



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 22 October 2024 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:55 P.M., 22 October 2024). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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**Notes:**

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

## ANSWERS

### BUSINESS AND TRADE

#### ■ Carers: Parents

**James McMurdock:** [\[9335\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps he is taking to support parents who need to take time out of work to care for children with long term illnesses.

**Justin Madders:**

The Government recognises the difficult circumstances faced by parents who need to take time out of work to care for children with long term illnesses.

The Government has made a range of commitments which will work to support parents in this situation so they can balance work with caring responsibilities. This includes making flexible working the default as part of the Employment Rights Bill, which will make it easier for parents to access flexible working where it is feasible.

Government has also committed to reviewing unpaid Carer's leave and exploring the benefits of a paid entitlement.

#### ■ Clothing: Retail Trade

**Jess Asato:** [\[7641\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether his Department has made a recent assessment of the potential merits of introducing a garment trading adjudicator to regulate the purchasing practices of domestic fashion retailers.

**Gareth Thomas:**

The UK fashion industry is famed for its historic creativity and this government recognises the important role the sector plays both in our domestic economy and on the global stage.

It is important to take an evidence-based approach to considering policy options. As well as the garment trade adjudicator or fashion watchdog idea, there have been other proposals including licensing and increased guidance on managing supply chains. We will continue to review measures to drive up standards across the sector and monitor global regulatory proposals in the sector.

#### ■ Companies House

**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[9148\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how many companies have been reported to Companies House for using (a) names and addresses and (b) other personal information without consent when registering in the last year; and whether his Department has plans to require people seeking to register new companies to send Companies House proof of identity before (i) issuing a certificate of incorporation and (ii) publishing the company's details online.



**Justin Madders:**

To the year ending 30 September 2024, Companies House received 28,933 reports related to the unauthorised use of addresses. No figure is available for personal information.

In future, all directors (and equivalents), persons with significant control and those filing information with Companies House will be required to undergo identity verification checks and proposed directors will need to complete these checks before a company is incorporated. The phased introduction of compulsory identity verification is due to begin by Autumn 2025.

**Department for Business and Trade: Ministers****Charlie Dewhurst:****[9341]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what meetings (a) Ministers and (b) his officials have held with external stakeholders since 5 July 2024.

**Justin Madders:**

Details of ministers' and senior officials' meetings with external individuals and organisations are published quarterly in arrears on GOV.UK.

Data for the period of July to September 2024 will be published in due course.

**Drinking Water: EU Law****Chris Bloore:****[9036]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what discussions he has had with industry representatives on the potential impact of the EU's revised Drinking Water Directive on (a) product standards and (b) market access.

**Mr Douglas Alexander:**

This Government continues to follow EU regulatory developments with interest, engaging with the EU on key regulatory developments via TCA structures. The Drinking Water Directive has not been discussed or raised with my Department.

UK businesses exporting to the EU must ensure that they comply with EU requirements for accessing the EU market. Guidance in respect of regulatory compliance with the revised Drinking Water Directive is the responsibility of the European Commission.

**Employment Rights Bill****Jerome Mayhew:****[9217]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, when he plans to publish the impact assessment for the Employment Rights Bill.

**Justin Madders:**

On Monday 21 October, the Government published a comprehensive package of analysis on the impact of the Employment Rights Bill (<http://www.gov.uk/guidance/employment-rights-bill-impact-assessments>).

## ■ Fireworks

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[9212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps he is taking to help mitigate the impact of fireworks on communities.

**Justin Madders:**

There is a comprehensive legislative framework regulating the manufacture, storage, supply, possession and use of fireworks in the UK. Local Authorities and the Police have a wide range of powers available to them to tackle the misuse of fireworks.

To ensure people continue to use fireworks in a safe and considerate manner I have launched a fireworks campaign for this season to provide guidance on minimising the impacts of fireworks and encouraging responsible use.

To inform any future decisions on the legislative framework, I intend to engage with stakeholders to gather evidence on the issues and impacts of fireworks.

## ■ Fireworks: Crime

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[9213\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps he is taking to tackle the illegal use of fireworks.

**Justin Madders:**

There is a comprehensive legislative framework regulating the manufacture, storage, supply, possession and use of fireworks in the UK. Local Authorities and the Police have a wide range of powers available to them to tackle the misuse of fireworks.

To ensure people continue to use fireworks in a safe and considerate manner I have launched a fireworks campaign for this season to provide guidance on minimising the impacts of fireworks and encouraging responsible use.

To inform any future decisions on the legislative framework, I intend to engage with stakeholders to gather evidence on the issues and impacts of fireworks.

## ■ Flexible Working: Women

**Ian Lavery:** [\[9180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps the Government is taking to support flexible working by women.

**Justin Madders:**

Through the recently introduced Employment Rights Bill, we are amending existing legislation to ensure employers accept flexible working requests, except where they are not reasonably feasible. These changes will support employees to access flexible working, including women. We know flexible working is particularly important supporting women who combine work with caring responsibilities.

**Charlotte Nichols:** [\[9235\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps he is taking to support women with flexible working.

**Justin Madders:**

Through the recently introduced Employment Rights Bill, we are amending existing legislation to ensure employers accept flexible working requests, except where they are not reasonably feasible. These changes will support employees to access flexible working, including women. We know flexible working is particularly important supporting women who combine work with caring responsibilities.

**Ayoub Khan:** [\[9358\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps he is taking to support women with flexible working.

**Justin Madders:**

Through the recently introduced Employment Rights Bill, we are amending existing legislation to ensure employers accept flexible working requests, except where they are not reasonably feasible. These changes will support employees to access flexible working, including women. We know flexible working is particularly important supporting women who combine work with caring responsibilities.

## ■ **Horizon IT System: Compensation**

**Victoria Collins:** [\[8961\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to speed up compensation payments for sub-postmasters impacted by the Horizon IT System.

**Gareth Thomas:**

Government is committed to providing redress to individuals affected by the Horizon scandal as quickly as possible. Real progress is being made; as of 30 September 2024, approximately £363 million has been paid to over 2,900 claimants across the available schemes.

We however continue to seek options to speed up redress, in discussion with the Horizon Compensation Advisory Board. For example, we have recently committed to providing offers in response to fully completed claims to the Horizon Convictions Redress Scheme within 40 working days in 90% of cases, in line with the commitment on the GLO scheme which we are currently meeting.

## ■ **Insolvency Service: Reform**

**Jodie Gosling:** [\[9665\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of reforming the Insolvency Service to ensure (a) greater transparency, (b) faster investigations and (c) greater accountability for insolvency practitioners.

**Justin Madders:**

The work of the Insolvency Service is kept under continual review by the Department and Ministers.

The Insolvency Service, on behalf of the Secretary of State, performs a crucial function in overseeing the Recognised Professional Bodies' regulation of Insolvency Practitioners. The regulation of Insolvency Practitioners was subject to a public consultation in 2021, and the Government is considering the introduction of reforms in this area.

**■ Lithium: Production**

**Noah Law:** [\[9686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of mandating a 50,000 tons per annum production target for domestic lithium.

**Sarah Jones:**

A secure supply of critical minerals is vital for the UK's economic growth and security, industrial strategy ambitions, and clean energy transition.

Domestic production of lithium will be increasingly important as demand for resilient and responsible sources of critical minerals grows. The St Austell and Newquay constituency is home to several promising lithium projects like Imerys-British Lithium and Cornish Lithium, which recently celebrated opening the UK's first lithium hydroxide demonstration plant this month.

Government is considering policy options to secure our critical mineral supply chains and will be engaging closely with industry to realise our potential for producing critical minerals domestically.

**■ Shipbuilding: Trade Promotion**

**Jim Shannon:** [\[6237\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will extend export support programmes for civil maritime sector participation in international trade shows.

**Gareth Thomas:**

This year, the Department for Business and Trade (DBT) has already supported UK maritime firms at Asia Pacific Maritime (Singapore), Posidonia (Athens), and SMM (Hamburg). Other upcoming events include METSTRADE, which will be taking place in Amsterdam this November, as well as Sea Asia in March. UK businesses can access DBT's export services via Great.gov.uk, including the UK Export Academy, International Trade Advisers, Help to Grow, and the Export Support Service.

DBT will continue to review its offer to ensure businesses have the support they need to export and grow.

**■ Summertime: Mental Health**

**Marie Goldman:** [9247]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he plans to make an assessment of the impact of daylight saving time on (a) mental health and (b) seasonal affective disorder.

**Justin Madders:**

The Government has no current plans to change the approach to Daylight Savings.

**CABINET OFFICE****■ Cabinet Office: Freedom of Information**

**John Glen:** [8811]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will list the (a) Freedom of Information and (b) Environmental Information Regulation requests received by his Department since 2024 by (i) information requested, (ii) decision taken and (iii) exemption used.

**Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:**

As was the case when the Rt Hon member was a minister in the department, the Cabinet Office publishes statistics for FOI and EIR requests for all central government departments and other monitored bodies which can be found on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/government-foi-statistics>. The statistics detail volumes, outcomes and any exemptions applied, and are published on a quarterly basis.

**■ Cabinet Office: Smoking**

**John Glen:** [8639]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answers of 13 September 2024 to Questions 4350 and 4352 on Smoking, whether his Department plans to ban (a) smoking and (b) vaping in (i) public gardens and (ii) outdoor recreational spaces at (A) 10 Downing Street and (B) 70 Whitehall.

**Georgia Gould:**

The Government will soon introduce the Tobacco and Vapes Bill which stands to be the most significant public health intervention in a generation and will put us on track to a smoke-free UK.

Action on smoking will help to reduce 80,000 preventable deaths, reduce the burden on the NHS and reduce the burden on the taxpayer.

The Department of Health and Social Care will set out more details soon.

**■ Cabinet Office: Vacancies****John Glen:** [\[8637\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if the vacancy for the position of the Second Permanent Secretary, Head of Mission Delivery Unit, was (a) publicly advertised and (b) for how long.

**Georgia Gould:**

The appointment follows a Civil Service wide recruitment competition overseen by the Civil Service Commission. The application process was open for five days.

**■ Coronavirus: Death****Andrew Rosindell:** [\[8763\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish the 20 earliest covid-19 related deaths in the UK by (a) five year age-cohort, (b) sex, (c) nation, (d) week of occurrence and (e) week of registration; and whether each of those deaths were (i) referred to a coroner and (ii) subject to an inquest.

**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[8764\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how long the 20 longest delays between (a) occurrence date and (b) registration date were for covid-19 related deaths in England that (i) occurred in 2020 and (ii) were subject to an inquest.

**Georgia Gould:**

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

A response to the Hon. Gentleman's Parliamentary Questions of 14th October is attached.

**Attachments:**

1. UKSA Letter [PQ8763\_8764.pdf]

**■ Debts: Lincolnshire****Sir John Hayes:** [\[8757\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent estimate his Department has made of the level of household debt in (a) South Holland and the Deepings constituency and (b) Lincolnshire.

**Georgia Gould:**

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

A response to the Rt. Hon. Gentleman's Question of 14 October is attached.

**Attachments:**

1. UKSA Letter [PQ8757 (1).pdf]

## ■ Equality Act 2010

**John Glen:**

[\[8801\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether his Department plans to publish a consultation on enacting the socio-economic duty in the Equality Act 2010.

**Anneliese Dodds:**

We will commence the socio-economic duty in section 1 of the Equality Act 2010 through a commencement order when parliamentary time allows. We will engage widely to ensure that its implementation is as effective as possible.

## ■ Ministers: Codes of Practice

**Lloyd Hatton:**

[\[9328\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, when he plans to publish a new Ministerial Code of Conduct; and whether it will include (a) an explicit commitment to the seven Principles of Public Life, (b) an ability for the Independent Adviser on Ministerial Interests to initiate investigations into breaches of the code without needing the consent of the Prime Minister and (c) new restrictions on former ministers taking up outside employment through a deed of undertaking.

**Georgia Gould:**

The Prime Minister intends to issue and publish an updated version of the Ministerial Code shortly, in which he will set out his expectations for the conduct of all who serve in Government as Ministers.

## ■ National Security: Risk Assessment

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[8446\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to improve the Government's national security risk assessment policies, in the context of the recent CrowdStrike software outages.

**Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:**

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

## ■ Public Appointments

**John Glen:**

[\[6096\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to page five of the report entitled Strengthening Ethics and Integrity in Central Government, published in July 2023, CP 900, whether he plans to publish (a) new guidance on direct ministerial appointments and (b) a list of unregulated public appointments.

**Georgia Gould:**

We are currently considering whether the commitments made by the previous administration in that report, which have not yet been implemented, are sufficient and appropriate for meeting the Committees' recommendations and the wider public's expectations on transparency.

**Public Appointments and Special Advisers: Equality****John Glen:**[\[8433\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 6 September 2024 to Question 2316 on Equality, if she will publish guidance on the application of the socio-economic duty to (a) special advisers and (b) ministerial appointments.

**Georgia Gould:**

The socio-economic duty has not yet commenced. I refer the Hon Member back to PQ 2316.

**Stonewall: Public Bodies****John Glen:**[\[8818\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he has issued guidance to public bodies on using public funds to subscribe to Stonewall.

**Georgia Gould:**

Cabinet Office has not issued any specific guidance to arm's length bodies (ALBs) on using public funds to subscribe to organisations.

ALBs are subject to the principles of sound financial management as set out in the [Managing Public Money](#) guidance.

**Sue Gray: Pay****John Glen:**[\[8802\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he has requested a leak inquiry in relation to media reports about Sue Gray's salary.

**Georgia Gould:**

It is the longstanding policy of successive governments not to comment on leak investigations.

**CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT****11 Downing Street: Art Works****John Glen:**[\[8809\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what estimate she has made of the cost to the public purse of (a) removing portraits of men from 11 Downing Street and (b) procuring new portraits and paintings; what the process will be for procuring new



portraits and paintings; and whether she plans to remove the portraits of former Chancellors of the Exchequer.

**Chris Bryant:**

It is standard practice, as followed by the previous government, for new ministers to select works from the Government Art Collection for their ministerial offices. All such changes of displays of works from the Government Art Collection constitute 'business as usual' for the Collection, so all costs are met from within existing budgets. All the newly installed artworks are part of the Government Art Collection, and no works have been acquired or procured for this new display. The whole collection, which is about to celebrate its 125th anniversary, shows great British art at its best in ministerial offices, departments, museums, galleries, embassies and consulates. Its diversity is a key part of its appeal and its championing of British art at home and abroad.

■ **Broadcasting**

**Helen Grant:**

[\[8799\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she (a) is taking and (b) plans to take to support the development of the broadcasting industry outside of London.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

Our world-leading TV sector is too centralised in London and the South East. We need to spread the benefits of the sector into our towns and cities, so that more people can see themselves and their experiences reflected on screen as part of our national story. This is why my Right Honourable Friend the Secretary of State and I have already called on broadcasters to be more ambitious in growing the sector outside of London and the South East, and to commission more content from across the whole of the UK.

My Department is taking forward work in this area to understand the barriers to further development of the industry outside of London and we are committed to working with the sector to ensure the right framework, conditions and support are in place for this to happen.

■ **Charities: Political Activities**

**Nick Timothy:**

[\[8925\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has held discussions with the Charity Commission on the adequacy of its guidance entitled Campaigning and political activity guidance for charities, published on 7 November 2022.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

Charity law sets limits on what campaigning and non-party political activities charities can undertake. This is reflected in the guidance for charities on campaigning and political activity, published by the Charity Commission for England and Wales ("the Commission").

On 14 August 2024 the Commission [published a report](#) summarising casework on campaigning and political activity in the run up to the 2024 General Election. It found a rise in proactive efforts by charities to seek advice and guidance from the Commission and a 60% decline in high-risk cases compared to the 2019 election.

Ministers and officials meet regularly with the Commission to discuss matters of mutual interest.

## ■ Cricket: Finance

**Shivani Raja:** [\[8965\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of levels of funding for (a) women's cricket and (b) grassroots cricket infrastructure.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

The Government is committed to supporting every aspect of women's sport and ensuring all women and girls, no matter their background, have access to high quality sport.

The Government provides the majority of support for grassroots sport through Sport England, which annually invests over £250 million in Exchequer and Lottery funding.

This includes long term investment to the England and Wales Cricket Board, the National Governing Body for cricket, which receives up to £11.6 million for five years to invest in community cricket initiatives that will benefit everyone, including disabled people, women and girls and older people. Sport England's This Girl Can campaign has also inspired millions of women and girls to get active, including through cricket.

## ■ Department for Culture, Media and Sport: Buildings

**Sir Ashley Fox:** [\[9064\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, how many and what proportion of desks were occupied in each of her Department's offices in the most recent four weeks for which figures are available; and how many staff attended each office in person in the same period.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

Our most recently available figures are for the month of August. Our London HQ saw an average of 81% desk utilisation and 171 staff attending the office per day. In our secondary Manchester HQ desk utilisation was 74% for that same month. This gives an overall average of 78% usage across our primary headquarters.

## ■ Department for Culture, Media and Sport: Civil Servants

**Sir Ashley Fox:** [\[9063\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, how many civil servants are assigned to work in each of her Department's offices; and how many desks are available in each office.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

LOCATION	STAFF NUMBER	DESKS AVAILABLE
100 Parliament Street (100 PS)	813	380
Manchester - Bloc, 17 Marble Street	209	104*
Belfast - Erskine House	8	5
Cardiff - Tŷ William Morgan House	7	8
Edinburgh - Queen Elizabeth House	6	3
Darlington - Feethams House	12	6
Birmingham - Hub	3	2
Bristol - Hub	6	17
Glasgow - Hub	3	3
Leeds - Hub	7	4
Liverpool - Hub	4	3
Nottingham - Hub	2	1
Sheffield - Hub	1	4

**■ Department for Culture, Media and Sport: Ministers' Private Offices****Sir Ashley Fox:****[9065]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, how much was spent on (a) new furniture and fittings and (b) other refurbishment of Ministerial offices in her Department since the dissolution of the last Parliament; and on what items this was spent.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

I can confirm that the Department for Culture, Media and Sport has not spent any money on new furniture and fittings or other refurbishment of Ministerial offices in her Department since the dissolution of the last Parliament.

**■ Department for Culture, Media and Sport: Waste Management****Adam Jogee:** [\[8977\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to reduce food waste in her Department.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

As a tenant for each of our offices including our London and Manchester HQs, DCMS does not manage food provision or waste in our offices. For our London HQ this service is provided by our landlords, the Government Property Agency.

**■ Film: Sheltered Housing****Blair McDougall:** [\[8973\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative changes to enable the viewing of films in communal spaces in sheltered accommodation without a licence.

**Chris Bryant:**

This is a devolved area of competence in Scotland. Decisions about introducing legislative changes would be for the Scottish Government.

In England and Wales, the exhibition of films in communal spaces is regulated through the Licensing Act 2003. Local authorities act as the 'licensing authority' when determining what activity requires a licence.

The Licensing Act 2003 contains an exemption for entertainment activity that is provided on or behalf of a local authority, healthcare provider or school provider (see para. 16.16 of the Revised Guidance issued under s.182 of the Licensing Act 2003). The exemption applies to activity that takes place on defined premises between 08.00 - 23.00. This exemption may apply to sheltered accommodation, and we would encourage those interested in exhibiting films in communal spaces in sheltered accommodation to consider on a case by case basis whether they would fall under this exemption.

The government is not planning any legislative changes in this area.

**■ Football: Women****Samantha Niblett:** [\[9331\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what recent progress her Department has made on implementing the recommendations of the independent report entitled Raising the bar - reframing the opportunity in women's football, published on 13 July 2023.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

We are dedicated to supporting every aspect of women's sport and ensuring all women and girls, no matter their background, are able to participate in sport and physical activity.

Each of the recommendations outlined in the Carney Review is aligned with individual stakeholders to progress. This includes the Women's Professional Leagues Ltd, the FA, Premier League, EFL and PFA.

## ■ Gaming

**Dr Beccy Cooper:** [\[9008\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of pausing the measures on adult gambling centres announced in the Gambling White Paper.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

The Government is committed to strengthening protections to ensure that people can continue to enjoy gambling as a pastime without the harms that can ensue from harmful gambling. We are committed to reviewing the best available evidence from a wide range of sources and working with all stakeholders in order to support the sector and ensure there are robust protections in place to protect those at risk.

The Minister for Gambling has met and held wide-ranging discussions with a range of stakeholders, including the British Amusement Catering Trade Association. We will provide further updates to the House soon.

## ■ Newspaper Press: Foreign Investment in UK

**Dr Luke Evans:** [\[8886\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, when she plans to publish the Government's response to the consultation entitled The Enterprise Act 2002 (Mergers Involving Newspaper Enterprises and Foreign Powers) Regulations 2024.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

We are currently considering the responses to the consultation that we received, and hope to publish a response in the near future.

## ■ Universal Studios: Bedfordshire

**Dr Luke Evans:** [\[8884\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has had discussions with Universal Studios on proposals for a theme park in Bedfordshire.

**Dr Luke Evans:** [\[8885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of Universal Studios' proposed theme park to be situated in Bedfordshire.

**Chris Bryant:**

DCMS supports NBCUniversal's proposal to invest in Bedfordshire. A world-class, large-scale resort and theme park has the potential to transform the area, drive growth, create thousands of jobs and boost UK tourism.

The details of conversations between private investors and the Government are confidential.

## DEFENCE

### ■ Armed Forces: Foreign Nationals

**Lincoln Jopp:** [\[9321\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many members of overseas armed forces his Department is in a direct employment relationship with as of 15 October 2024.

**AI Carns:**

I have interpreted your question to be asking for the number of foreign personnel on exchange or embedded with the UK Armed Forces.

The table below shows the number of foreign exchange personnel that were on strength with an active assignment, as at 15 Oct 2024, by assigned location country in either overseas or the United Kingdom.

LOCATION COUNTRY	FOREIGN EXCHANGE PERSONNEL COUNT
Overseas	146
United Kingdom	582
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>728</b>

### ■ Armed Forces: Health

**Jim Shannon:** [\[8824\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if his Department to will make an assessment of the adequacy of support for the physical health of service people.

**AI Carns:**

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) is committed to the health and wellbeing of our Armed Forces personnel. For those personnel requiring medical intervention the Defence Medical Services (DMS) provides occupationally focused primary healthcare to serving Armed Forces personnel, to ensure that they are medically fit, mentally and physically, to undertake their duties.

For wounded, injured and sick personnel, the Defence Recovery Capability is a MOD-owned capability designed to deliver programmed, command-led and coordinated support. Each person who comes under the Defence Recovery Capability will get a tailored Individual Recovery Plan which enables them to focus on either their return to duty or transition to civilian life.

The Department is reviewing its medical capabilities, including the provision of healthcare delivered by DMS to Armed Forces personnel as part of the Strategic Defence Review. The review will report in the first half of 2025.

## ■ **Armed Forces: Housing**

**Helen Morgan:**

[\[8912\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what progress his Department has made to deliver (a) new and (b) refurbished military accommodation for 40,000 service men and women.

**Maria Eagle:**

### **Service Family Accommodation (SFA):**

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) manages c47,000 SFA properties in the UK.

In financial year (FY) 2024-25, the Department has purchased 351 new homes at a cost of £157 million, in areas where there is a shortage of SFA.

£441 million is currently forecast to be spent on maintaining and improving SFA including: £180 million to improve insulation in c600 homes; remediate c1,000 homes with long-term damp and mould issues, and refurbishing c200 long-term empty homes. C1,700 minor damp and mould packages are planned and c30 homes will receive upgraded heating.

### **Single Living Accommodation (SLA):**

As part of a new programmatic approach for the construction of SLA which is intended to improve the delivery of new accommodation by finding efficiencies and improving value for money, the Department has appointed six companies to undertake this work.

This will see 16,000 new bedspaces built as part of a wider-MOD plan to build or refurbish 40,000 SLA bedspaces over 10 years. The work will improve the lived experience for Service Personnel occupying the rooms.

In FY 2024-25 £41 million is currently forecast to be spent on improving the condition of SLA including: refurbishment, heating, and room conversions to provide additional bedspaces. A further £7.5 million is forecast to be spent on internal improvements to condition and heating.

An additional c£14.3 million is forecast to be spent on Safe & Legal SLA compliance works.

## ■ **Armed Forces: Private Education**

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[9207\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 14 October 2024 to Questions 7840, 7842 and 7843 on Armed Forces: Private Education, whether he has held discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the potential merits of (a) introducing VAT exemptions for serving personnel making use of the Continuity of

Education Allowance and (b) increasing the budget for the Continuity of Education Allowance to mitigate the impact of the planned introduction of VAT.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[9208\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 14 October 2024 to Questions 7840, 7842 and 7843 on Armed Forces: Private Education, whether he has made a recent assessment of the potential impact of imposing VAT on independent school fees on the number of service personnel in receipt of the Continuity of Education Allowance that may (a) change roles and (b) leave the military.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[9209\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 14 October 2024 to Questions 7840, 7842 and 7843 on Armed Forces: Private Education, whether he has made an estimate of the cost to the public purse of increasing the Continuity of Education Allowance to cover the introduction of VAT in private schools.

**Al Carns:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 14 October 2024 to Question 6838 to the hon. Member for Huntingdon (Ben Obese-Jecty).

**Attachments:**

1. Armed Forces Private Education [6838 - Armed Forces Private Education.docx]

## ■ Armed Forces: Protective Clothing and Uniforms

**Gavin Robinson:** [\[9715\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what his Department's budget is for armed forces (a) uniforms and (b) protective clothing in the 2024-25 financial year; and what the value is of orders placed with companies in Northern Ireland to provide (i) uniforms and (ii) protective equipment for the armed forces in the same period.

**Maria Eagle:**

The Logistics Commodities and Services Transformation (LCST) budget for all Clothing Raw Materials and Consumables purchases in the 2024-25 financial year (FY) is £79.839 million.

The value of orders placed with companies based in Northern Ireland for FY 2024-25 to date totals £16,441,905. We are forecast to spend an additional £11,755,371 for the remainder of the FY2024-25.

It has not been possible to identify which items are classed as uniform or which are protective clothing within the timeframe permitted.

Notes:

- This budget amount covers all uniforms and protective clothing purchased by Defence Equipment and Support through the LCST contract with Leidos Supply Limited across all Front Line Commands.
- This excludes items purchased directly by the Front Line Commands.



## ■ Armed Forces: Training

**Dr Neil Shastri-Hurst:**

[\[9115\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much funding his Department plans to provide for training in the (a) Royal Navy, (b) British Army and (c) Royal Air Force in the 2024-25 financial year.

**Luke Pollard:**

The Department has interpreted funding for training to mean funding for direct training exercises only. This includes Phase 1 (basic training) and Phase 2 (initial training) costs. The final outturn for FY2023-24 is below and the equivalent for the current financial year will be released in due course.

(a) Royal Navy: £89 million

(b) British Army: £105 million

(c) Royal Air Force: £131 million

## ■ Army: Training

**James Cartlidge:**

[\[9732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the per-person cost of training a regular army recruit undertaking phase one basic training including (a) staff, (b) accommodation and (c) logistics costs.

**Luke Pollard:**

The average cost to train a Regular Army recruit at the Army Training Centre Pirbright is approximately £47,900. This is the estimated cost of delivering the Basic Training course, known as the Common Military Syllabus Future Soldier, which is completed by all Standard Entry recruits when they join the Army.

COST CATEGORY	COST £THOUSANDS	NOTES
Clothing	2.0	
Ammunition	0.4	
Trainee Pay	12.2	
Other Stock consumption	0.5	Includes ration packs and respirators
Workforce	18.8	Direct and indirect workforce costs for both military and civilian staff
Infrastructure	11.8	Accommodation and training facilities
Administration Overhead	2.2	

COST CATEGORY	COST £THOUSANDS	NOTES
<b>Total</b>	<b>47.9</b>	

**Note:** These are the latest available costings and are based on data for the financial year 2023-24.

## ■ Chiefs of Staff

**Ben Obese-Jecty:** [\[8949\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what progress he has made on (a) appointing service chiefs for four years tenures and (b) reviewing the performance of service chiefs two years after their appointment.

### **Al Carns:**

Service Chiefs are appointed for three years. After 18 months in post, an extension of one additional year (to four years) may be considered, factoring in performance and succession planning requirements.

The Chief of the Defence Staff, Chief of the Naval Staff and Commander UK Strategic Command have all had their postings extended to four years.

All British military personnel, including Service Chiefs, receive an annual performance review.

## ■ Defence Equipment: Production

**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[8775\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to increase domestic defence production capabilities.

### **Maria Eagle:**

This Government recognises the vital role of the defence industry in both keeping our country safe and in providing businesses, jobs, prosperity and tax in all corners of our United Kingdom.

Our UK industry partners, of all sizes, are very much at the heart of our One Defence approach and we recognise the value that suppliers bring to the defence enterprise. That is why this Government is committed to bringing forward a Defence Industrial Strategy.

The Defence Industrial Strategy will align our national security and economic priorities and will aim to create a better, bigger, more modern, connected, innovative, and resilient defence sector. It will also consider requirements for onshore production capability to ensure the UK has the industrial base needed to meet potential future threats.

## ■ Landing Ship Dock Auxiliaries

**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[8776\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Albion-class amphibious assault ships are (a) operationally available and (b) undergoing upgrades.

**Maria Eagle:**

I can confirm that since 2010, one Landing Platform Dock (LPD) ship has been held in extended readiness so that she can be regenerated if required.

HMS Albion has taken HMS Bulwark's position in extended readiness so that HMS Bulwark can undergo regeneration. Once regenerated she can be ready to deliver defence outputs if required.

The Ministry of Defence annually releases readiness data for the Royal Navy surface fleet, however for reasons of operational security, we do not disclose timetables or forecasts as this information would be helpful to our adversaries.

## ■ Veterans: Identity Cards

**Tom Hayes:** [\[9020\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate his Department has made of the proportion of veterans who left service before December 2018 who have a veteran ID card.

**Al Carns:**

The Armed Forces Veteran Card Scheme was launched in two phases. Phase one is complete, with all Service leavers since December 2018 being automatically issued with a card as part of their discharge process.

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

The Ministry of Defence does not collect or hold information on all veterans, so it is not possible to make an estimate specifically on the proportion of pre-18 veterans who now have a card.

However, I can confirm that as of 15 October 2024, 139,328 Phase two cards had been dispatched to pre-2018 veterans who had applied, and we continue to receive approximately 270 applications per day. These figures exclude duplicates.

## ■ Veterans: Northern Ireland

**Mr Gregory Campbell:** [\[9416\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he plans to create a welfare services governance board for veterans' issues in Northern Ireland.

**AI Carns:**

The Government is committed to ensuring that veterans are able to access the appropriate support they require wherever they live in the UK and will be seeking to more effectively coordinate and cohere the support that is available.

This will build on the successful expansion of the Veterans Welfare Service Northern Ireland to all veterans and their families across Northern Ireland, the work of the 11 Veterans' Champions in Northern Ireland and of the Northern Ireland Veterans Support Committee, and the forthcoming enhancement of the Office for Veterans Affairs' presence in Northern Ireland.

**EDUCATION****■ Adoption****Sir John Whittingdale:****[8750]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will issue a formal public apology on historic forced adoptions on behalf of the Government.

**Janet Daby:**

I have the deepest sympathy with everyone affected by historic forced adoption. The practice was abhorrent and should never have taken place.

The department is currently funding the Adoption England project 'Improving Adoption Services for Adults', which is designed to maintain relationships and facilitate access to better support for adopted adults, including those adopted between 1940 to 1970.

The department will continue to review the offer, including looking to learn from the approach of the devolved nations, and will consider how we can collaborate across government to provide support.

**■ Children: Carers****Neil Duncan-Jordan:****[8928]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will hold discussions with Ofsted on the potential merits of identifying young carers as a specific group within the education system.

**Neil Duncan-Jordan:****[8931]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will take steps to enforce Section 96(1)(1) of the Children and Families Act 2014 on providing a needs assessment for all young carers.

**Janet Daby:**

Young carers were added, as a specific group within the education system, to the school census in the 2022/23 academic year. Ofsted has committed to developing and consulting upon a revised schools' inspection framework for September 2025.

This will support the new school report card, which will also be in place from that time. A consultation on the framework and report card is scheduled to launch early in the new year.

The department and Ofsted are engaging closely to take this forward. This includes considering how schools are to be assessed in future in terms of their contribution to inclusion, in the context of the government's mission to ensure that all children, including young carers, can achieve and thrive at school.

Local authorities have a statutory duty to undertake a Young Carers' Needs Assessment where it appears that a young carer may need support or where an assessment is requested by a young carer or by a parent of a young carer.

The Children's Social Care National Framework, which was issued in December 2023, is statutory guidance for local authorities. It provides clarity on the outcomes that children's social care should achieve when supporting children, young people and families, including young carers.

The department is clear that the everyone working within children's social care should use the National Framework to understand how they can improve the outcomes and break down barriers for opportunity for children, young people, and families. We have included specific expectations, in the framework, for practice for senior leaders, practice supervisors and practitioners on providing help to young carers.

## ■ Children: Poverty

**Mary Kelly Foy:** [\[9658\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether levels of food insecurity will be a key metric of the Child Poverty Taskforce.

**Janet Daby:**

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

Child poverty has increased by 700,000 since 2010, with over four million children now growing up in a low-income family. This not only harms children's lives but also damages their future prospects and holds back our society and economy.

With this in mind, the Child Poverty Taskforce will drive forward action across government to reduce child poverty, including considering a range of metrics which can be tracked. These will be published in the government's Child Poverty Strategy in the spring.

## ■ Education: Finance

**Neil O'Brien:** [\[8855\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the cost to the public purse will be per local authority to fund (a) the teachers' pay additional grant, (b) the teachers' pension

employer contribution grant and (c) the core schools budget grant for financial year 2024-25.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

In 2024/25, the department is providing schools and high needs settings with £900 million through the teachers' pay additional grant (TPAG), £1.1 billion through the teachers' pension employer contribution grant (TPECG) to support them with the increased teachers' pension scheme employer contribution rates from April 2024, and almost £1.1 billion through the core school budget grant (CSBG) to support schools with overall costs.

Guidance for schools and local authorities on the TPAG allocations for 2024/25, can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teachers-pay-additional-grant-2024-to-2025>.

Guidance for schools and local authorities on the TPECG 2024 for March 2024 to April 2025 can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teachers-pension-employer-contribution-grant-2024-for-schools-high-needs-settings-and-local-authorities-2024-to-2025>.

Allocations and guidance for schools and local authorities for the CSBG for September 2024 to March 2025 can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/core-schools-budget-grant-csbg-2024-to-2025>.

■ **Knives: Crime**

**Lee Anderson:**

**[8857]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department is taking steps to help ensure school children are educated about knife crime.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

Keeping children safe is a top priority for this government. Education plays a key role in ensuring children can lead safe and fulfilling lives, and it provides opportunity to intervene early, to prevent young people being drawn into crime.

Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) includes content on the situations that often lead young people to carry weapons such as knives, including criminal exploitation through involvement in gangs and county lines drugs operations and in particular the grooming relationships that often accompany this. Issues around gun and knife crime can also still be taught as part of a school's wider curriculum. For example, schools can choose to include this content as part of their personal, social, health and economic education or citizenship curriculum.

Additionally, school-led Support, Attend, Fulfil, Exceed ('SAFE') taskforces have been established in 10 hotspot areas in England. The taskforces are investing in and delivering evidence-based interventions such as mentoring and social skills training to reach young people early, get them back on track with their education and reduce their vulnerability to serious violence. In alternative provision (AP), our Alternative

Provision Specialist Taskforces programme enables teams of specialists such as speech and language therapists, youth justice workers and family workers to provide integrated, child-centred support in 22 APs in hotspot areas.

Youth Endowment Fund's Toolkit, backed by Home Office funding, supports schools and wider services to take evidence based interventions to tackle serious violence.

More information on this toolkit is available here:

<http://www.youthendowmentfund.org.uk/toolkit/>.

## ■ Magna Carta School

**Dr Ben Spencer:** [8890]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will rebuild the Magna Carta School in Egham.

**Stephen Morgan:**

Magna Carta was announced as part of the school rebuilding programme in February 2024. The department remains committed to rebuild or refurbish all schools within the programme and we can confirm that early planning work for Magna Carta has started.

## ■ Pupils: Bullying

**Josh Babarinde:** [9252]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made an assessment of (a) trends in the level of bullying in schools and (b) the potential impact of those trends on the (i) mental wellbeing of and (ii) performance of young people in schools.

**Josh Babarinde:** [9253]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made an assessment of trends in the level of bullying in schools based on (a) perceived differences and (b) protected characteristics.

**Stephen Morgan:**

There is no legal requirement for schools to record and report incidents of bullying to the government. However, the department does monitor evidence on the impact of bullying on children and young people through robust national surveys.

According to the most recent published data from the department's National Behaviour Survey (NBS), for the 2022/23 academic year, 26% of secondary pupils reported being bullied and 28% of primary and secondary school parents reported their child being bullied in the past 12 months. This is shown in the table below. To note, the total sample size for pupils was 2,521 and the approximate parent sample size was 2,335.

	2021/22 ACADEMIC YEAR	2022/23 ACADEMIC YEAR
<i>Pupil</i> reported bullying victimisation	22%	26%
<i>Parent</i> reported bullying victimisation	26%	28%
Pupil reported bullying victimisation by gender		
Males	21%	25%
Females	22%	27%
Pupil reported bullying victimisation by SEND		
Pupils with SEND	34%*	36%*
Pupils without SEND	20%*	24%*
Pupil reported bullying victimisation by ethnicity		
White	25%*	29%*
Ethnic minority	14%*	19%*
Pupil reported bullying victimisation by FSM eligibility		
Eligible for FSM	28%*	38%*
Not Eligible for FSM	21%*	22%*

\*Indicates a significant difference between the sub groups. Changes over time have not been tested for significance.

The department sees little difference in self-reported rates of bullying by gender. However, a greater proportion of white secondary-aged pupils reported being bullied compared to pupils from an ethnic minority background. Similarly, a larger proportion of secondary-aged pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) reported being bullied compared to those without SEND. Secondary-aged pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) also reported being bullied more frequently when compared with those not eligible for FSM.

Across most of these groups, there is a small percentage point increase in 2022/23 compared to 2021/22. This is between 2 and 5 percentage points, aside from FSM, where the increase was 10. The department does not know if these changes are



statistically significant. The department will publish updated data from the NBS in due course.

Other robust data sources which report on bullying prevalence, and with a longer time series, include the Health Behaviours of School-aged Children Study and the Crime Survey for England and Wales, surveying 10 to 15 year olds. These suggest overall prevalence rates have remained reasonably stable between 2018 and 2023.

The department has not made a formal assessment of the links between the level of bullying and impacts on the mental wellbeing and performance of young people in schools, but we are aware of the range of evidence that shows these links. For example, national surveys which show a link between bullying and the impact on mental health include the NHS Digital: Mental Health of Children and Young People in England Survey and the Crime Survey for England and Wales, surveying 10 to 15 years olds. The department also follows the wider academic literature on the impacts of bullying. A recent internal review by departmental analysts identified numerous sources which demonstrate the link between bullying and both mental health and academic outcomes.

#### ■ Schools: Sports

**Shivani Raja:**

[\[8966\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to help ensure that the current level of funding for sports programmes in schools is protected.

**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.

#### ■ Special Educational Needs

**Victoria Collins:**

[\[8953\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to improve the accountability of SEND support within schools; and if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of reviewing the complaint routes for parents.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

The department welcomes the publication of the response to the Big Listen, which stated that Ofsted will consult on introducing a new inspection judgement area for inclusion across education settings. The department continues to work with Ofsted to consider how outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), or in alternative provision (AP), are better reflected in the Education Inspection and the Area SEND inspection frameworks going forwards.

Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission began a strengthened local inspection framework in January 2023, placing a greater emphasis on the outcomes being achieved for children and young people. This is an important tool to maintain a focus on high standards in the SEND system across all partners.

The department works to monitor, support and, where necessary, challenge local authorities, working closely with NHS England to tackle any weaknesses that sit with health partners. Where a local authority does not meet its duties, the department can take action that prioritises children's needs and supports local areas to bring about rapid improvement.

There are several routes of redress for parents or young people who disagree with the decisions or actions of their educational setting or local authority. However, the department understands these processes can be lengthy and difficult for families to navigate. It is in everyone's interests that routes of redress are set out clearly and that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage.

The department is working to support inclusive practice in mainstream schools whilst ensuring that specialist provision meets the needs of children and young people who need it.

#### ■ **Special Educational Needs: South Basildon and East Thurrock**

**James McMurdock:**

[\[9076\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to improve the provision of SEND support for children in South Basildon and East Thurrock constituency.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

Departmental officials meet regularly with representatives from Essex and Thurrock local area partnerships to discuss their education, health and care (EHC) plan performance, annual review processes, sufficiency strategy and their wider support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Departmental officials challenge Essex and Thurrock about impact where appropriate and share best practice to provide support. Essex has recently announced investment of £2.9 million for additional assistance and resources to improve timeliness of the EHC plan process.

Thurrock is also part of the Delivering Better Value (DBV) in SEND programme, which provides £1 million in grant funding to support local authorities to provide more effective SEND services by meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND at an early stage and with the right level of support. The department monitors Thurrock's progress in the DBV programme through quarterly reporting and meetings with the local authority. Thurrock is also involved in the supported internship programme and has a number of young people starting specialist internships at Amazon.

This government's ambition is that all children and young people with SEND or in alternative provision receive the right support to succeed in their education and as

they move into adult life. The department is committed to taking a community-wide approach in collaboration with local area partnerships, improving inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools, as well as ensuring special schools cater to those with the most complex needs.

### ■ **Supporting Families Programme**

**Damian Hinds:** [\[8792\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has plans to review and amend the Supporting Families programme.

**Janet Daby:**

The new government is committed to improving outcomes for children and families and to continuing to consider reforms to include Early Help and Family Help.

The Supporting Families programme is funded until March 2025. Any future funding will be determined, as is normal, by the Budget and Spending Review process.

**Damian Hinds:** [\[8793\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many full-time equivalent staff will be allocated to the Supporting Families programme in the 2025-26 financial year; and what grades those staff are.

**Janet Daby:**

This government is committed to improving outcomes for children and families, and to continuing to work on the reform agenda of which Early Help and Family help are a part. The Supporting Families programme is funded until March 2025. Any future funding will be determined, as is normal, by the Budget and Spending Review process. Any decisions on staffing will be made through the department's business planning following the Spending Review.

## ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

### ■ **Coal: Imports and Mining**

**Mr Richard Holden:** [\[9066\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether his Department has made a comparative assessment of the potential environmental impact of (a) importing coal from abroad for domestic consumption and (b) mining coal in the UK.

**Michael Shanks:**

In line with our net zero target, we committed to phasing out unabated coal-fired power generation by 1st October 2024, a year earlier than the original 2025 target, and on September 30th Great Britain's last coal fired electricity power plant, Ratcliffe-upon-Soar, closed. This means we have reduced coal's share of our electricity supply from around a third, to zero in the space of only ten years. Most imported coal is used by industry, including steel making, cement and chemical industries, and patent fuel manufacture.

Coal production and import information can be found here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66a7a172a3c2a28abb50d8be/DUKES\\_2024\\_Chapter\\_2.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66a7a172a3c2a28abb50d8be/DUKES_2024_Chapter_2.pdf)

### ■ Heat Pumps: Energy Performance Certificates

**Victoria Collins:**

**[8960]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of recognising air-to-air heat pumps in energy performance certificates.

**Miatta Fahnbulleh:**

Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) are a critical tool in informing consumers about the running costs of their homes, helping them reduce both energy bills and carbon emissions. The EPC model already recognises the performance of air-to-air heat pumps. The government is reviewing the building physics model and methodology underpinning EPCs to better support net zero goals, including deployment of heat pumps. Government will shortly set out a consultation with proposals for improvements to EPCs, including proposals for improving EPC metrics.

### ■ Northern Ireland Executive: Carbon Emissions

**Alex Easton:**

**[9332]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he plans to take steps to support the Northern Ireland Executive to meet their net zero obligations.

**Kerry McCarthy:**

Collaboration between the UK Government and Devolved Governments is essential to accelerate Net Zero and deliver the Clean Energy Superpower Mission. The Government is working closely with governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to help work towards delivery of our respective climate targets and carbon budgets and Ministers from this department and the Devolved Governments met on 17 October in Edinburgh to discuss this.

### ■ Offshore Industry: Renewable Energy

**Tom Hayes:**

**[9024]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to encourage offshore oil and gas companies to (a) transition from fossil fuels and (b) increase their level and proportion of investment in renewable carbon energy sources.

**Michael Shanks:**

Making Britain a clean energy superpower is one of the five missions of this Government, and oil and gas companies will have an important role to play in the transition.

We have begun the biggest ever investment in offshore wind and are moving ahead with new industries including carbon capture and storage, and hydrogen which will attract further private investment.

Great British Energy will play a key role in driving the private investment needed to deliver our mission, acting as a partner to industry by co-investing in leading technologies of the future.

### ■ **Solar Power: Rural Areas**

**Layla Moran:**

[\[8848\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that rural communities benefit from hosting ground-mounted solar farm infrastructure on agricultural land.

**Michael Shanks:**

The Government is committed to ensuring that where communities host clean energy infrastructure, such as solar farms, they directly benefit from it. The relaunched Solar Taskforce, which will set out how Government and industry can radically increase the level of solar deployment required by 2030, is considering how best to ensure that communities receive appropriate benefits. Its recommendations will be made in a Solar Roadmap, due to be published shortly.

## ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

### ■ **Agriculture: Sewage**

**Dr Simon Opher:**

[\[9802\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make it his policy to move the regulation of sludge used on agricultural land from the Sludge (Use in Agriculture) Regulations 1989 into the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016, as outlined in the Environment Agency strategy for safe and sustainable sludge use.

**Emma Hardy:**

The Government is working with the Environment Agency to assess the regulatory framework for sludge. We recognise the importance of improving the regulatory framework, however, further work is required before any proposal for change may be progressed.

### ■ **Bottles: Recycling**

**Sarah Gibson:**

[\[8938\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the (a) effectiveness of the Pfand recycling system in Germany and (b) potential merits of adopting a similar approach in the UK.

**Mary Creagh:**

Defra officials have worked closely with international partners to learn lessons and consider best practice when developing the scheme design of the Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) in the UK. This includes teach-ins with the German scheme administrator, as well as a visit earlier this year to observe the recycling system in Germany.

This Government remains committed to delivering the DRS for drinks containers in October 2027, as agreed with the devolved Governments of the UK, and in accordance with the Joint Policy Statement published in April 2024.

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

**■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs****Charlie Dewhirst:**[\[9346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what meetings (a) Ministers and (b) his officials have held with external stakeholders since 5 July 2024.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

Details of ministers' and senior officials' meetings with external individuals and organisations are published quarterly in arrears on GOV.UK. Data for the period of July to September 2024 will be published in due course.

**■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Official Cars****Charlie Dewhirst:**[\[7016\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, 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.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

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.

Defra is currently allocated two vehicles including allocated and shared vehicles. For security reasons specific details of allocations including make and model of vehicles are not issued.

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

**■ Dogs: Animal Breeding****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[9211\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the impact of Canine Fertility Clinics on the number of dogs from the brachycephalic breeds.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

Defra does not hold the requested information. However, to understand the impact of dog breeding activities, including canine fertility businesses, on individual and overall breed health and welfare, Defra has commissioned an opinion from the Animal Welfare Committee. The opinion will be published in due course.

**■ Dogs: Brucellosis****Freddie van Mierlo:**[\[9303\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help prevent the spread of *Brucella canis*.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

The Government takes biosecurity seriously and has taken steps to mitigate the risk of *Brucella canis*. Disease risk is monitored carefully and is kept under regular review.

Defra made detection of *Brucella canis* in dogs reportable in April 2021. The Department has also published information for veterinary professionals and pet owners and has worked with stakeholders to disseminate advice and recommended actions to veterinary surgeons, rescue and rehoming organisations and dog breeding associations. Where necessary Defra have the powers in legislation to introduce preventive health measures to protect animal or public health by controlling diseases or infections that are likely to be spread due to the movement of pet animals into Great Britain.

Defra will continue to monitor and consider any further actions as appropriate.

**■ Domestic Waste: Recycling****Dame Caroline Dinéage:**[\[8796\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 10 September 2024 to Question 5225 on Domestic Waste: Waste Disposal, whether Ministers have completed the review of final policy positions relating to Simpler Recycling.

**Mary Creagh:**

The review is still under way however the Department is aware of the urgent need for certainty for stakeholders, and we hope to provide further clarity as soon as possible.



## ■ Import Controls

**Mike Reader:** [\[9318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the efficiency of the operation of the Border Target Operating Model since it was introduced.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

The first milestone - health certificates - happened on 31 January 2024. Physical and documentary checks began on April 30th. Medium and high-risk goods posing the greatest biosecurity risk are being prioritised as check levels are scaled up in a sensible and controlled way.

The controls introduced under the Border Target Operating Model (BTOM) protect the country from biosecurity threats. We continue to monitor and review the impact of controls introduced under the BTOM. We are seeing regular instances of biosecurity threats being intercepted or prevented from entering the country. Meanwhile we are working closely with industry, trade partners and enforcement agencies to minimise disruption and costs to trade, and to ensure checks are completed efficiently. We are not seeing any routine queues or delays.

**Mike Reader:** [\[9319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to publish the timetable for scaling up physical checks under the Border Target Operating Model to the full regime.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

Our checks are intelligence-led and based on biosecurity risk. To protect the integrity of this approach, we cannot share operational details, including the exact timelines for scaling up checks.

Traders should continue to follow the published guidance which sets out Border Target Operating Model inspection rates. However, we continually review our enforcement approach, and are seeing generally good rates of compliance, and are continuing to push towards a fully enforced regime.

## ■ Pets: Animal Housing

**Tim Farron:** [\[8785\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the number of places available for dogs and cats at Animal and Plant Health Agency licensed quarantine kennel and cattery facilities.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

The number of quarantine kennels and cattery facilities is kept under constant review to ensure there is sufficient quarantine provision to preserve our high animal health and biosecurity standards.



**Tim Farron:** [8787]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the inspection regime is for premises licensed by the Animal and Plant Health Agency to operate as quarantine facilities.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

Quarantine kennels are subject to annual authorisation by the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) for the first two years of establishment approval and authorisation every two years thereafter.

Before granting a quarantine kennel licence, APHA inspects the premises. The premises must meet standard requirements for the design, construction, operation and management of a quarantine facility to ensure that full rabies security is maintained and must also meet specific welfare requirements.

Every premises is overseen by a veterinary superintendent (VS) who oversees the health and welfare of the animals in the establishment's care. The VS must visit the premises every week and submit a monthly report on the facility to APHA.

APHA field vets also inspect the quarantine kennel every three months to ensure the health and welfare of the occupants is satisfactory.

**Tim Farron:** [8788]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to his Department's statutory guidance entitled Dog kennel boarding licensing: statutory guidance for local authorities, updated on 1 June 2024, how many licensed kennels and catteries inspected by local authorities did not meet minimum requirements in the latest period for which data is available.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

Under the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018 there are no statutory requirements for local authorities to provide Defra with information on the number of licensed businesses who do not meet minimum requirements.

Local authorities are required to provide an annual return detailing the number of licences in force on 1st April each year, and the average fees associated with the grant or renewal of each licence in the preceding year. Some local authorities have provided additional information about suspended, refused or revoked licences. Data from the annual return is published by Defra and can be found here: [Local Authority Licensing of Activities involving Animals returns - data.gov.uk](https://data.gov.uk/dataset/local-authority-licensing-of-activities-involving-animals-returns).

## ■ **Plastics: Waste**

**Afzal Khan:** [8852]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with his counterparts in (a) France, (b) Germany and (c) Sweden on reducing plastic waste.

**Mary Creagh:**

The Secretary of State has not held discussions on plastic waste with his counterparts in France, Germany, and Sweden. However, officials have had discussions with their counterparts in other countries to learn lessons on tackling waste, including plastic waste. For instance, officials have had discussions with the German Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) administrator to assist in developing the DRS in the UK.

■ **River Mole: Sewage****Dr Ben Spencer:**[\[9571\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the (a) adequacy of improvements to sewage works discharging into the river Mole and (b) extent of further work needed to reduce storm overflows from those sites.

**Emma Hardy:**

The Environment Agency (EA) has 31 Water Industry National Environment Programme (WINEP) schemes in the current investment period 2020-25. These cover the Mole catchment as a whole.

The schemes involve a range of actions including increasing storm tank capacity, investigations at Sewage Treatment Works in the catchment and monitoring. These schemes are on target to be completed by the end of the year and will be reviewed by the EA.

■ **River Ravensbourne: Sewage****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[8766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, for how many hours raw sewage was discharged into the River Ravensbourne in the London Borough of Havering in the first nine months of 2024.

**Emma Hardy:**

There are no Combined Sewer Overflows or Sewage Treatment Works on the River Ravensbourne, meaning that no raw sewage has been discharged into the river from these types of assets.

However, the Environment Agency (EA) is aware of the issue of potential misconnections resulting in pollution discharges from private residences within the Ravensbourne area. Its area team will be investigating this matter further.

Thames Water provide [data on storm overflow discharges data on storm overflow discharges](#) in near real time on their website for their assets. The EA will publish the 2024 Event Duration Monitoring data, showing how long and how often storm overflows have been used, in March 2025. The data for previous years is available [here](#).

The Government's Water (Special Measures) Bill will require independent event duration monitoring of all sewage outlets, to support greater scrutiny of water company activity.

#### ■ River Thames: Flood Control

**Dr Ben Spencer:** [\[9778\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the impact of the condition of flood risk assets along the non-tidal Thames on flood risk in that area.

**Dr Ben Spencer:** [\[9779\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what proportion of (a) flood risk and (b) primary navigation assets along the non-tidal Thames that are below their target condition lie within the Runnymede and Weybridge constituency.

**Dr Ben Spencer:** [\[9781\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the Environment Agency's performance on flood risk asset management along the non-tidal Thames; and what discussions he has had with that agency on improving its performance.

**Emma Hardy:**

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

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

There are currently no flood risk assets on the River Thames within the Runnymede and Weybridge constituency. However, the Maidenhead, Windsor and Eton Flood Alleviation scheme (MWEFAS) reduces impacts of Thames flooding. Assessments carried out post-flooding showed that it performed as designed.

Approximately 7% of primary purpose navigation assets below required condition are within Runnymede and Weybridge constituency. Where assets are not at required condition, this identifies that work is needed. It doesn't present a risk of failure, or compromise performance in a flood, because mitigation measures are put in place such as more frequent inspections by the Environment Agency (EA).

Defra ministers regularly meet with EA leadership to discuss its performance and delivery of departmental priorities.

## ■ River Thames: Infrastructure

**Dr Ben Spencer:**

[\[9777\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the (a) ability of river users to safely navigate the Thames river and (b) potential economic impact of the proportion of navigation assets along the non-tidal Thames that are below their target condition.

**Emma Hardy:**

(a) The safety of river users navigating the non-tidal Thames is a priority for the Environment Agency (EA), although it remains the responsibility of the master of their vessel to ensure the safety of it and everyone on board. The EA have measures in place to ensure the safety of river users which include regular inspections and maintenance of assets, marking obstructions and hazards in the channel. The hydraulic locks on the Thames also have a 'public power' setting which reduces the speed that the locks fills or empties, to ensure that they can be safely operated by the public when there is no Lock & Weir Keeper on duty.

(b) The EA engages regularly with businesses operating on the River Thames. The EA is developing a strategic management plan for assets on its navigable waterways. This plan looks to set out the performance of its assets and identify the investment required to maintain these assets to deliver that performance at an acceptable level of risk. Although some assets are currently classed as below required condition this does not necessarily mean they are inoperable.

## ■ River Thames: Reading

**Sarah Olney:**

[\[8843\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will publish the Environment Agency's modelling of average (a) daily and (b) monthly volumetric river flow rates for each gauging station on the Thames from Reading to Kingston for drought events that are (i) 1 in 100, (ii) 1 in 200 and (iii) 1 in 500 years.

**Emma Hardy:**

The Environment Agency (EA) does not model flow at gauging stations using drought event return periods. The modelling of flow under a range of climate scenarios is carried out as part of planning by water companies to assess how resilient their supply systems are to droughts. This assessment is set out in their statutory Water Resources Management Plans (WRMP) and Drought Plans.

Thames Water have worked with Water Resources South East (WRSE) regional group to model flow under a range of climate scenarios as a component of regional system simulation modelling which informs their WRMP.

The EA is a statutory consultee for water company WRMPs and reviews the technical analysis undertaken by water companies showing how secure supplies are now (known as the baseline) and what actions are needed to ensure secure supplies in the future.

The EA has reviewed Thames Water's latest draft WRMP and is satisfied with the company's evidence provided alongside its latest draft WRMP.

I attended the National Drought Group meeting earlier this month on Wednesday 16 October 2024 where I outlined the pressure climate change is having on our water system and that we need to be prepared for all eventualities. This Government is taking decisive action to improve the resilience of our precious water supplies.

For more information on water resource system modelling completed on behalf of Thames Water see the following links:

[wrse-hydrological-modelling-method-statement-november-2022.pdf](#)

[method-statement-regional-simulation-model-aug-2021.pdf](#).

## ■ River Thames: Reservoirs

**Sarah Olney:**

**[8844]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will publish the Environment Agency's modelling of the average (a) daily and (b) monthly percentage of (i) usable and (ii) deployable capacity in each of the (A) Lower Lee Group and (B) Lower Thames Group reservoirs for drought events that are (1) 1 in 100, (2) 1 in 200 and (3) 1 in 500 years.

**Emma Hardy:**

The Environment Agency (EA) does not model how resilient water company owned supply systems are to drought. It is the responsibility of the water companies to ensure that their systems can deliver secure water supplies for customers whilst ensuring they meet their environmental obligations and legal requirements during a drought.

Every 5 years, water companies are required to evidence in their statutory Water Resources Management Plans (WRMP) how they will ensure secure supplies for the next 25 years. This includes consideration of resilience to extreme droughts, population growth, climate change and environmental water needs.

The EA is a statutory consultee for water company WRMPs and reviews the technical analysis undertaken by water companies showing how secure supplies are now (known as the baseline) and what actions are needed to ensure secure supplies in the future. The EA has reviewed Thames Water's latest draft WRMP and is satisfied with the company's evidence provided alongside its latest draft WRMP.

I attended the National Drought Group meeting earlier this month on Wednesday 16 October 2024 where I outlined the pressure climate change is having on our water system and that we need to be prepared for all eventualities. This Government is taking decisive action to improve the resilience of our precious water supplies.

For more information on water resource system modelling completed on behalf of Thames Water see the following links:

[Library | WRSE - Water Resource South East](#)

[method-statement-regional-simulation-model-aug-2021.pdf \(wrse.org.uk\)](#)

## ■ Supermarkets: Supply Chains

**Victoria Collins:** [8962]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a Grocery Supply Code of Practice for all (a) upstream and (b) mid-supply chain businesses.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

The Groceries Supply Code of Practice covers direct suppliers to large retailers in the UK and was introduced after a competition investigation into the grocery retail sector.

Power imbalances between trading businesses can make smaller parties susceptible to unfair trading practices.

At the production end of the supply chain, powers in the Agriculture Act allow us to introduce 'Fair Dealings' Regulations, applying to businesses when purchasing agricultural products from farmers. Such regulations have been introduced to cover the UK dairy sector.

We will continue to monitor the supply chain and can intervene where there is evidence of unfair behaviour.

The Government will deliver a resilient and healthy food system, with a new deal that ensures fairness in the supply chain across all sectors.

## ■ Thames Water

**Dr Ben Spencer:** [9780]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the performance standards he expects Thames Water to meet in response to a sewer flooding incident.

**Emma Hardy:**

The Environment Agency expects water and sewerage companies to take all possible measures to avoid pollution incidents and to mitigate environmental impact if they occur.

Thames Water's current performance on pollution incidents is unacceptable and the company needs to increase the scale and pace of action set out in its Pollution Incident Reduction Plan.

## ■ UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland

**Alex Burghart:** [9201]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to paragraph 43(m) of the publication entitled Safeguarding the Union, published on 31 January 2024, what progress his Department has made on developing legislative proposals to confirm the application of the Windsor Framework labelling requirements across the UK.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

The Government confirmed at the end of September that we would no longer proceed with the introduction of mandatory GB-wide 'not for EU' labelling from the beginning of October 2024, as originally proposed. We will put in place the legislative powers necessary to apply labelling requirements across Great Britain in a targeted way, should that be needed to safeguard the supply of supermarket supplies into Northern Ireland. We will set out further details in due course and will not hesitate to intervene if necessary to support Northern Ireland's place in the UK internal market.

**Water: Conservation**

**Adam Joge:** [\[9043\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the cost to the public purse has been of developing a new water efficiency labelling scheme; and if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of mandating the use of existing labels that comply with ISO31600 as an alternative.

**Adam Joge:** [\[9045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has had discussions with domestic manufacturers on complying with dual labelling requirements for water efficiency in the UK and EU; and if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of aligning new labelling requirements with existing international standards.

**Adam Joge:** [\[9046\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to mandate the display of water efficiency labels for products such as taps and showers; and if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of accepting the Unified Water Label as a route to comply.

**Emma Hardy:**

On 5 September the Secretary of State reaffirmed the Government's intention to rollout a Mandatory Water Efficiency Label (MWEL). We will introduce the MWEL in the UK via [Secondary Legislation under Section 52 and Schedule 6 of the Environment Act 2021](#). The label will be informed by the international standard ISO's 31600:2022.

We are working with the Environment Agency to engage manufacturers and other stakeholders to keep them informed about the regulations as they develop.



**FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]****David Taylor:**[\[900793\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the level of Official Development Assistance spending on refugee costs in the UK.

**Anneliese Dodds:**

My Rt Hon. Friend the Home Secretary is committed to bringing order to the asylum system and has taken steps to unblock the backlog of claims. Official Development Assistance spending on demand-driven refugee costs is within international rules set by the OECD's Development Assistance Committee. My Rt Hon. Friend the Chancellor will set out the Government's spending plans, including ODA, at the Budget.

**Jayne Kirkham:**[\[900799\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking with Cabinet colleagues to encourage international investment into the UK.

**Anneliese Dodds:**

Growth is this government's top priority. Working together with my Cabinet colleagues, I am determined to use our diplomatic and trade networks to attract inward investment and demonstrate the UK is open for business. At the International Investment Summit on 14 October international investors committed to £63 billion of investment into the UK.

**Imran Hussain:**[\[900800\]](#)

What steps he is taking to support the International Criminal Court investigation into the situation in the state of Palestine.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The UK is fully committed to international law. We respect the independence of the International Criminal Court, and respect their independence in investigating the situation in Israel and the OPTs. UK practical support to the ICC includes: witness protection; sentence enforcement; commitment to the ICC's reform process; and secondment of staff. The UK is also one of the Court's major funders, providing support of £13.2 mill to the ICC's annual (2024) budget. This Government is clear that International Humanitarian Law must be upheld, and civilians protected.

**Naz Shah:**[\[900805\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion on the legal consequences arising from the policies and practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem.



**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The UK is fully committed to international law and fully respects the independence of the International Court of Justice. We continue to consider the Court's Advisory Opinion carefully. We do not disagree with the central findings of the Court's Advisory Opinion. We are of the clear view that Israel should bring an end to its presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territories as rapidly as possible – but we are clear that every effort must be made to create the conditions for negotiations towards the two-state solution. Our commitment to a two-state solution is unwavering. The UK abstained on the UN General Assembly resolution in September because it did not provide sufficient clarity to advance a negotiated two-state solution.

**Edward Morello:**[\[900806\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he is taking steps to represent the interests of British farmers in global food security discussions.

**Anneliese Dodds:**

Investment in global food security supports stable, sustainable and resilient global food markets to the benefit of British farmers, exporters, and consumers. For example, for each £1 the UK invests in CGIAR, the world's leading agricultural science and innovation organisation, UK farmers receive between £1.60 and £2.40 in benefits driven by increased UK productivity in the production of wheat, dairy, beef and pulses.

■ **Alaa Abd El-Fattah****David Davis:**[\[9415\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of issuing sanctions on individuals associated with the detention of Alaa Abd El-Fattah in Egypt.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

We remain committed to securing Mr Alaa Abd El-Fattah's release. We raise his case at the highest levels. The Prime Minister did so with President Sisi on 8 August, the Foreign Secretary with Foreign Minister Abdelatty on 7 October and myself with Foreign Minister Abdelatty on 15 October. Our approach to the case is under regular review. It is not appropriate to speculate on possible future designations.

■ **Azerbaijan: Human Rights****Clive Lewis:**[\[8836\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help protect human rights defenders in Azerbaijan ahead of COP29.

**Stephen Doughty:**

Along with our international partners, the UK continues to urge Azerbaijan to improve human rights protections for all its citizens; Azerbaijan's hosting of COP29 in

November provides the country with an opportunity to demonstrate meaningful action in this regard. We remain concerned at the increased number of detentions of independent journalists, human rights defenders and civil society representatives over the last year. We are clear that freedom of expression is the foundation of an open, pluralistic society, and must be respected. British Embassy Baku regularly raises our concerns with the Azerbaijani authorities at senior levels, including ahead of COP29.

### ■ **British Indian Ocean Territory: Sovereignty**

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[9140\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the timescale is for implementing the agreement with Mauritius on sovereignty of the British Indian Ocean Territory.

**Stephen Doughty:**

The Agreement is subject to the finalisation of a treaty, which both sides have committed to complete as quickly as possible. After signature, the treaty is required to be ratified by both the UK and Mauritius before entry into force. Parliament will have the opportunity to scrutinise the detail of the Treaty prior to ratification, in the usual way.

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[9141\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his US counterpart on the British Indian Ocean Territory.

**Stephen Doughty:**

The Foreign Secretary is in regular contact with Secretary Blinken on a range of issues, including the British Indian Ocean Territory / Chagos Archipelago. The agreement on the exercise of sovereignty over the archipelago is strongly supported by our partners, including the US. President Biden, Secretary Blinken and Secretary Austin all released statements shortly after the announcement praising the deal for securing the operational future of the joint US-UK facility on Diego Garcia.

**Alicia Kearns:**

[\[9640\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 16 October 2024 to Question 7857 on British Indian Ocean Territory: Sovereignty, how much funding he plans to allocate to that new trust fund.

**Stephen Doughty:**

We recognise the importance of the British Indian Ocean Territory / Chagos Archipelago to Chagossians and we have worked to ensure this agreement reflects their interests. The government will endeavour to provide Parliament with appropriate details about the new trust fund for Mauritius in support of Chagossians, including additional support for Chagossians in the UK when the Treaty is laid before Parliament.

**■ Canada: Hinduism****Laura Kyrke-Smith:** [\[9109\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made representations to his Canadian counterpart on reports of anti-Hindu hatred in that country.

**Stephen Doughty:**

The Foreign Secretary and Foreign Minister Joly engage regularly on a wide range of topics. They last spoke on 15 October. The UK will continue to work with its partners to tackle all forms of extremism to ensure the safety of our communities. We are clear that incitement of violence or hatred against individuals based on their religion or belief is unacceptable.

**■ Chelsea Football Club****Mr Gregory Campbell:** [\[9418\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Answer of 18 March 2024 to Question 18399 on Chelsea Football Club, what his planned timetable is to establish a foundation to (a) manage and (b) distribute the money from the sale of Chelsea FC.

**Stephen Doughty:**

Independent experts outside of Government are leading the establishment of the new charitable foundation to manage and distribute the proceeds from the sale of Chelsea FC. UK officials continue to hold discussions with Mr Abramovich's representatives, experts and international partners, and we are doubling down on our efforts to ensure the money reaches humanitarian causes in Ukraine as quickly as possible.

**■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Arden Strategies****Sir John Hayes:** [\[8629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether Ministers in his Department have met with representatives of Arden Strategies since 5 July 2024.

**Catherine West:**

No FCDO Minister has met with representatives of Arden Strategies since 5 July 2024.

**■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Correspondence****Mr Andrew Mitchell:** [\[8633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Point of Order of the Rt hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield of 8 October 2024, Official Report, column 163, when he plans to respond to the correspondence of 6 September 2024 from Lord Howard of Lympne.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

We are grateful to the Honourable member for bringing this matter to our attention. We apologise for the delay. A response will be issued in due course.

■ **Georgia: Human Rights****Jim Shannon:**[\[8828\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had discussions with his Georgian counterpart on human rights in that country.

**Stephen Doughty:**

I [Minister Doughty] spoke with Georgian Foreign Minister Darchiashvili on 9 October. I shared with him my deep concerns about the negative implications of Georgia's recent laws on *Transparency and Foreign Influence* and on *Family Values*. The pressures being applied to civil society and on human rights protections undermine the Georgian people's ambition for a modern, inclusive, Euro-Atlantic future. More needs to be done to embed Georgia's previous impressive progress - on combating corruption, improving prison conditions, and launching a human rights strategy - into reforms that enhance judicial independence and political freedoms, and protect minority rights.

■ **Ghana: Christianity****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[8768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help protect Christians from persecution in Ghana.

**Anneliese Dodds:**

The UK champions freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) for all abroad; no one should live in fear because of what they do or do not believe in. We work to uphold the right to FoRB through our position at the UN, G7 and other multilateral fora and in our important bilateral work. Religious beliefs and practices permeate all aspects of Ghanaian life and Ghana's Constitution provides a framework which guarantees the liberty for all citizens to be free to believe and manifest any religious faith. FCDO is not aware of any cases of Christian persecution in Ghana.

■ **Gubad Ibadoghlu****Sir Iain Duncan Smith:**[\[9396\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made recent representations to his Azerbaijani counterpart on the detention of Dr Gubad Ibadoghlu; and if he will take steps to secure his immediate release on humanitarian grounds.

**Stephen Doughty:**

Since Dr Gubad Ibadoghlu's arrest in July 2023, the UK has consistently advocated for the right to a fair legal process and appropriate medical access, including

permission for temporary leave from Azerbaijan to receive specialist medical care abroad, if required. The UK has consistently called on the Azerbaijani Government to protect the human rights and freedoms of all its citizens, and we will continue to work to ensure Dr Ibadoghlu's rights are upheld.

#### ■ Israel: Arms Trade

**Tracy Gilbert:**

[\[9378\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to his oral statement of 2 September 2024 on Middle East Update, Official Report, column 37, whether his Department has undertaken a further review of export licenses.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

Export licence applications continue to be assessed on a case-by-case basis against the Strategic Export Licensing Criteria. The UK's robust export licensing criteria state that the Government will not issue export licences if there is a *clear risk* that the items might be used to commit or facilitate serious violations of International Humanitarian Law (IHL). Following our review into Israel's compliance with IHL in Gaza, this Government has concluded that a *clear risk does exist*, and we have suspended certain export licences for items that could be used in the current conflict in Gaza.

#### ■ Israel: Sanctions

**Brendan O'Hara:**

[\[9469\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he (a) has made an assessment and (b) plans to make an assessment of the potential merits of imposing sanctions on individual members of the Israeli cabinet.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The UK government condemns the unacceptable language that has been used by Israeli ministers Smotrich and Ben-Gvir. Israel should condemn this language and clamp down on the actions of those who seek to inflame tensions. The UK government does not speculate about possible future sanctions designations, as to do so could reduce their impact.

#### ■ Moldova: Russia

**Blair McDougall:**

[\[9032\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assistance he is providing to the Republic of Moldova against potential Russian aggression.

**Stephen Doughty:**

During my visit to Chisinau on 16-17 September, I represented the UK at the Moldova Partnership Platform and met President Sandu, Deputy Prime Minister Popsoi and Defence Minister Nosatii to reaffirm the UK's strong support for Moldova in the face of Russian hybrid aggression. This year alone, the UK is providing £27 million of

humanitarian, development and defence support to Moldova, including £4.3 million through the Good Governance Fund to strengthen Moldova's capacity to respond to threats. In September, I announced that at least £8 million of our humanitarian support to Ukraine would be used in interventions in Moldova.

### ■ Transcaucasus: Human Rights

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[9174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of (a) human rights conditions and (b) respect for international law in the South Caucasus.

**Stephen Doughty:**

Long-term human rights concerns persist across the whole South Caucasus region. The UK Government regularly raises human rights obligations and commitments with the Governments of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, as well as discussing such matters with international counterparts. For example, I [Minister Doughty] spoke to Georgian Foreign Minister Darchiashvili on 9 October. I shared with him my deep concerns about the negative implications of Georgia's recent laws on Transparency and Foreign Influence and on Family Values and highlighted our concerns regarding the pressures being applied to civil society which undermine the Georgian people's ambition for a modern, inclusive and Euro-Atlantic future.

### ■ Turkey: Churches

**Sammy Wilson:**

[\[9421\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of church closures without provision for an alternative place of worship in Turkey; and if he will make representations to his Turkish counterpart on those closures.

**Stephen Doughty:**

Freedom of religion or belief is a priority for the FCDO. It is a fundamental right that we regularly discuss with the Turkish authorities. The Turkish government has repeatedly stated its support for the operation of churches and the religious houses of all faiths in Türkiye. In our engagement with Türkiye, we will continue to engage on these issues and to urge respect for religious freedoms, which are essential to the long-term health of Turkish democracy.

### ■ UN Interim Force in Lebanon: Hezbollah

**Mr Gregory Campbell:**

[\[9696\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will hold discussions with his UN counterparts on allegations that United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) officials were aware of Hezbollah activity in close proximity to UNIFIL bases in southern Lebanon.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The Government supports the essential role played by UNIFIL in southern Lebanon and recognises that the mission is working in difficult circumstances. In a call on 16 October with the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, the Foreign Secretary discussed concern at UNIFIL not being able to access all relevant locations north of the de-facto border between Lebanon and Israel and called for all parties to ensure freedom of movement for UNIFIL personnel. We continue to speak with counterparts from the UN on a range of issues related to the on-going conflict. The Government will continue to underscore the importance of the UN in resolving armed conflict and mitigating the humanitarian impact.

**HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE****■ Adrenaline Auto-injectors: Schools****Daisy Cooper:**[\[9221\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of permitting GPs to prescribe a third epi pen to school children with severe allergies when school policies require them to leave one of the two provided by the NHS on the school premises during term time.

**Karin Smyth:**

Clinicians are responsible for making prescribing decisions for their patients and, where appropriate, can prescribe the number of EpiPens needed, taking into account best practice, the patient's needs, and any local or national guidance. There are already some children in England with severe allergies who have four EpiPens prescribed to them, two for use at home, and two for use at school.

**■ Air Pollution: Poverty****Mary Glendon:**[\[9455\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the impact of air pollution on neighbourhoods with high levels of poverty.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

Although air pollution can be harmful to everyone, some people are more affected because they live in a polluted area, are exposed to higher levels of air pollution in their day-to-day lives, or are more susceptible to health problems caused by air pollution, such as cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, lung cancer, and a shortened life expectancy.

There is clear evidence that people with a low income are affected by air pollution in a number of different ways. The disadvantages that come about as a result of poor income add up, with deprived populations who are more likely to be in poor health, and are at greater risk from air pollution and its adverse health impacts. These inequalities can affect people throughout their lives, from the prenatal stage through



to old age, particularly as deprived communities often have limited opportunities to improve their environment. Further information on pollution is available at the following link:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1124738/chief-medical-officers-annual-report-air-pollution-dec-2022.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1124738/chief-medical-officers-annual-report-air-pollution-dec-2022.pdf)

A 2021 study by the UK Health Security Agency found that one-third of the schools in England were in areas exceeding World Health Organisation guidelines for fine particulate matter (PM2.5) concentrations. Schools with higher annual mean PM2.5 concentrations are more likely to have a high deprived pupil intake and be in neighbourhoods with high levels of child income deprivation compounding existing socioeconomic disadvantages.

### ■ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: North Down

**Alex Easton:**

**[8909]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what can be done to reduce waiting times for patients referred for ADHD assessments in North Down constituency.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

As health is a devolved matter, each administration of the United Kingdom takes its own decisions on the provision of assessments for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

**Alex Easton:**

**[8910]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what can be done to address the shortage and delays obtaining ADHD medications in North Down constituency.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Department monitors and manages medicine supply at a national level so that stocks remain available to meet regional and local demand. Information for the North Down constituency is a matter for the devolved government in Northern Ireland.

The Department has been working hard with industry, the devolved administrations, and NHS England to help resolve the supply issues with some attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) medicines, which are affecting the United Kingdom and other countries around the world. As a result of intensive work, some issues have been resolved, and all strengths of lisdexamfetamine, atomoxetine capsules, and guanfacine prolonged-release tablets are now available.

We are continuing to work to resolve supply issues, where they remain, for methylphenidate prolonged-release tablets. We are engaging with all suppliers of methylphenidate prolonged-release tablets to assess the challenges faced and their actions to address them. We are also directing suppliers to secure additional stocks, expedite deliveries where possible, and review plans to further build capacity to support continued growth in demand for the short and long-term. We anticipate intermittent regional supply disruptions to continue, and we expect supply to improve in the UK from October 2024 onwards.



In parallel, the Department has worked with specialist clinicians, including those within the National Health Service, to develop management advice for NHS clinicians to consider prescribing available alternative brands of methylphenidate prolonged release tablets or available alternative ADHD medicines. We would expect ADHD service providers and specialists to follow our guidance, which includes offering rapid response to primary care teams seeking urgent advice or opinions for the management of patients, including those known to be at a higher risk of adverse impact because of these shortages.

To aid ADHD service providers and prescribers further we have widely disseminated our communications and continually update a list of currently available and unavailable ADHD products on the Specialist Pharmacy Service website, helping ensure that those involved in the prescribing and dispensing of ADHD medications can make informed decisions with patients.

## ■ **Audiology: Children**

**James Wild:**

[9232]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential economic benefit for the (a) NHS and (b) wider economy of investment in training the public sector workforce to increase access to Auditory Verbal therapy for young deaf children.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave to the Hon. Member for Washington and Gateshead South on 14 October 2024 to [Question 5963](#).

## ■ **Brain: Tumours**

**David Simmonds:**

[9022]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with representatives of the pharmaceutical industry on access to clinical trials for brain tumour patients.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The Department is committed to working with the pharmaceutical industry to implement the recommendations of Lord O'Shaughnessy's review into commercial clinical trials, maximising our potential to be a world leader in clinical trials.

The current programme governance groups overseeing the delivery on the recommendations of Lord O'Shaughnessy's review, including improving access to clinical trials across the United Kingdom, includes representatives from the pharmaceutical industry and across the clinical research sector.

Through this programme, the Department is committed to working with the pharmaceutical industry to develop a more efficient, more competitive, and more accessible clinical research system in the UK, ensuring that all patients, including those with brain tumours, have access to cutting-edge clinical research and innovative, lifesaving treatments.

**David Simmonds:** [\[9023\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support (a) adult and (b) paediatric brain tumour patients with a terminal diagnosis to find and participate in clinical trials.

**David Simmonds:** [\[9025\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of providing brain tumour patients access to clinical trials.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

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

The Department funds research and research infrastructure, which supports brain tumour patients and the public to participate in high-quality research, through the National Institute of Health and Care Research (NIHR).

In September 2024, the NIHR announced a new approach to transform the outcomes for patients and their families who are living with brain tumours, ultimately reducing the lives lost to cancer, with a new national Brain Tumour Research Consortium, a new research funding call, and a new Tessa Jowell Allied Health Professional research fellowship.

## ■ **Breast Cancer: Medical Treatments**

**Rachel Gilmour:** [\[8732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the introduction of the National Care Institute for Health and Care Excellence severity modifier in 2022 on the (a) appraisal of Enhertu for HER2-low secondary breast cancer and (b) availability of new treatments for secondary breast cancer over the next (i) five, (ii) ten and (iii) twenty years.

**Karin Smyth:**

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is responsible for developing the methods and processes it uses in its evaluations independently, and in consultation with stakeholders. The severity modifier that the NICE introduced in 2022 is based on evidence of societal preferences, and was introduced as part of a comprehensive review of the NICE's methods and processes, following extensive public and stakeholder engagement. The severity modifier was designed to be opportunity cost neutral in relation to the end of life modifier that it replaced, and to apply to a broader range of conditions than had benefited from the end of life modifier.

The NICE was unfortunately unable to recommend Enhertu (trastuzumab deruxtecan) for the treatment of HER2-low secondary breast cancer in its final guidance published in July 2024, despite the topic being awarded a severity weighting. Other drugs for advanced cancer, including breast cancer, have been approved using these methods.

No assessment has been made on the likely impact on appraisals of future breast cancer medicines. However, since its introduction, the severity modifier has resulted in a higher approval rate for cancer medicines than under the NICE's previous methods, and has also allowed greater weight to be applied to non-cancer medicines that address a broader range of severe diseases, enabling the NICE to recommend medicines for conditions such as cystic fibrosis and hepatitis D. The NICE is keeping the impact of the severity modifier under review and is scoping further research into society's preferences on how much additional weighting to give to health benefits for people with severe diseases.

### ■ **Breast Cancer: Screening**

**Ms Julie Minns:**

[\[9562\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people were unable to achieve a successful set of mammograms because (a) they were unable to hold the required position for sufficient time and (b) the mammogram machine was not accessible to wheelchair users in each of the last five years.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

NHS England does not hold this information centrally. However, NHS England is fully committed to modernising the breast screening programme and removing barriers to accessing screening.

### ■ **Cancer: Rural Areas**

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

[\[9187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what measures are in place to support an (a) ageing and (b) isolated population in (i) remote and (ii) rural areas to attend hospital appointments for cancer (A) diagnosis and (B) treatment.

**Karin Smyth:**

NHS England and the integrated care boards are responsible for ensuring healthcare needs of local communities are met. These responsibilities include considering adequate healthcare provision, care, and wider support for local populations, including in remote and rural areas, and for those in the community who have needs linked to ageing and isolation.

There are two National Health Service schemes in England which provide assistance for travel to hospital or other NHS premises for specialist NHS treatment or diagnostics tests, as set out below.

The NHS Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme provides financial assistance to patients in England who do not have a medical need for transport, but who require assistance

with the costs of travelling to receive certain NHS services. The NHS Non-Emergency Patient Transport Services provide funded transport where a medical condition means that a patient would struggle to safely attend their treatment independently.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

[\[9483\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will commission research on potential steps to improve outcomes for cancer patients in rural areas.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

Reducing unwarranted variation in cancer treatment and outcomes is a strategic priority for the NHS Cancer Programme. NHS England commissioned the Royal College of Surgeons to deliver 10 cancer clinical audits. Outcomes from the audits will support the National Health Service to increase the consistency of access to treatments and help guide quality improvement initiatives. Officials within the Department and NHS England are in the process of considering the audit's findings and next steps.

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

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

## ■ Cancer: Waiting Lists

**Andrew Cooper:**

[\[9370\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve waiting times for cancer treatment in (a) Mid Cheshire constituency, (b) Cheshire and (c) England.

**Karin Smyth:**

*[Holding answer 21 October 2024]:* The Government is committed to improving cancer survival rates and hitting all National Health Service cancer waiting time targets within five years, so that no patient waits longer than they should.

NHS England and the integrated care boards are responsible for commissioning and ensuring the healthcare needs of local communities in England are met, including for cancer patients. The Department is working with NHS England to deliver interventions to improve outcomes for those with cancer across England, including in Cheshire.

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.

### ■ Charing Cross Hospital: Construction

**Ben Coleman:** [9865]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much funding his Department provided for the rebuild and modernisation of Charing Cross Hospital by the end of the 2023-24 financial year.

**Ben Coleman:** [9866]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his department has made of the cost of the scheme to (a) rebuild and (b) modernise Charing Cross Hospital.

**Ben Coleman:** [9867]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much funding had been allocated for (a) the scheme to (i) rebuild and (ii) modernise Charing Cross Hospital and (b) the New Hospital Programme by 2 July 2024.

**Ben Coleman:** [9868]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the (a) business case status and (b) RIBA stage is for the scheme to (i) rebuild and (ii) modernise Charing Cross Hospital as part of the New Hospital Programme.

#### **Karin Smyth:**

The standard process confirming the total funding amount for major infrastructure projects involves the review and approval of a Full Business Case. All trusts in the programme have previously received indicative funding allocations to support planning, however these are commercially sensitive. The New Hospital Programme had confirmed £3.7 billion in funding up to the end of 2024/25.

Up to the end of 2023/24, the total amount received by the Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust in funding for their new hospital schemes is £13 million. The trust has two schemes in the New Hospital Programme, for the Charing Cross Hospital and Hammersmith Hospital, as well as the scheme for St Mary's Hospital. Up to the end of 2023/24 funding allocated to the trust was not separated by the individual schemes.

The breakdown of how much the trust received for their new hospital scheme is published annually as part of the Department's Annual Reports and Accounts, with Public Dividend Capital to individual trusts included in the Financial Assistance Report under section 40 of the National Health Service Act 2006. The 2022/23 report is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dhsc-annual-report-and-accounts-2022-to-2023>

The trust is currently developing their Strategic Outline Case for the Charing Cross Hospital and Hammersmith Hospital scheme, and is at Royal Institute of British Architects Stage 0.

### ■ Chronic Fatigue Syndrome: Research

**Dr Ben Spencer:**

[\[8477\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has had discussions with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence on reviewing guidance for the (a) diagnosis, (b) care and (b) treatment of myalgic encephalomyelitis or chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS).

**Karin Smyth:**

*[Holding answer 17 October 2024]:* We have had no discussions with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) on reviewing its guidance for the diagnosis, care, and treatment of myalgic encephalomyelitis, also known as chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS).

The NICE develops its guidance independently and keeps its published guidelines under active surveillance so that it is able to update its recommendations in light of any significant new evidence. Decisions on updates to existing guidance are made by the NICE's Prioritisation Board in line with the NICE's published common prioritisation framework. The NICE does not currently have plans to update this guideline.

### ■ Chronic Illnesses: Unemployment

**Dr Beccy Cooper:**

[\[9630\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of improving access to healthy food on the number of people who cannot work due to long-term illness.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

In the United Kingdom, most people's diet is not in line with the Government's dietary recommendations as encapsulated in the Eatwell Guide. Most people consume too many calories, too much salt, sugar, and saturated fat, and not enough fibre, fruit, and vegetables. This increases the risk of gaining weight and suffering from type 2 diabetes, heart attacks, stroke, and some cancers at an earlier age.

Whilst the Government has not made a specific assessment of the impact of improving access to healthy food for people who cannot work due to long term illness, published modelling data suggests that if population intakes were in line with the Eatwell Guide it would improve life expectancy by approximately eight years for the average 40 year old.

The Eatwell Guide shows the proportions in which different types of foods and drinks should be consumed to achieve a healthy, balanced diet. It is communicated through the NHS.UK website and Government social marketing campaigns such as Better Health, Healthier Families, and Start for Life.

## ■ Darent Valley Hospital: Respiratory Diseases

**Jim Dickson:** [\[9099\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many children have been hospitalised for asthma in Darent Valley Hospital in each of the last 10 years.

**Jim Dickson:** [\[9100\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many children under one year old were admitted to Darent Valley Hospital for respiratory issues in each of the last 10 years.

**Jim Dickson:** [\[9102\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people over 70 years old have been hospitalised with respiratory issues at Darent Valley Hospital in each of the last 10 years.

### **Karin Smyth:**

Data on the number of people hospitalised or admitted is not recorded. Finished Admission Episodes (FAE) are recorded, although these are not substitutions for counts of people, as the same person may have been admitted to hospital on more than one occasion within any given time period.

The following table shows a count of FAEs where there was a primary diagnosis of all respiratory conditions, for patients aged 70 years old or over, at Darent Valley Hospital for the period 2014/15 to 2023/24:

YEAR	NUMBER OF FAES FOR PATIENTS OVER AGED 70 YEARS OLD
2014/15	1,585
2015/16	1,610
2016/17	1,920
2017/18	2,150
2018/19	2,065
2019/20	2,075
2020/21	1,230
2021/22	1,740
2022/23	1,985
2023/24	2,075

The following table shows a count of FAEs where there was a primary diagnosis of asthma, for patients aged zero to 17 years old, at Darent Valley Hospital for the period 2014/15 to 2023/24:

YEAR	NUMBER OF FAES FOR PATIENTS AGED ZERO TO 17 YEARS OLD
2014/15	130
2015/16	110
2016/17	95
2017/18	100
2018/19	100
2019/20	110
2020/21	65
2021/22	150
2022/23	100
2023/24	120

The following table shows a count of FAEs where there was a primary diagnosis of all respiratory conditions, for patients aged less than one years old, at Darent Valley Hospital for the period 2014/15 to 2023/24:

YEAR	NUMBER OF FAES FOR PATIENTS AGED UNDER ONE YEARS OLD
2014/15	645
2015/16	795
2016/17	935
2017/18	915
2018/19	1,030
2019/20	1,155
2020/21	260
2021/22	1,465
2022/23	1,740



YEAR	NUMBER OF FAES FOR PATIENTS AGED UNDER ONE YEARS OLD
2023/24	1,715

## ■ Death: Statistics

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[8765\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to mandate that fact-of-death is reported to the Office for National Statistics in England within eight days.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

There is a legal responsibility to register a death within a five-day time period, from when a medical examiner submits the medical certificate of cause of death (MCCD) to the registrar. The Office for National Statistics compiles their mortality data from the data taken at registration, which is informed in part by the MCCD. The five-day requirement complements the guidance to medical practitioners that certifying the death should be completed in a timely and efficient manner. However, there are valid cases where, for example, the identification of the cause of death, including where this is ascertained through a coronial investigation, and therefore the registration must take longer, which would be incompatible with a more prescriptive legal timeline.

## ■ Dementia

**Helen Grant:**

[\[8800\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he has taken to assess the impact on the health outcomes of people with dementia of the (a) average length of time people with dementia stay in hospital relative to people over 65 without dementia and (b) availability of specialist dementia nurses to meet the needs of people with dementia during hospital stays.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

NHS England does not hold this information centrally. However, the provision of dementia health care services is the responsibility of local integrated care boards (ICBs). NHS England would expect ICBs to commission services based on local population needs, taking account of the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's guidelines.

Employers determine the number of specialist nurses needed to provide care for the population. However, there is no specific regulatory requirement for post registration education, and people can choose to upskill to meet their own educational requirements.

Student nurses do receive broad preparation, so they are able to support adults needing care, including those with dementia. The Advanced Clinical Practice programme supports the progression of clinicians, enabling them to take on more specialist roles.

**Freddie van Mierlo:**

**[9041]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help improve public awareness of (a) the importance of early dementia diagnosis and (b) recognition of early symptoms.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

Lord Darzi's independent review showed that a timely diagnosis is vital to ensure that a person with dementia can access the advice, information, care, and support that can help them to live well and remain independent for as long as possible.

The NHS Health Check for adults in England aged 45 to 74 years old is designed to identify early signs of stroke, kidney disease, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, or dementia. Since 2018, dementia risk reduction has been incorporated in the NHS Health Check to increase dementia awareness and motivate people to make positive changes to reduce their risks. In addition, those aged 65 years old and over are made aware of the signs and symptoms of dementia and guided to memory clinics.

The Government's Dame Barbara Windsor Dementia Goals programme, formerly known as the Dame Barbara Windsor Dementia Mission, is investing in innovations in biomarkers, clinical trials, and implementation. Some of these innovations could support earlier diagnosis in the future, if validated for clinical use.

**Freddie van Mierlo:**

**[9042]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to increase diagnostic capacity in memory clinics to reduce waiting times for dementia diagnosis in England.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

We are committed to transforming diagnostic services and will support the National Health Service to increase diagnostic capacity to meet the demand for diagnostic services, including for the detection and diagnosis of dementia, through investment in new capacity, including magnetic resonance imaging scanners.

To further reduce waiting times for diagnosis, NHS England has funded an evidence-based improvement project to fund two trusts in each region, 14 sites in total, to pilot the Diagnosing Advanced Dementia Mandate tool to improve the diagnosis of dementia and provision of support in care homes. All pilots completed at the end of May 2024, and it is anticipated that learning will be shared by end of the third quarter of 2024/25.

## ■ Dementia: Henley and Thame

**Freddie van Mierlo:**

[\[9040\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve dementia diagnosis rates in Henley and Thame constituency.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

The Henley and Thame constituency lies within the county of Oxfordshire, where the performance in August 2024 was 63%. The performance across the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and West Berkshire Integrated Care Board is 62.6%, and across the NHS South East region is 63%. Oxfordshire's performance has improved over the last 12 months by 0.2%. The national target for dementia diagnosis is that 66.7% of the prevalent population has a diagnosis of dementia. The current England wide position is 65.4%.

We are currently working with our local population, including patients, carers, Age UK, and clinicians in primary care, mental health services, and acute hospital services, to develop a new strategy, Living Well with Dementia, to be implemented from April 2025. Within this work we are seeking to increase the rate of diagnosis by streamlining the referral processes into diagnostic and memory clinics, and alignment with other services that might be needed. We also work closely with our voluntary and community partners to improve access to post-diagnostic support, offering advice and practical help to patients, and their carers and wider family.

## ■ Dental Services: Waiting Lists

**Richard Foord:**

[\[9105\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what criteria are used to prioritise patients on NHS dental waiting lists; and whether older people are given priority.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

The Government plans to tackle the challenges for patients trying to access National Health Service dental care with a rescue plan to provide 700,000 more urgent dental appointments and to recruit new dentists to the areas that need them most.

Patients in England are not registered with an NHS dental practice, and there is no single waiting list, although many NHS dental practices do tend to see patients regularly and may operate local waiting list arrangements. There is no geographical restriction on which practice a patient may attend. NHS dentists are required to keep their NHS website profiles up to date so that patients can find a dentist more easily. This includes information on whether they are accepting new patients. In circumstances where patients are unable to access an urgent dental appointment directly through an NHS dental practice, they should contact NHS 111.

The responsibility for commissioning primary care, including dentistry, to meet the needs of the local population has been delegated to all integrated care boards (ICBs) across England. For Honiton and Sidmouth constituency, this is the NHS One Devon ICB.

**■ Department of Health and Social Care: Corporate Hospitality****Paul Holmes:** [\[8903\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has for revising his policy on accepting hospitality from the (a) football and (b) music industry.

**Karin Smyth:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answers by my hon. Friend, the Minister without Portfolio, during the Urgent Question, Reporting Ministerial Gifts and Hospitality, on 14 October 2024, Official Report, Columns 594-602.

**■ Drugs: Prices****Andrew Rosindell:** [\[9136\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to take steps with NHS England to expand access to indication-specific pricing agreements.

**Karin Smyth:**

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

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

**■ Gender Dysphoria: Health Services****Laura Kyrke-Smith:** [\[7364\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce waiting times for appointments at NHS gender identity clinics.

**Karin Smyth:**

NHS England has published a two-year action plan, which sets out how it will continue to transform and improve children and young people's gender services. Investment in children and young people's gender services in 2024/25 has more than doubled compared to 2023/24 and will increase further as new services are established.

In April 2024, NHS England opened two new services in the North West and London that offer a holistic clinical model, embedding multi-disciplinary teams in specialist children's hospitals. A third new service will open in the South West later in the autumn, and a fourth in the East of England in spring of next year. NHS England is advancing towards meeting its commitment for there to be a specialist children's

gender service in every region by 2026. These new services will increase service capacity and reduce waiting lists.

NHS England has written to all children and young people on the waiting list for services, to offer them a mental health assessment. It has also rolled out a new referral pathway into children and young people gender services, which ensures that children are assessed more holistically through referral via pediatrics or children's mental health services.

### ■ **General Practitioners: Bromsgrove**

**Bradley Thomas:** [\[9110\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of the GP-to-patient ratio in Bromsgrove constituency.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

In August 2024, the median number of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) doctors in general practice (GP) per 10,000 registered patients in the Bromsgrove constituency was 7.2. The median number nationally of FTE fully qualified GPs per 10,000 registered patients was 5.7.

### ■ **Health Centres: Weybridge**

**Dr Ben Spencer:** [\[8891\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent progress his Department has made on building a new healthcare facility to replace Weybridge Community Hospital.

**Karin Smyth:**

Since the fire at Weybridge Community Hospital in 2017, the NHS Surrey Heartlands Integrated Care Board (ICB) has been working on plans to develop a replacement health centre. The planning application is due to be submitted shortly, following a public consultation to be held this month. Pending the approval of the planning application, the ICB will then submit a business case seeking approval for the funding for the new facility, which will be delivered by NHS Property Services. As with all schemes, this will need to be considered alongside other capital investment priorities, in the light of the forthcoming Spending Review.

### ■ **Health Services: Medway**

**Tristan Osborne:** [\[9270\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his Department's timetable is for making a decision on the development Medway Maritime Trust elective care centre in Chatham.

**Karin Smyth:**

Presently, there is no Medway elective treatment business case going through assurance with the Department. NHS England has delegated authority for business

cases costed at under £25 million, in which case the Department is not the decision maker. This aligns with our approach that local health infrastructure needs are determined by local health system planners, in collaboration with NHS England.

### ■ **Healthy Start Scheme**

**Dr Beccy Cooper:** [\[9628\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of introducing auto-enrolment for the Healthy Start scheme.

**Mary Kelly Foy:** [\[9657\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to introduce auto-enrolment for the Healthy Start scheme.

**Ellie Chowns:** [\[9678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on introducing auto-enrolment for Healthy Start vouchers.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The Healthy Start scheme is kept under review. There have been no discussions with my Rt Hon. Friend, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on introducing auto-enrolment for Healthy Start.

The Healthy Start scheme was introduced in 2006 to encourage a healthy diet for pregnant women, babies, and young children under four years old, from very low-income households. It can be used to buy, or put towards the cost of, fruit, vegetables, pulses, milk, and infant formula. Healthy Start beneficiaries have access to free Healthy Start Vitamins for pregnant women and children aged under four years old. Healthy Start now supports over 355,000 beneficiaries. This figure is higher than the previous paper voucher scheme.

The NHS Business Services Authority operates the Healthy Start scheme on behalf of the Department. All applicants to the Healthy Start scheme, where they meet the eligibility criteria, must accept the terms and conditions of the prepaid card at the point of application. As the prepaid card is a financial product and cannot be issued without the applicant accepting these terms, the NHS Business Services Authority is not able to automatically provide eligible families with a prepaid card. However, we remain open to all viable routes to improve uptake.

### ■ **Hillingdon Hospital: Construction**

**Danny Beales:** [\[10021\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the cost of the Hillingdon Hospital scheme.

**Danny Beales:** [\[10022\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much funding the Hillingdon Hospital scheme received up until the 2023-24 financial year.

**Danny Beales:** [\[10023\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much had been (a) allocated and (b) confirmed by the Treasury for (i) the Hillingdon Hospital scheme and (ii) the New Hospital Programme overall by 2 July 2024.

**Danny Beales:** [\[10024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the (a) business case status and (b) RIBA stage of the Hillingdon Hospital scheme as part of the New Hospital Programme.

**Karin Smyth:**

The standard process confirming the total funding amount for major infrastructure projects involves review and approval of a Full Business Case. All trusts in the Programme have previously received indicative funding allocations to support planning, however these are commercially sensitive. The New Hospital Programme had confirmed £3.7 billion in funding up to the end of 2024/25.

Up to the end of 2023/24, the total amount received by The Hillingdon Hospital NHS Foundation Trust in funding for their new hospital schemes is £62.2 million.

The breakdown of how much the Trust received for their new hospital scheme is published annually as part of the Department's Annual Reports and Accounts, with Public Dividend Capital to individual Trusts included in the Financial Assistance Report under section 40 of the National Health Service Act 2006. The 2022/23 report is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dhsc-annual-report-and-accounts-2022-to-2023>

The trust is currently developing their Outline Business Case for the new Hillingdon Hospital and is at Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) stage 2.

## ■ HIV Infection: Diagnosis

**Neil O'Brien:** [\[9646\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people living with diagnosed HIV infection there are whose country of birth was (a) in the UK and (b) not in the UK by region.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The following table shows the number of people diagnosed and seen for care in 2023 presented by region and by whether country of birth was the United Kingdom:

REGION OF RESIDENCE	UK BORN	BORN OUTSIDE THE UK
EAST MIDLANDS	2,392	3,876
East of England	3,242	5,325
London	11,025	26,035
North East	1,480	817
North West	6,590	4,305
Scotland	3,112	1,820
South East	5,873	6,321
South West	3,420	2,359
Wales	723	241
West Midlands	3,666	4,683
Yorkshire and Humber	2,883	3,208

Source: UK Health Security Agency

Note: this excludes 4% people for whom we did not hold data for country of birth. Data for Northern Ireland was not reported in 2023. People born outside the UK includes people who acquired HIV after arriving in the UK.

HIV surveillance data in the UK by demographic characteristics and geographical region is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hiv-annual-data-tables>

The latest update was published on 1 October 2024.

## ■ Hospices: Wokingham

**Clive Jones:**

**[8917]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing additional funding to hospices in Wokingham.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

The Government is determined to shift more healthcare out of hospitals and into the community, to ensure patients and their families receive personalised care in the most appropriate setting, and hospices will have a big role to play in that shift.

Whilst the majority of palliative and end of life care is provided by National Health Service staff and services, we recognise the vital part that voluntary sector



organisations, including hospices, also play in providing support to people, and their families, at end of life.

The amount of funding charitable hospices receive varies by integrated care board (ICB) area, and will, in part, be dependent on the breadth and range of the palliative and end of life care provision within their ICB footprint. To support ICBs in this duty, NHS England has published statutory guidance and service specifications, which are available, respectively, at the following two links:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/palliative-and-end-of-life-care-statutory-guidance-for-integrated-care-boards-icbs/>

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/service-specifications-for-palliative-and-end-of-life-care-children-and-young-people-cyp/>

## ■ Hospitals: Nottingham

**Adam Thompson:** [9683]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the total cost to the public purse of work on (a) the Queen's Medical Centre and (b) Nottingham City Hospital via the New Hospital programme.

**Adam Thompson:** [9684]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the (a) business case status and (b) RIBA stage is for the delivery of works on (i) Queen's Medical Centre and (ii) Nottingham City Hospital as part of the New Hospital Programme.

**Karin Smyth:**

The standard process for confirming the total funding amount for major infrastructure projects involves the review and approval of a Full Business Case. All trusts in the programme have previously received indicative funding allocations to support planning, however these are commercially sensitive. The scheme is currently at the Pre-Consultation Business Case stage, and is at Royal Institute of British Architects Stage 0.

**Adam Thompson:** [9805]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much funding (a) the Queen's Medical Centre and (b) Nottingham City Hospital received from the National Hospital Programme until the end of the 2023-24 financial year.

**Adam Thompson:** [9806]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much funding had been (a) budgeted and (b) provided for (i) the Queen's Medical Centre and Nottingham City Hospital and (ii) the New Hospital Programme in total by 2 July 2024.

**Karin Smyth:**

Up to the end of 2023/24, the total amount of funding received by Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust for the Queen's Medical Centre and Nottingham City Hospital scheme was £7.5 million. The breakdown of how much the Trust received

for their new hospital scheme is published annually as part of the Department's Annual Reports and Accounts, with Public Dividend Capital to individual Trusts included in the Financial Assistance Report under section 40 of the National Health Service Act 2006. The 2022/23 report is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dhsc-annual-report-and-accounts-2022-to-2023>

All trusts in the Programme have previously received indicative funding allocations to support planning, however these are commercially sensitive. The New Hospital Programme had confirmed £3.7 billion in funding up to the end of 2024/25.

### ■ Hospitals: Private Finance Initiative

**Jeremy Corbyn:**

**[8753]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he is taking steps to support hospitals that (a) are and (b) have been indebted by Private Finance Initiative (PFI) schemes.

**Karin Smyth:**

*[Holding answer 21 October 2024]:* The funding allocation formula used to set budgets for integrated care boards includes an adjustment to reflect the impact of the excess finance costs that some trusts face due to the financing arrangements for some buildings constructed under historic Private Finance Initiative (PFI) arrangements.

The Department does not centrally provide funding to support trusts in paying for their PFI schemes. However, the Department, along with NHS England, is supporting National Health Service trusts to manage their PFI contracts, including looking for opportunities to deliver better value for money. This support is available to all trusts with a PFI contract.

### ■ Infant Foods: Health Education

**Ellie Chowns:**

**[9680]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his Department's policies of the report by the Food Foundation entitled Broken Plate Report 2023, published on 27 June 2023; and what steps he is taking to tackle misleading health claims on baby and infant food.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

We face a childhood obesity crisis, and the Government is committed to raising the healthiest next generation ever. It is vital that we maintain the highest standards for foods consumed by babies and young children and ensure that claims made about infant food or drink are accurate and not misleading. This will help to better support parents and carers to make the best choices for feeding their young children.

The independent Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN), for their 2023 report Feeding Young Children aged 1-5 years, recommended that foods, including

snacks, that are high in salt, free sugars, saturated fat, or are energy dense, should be limited in the diets of children aged one to five years old, and that commercially manufactured foods and drinks marketed specifically for infants and young children are not needed to meet nutrition requirements.

This is why baby and infant foods are already subject to robust regulations which set nutrition and composition standards through the Processed Cereal-based Foods and Baby Foods for Infants and Young Children (England) Regulations 2003 and its parent Regulation (EU) No 609/2013 on food for specific groups.

Under our health mission and shift to prevention we are considering what further action is needed to respond to the SACN's commercial baby food recommendations, in order to establish healthy habits as early as possible. We will continue to keep these regulations under review to ensure they reflect the latest scientific and dietary guidelines.

### ■ Leeds General Infirmary: Construction

**Alex Sobel:** [\[9757\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his Department's latest estimate is of the total cost of the rebuild of Leeds General Infirmary.

**Alex Sobel:** [\[9758\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much funding the Leeds General Infirmary scheme received up to the end of the 2023-24 financial year.

**Alex Sobel:** [\[9759\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much funding had been allocated by the Treasury for the (a) Leeds Infirmary scheme and (b) New Hospital Programme up to 2 July 2024.

**Alex Sobel:** [\[9760\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the (a) business case status and (b) Royal Institute of British Architects' stage is for Leeds General Infirmary scheme.

**Karin Smyth:**

The standard process confirming the total funding amount for major infrastructure projects involves review and approval of a Full Business Case. All trusts in the Programme have previously received indicative funding allocations to support planning, however these are commercially sensitive. The New Hospital Programme had confirmed £3.7 billion in funding up to the end of 2024/25.

Up to the end of 2023/24, the total amount received by Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust in funding for their new hospital schemes is £32.8 million.

The breakdown of how much the Trust received for its new hospital scheme is published annually as part of the Department's Annual Reports and Accounts, with Public Dividend Capital to individual Trusts included in the Financial Assistance

Report under section 40 of the National Health Service Act 2006. The 2022/23 report is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dhsc-annual-report-and-accounts-2022-to-2023>

The Trust is currently developing its Outline Business Case for the new Leeds General Infirmary scheme and is at Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) stage 2.

## ■ Long Covid

**Alice Macdonald:** **[9590]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people are affected by long covid in (a) Norfolk, (b) the East of England and (c) England.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The most recent data from the Winter Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection Study, a joint study carried out by the Office for National Statistics and the UK Health Security Agency, shows that, for the period of 6 February 2024 to 7 March 2024, an estimated 1.8 million people, or 3.3% of the population, in private households in England reported experiencing long COVID symptoms more than four weeks after a COVID-19 infection.

For the same period, approximately 200,000 people, or 3.3% of the population, in private households in the East of England reported experiencing long COVID symptoms more than four weeks after a COVID-19 infection.

## ■ Medical Certificates

**Helen Whately:** **[9505]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has had recent discussions with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on improving the support available for people seeking a fit note.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

As part of our Get Britain Working plan, more disabled people and those with health conditions will be supported to enter and stay in work, by devolving more power to local areas so they can shape a joined-up work, health, and skills offer that suits the needs of the people they serve.

We launched a Call for Evidence to seek views on how the current fit note process works and the support required to facilitate meaningful work and health conversations to help people start, stay, and succeed in work. It closed on 8 July 2024, and we received approximately 1,900 responses that are now being reviewed.

## ■ Mental Health Services: Access

**Paul Davies:**

[\[8608\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make a comparative assessment of the adequacy of access to mental health provision in (a) urban and (b) rural areas.

**Paul Davies:**

[\[8609\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure parity in the adequacy of mental health resources in (a) rural and (b) urban areas.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

Integrated care boards are responsible for providing health and care services to meet the needs of their local populations, taking into account local considerations such as access to services in rural areas.

Too many people are not receiving the mental health care they need, and we know that waits for mental health services are too long. We are determined to change that, which is why we will fix the broken system to ensure we give mental health the same attention and focus as physical health. This should help people in rural areas to be confident in accessing high quality mental health support when they need it.

We will recruit an additional 8,500 mental health workers across child and adult mental health services in England to reduce delays and provide faster treatment, including in rural areas. We will make sure mental health care is delivered in the community and close to people's homes, through new models of care and support, so that fewer people need to go into hospital.

## ■ Methylphenidate

**Jo Platt:**

[\[9215\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has had round tables with suppliers of methylphenidate prolonged-release tablets since April 2024; what discussions his Department has had on the difficulties suppliers are facing; and what steps his Department is taking to help ensure (a) patients and (b) health care providers have reasonable expectations of supply.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Department has been working hard with industry and NHS England to help resolve supply issues with some attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) medicines, which are affecting the United Kingdom and other countries around the world. As a result of intensive work, some issues have been resolved and all strengths of lisdexamfetamine, atomoxetine capsules, and guanfacine prolonged-release tablets are now available.

We are continuing to work to resolve supply issues, where they remain, for methylphenidate prolonged-release tablets. Although no further roundtables have been held since April 2024, we have continued extensive engagement with all suppliers of methylphenidate prolonged-release tablets to assess the challenges

faced and their actions to address them. We are also directing suppliers to secure additional stocks, expedite deliveries where possible, and review plans to further build capacity to support continued growth in demand for the short and long-term. We anticipate intermittent regional supply disruptions to continue, and we expect supply to improve in the UK from October 2024 onwards.

In parallel, the Department has worked with specialist clinicians, including those within the National Health Service, to develop management advice for NHS clinicians to consider prescribing available alternative brands of methylphenidate prolonged release tablets or available alternative ADHD medicines. We would expect ADHD service providers and specialists to follow our guidance, which includes offering rapid response to primary care teams seeking urgent advice or opinions for the management of patients, including those known to be at a higher risk of adverse impact because of these shortages.

To aid ADHD service providers and prescribers further we have widely disseminated our communications and continually update a list of currently available and unavailable ADHD products on the Specialist Pharmacy Service website, helping ensure that those involved in the prescribing and dispensing of ADHD medications can make informed decisions with patients.

#### ■ **Midwives: Training**

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** [\[8871\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people graduated from pre-registration undergraduate midwifery courses as newly-qualified midwives in each of the last five years.

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** [\[8872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many students were enrolled on (a) pre-registration undergraduate and (b) postgraduate midwifery courses in each year of study in each of the last five years.

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** [\[8873\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of people who joined the NHS as a midwife were newly-qualified as midwives in each of last five years.

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** [\[8874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have entered the NHS midwifery workforce through (a) pre-registration undergraduate courses, (b) apprenticeships, (c) postgraduate conversion from nursing, (d) return to midwifery programmes, (e) international recruitment and (f) other routes according to the most recent data available to his Department; and what assessment his Department has made of the contribution of each route to growing that workforce over the (i) last and (ii) next five years.

**Karin Smyth:**

In order to bring together questions on the education and training of midwives and the flow of staff into the National Health Service midwifery workforce, a number of strands of the available data are presented below.

Data published by the Office for Students, in the Higher Education Students Early Statistics Survey (HESES), collates figures submitted by individual higher education providers to give an indication of the number of students starting in each academic year. The HESES' data includes figures on undergraduate and postgraduate midwifery courses in England. The latest published data is for those starting courses in 2023. The following table shows the number of undergraduate and postgraduate starters on midwifery courses in England for 2019 to 2023:

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Undergraduate starters	2,930	3,460	3,565	3,305	3,255
Postgraduate starters	55	100	135	190	195

Source: The Office for Students' HESES data for 2023.

The following table shows the number of qualifiers from undergraduate midwifery courses in England, with a qualifier being defined by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) as a student who gained a qualification during the academic year in question, for the academic years 2020/21 to 2022/23:

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Undergraduate midwifery qualifiers	1,895	2,380	2,705

Source: HESA's qualifier data 2023

Note: Data is currently only available up to the academic year 2022/23.

Additionally, there are midwives training through an apprenticeship route. The following table shows the number of starts on midwifery apprenticeships, including apprenticeships within NHS and non-NHS organisations, in each of the last five years:

YEAR	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Starts	26	39	22	42	72

Source: Department for Education Apprenticeships and traineeships statistics, October 2024.



Note: Data on the provisional starts for the year 2023/24 is only available between August 2023 to July 2024.

The Department does not hold data which would allow the identification of the route which joiners to the NHS registered midwifery workforce have taken to become active in the service, or what these flows will be in future years. Data published by NHS England does show the total annual number of staff who join active service across NHS trusts and other core organisations. Joiners are not the same as those recruited to the NHS, as they will include staff returning after breaks in activity. Joiners will also include experienced midwives joining from non-NHS providers. Within this data we can see the number who are joiners at Agenda for Change pay band five, which is where newly qualified or less experience staff would be placed. Data also contains the nationality of staff joining active service, and whilst self-reported nationality is not the same as place of training or previous residence, it does provide a guide to scale. The following table shows the annual number of midwives joining active service in the NHS in England, as well as those joining at band five, and those joining who reported non-United Kingdom nationalities, for each of the last five years up until June:

YEAR ENDING	JUNE 2020	JUNE 2021	JUNE 2022	JUNE 2023	JUNE 2024
Annual midwives joining active service	3,242	1,845	3,320	3,883	4,278
Joining at band five	1,685	421	1,766	2,172	2,479
Joining any grade with a non-UK nationality	243	155	247	593	616

Source: NHS England, NHS Workforce Statistics.

## ■ Motor Neurone Disease: Aldesleukin

**Tonia Antoniazzi:**

[\[9535\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of making Proleukin available for motor neurone disease patients on the NHS.

**Karin Smyth:**

*[Holding answer 21 October 2024]:* We have made no assessment. It is critical that medicines used in the United Kingdom are safe and effective and as such, medicines cannot be marketed in the UK without a marketing authorisation. These are granted by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) which



assesses all medicines with regard to their quality, safety, and effectiveness. Proleukin (interleukin-2, Aldesleukin) has not been licensed by the MHRA as a treatment for motor neurone disease. It is the responsibility of the company to apply to the MHRA for a relevant marketing authorisation. Should an application for it be received, the MHRA will consider this accordingly.

In England, newly licensed medicines are also appraised by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) to determine whether they represent a clinically and cost-effective use of National Health Service resources. If the manufacturer of Proleukin seeks a licence from the MHRA for the treatment of motor neurone disease, then the NICE may consider it through the Technology Appraisal programme.

## ■ NHS: Buildings

**Josh Fenton-Glynn:**

**[8599]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an estimate of the cost to the public purse of maintaining unused NHS (a) buildings, (b) parts of buildings and (c) other spaces in each of the last five years.

**Karin Smyth:**

The following table shows data that NHS England has collected and published on occupancy costs, the total expenses associated with occupying and operating buildings, including finance costs, hard and soft facilities management costs, and other management costs, for unoccupied National Health Service sites since 2021/22:

FINANCIAL YEAR	NUMBER OF SITES UNOCCUPIED	OCCUPANCY COST INCURRED
2021/22	18	£2,740,553
2022/23	23	£3,468,536
2023/24	27	£4,350,825

Source: NHS England

Note: NHS England does not hold pre-2021 data and is unable to allocate occupancy costs to parts of unused buildings or spaces. As such the above data represents only unoccupied whole sites. The NHS England definition of unoccupied sites covers empty spaces, those not in use, and those closed awaiting disposal, and includes hospitals, health centres, mental health hubs, stores and warehouses, and administrative buildings.

The Government is committed to delivering a National Health Service that is fit for the future. This means not only upgrading but better utilising infrastructure across the entire NHS estate to reduce vacant or unused spaces and their associated costs over time.

**■ NHS: Employers' Contributions****Dr Caroline Johnson:**[\[9519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the cost to the NHS that would be incurred by an (a) 1% and (b) 2% rise in the rate of employers national insurance contributions.

**Karin Smyth:**

*[Holding answer 21 October 2024]:* We do not comment on speculation around hypothetical situations. Any decisions that could be taken on National Health Service budgets for future years will be announced at fiscal events, including the Spending Review.

**■ NHS: Publications****Dr Caroline Johnson:****[R]** [\[4235\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure sex-based language is used in (a) NHS guidance and (b) NHS communications.

**Karin Smyth:**

The National Health Service website aims to provide health advice and guidance that is clear and easy to understand, and that helps everyone who uses the website find the information they need, so they can make informed decisions about their own health.

The Government understands the need for health information to be as clear as possible and to use language that is grounded in biological sex. However, we recognise that for some people, their gender identity is different from their biological sex.

**■ Non-surgical Cosmetic Procedures: Licensing****Amanda Hack:**[\[9307\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps his Department has taken to introduce a licensing scheme under the Health and Care Act 2022 for people administering botox and lip fillers.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Government is currently considering what steps may need to be taken in relation to the safety of the non-surgical cosmetics sector. The Government will set out its position at the earliest opportunity.

**■ Nurses: Labour Turnover and Recruitment****Mary Kelly Foy:**[\[9774\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve the (a) recruitment and (b) retention of nurses.

**Karin Smyth:**

Working with universities we are committed to training the staff we need to get patients seen on time, including more nurses, and will work closely with National Health Service trusts and their local education providers to do so and ensure nursing remains an attractive career choice.

Targeted retention work for nurses and midwives is being undertaken by NHS England and led by the Chief Nursing Officer. This includes the introduction of a nursing and midwifery retention self-assessment tool which shares evidence on retention interventions and allows employers to assess their local plans and actions; a national preceptorship framework which provides early career support for nurses and midwives as they transition from education to employment; mentoring schemes; strengthened advice and support on pensions and flexible retirement options; and the publication of menopause policies and guidance.

**■ Nurses: Recruitment****Mary Kelly Foy:**[\[9775\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase the number of nurses.

**Karin Smyth:**

Working with universities we are committed to training the staff we need to get patients seen on time, including more nurses, and will work closely with National Health Service trusts and their local education providers to do so and ensure nursing remains an attractive career choice.

**■ Nutrition: Disadvantaged****Mary Kelly Foy:**[\[9659\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce inequalities in dietary health.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

Under our Health Mission we will move from a model of sickness to one of prevention, reducing health inequalities and closing the gap in healthy life expectancy, as well as delivering on our commitment to raise the healthiest generation ever. As part of this we are working with civil society, industry, and the public to address some of the biggest drivers of ill-health and health inequalities, including tackling obesity and poor diet, as obesity prevalence for children in deprived areas is double that of non-deprived areas.

To this end, we are rolling out free breakfast clubs in every primary school, with an early adopter scheme launching in April 2025, so children start the day ready to learn, helping to break down barriers to opportunity and confront child poverty. All children in Reception, Year 1, and Year 2 in England's state-funded schools are already entitled to universal infant free school meals, and disadvantaged pupils in state-

funded schools, as well as 16 to 18-year-old students in further education, receive free meals on the basis of low income.

In addition, our Healthy Food Schemes already provide support for those who need it the most. The Healthy Start scheme aims to encourage a healthy diet for pregnant women, babies, and young children under four years old from very low-income households. It can be used to buy, or put towards the cost of, fruit, vegetables, pulses, milk, and infant formula, with beneficiaries also having access to free Healthy Start Vitamins.

We have also committed to banning the sale of high-caffeine energy drinks to children under the age of 16 years old, where we know average intakes of these drinks is highest among children from more deprived areas. Additionally, we are on track to ban junk food advertising to children from next year.

### ■ Ophthalmic Services: Sleeping Rough

**Deirdre Costigan:**

[\[6771\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve access to optometry services for rough sleepers who are not eligible for full public funding due to their immigration status.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

Individuals can apply for help with the cost of sight tests and glasses through the NHS low-income scheme. This includes people seeking asylum, refused asylum seekers in receipt of Home Office support and some refugees who will be eligible for cost exemption certificates. Furthermore, NHS England have recently taken steps to ensure that having no fixed abode should not prevent access to sight tests.

The Department of Health and Social Care recognises the importance of reducing barriers to services for those experiencing rough sleeping. This is why we supported the development of NICE guidance which provides recommendations on ways to improve access to, and engagement with, health and social care services for people experiencing homelessness.

More broadly, there are some services that are free at the point of use for all patients regardless of immigration status. These include, for example, accident and emergency services.

### ■ Oral Cancer

**Richard Foord:**

[\[9106\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the level of access to NHS dentistry on diagnosis rates of routine mouth cancers.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

No specific assessment has been made of the potential impact of the level of access to National Health Service dentistry on the diagnosis rates of routine mouth cancers.

Dentists and other dental professionals, including hygienists, routinely check the soft tissues of a patient's mouth for signs of cancer during dental visits, and as part of the check-up will make an assessment and record of an individual's oral cancer risk.

Dentists will prioritise patients at a higher risk of oral cancer for more frequent recall and review, in line with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's guidance. Members of the public who are worried about their oral health in relation to cancer should seek advice from their dentist or general practitioner. Patients with symptoms of concern should be assessed and offered an urgent dental appointment based upon clinical need, in line with advice from NHS England.

## ■ Palliative Care

**Victoria Collins:**

[\[8956\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve the (a) integration and (b) coordination of end of life care services.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

The Government is determined to shift more healthcare out of hospitals and into the community, to ensure that patients and their families receive personalised care in the most appropriate setting, and palliative and end of life care services will have a big role to play in that shift.

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

Within the statutory guidance, it is made clear that ICBs should consider working collectively with colleagues across health, social care, local government, and the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector to develop systems to best meet the needs of their populations.

I have recently met NHS England and discussions have begun on how to reduce inequalities and variation in access to, and the quality of, palliative and end of life care. Additionally, we have committed to develop a 10-Year Health Plan to deliver a National Health Service fit for the future, by driving three shifts in the way health care is delivered. We will carefully be considering policies, including those that impact people with palliative and end of life care needs, with input from the public, patients, health staff, and our stakeholders, as we develop the plan.

## ■ Princess Alexandra Hospital: Construction

**Chris Vince:**

[\[9851\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the cost of the new Princess Alexandra Hospital scheme.

**Chris Vince:** [9852]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much funding the new Princess Alexandra Hospital scheme has received up to the end of the 2023/24 financial year.

**Chris Vince:** [9853]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what funding had been allocated for the (a) new Princess Alexandra Hospital in Harlow scheme and (b) New Hospital Programme by 2 July 2024.

**Chris Vince:** [9854]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the (a) business case status and (b) RIBA stage is of the new Princess Alexandra Hospital scheme.

**Karin Smyth:**

The standard process confirming the total funding amount for major infrastructure projects involves the review and approval of a Full Business Case. All trusts in the programme have previously received indicative funding allocations to support planning, however these are commercially sensitive. The New Hospital Programme had confirmed £3.7 billion in funding up to the end of 2024/25.

Up to the end of 2023/24, the total amount received by The Princess Alexandra Hospital NHS Trust in funding for their new hospital schemes is £11.4 million. The breakdown of how much the trust received for their new hospital scheme is published annually as part of the Department's Annual Reports and Accounts, with Public Dividend Capital to individual trusts included in the Financial Assistance Report under section 40 of the National Health Service Act 2006. The 2022/23 report is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dhsc-annual-report-and-accounts-2022-to-2023>

The trust is currently developing their Outline Business Case for the new Princess Alexandra Hospital, and are at Royal Institute of British Architects Stage 2.

## ■ Prostate Cancer: Screening

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** [9560]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to Prostate Cancer UK's study entitled Using real world data to bridge the evidence gap left by prostate cancer screening trials, published in October 2024, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of the finding relating to the reduction in potential harm following prostate-specific antigen testing.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC) does not currently recommend screening for prostate cancer. This is because of the inaccuracy of the current best test for the condition, the prostate specific antigen test.

A UK NSC evidence review for prostate cancer screening is already underway. We welcome the study by Prostate Cancer UK, and will make sure it is fed into the UK NSC's review of prostate screening.

## ■ Radiology: Staff

**Mr Clive Betts:**

[\[9695\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase the number of NHS (a) radiologists and (b) oncologists.

**Karin Smyth:**

We are committed to training the staff we need, including radiologists and oncologists, to ensure patients are cared for by the right professional, when and where they need it.

We will ensure that the number of medical specialty training places meets the demands of the National Health Service in the future. NHS England will work with stakeholders to ensure that any growth is sustainable and focused in the service areas where need is greatest.

## ■ Radiotherapy

**Tim Farron:**

[\[9151\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to (a) expand radiotherapy services and (b) waiting times for radiotherapy treatments.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Government knows that cancer patients are waiting too long for a diagnosis and treatment. We will get the National Health Service diagnosing cancer on time, diagnosing it earlier, and treating it faster, so that more patients survive this horrible set of diseases, and we will improve patients' experience across the system. As part of this, we are committed to bringing down waits for cancer appointments with a Fit For the Future fund, providing the number of computed tomography, magnetic resonance imaging, and other tests that are needed to reduce elective and cancer waiting times, thereby saving lives.

The Government will continue to support the provision of radiotherapy machines, however, since April 2022 the responsibility for investing in new radiotherapy machines has been with local systems.

## ■ Respite Care

**Victoria Collins:**

[\[8958\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will introduce a statutory guarantee of regular respite breaks for unpaid carers.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

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

Local authorities have duties to support people caring for their family and friends. The Care Act 2014 requires local authorities to deliver a wide range of sustainable, high-quality care and support services, including support such as respite and breaks for carers.

However, Lord Darzi's independent review of the National Health Service is clear that a fresh approach to supporting and involving unpaid carers is required to improve outcomes for carers, people needing care, and the NHS. We will carefully consider these findings as part of our 10-Year Health Plan for reforming and modernising the NHS and as we develop plans to reform adult social care, including through the National Care Service.

Support for unpaid carers must also be addressed in the wider context of the need for a renewed vision for adult social care. As we move forward, we will collaborate with our counterparts across Government, unpaid carers, and sector partners, to make sure that unpaid carers are visible, valued, and supported.

**■ Royal Berkshire Hospital: Construction**

**Matt Rodda:** [\[9751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the cost of rebuilding the Royal Berkshire Hospital.

**Matt Rodda:** [\[9752\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much funding the scheme to rebuild the Royal Berkshire Hospital has received up to the end of the 2023-24 financial year.

**Matt Rodda:** [\[9753\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much funding (a) his Department has allocated and (b) was confirmed by the Treasury by 31 July 2024 for the (i) rebuild of Royal Berkshire Hospital and (ii) New Hospitals Programme.

**Matt Rodda:** [\[9754\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the (a) business case status and (b) RIBA stage is of the scheme to rebuild the Royal Berkshire Hospital.

**Karin Smyth:**

The standard process confirming the total funding amount for major infrastructure projects involves review and approval of a Full Business Case. All trusts in the Programme have previously received indicative funding allocations to support planning, however these are commercially sensitive. The New Hospital Programme had confirmed £3.7 billion in funding up to the end of 2024/25.



Up to the end of 2023/24, the total amount received by Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust in funding for their new hospital scheme is more than £20 million. The breakdown of how much the trust received for their new hospital scheme is published annually as part of the Department's Annual Reports and Accounts, with Public Dividend Capital to individual Trusts included in the Financial Assistance Report under section 40 of the National Health Service Act 2006. The 2022/23 report is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dhsc-annual-report-and-accounts-2022-to-2023>

The Trust is currently at Pre-Consultation Business Case stage for the Royal Berkshire Hospital and is at Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) stage 0.

### ■ **Salbutamol: Shortages**

**Harriet Cross:**

**[9363]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the impact of current shortages in the supply of Salbutamol nebulas on patients with respiratory conditions; and what steps his Department is taking to tackle procurement and supply chain issues to ensure continuity of supply.

**Karin Smyth:**

Supply of salbutamol nebulas, used to treat asthma, has now improved, although there may still be some short intermittent interruptions in supply experienced. We are working with NHS England to manage the supply issues and mitigate risks to patients. Communications have been issued to the National Health Service to provide management advice for all pharmacy teams and prescribers with information on alternative treatments that are available.

### ■ **Sexual Dysfunction: Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors**

**Darren Paffey:**

**[9558]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress the Commission for Human Medicines has made on its review of how the risk of sexual dysfunction is communicated to patients; and whether that review includes the potential effects of selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors.

**Karin Smyth:**

*[Holding answer 21 October 2024]:* The first meeting of the Expert Working Group (EWG) on antidepressant risk minimisation convened by the Medicine and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, on the advice of the Commission on Human Medicines, was held on 4 July 2024.

At the initial meeting of the EWG, the terms of reference, scope of work, additional expertise, and plans for patient engagement were discussed. The EWG will consider whether the patient information can be improved and whether additional risk minimisation measures are required for all antidepressants, including selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors.

**■ Social Services: Income Support****Ben Coleman:** [\[9391\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of uprating the minimum income guarantee in line with inflation each year.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

The social care allowance rates, which include the Minimum Income Guarantee (MIG), are reviewed each year. The MIG rates were uprated in line with inflation for the previous three financial years, and the rates for the 2025/26 financial year will be published in early 2025.

**■ St Mary's Hospital Paddington****Rachel Blake:** [\[9687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the total cost to the public purse of work on St Mary's Hospital via the New Hospital programme.

**Rachel Blake:** [\[9688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the cost to the public purse was of work on St Mary's Hospital via the New Hospital programme in financial year 2023-24.

**Rachel Blake:** [\[9689\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what funding had been (a) allocated and (b) confirmed by Government for the redevelopment of St Mary's Hospital as of 2 July 2024.

**Rachel Blake:** [\[9690\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the (a) business case status and (b) RIBA stages are for the delivery of work on St Mary's Hospital as part of the New Hospitals Programme.

**Karin Smyth:**

The standard process for confirming the total funding amount for major infrastructure projects involves the review and approval of a Full Business Case. All trusts in the programme have previously received indicative funding allocations to support planning, however these are commercially sensitive.

Up to the end of 2023/24 the total amount received by the Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust in funding for their new hospital schemes is £13 million. The trust has two schemes in the New Hospital Programme for the Charing Cross Hospital and Hammersmith Hospital, as well as the scheme for St Mary's Hospital. Up to the end of 2023/24, the funding allocated to the trust was not separated by the individual schemes.

The breakdown of how much the trust received for their new hospital scheme is published annually as part of the Department's Annual Reports and Accounts, with Public Dividend Capital to individual Trusts included in the Financial Assistance Report under section 40 of the National Health Service Act 2006. The 2022/23 report is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dhsc-annual-report-and-accounts-2022-to-2023>

The trust is currently developing their Strategic Outline Case for the St Mary's Hospital scheme and are at Royal Institute of British Architects Stage 1.

## ■ **Sugar: Consumption**

**Dr Beccy Cooper:**

[9627]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of voluntary sugar reduction programmes.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

Children currently consume twice the recommended level of sugar. There is strong evidence that high sugar intakes increase the risk of tooth decay and weight gain. Being overweight increases the risk of heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, and some cancers.

We face a childhood obesity crisis, and the Government is committed to tackling this and raising the healthiest generation of children. The Government has already taken action to ensure the implementation of restrictions on the advertising of high sugar food and drink, which will incentivise industry to reformulate and reduce sugar levels in their products.

The Soft Drinks Industry Levy has nearly halved the level of sugar in drinks in scope, and the voluntary sugar reduction programme has also reduced sugar in many products.

Working together as a mission led Government, and through our shift to prevention, we are reviewing the balance of mandatory and voluntary measures that will be required to deliver further reductions in sugar levels in everyday food and drink products.

## ■ **Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust: Mortality Rates**

**Tom Gordon:**

[7596]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish mortality rates of mental health patients at Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust publishes the information requested (under 'Learning from deaths') as part of its annual Quality Account report about the quality of the services provided by the Trust. The most recent report is available at the following link:

[www.tevv.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Quality-Account-23-24-Final.pdf](http://www.tevv.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Quality-Account-23-24-Final.pdf)

## ■ Trastuzumab Deruxtecan

**David Davis:**

[9414]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to encourage (a) the NHS, (b) Daiichi Sankyo, and (c) AstraZeneca to reach a commercial agreement that makes Enhertu available on the NHS in England.

**Karin Smyth:**

*[Holding answer 21 October 2024]:* Decisions on whether new medicines should be routinely funded by the National Health Service in England are taken by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) on the basis of an evaluation of a treatment's costs and benefits. These are very difficult decisions to make, and it is important that they are made independently and on the basis of the available evidence.

We know the NICE's decision to not recommend Enhertu for use in the treatment of HER-2 low metastatic and unresectable breast cancer, has come as a blow to many women and their families. We understand that the NICE and NHS England have already sought to apply as much flexibility as they can in their considerations of Enhertu for HER2-low breast cancer and have made it clear to the companies that their pricing of the drug remains the main obstacle to access.

The Government wants to see a deal reached to make Enhertu available. The NICE and NHS England remain open to considering an improved offer from the companies through the rapid review process, and we strongly encourage the companies to come back to the table.

The NICE does recommend Enhertu (trastuzumab deruxtecan) in advanced breast cancer for treating HER2-positive unresectable or metastatic breast cancer after one or more anti-HER 2 treatments.

## ■ University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust

**Shivani Raja:**

[9393]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is taking steps to support University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust in the context of that Trust declaring a critical incident on 9 October 2024 and standing down that critical incident on 10 October 2024; and whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of the review of the New Hospital Programme on support for that Trust.

**Karin Smyth:**

*[Holding answer 21 October 2024]:* The Government recognises the pressures that the National Health Service is facing, as made clear in the recent independent report undertaken by Lord Darzi. The report, published on 12 September 2024, will inform the Government's 10-Year Health Plan to reform the health service and ensure the NHS is fit for the future.

The NHS's operational pressures escalation levels (OPEL) framework provides a standardised approach to support an effective, integrated, and coordinated response to acute trust operational pressures. This includes the actions locally, regionally, and nationally that support the depressurising of services, and ensure patient safety. Further information about the OPEL framework is published by NHS England, and is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/PRN00551-OPEL-Framework-2023.24-V2.0.pdf>

The new hospital scheme for this trust is included in a review of the New Hospital Programme. This review will ensure the scheme is put on a sustainable footing, including a realistic timetable for delivery, and clarity on the funding required.

### ■ **Watford Hospital: Domestic Visits**

**Daisy Cooper:** [9594]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to visit Watford General Hospital before his Department's review of the New Hospital Programme is complete.

**Karin Smyth:**

*[Holding answer 21 October 2024]:* Ministers regularly consider visits across the country. Any plans to visit specific locations will be notified to the Hon. Members in advance.

### ■ **Whipps Cross Hospital: Construction**

**Mr Calvin Bailey:** [9807]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate his Department has made of the cost of the scheme to rebuild Whipps Cross University Hospital.

**Mr Calvin Bailey:** [9808]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much funding the scheme to rebuild Whipps Cross University Hospital has received up to the end of the 2023-24 financial year.

**Mr Calvin Bailey:** [9809]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much funding had been allocated for (a) the scheme to rebuild Whipps Cross University Hospital and (b) the New Hospital Programme by 2 July 2024.

**Mr Calvin Bailey:** [9810]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the (a) business case status and (b) RIBA stage is for the scheme to rebuild Whipps Cross University Hospital as part of the New Hospitals Programme.

**Karin Smyth:**

The standard process confirming the total funding amount for major infrastructure projects involves the review and approval of a Full Business Case. All trusts in the New Hospital Programme have previously received indicative funding allocations to support planning, however these are commercially sensitive. The New Hospital Programme had confirmed £3.7 billion in funding up to the end of 2024/25.

The trust is currently developing their Outline Business Case for the Whipps Cross Hospital, and is at Royal Institute of British Architects Stage 2. Up to the end of the 2023/24, the total amount received by the Barts Health NHS Trust in funding for their new hospital scheme is £22.2 million.

The breakdown of how much the trust received for their new hospital scheme is published annually as part of the Department's Annual Reports and Accounts, with Public Dividend Capital to individual trusts included in the Financial Assistance Report under section 40 of the National Health Service Act 2006. The 2022/23 report is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dhsc-annual-report-and-accounts-2022-to-2023>

**HOME OFFICE****■ Alternatives to Prison****Bell Ribeiro-Addy:****[8867]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of community-based alternatives to detention.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

Detention is an important component of a functioning immigration system. The Department will keep under review the effectiveness of alternatives to detention pilots.

**■ Asylum and Immigration****Kim Johnson:****[9002]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to consult civil society before publishing the Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

The King's Speech on 17 July confirmed the Government will introduce the Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill to deliver enhanced powers to tackle organised immigration crime whilst providing for strong and effective border security. Work is underway to prepare this legislation and it will be introduced when Parliamentary time allows.

The measures will provide a framework for the Border Security Command to operate, improve investigative capability into organised immigration crime, enable smarter,

faster and more effective interventions to protect UK border security; and make it easier to detect, disrupt and deter those seeking to engage in and benefit from organised immigration crime, limiting the permissible environment and its impact. Throughout the development of the legislation, the Government has engaged with a range of partners including operational teams and will continue to do so throughout the Bill's passage.

#### ■ **Asylum: Detainees**

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:**

[8869]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if her Department will (a) collect and (b) publish data on (i) the protected characteristics of individuals in detention who have claimed asylum, (ii) where those individuals are detained and (iii) the period that those individuals have been detained for.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

The Home Office publishes data on asylum seekers entering, in, and leaving detention in summary table Det\_01 of the [Immigration System Statistics data tables](#). Official statistics published by the Home Office are kept under review in line with the code of practice for statistics.

#### ■ **Asylum: LGBT+ People**

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:**

[8865]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of provisions in Section 32 of the Nationality and Borders Act 2022 on LGBTQI+ people in the asylum system.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

Each asylum claim lodged in the UK is considered in accordance with our obligations under the Refugee Convention and European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). The cornerstone of the asylum consideration process remains the requirement to establish a well-founded fear of persecution for a reason set out in Article 1(A)(2) of the Refugee Convention. No one who is found to be at risk of serious harm, including on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity, will be returned to their country of origin.

The Home Office remains committed to delivering an asylum system that is responsive to all forms of persecution including those based on sexuality or gender identity.

#### ■ **Asylum: Temporary Accommodation**

**Clive Lewis:**

[8665]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 9 September 2024 to Question 2952 on Asylum: Temporary Accommodation, what alternative accommodation her Department plans to use to enable a reduction in the use

of hotels; and how much funding she plans to provide for this purpose in each of the next three financial years.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

The Home Office is determined to return to using dispersed asylum accommodation and is working with local authorities and partners to find solutions to provide accommodation for asylum seekers across the entire country which work for everyone. We have a comprehensive funding package for local authorities who help to support asylum seekers in their area.

We are taking immediate action to clear the asylum backlog which will help reduce the use of asylum accommodation and ensure better use of public money.

■ **Asylum: Undocumented Migrants**

**Nigel Farage:**

[\[6894\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has plans to offer an amnesty to illegal immigrants residing in the UK.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

No.

■ **Bombings: Birmingham**

**Chris Bloore:**

[\[6886\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to establish a public inquiry into the Birmingham pub bombings.

**Dan Jarvis:**

The attacks on the Mulberry Bush and Tavern in the Town public houses were horrific events.

As we approach the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary I offer my deepest sympathy and condolences to all those affected.

The families of the victims of these attacks have long campaigned for justice to be done. The Home Secretary and I will consider requests for an inquiry as soon as possible.

■ **Community Policing: South Basildon and East Thurrock**

**James McMurdock:**

[\[9093\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of neighbourhood policing levels in South Basildon and East Thurrock constituency.

**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



includes getting thousands more neighbourhood police personnel back to the beat, as part of the Government's Safer Streets mission.

## ■ Detention Centres: LGBT+ People

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** [8866]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential implications for her policies of the risk of (a) abuse, (b) harassment and (c) violence faced by LGBTQI+ people in immigration detention centres.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

It is vital that detention and removal are carried out with dignity and respect, and we take the welfare and safety of people in our care very seriously. We will not tolerate any form of discrimination against those who are detained in our immigration removal estate. We keep the level of risk under regular review and will take robust action against anyone who is found not to have behaved appropriately.

In order to effectively support individuals in immigration detention who identify as LGBT+ there is detailed published guidance for all staff working in immigration removal centres (IRCs). Detention Services Orders [2/2016 'Lesbian, gay and bisexual detainees in the detention estate'](#) and [11/2012 'Care and Management of Transsexual Detainees'](#) set out the actions and safeguarding processes that are undertaken in IRCs to ensure that the needs of LGBT+ individuals are identified and appropriately met.

## ■ Fire and Rescue Services: Police

**Sir John Whittingdale:** [8751]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will repeal the Section 37 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 prohibiting police officers serving while off duty as on-call firefighters.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

We have no current plans to repeal Section 37 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004.

## ■ Home Office: Food

**Adam Jogee:** [8976]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to reduce food waste in her Department.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

In line with the Greening Government Commitments the Home Office has committed to measure and report on food waste.

Over the period 2017 to 2024, Home Office food waste arisings increased from 183 to 207 tonnes (13% increase) an increase primarily driven by an increase in food

waste collection across the estate, from 7 facilities in 2017 to up to 20 facilities in 2023/24.

#### ■ Home Office: Official Hospitality

**Paul Holmes:** [8995]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has to revise guidance issued to her Department on accepting hospitality from the (a) football and (b) music industry.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answers by my hon. Friend, the Minister without Portfolio, during the Urgent Question, Reporting Ministerial Gifts and Hospitality, on 14 October 2024, Official Report, Columns 594-602.

#### ■ Home Office: Staff

**Nick Timothy:** [8981]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answers of 17 September 2024 to Questions 4871 and 4872 on Home Office: Staff, how many of the employees of (a) Immigration Enforcement, (b) UK Visas and Immigration, (c) Border Force, and (d) HM Passport Office who were (i) suspended for gross misconduct, (ii) dismissed for gross misconduct and (iii) convicted of immigration crime were (A) British nationals, (B) non-British nationals and (C) British nationals with dual nationality.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

The Home Office recruitment process adheres to the requirements of the Civil Service Nationality Rules. [Civil Service recruitment: nationality rules - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/civil-service-recruitment-nationality-rules)

Eligibility for appointment, including on the grounds of nationality, is assessed during pre-employment checks, but breakdowns of nationality are not conducted in relation to those employers after they have been appointed or leave those roles.

#### ■ Immigration: Age

**Chris Philp:** [9190]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to The Immigration (Age Assessments) Regulations 2024, whether those Regulations have been implemented; and whether scientific age assessments are taking place.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

The Immigration (Age Assessments) Regulations 2024 came into force in January of this year.

We are committed to strengthening our age assessment process.

We are taking a holistic approach to prevent adults claiming to be children or children being wrongly treated as adults – as both present serious safeguarding risks to children.

## ■ Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps

**Luke Akehurst:**

[\[9836\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she has taken to disrupt the activity of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps in the UK.

**Dan Jarvis:**

We do not routinely comment on the detail of operational matters or specific threats. But national security is the first duty of any government, and we take any malicious activity that might pose a significant threat to our security and public safety extremely seriously.

Iran's malign activity, including the activities of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), are unacceptable and will not be tolerated. The UK has more than 450 sanctions designations in place on Iranian individuals and entities, in response to the regime's human rights violations, nuclear weapons programme, malign influence internationally and state threats. The UK has also sanctioned the IRGC in its entirety, with the IRGC Intelligence Chief most recently being sanctioned this month.

The National Security Act 2023 provides a significant toolkit for our intelligence services and law enforcement agencies in the fight against state threats. This means that the UK is now a harder target for those states which seek to conduct hostile acts against the UK, including espionage, interference in our political system, sabotage and assassination.

In concert with partners, the UK Government will continue to use all tools at our disposal to protect the UK and its overseas interests against any threats from the Iranian state.

## ■ Members: Correspondence

**Nick Timothy:**

[\[9811\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the letter of 1 September 2024 from the hon. Member for West Suffolk.

**Seema Malhotra:**

The Home Office has no record of receiving the Hon. Member's letter, and has contacted his office on 18 October 2024 for a copy of the letter. Once received, the Home Office will reply within its 20 working day service standard.

## ■ Migrant Workers: Sponsorship

**Darren Paffey:**

[\[9324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department takes to enable foreign workers to switch sponsors when their original employer ceases trading, particularly where the individual (a) is actively seeking employment and (b) wishes to remain in the UK.

**Darren Paffey:**

[9325]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what (a) steps her Department takes and (b) guidance her Department provides to ensure the process of obtaining visa sponsorship licences is accessible to companies.

**Seema Malhotra:**

Links to comprehensive guidance are available to companies wishing to obtain sponsor licences and sponsored workers wanting to switch sponsors on the Gov.uk website at: [www.gov.uk/browse/visas-immigration/work-visas](http://www.gov.uk/browse/visas-immigration/work-visas)

■ **Mistreatment of Detainees at Brook House Immigration Removal Centre Inquiry**

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:**

[8868]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to her Department's policy paper entitled Government response to the Brook House Inquiry report, published on 19 March 2024, what progress her Department has made on implementing the recommendations of that report.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

The abuse that took place at Brook House Immigration Removal Centre (IRC) in 2017 was unacceptable.

The previous government published its response to the public inquiry into Brook House IRC on 19 March 2024, summarising the progress made since 2017 and addressing each of the ten key areas of concern raised in the report.

The new government is carefully considering the Inquiry's recommendations and will set out its approach in due course.

■ **Police: Data Protection**

**Jim Shannon:**

[8823]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what guidance her Department issues to police forces on the (a) recording and (b) retention of personal information on police data bases for hate incidents that are not deemed to be a crime.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

This Government has already committed to reversing the previous Government's decision to downgrade the monitoring of antisemitic and Islamophobic hate.

It is vital that the police can capture data relating to non-crime hate incidents when it is proportionate and necessary to help prevent serious crimes which may later occur.

We are carefully considering how best to protect individuals and communities from hate whilst balancing the need to protect the fundamental right to free speech. We are also ensuring the police can spend their time dealing with issues that matter most to communities. We will set out next steps in due course.

## ■ Police: Deployment

**Nick Timothy:** [\[8951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an estimate of the number and proportion of warranted police officers that were (a) deployed and (b) unavailable for deployment to frontline roles per police force in the last 12 months.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

The Home Office collects and publishes data annually on the number and proportion of police officers available for duty and those in frontline roles as at 31 March each year in the 'Police Workforce, England and Wales' statistical bulletin, available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/police-workforce-england-and-wales>.

Table H1 of the data tables accompanying the publication provides the number and proportion of police officers available for duty, by Police Force Area, as at 31 March 2024. The number of police officers available for duty is calculated by excluding those on long-term absence.

The Home Office also publishes statistics on the functions of police workers, following the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA) Police Objective Analysis (POA) framework. Table F1 of the data tables accompanying the publication provides the primary function of police officers by Police Force Area, as at 31 March 2024. Those on long-term absence, which are not available for duty, are included in the 'Other' function; however, this group may also contain some officers that are available for duty. Table F5 presents the number and proportion of officers that are in frontline roles, by Police Force Area, as at 31 March 2024. The proportions are calculated excluding officers recorded under the 'Other' and 'National Policing' functions.

## ■ Royal and VIP Executive Committee

**Paul Holmes:** [\[9549\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has participated in discussions on the provision of escorted policing to private individuals who are not formally classified as protected individuals in its capacity as her representative on the Executive Committee for the Protection of Royalty and Public Figures since 5 July 2024.

**Dan Jarvis:**

The government's protective security system is rigorous and proportionate. It is our long-standing policy not to provide detailed information on protective security arrangements, as doing so could compromise their integrity and affect individuals' security.

Decisions on security arrangements are independent operational decisions for the police.

**■ Taylor Swift**

**Paul Holmes:** [8992]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions (a) she has had and (b) officials in her Department have had with the Metropolitan Police on Special Escort Group policing for (i) Taylor Swift and (ii) her entourage.

**Paul Holmes:** [8993]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the Metropolitan Police originally recommended that the Special Escort Group was necessary to escort Taylor Swift to and from Wembley Stadium.

**Paul Holmes:** [8994]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what information her Department holds on the estimated cost to the public purse of the special escort group policing for Taylor Swift and her entourage; and whether any external sources contributed to that cost.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

The safety of the British public is the first priority of this Government. We make no apologies for ensuring citizens are protected.

It is entirely right that for major events in the capital, the Government has a dialogue with the Metropolitan Police and Mayor to discuss planning to ensure events happen safely. Operational decisions on security arrangements are made by the police, independent of politicians.

It is long-standing policy not to provide detailed information on security arrangements, as doing so could compromise their integrity and affect individuals' security.

**■ Undocumented Migrants: English Channel**

**Nigel Farage:** [8692]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment her Department has made of the value for money of payments made to the French government to stop the departures of illegal boats travelling to the UK from northern France.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

Expenditure and value for money are monitored closely, with a joint governance structure to ensure the suitability of proposed expenditure against the shared aim of the UK and French Governments of stopping these dangerous and unnecessary crossings.

**Nigel Farage:** [8693]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many small boats without permission to enter the UK departing from northern France have been disrupted this year, and of those how many migrants were (a) detained or (b) attempted a further crossing.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

So far in 2024 (to 6 October) a total of 607 boats have been prevented from crossing the Channel as a result of our joint work with the French.

**■ Undocumented Migrants: South Basildon and East Thurrock**

**James McMurdock:** [\[9077\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many irregular migrants are housed in South Basildon and East Thurrock constituency.

**James McMurdock:** [\[9079\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many beds are reserved to house irregular migrants in South Basildon and East Thurrock constituency.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

The Home Office does not reserve beds for irregular migrants. In accordance with the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, the Home Office has a statutory obligation to provide destitute asylum seekers with accommodation and subsistence support whilst their application for asylum is being considered. The Government is determined to restore order to the asylum system so that it operates swiftly, firmly and fairly. This includes our accommodation sites, as the Home Office continues to identify a range of options to minimise the use of hotels and ensure better use of public money, whilst maintaining sufficient accommodation to meet demand.

Data on the number of supported asylum seekers in accommodation by local authority can be found within the Asy\_D11 tab for our most recent statistics release. The data can also be broken down by local authority. [Immigration system statistics data tables - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)\(opens in a new tab\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-data-tables)

**■ Yvette Cooper**

**Paul Holmes:** [\[8996\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, on what date she declared the hospitality of tickets to the Taylor Swift concert in August 2024 to her Permanent Secretary.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

As is standard practice, all ministerial gifts and hospitality received are declared on the Ministerial gifts, hospitality, travel and meetings transparency data on gov.uk

[Home Office: ministerial gifts, hospitality, travel and meetings, January to March 2024 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/home-office-ministerial-gifts-hospitality-travel-and-meetings-january-to-march-2024)

**HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION****■ All-party Parliamentary Groups: Membership****Phil Brickell:****[R] [9977]**

To ask the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent and Rhymney, representing the House of Commons Commission, if the Commission will require All Party Parliamentary Groups to publish a list of all their members.

**Nick Smith:**

APPGs are already required to publish a list of all their members. The reporting requirements for APPGs are set out in the Guide to the APPG Rules. Paragraph 67(b) of the Guide to the Rules requires APPGs to publish on their website, or provide on request if they do not have a website, a list of its members (both parliamentary and external).

Changes to the APPG Rules are approved by the House on the recommendation of the Committee on Standards. The Committee on Standards, not the House of Commons Commission, is responsible for updating and issuing the Guide to the APPG Rules.

**HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT****■ Homelessness****Andrew Rosindell:****[8774]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to help reduce the number of children living in temporary accommodation.

**Dr Beccy Cooper:****[8937]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what support her Department provides to district councils to help reduce the levels of homelessness.

**Dr Roz Savage:****[9014]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what additional steps she plans to take to support district councils to reduce the levels of homelessness.

**Rushanara Ali:**

The Government is clear that homelessness is too high and too many families are living in temporary accommodation. We want to take a long-term approach and, working with Mayors and councils across the country, we will develop a new cross-government strategy to get us back on track to ending homelessness. The Deputy Prime Minister will chair an Inter-Ministerial Group to drive this forward.



We are also tackling the root causes of homelessness, including by delivering the biggest increase in social and affordable housebuilding in a generation. We will abolish Section 21 'no fault' evictions with immediate effect, preventing private renters being exploited and discriminated against, and empowering people to challenge unreasonable rent increases.

## ■ HOPE not hate

**Mrs Kemi Badenoch:**

[\[8195\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether (a) officials, (b) special advisers and (c) Ministers have met representatives of Hope Not Hate since the general election.

**Alex Norris:**

(a) Officials have attended forums where Hope Not Hate have been present and have been sighted on reports generated by the organisation since the General Election, (b) details of meetings special advisers have with external organisations are published on gov.uk, (c) details of ministerial meetings with external organisations are published on gov.uk.

**Nick Timothy:**

[\[8924\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department has provided funding to Hope Not Hate since the general election.

**Alex Norris:**

MHCLG has not provided any funding to Hope Not Hate since the election.

## ■ Ilois: Housing

**Tom Hayes:**

[\[8577\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities & Local Government, with reference to her oral statement on British Indian Ocean Territory: Negotiations of 7 October 2024, Official Report, column 45, whether the Government plans to provide housing support to Chagossians in the UK.

**Alex Norris:**

As British citizens living in the UK, Chagossian British Citizens have the same rights and responsibilities as any other British citizens and are able to live and work in the UK free of any immigration controls.

The Government has published [guidance](#) for Chagossian British Citizens moving to the UK, which confirms Chagossians should make their own accommodation arrangements before they travel.

The department is committed to working in partnership with local authorities to ensure they are able to support Chagossian arrivals in their area.

## ■ Levelling Up Fund and Towns Fund

**Dr Roz Savage:** [\[9016\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to continue funding for previously agreed (a) Town Deals and (b) Levelling Up Round 3 awards.

**Alex Norris:**

All 101 places selected for Town Deals are now well progressed into delivery, using their share of £2.35 billion to support projects that boost economic regeneration. All Town Deal project business cases have been approved and all monies are now fully allocated. Annual payments are scheduled to be made as planned and the programme is due to close in March 2026. I refer the hon Member to my answer to Question UIN [3603](#) on 9 September 2024 pertaining to Round 3 of the Levelling Up Fund.

## ■ Sleeping Rough

**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[8773\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to extend funding for the (a) Night Shelter Transformation Fund and (b) Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme.

**Rushanara Ali:**

As announced by the Chancellor on 29 July, spending plans for 2025-26 will be set alongside the Budget on 30th October. Following departmental review and processes, funding allocations for rough sleeping services will be announced via gov.uk.

## ■ Supporting Families Programme

**Damian Hinds:** [\[8791\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many full-time equivalent staff were allocated to the Supporting Families Programme in its final full year in her Department; and what grades those staff members were.

**Alex Norris:**

My department allocated 20.6 full time equivalent staff to the Supporting Families Programme in its final full year.

The breakdown of those staff by grade was as follows:

#### TABLE-AGREED ROLES

Roles in scope following HR scoping exercise

	<i>Total</i>
<b>DD</b>	1
<b>G6</b>	2
<b>G7</b>	8.7
<b>SEO</b>	4
<b>HEO</b>	3.9
<b>EO</b>	1
<i>Total</i>	<b>20.6</b>

## JUSTICE

### ■ Employment Tribunals Service: Fees and Charges

**Johanna Baxter:** [\[9004\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the consultation entitled Introducing fees in the Employment Tribunals and the Employment Appeal Tribunal, which closed on 25 March 2024, what her policy is on introducing a £55 issue fee for claimants.

**Heidi Alexander:**

The consultation to introduce Employment Tribunal fees was published under the last Government and no decisions have yet been made on the proposal.

### ■ Gov Facility Services

**John McDonnell:** [\[9398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent assessment she has made of the potential merits of insourcing the work currently undertaken by Government Facilities Services Limited.

**John McDonnell:** [\[9399\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, when she plans to respond to the requests on insourcing made by trade unions in their meeting with her on 18 July 2024.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

The Government is committed to ensuring professional Facility Management services across its prison estate. Our approach to securing delivery will be set out later this year.

Ministry of Justice officials regularly engage with Trade Union officials on the Lord Chancellor's behalf regarding the future of Gov Facility Services Limited and the delivery of facilities management services across the Prison and Probations estate.

■ **Probation****Caroline Voaden:****[9898]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September 2024 to Question 3550 on Probation, what access does the unified Probation Service have to information that was previously held by the Community Rehabilitation Companies; and whether current probation officers can access all relevant information about cases that were held by the CRCs.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

Probation Service practitioners have a complete record of all cases that were managed by Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs). National Delius and Offender Assessment System (OASys) records were preserved as the primary case record, as was the position before, during and after the structural changes to probation made by the Transforming Rehabilitation reforms.

In addition to this, the Probation Reform Programme carried out extensive work to ensure that any information from local CRC recording systems was appropriately migrated at the point of reunification.

**LEADER OF THE HOUSE**■ **Government Departments: Written Questions****John Glen:****[8807]**

To ask the Leader of the House, Pursuant to the answer of 18 September 2024, to Question 5016, on Emily Middleton, how many written parliamentary question responses have cited a forthcoming FOI response.

**Lucy Powell:**

The information requested is not held by the government. It is a matter for individual departments to determine how to respond to parliamentary questions from Members. However, the government's position regarding the relationship between the treatment of requests for information through parliamentary questions and the Freedom of Information Act 2000 is unchanged. The Guide to Parliamentary Work (available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guide-to-parliamentary-work>), published by my office, states that "if information would be released under FOI, it would also be released in response to a WPQ". I have written to all Members of Cabinet to remind

departments and Ministers about the importance of providing full and timely responses to parliamentary questions.

The Procedure Committee monitors departmental PQ performance and their sessional reporting continues to be an effective tool. I look forward to working with the Committee on this.

## ■ Written Questions

**Dr Ben Spencer:**

[8887]

To ask the Leader of the House, how many and what proportion of (a) named day and (b) ordinary written parliamentary questions were answered within the response deadline by (i) Department and (ii) month since 4 July 2024.

**Lucy Powell:**

Data on response times to written parliamentary questions (PQs) is held by the House, not the government. PQs are an important part of the scrutiny of government and we are committed to ensuring that Members receive full and timely responses. In May 2024, the Procedure Committee published its report regarding Departmental performance in responding to Written Parliamentary Questions (PQs) in the 2022-23 Parliamentary Session (available at:

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5804/cmselect/cmproced/676/report.html>).

The government has recently shared its response with the Committee and recognised that there is room for improvement upon the record of the previous government. I have written to all Members of Cabinet to ask that departments and Ministers consider how performance can be improved in this Parliament.

The Procedure Committee monitors departmental PQ performance and their sessional reporting continues to be an effective tool. I look forward to working with the Committee on this.

## SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

### ■ Internet: Young People

**Dr Luke Evans:**

[8882]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps his Department plans to take through the new joint government working group on children's online safety to assess the impact of digitally-manipulated body images on young people's mental health.

**Feryal Clark:**

Under the UK's Online Safety Act relevant services will need to prevent children from accessing the most harmful content, including content promoting eating disorders. Ofcom has also proposed in its draft child safety codes that platforms take steps to protect children from depressive content and body image content.

The government recognises that these issues must also be addressed working with our international partners. Once established, the new UK-US working group will facilitate the sharing of expertise and evidence, including from implementation of the UK's Online Safety Act, on the impact of social media on children's mental health and well-being.

## ■ Social Media: Drugs

**Dr Luke Evans:**

[\[8883\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps his Department plans to take through the new joint government working group on children's online safety to assess the impact of the illegal sale of IPEDs and anabolic steroids via social media platforms on young people.

**Feryal Clark:**

The UK's Online Safety Act places duties on online platforms to tackle illegal content and protect children's safety by mitigating risks identified. Platforms will need to put in place proactive measures to prevent the unlawful supply, or offer to supply, of controlled drugs on their services.

The government recognises that these issues must also be addressed working with our international partners. Once established, the new UK-US working group will facilitate the sharing of expertise and evidence, including from implementation of the UK's Online Safety Act.

## SCOTLAND

## ■ Business and Regional Planning and Development: Scotland

**Chris Kane:**

[\[9650\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what steps the Government is taking to (a) support rural businesses and (b) promote rural economic development in Scotland.

**Ian Murray:**

Growing the economy across both rural and urban areas is a key mission for the Government, and helping rural businesses succeed is a significant part of this work. Nature recovery plays a critical role in supporting the rural economy, and in turn businesses can help provide food security, enhance biodiversity and accelerate progress towards net zero targets.

In Scotland, we work closely with the Scottish Government and its agencies to ensure that businesses have access to the support they need to grow and thrive, including through export, and that we showcase the opportunities offered in all parts of Scotland to potential global investors.

For example, the Investment Fund for Scotland offers a range of commercial finance options with smaller loans and debt finance from £25,000 to £2 million and equity

investment up to £5 million. The fund covers the whole of Scotland, including rural and coastal areas..

## ■ Children: Poverty

**Chris Kane:** [\[9661\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what discussions he has had with (a) the Scottish Government and (b) the Chancellor of the Exchequer on funding for the voluntary sector in Scotland to help reduce child poverty.

**Ian Murray:**

Tackling child poverty is a shared priority across all parts of the UK. I am a member of the Child Poverty Taskforce, which is confronting the wide-ranging and deep-rooted causes of child poverty. The Child Poverty Taskforce will collaborate with the Scottish Government on our common goal to reduce and alleviate child poverty. The Taskforce will work with the Scottish Government in developing the UK-wide strategy, to be published in spring next year, to improve children's lives and life chances now and address the root causes of child poverty in the long-term.

I have had a number of discussions with Scottish Government Ministers since my appointment, as have many of my Ministerial colleagues, including the Prime Minister. To establish collaboration on the development of a UK-wide Child Poverty Strategy, the co-chairs of the Child Poverty Taskforce met with the First Minister and the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice earlier this month. We look forward to continuing our partnership to build consensus for action and deliver sustainable change for all children across the UK. The Taskforce is also engaging directly with voluntary sector organisations from across the UK.

The Chancellor will set out overall fiscal and spending plans in her Budget on 30 October and the Spending Review in the spring.

## ■ Population: Scotland

**Chris Kane:** [\[9651\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what steps the Government is taking to tackle depopulation in rural areas in Scotland.

**Ian Murray:**

The Government recognises the importance of tackling rural depopulation, and the wider challenges faced by rural and island communities in Scotland. We are committed to supporting these communities by boosting investment and opportunities.

For example, we are in the process of rolling out the Shared Rural Network (SRN) program (alongside EE, three, VMO2 and Vodafone), to improve mobile coverage and connectivity across the UK. Rural areas in Scotland will be among the biggest beneficiaries of this programme.

Furthermore, the UK Government is investing £50m covering the three island groups – Shetland, Orkney and Western Isles – through the Islands Growth Deal. The Deal supports the Islands’ ambitions for net zero, aquaculture and development of tourism and heritage projects. These investments exemplify the Government’s ongoing work towards growing the rural economy and improving infrastructure, which are critical to addressing rural depopulation.

## ■ Scotland Office

**Charlie Dewhirst:**

[\[9345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what meetings (a) Ministers and (b) his officials have held with external stakeholders since 5 July 2024.

**Ian Murray:**

Details of Ministers’ and senior officials’ meetings with external individuals and organisations are published quarterly in arrears on GOV.UK.

Data for the period of July to September 2024 will be published in due course.

## TRANSPORT

### ■ Chiltern Railways

**Dr Neil Shastri-Hurst:**

[\[9114\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will take steps to increase capacity on Chiltern Railways.

**Simon Lightwood:**

We continue to work closely with Chiltern Railways to support delivery of its train fleet renewal programme to improve passenger experience and drive sustainable growth across the region.

Chiltern is exploring options to procure additional trains, while following robust assurance steps to ensure it has a strong business case that delivers value for money for the taxpayer.

### ■ Department for Transport: Ministers' Private Offices

**Sir Ashley Fox:**

[\[9281\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much was spent on (a) new furniture and fittings and (b) other refurbishment of Ministerial offices in her Department since the dissolution of the last Parliament; and on what items this was spent.

**Mike Kane:**

Since 5 July 2024 the Department has spent £2,490 on furniture and £1,095 on redecoration of Ministerial offices.



## ■ Department for Transport: Waste Management

**Adam Jogee:** [\[8979\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to reduce food waste in her Department.

**Mike Kane:**

The government is committed to improving its own impact upon the environment. The Greening Government Commitments requires departments and agencies to measure and report to Defra on food waste for estates with over 50 full time equivalent staff and or over 500m2 floor area offering a food service.

The Department is taking a number of steps to measure and reduce food waste. At our London headquarters building the catering provider is a signatory to the industry-wide WRAP Courtauld 2030 commitment, which includes reducing food waste by 50% by 2030.

At our other site where we have onsite catering arrangements we work with food charities to donate surplus food items at the end of each day (as required). On site staffing forecasts are also provided in order to determine daily food quantities required. This minimises the risk of over-ordering and reduces food waste.

## ■ Driving Tests: Older People

**Marie Goldman:** [\[9655\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of requiring senior people to retake their driving test upon reaching a certain age.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) believes that most people want to be safe, law-abiding drivers and any post-test intervention needs to be focused where it will achieve most benefit and, where appropriate, should be targeted against irresponsible drivers.

The courts already have the powers to require drivers to retake the driving test in certain circumstances, and the police can also offer remedial education courses to those who would otherwise be prosecuted for some driving offences.

There are no plans to introduce mandatory vehicle driving re-tests.

If drivers do not drive for a period of time, DVSA recommends they receive a form of refresher training.

## ■ Heathrow Airport: Railways

**Dr Ben Spencer:** [\[8889\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact on (a) local traffic and (b) air pollution of a direct rail link from Egham to Heathrow.

**Simon Lightwood:**

A direct rail link from Egham to Heathrow is not currently being developed by the Department for Transport. Heathrow Southern Rail Ltd (HSRL) is developing proposals for a southern rail link to the airport, and I would expect impacts on local traffic and air quality to be assessed as part of their work.

**High Speed 2 Line: Newcastle-under-Lyme****Adam Jogiee:**[\[8980\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will meet the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme to discuss the release of HS2 compensation for residents in Newcastle-under-Lyme.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

The Rail Minister, Lord Hendy, would gladly meet the Honourable Member to discuss land and property related compensation for residents in Newcastle-under-Lyme.

**Ince and Elton Station****Mike Amesbury:**[\[8851\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans she has for Ince and Elton train station.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The Government believes that local transport authorities and local leaders are best placed to prioritise and take forward transport projects which are most appropriate for the areas they serve, particularly where they will support economic growth, job creation, more and better housing, and, ultimately, demonstrate a good business case.

I would encourage the Hon member to continue to engage with local stakeholders further on this.

**London Airports: Standards****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[9147\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an estimate of the number and proportion of outbound flights from the six largest airports serving London that were delayed over the last three months; and whether she has had discussions with (a) London Heathrow airport, (b) London Gatwick airport, (c) City airport, (d) Luton airport, (e) London Stansted airport and (f) Southend airport on steps they are taking to decrease the number of (i) delays and (ii) cancellations.

**Mike Kane:**

The aviation industry predominantly operates in the private sector, therefore it is the responsibility of the industry to have robust resilience plans in place to meet demand, recruit, and roster staff, and have appropriate mitigations in place.

The Civil Aviation Authority publishes quarterly aviation trends, which include delay statistics for the airports in question. The most recent published data is for April – June 2024 and can be found [here](#).

The Department for Transport engages regularly with industry to understand the issues facing industry, and to ensure that plans are in place to minimise delays and disruption. For example, the Aviation Minister wrote to the industry in October 2024 regarding preparedness for the upcoming winter period.

## ■ **Motor Insurance: Task Forces**

**Robin Swann:**

[\[9859\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the cross-Government Taskforce on motor insurance will include representation from Northern Ireland.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

We recognise that the concerns the Taskforce will work on are shared across the UK. Therefore, we have proposed a meeting of the Taskforce that includes representatives from the Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Executive to discuss any key differences in markets across the UK and how these affect the cost of insurance for consumers.

This Government committed in its manifesto to tackle the high costs of motor insurance. To deliver on this commitment, the UK Government formed a cross-government Taskforce on motor insurance, co-chaired by the Department for Transport and His Majesty's Treasury, which met for the first time on 16th October.

The Taskforce is comprised of ministers from relevant Government Departments and by the Financial Conduct Authority and Competition and Markets Authority. The Taskforce is supported by a separate Stakeholder Panel of industry experts representing the insurance, motor, and consumer sector.

This Taskforce has a strategic remit to set the direction for UK Government policy, identifying short- and long-term actions for departments that may contribute to stabilising or reducing premiums, while maintaining appropriate levels of cover. It will evaluate the impact of increased insurance costs on consumers and the insurance industry, including how this impacts different demographics, geographies and communities.

## ■ **Motor Vehicles: Imports**

**Alex Sobel:**

[\[9755\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of off-road vehicles imported from the USA on pedestrian safety.

**Alex Sobel:**

[\[9756\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the potential environmental impact of off-road vehicles imported from the USA.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

Any imported car or light goods vehicle up to 10 years old will require approval before it can be registered for use on the roads of Great Britain to ensure it meets prescribed environmental and safety requirements. There are several different approval schemes available, and the process will vary depending on the specific scheme and type of vehicle, but each contains provisions to minimise, as far as practicable, tailpipe emissions and risk to pedestrians. Imported vehicles over 10 years old are required to pass an annual roadworthiness test to assess their tailpipe emissions and ensure that they are safe.

**■ Network Rail: Finance****Dr Kieran Mullan:**[\[9113\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much and what proportion of the Control Period 7 funding settlement remains available to Network Rail; and if she will take steps to ensure that total funding level remains the same for the next financial year.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The full regulated Control Period 7 funding settlement, as outlined in the Delivery Plan, remains available to Network Rail. The phasing of spend is subject to annual update of the Delivery Plan for the 5 year period as led by Network Rail working in conjunction with the regulator and Government.

**■ Parking: Schools****Neil O'Brien:**[\[9763\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she plans to bring forward legislative reforms to zig zag markings outside schools to enable enforcement even where cars are partially on the pavement.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

Local authorities in England with designated civil parking enforcement powers already have the option to use existing traffic order-making powers to take civil enforcement action against vehicles which are stationary, whether fully or partially, on zigzag markings outside schools. Civil parking enforcement powers have been designated in 98 percent of local authority areas in England. Elsewhere enforcement remains a police matter.

**■ Public Transport: Essex****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[8771\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to modernise public transport in Essex.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The government knows that Britain needs a modern transport network to help kickstart economic growth. Good local bus services are an essential part of prosperous and sustainable communities. As announced in the King's Speech on 17

July 2024, the government will introduce a Buses Bill later this parliamentary session to put the power over local bus services back in the hands of local leaders right across England, including in Essex. 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. The Department will work closely with local leaders and bus operators to deliver on the government's ambitions.

The Secretary of State has also set out plans for the biggest overhaul of our railways in a generation by delivering publicly owned passenger rail within the first term in government. The government will do this as contracts with existing operators expire or if the relevant contractual conditions for early termination are met. The Passenger Railway Services Bill, also announced on 17 July, will allow the government to deliver on this commitment to bring rail services back into public ownership.

The government will also establish a new arm's length body, Great British Railways, which will deliver a unified system that focuses on reliable, affordable, high-quality, and efficient services; along with ensuring safety and accessibility.

#### ■ **Railway Stations: South Basildon and East Thurrock**

**James McMurdock:**

[\[9092\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of train stations in South Basildon and East Thurrock constituency.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The Department has made no recent specific assessment of the adequacy of train stations in South Basildon and East Thurrock constituency.

#### ■ **Railways**

**Helen Morgan:**

[\[9054\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how long it took her Department to consider each application for a change to the national passenger rail timetable for December 2024; and what the average time was for her Department to determine the outcome of an application.

**Simon Lightwood:**

Operators need to agree their train service level plans and funding in advance of operation allowing enough time for consideration by the Department before they engage with Network Rail's timetable production process. Typically, this is done through an annual business plan cycle with submissions in December and approval in March. However, they can be done through the year and approval time depends on the scale of the change.

**Helen Morgan:** [9056]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to ensure the timely determination of track access applications on changes to the national passenger rail timetable for (a) May 2025 and (b) December 2025.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The Secretary of State supports and encourages Department for Transport contracted operators to make timely application to the industry Track Access process. Track Access decisions are the responsibility of the Office of Rail and Road as independent rail regulator, which has taken steps across industry to improve timely decision-making.

## ■ Railways: Compensation

**Nick Timothy:** [8972]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what data her Department holds on the (a) number and (b) total sum of compensation payments made to passengers by each railway franchise in each of the last 10 years.

**Simon Lightwood:**

Statistics on the number of delay compensation claims made by passengers to each railway franchise is published by the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) and may be found online at: <https://dataportal.orr.gov.uk/statistics/passenger-experience/delay-compensation-claims/>, 'Table 4410 – Delay Compensation Claims'. The time series for this dataset begins in the financial year April 2018 to March 2019.

Data on the total sum of compensation payments made to passengers by each railway franchise between 2019/20 and 2022/23 may be found online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/train-operating-companies-passengers-charter-compensation/train-operating-companies-passengers-charter-compensation>.

Data on compensation payments between 2009/10 and 2018/19 for those train operating companies where information was available can be accessed from: <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20201020210716/https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/train-operating-companies-passengers-charter-compensation>. This data includes discretionary compensation paid by the train operators for poor service, e.g. out of service facilities, as well as delay compensation claims.

## ■ Railways: Complaints

**Nick Timothy:** [8971]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what data her Department holds on the number of passenger complaints for each railway franchise in each of the last 10 years.

**Simon Lightwood:**

Information on the number of passenger complaints for each railway franchise can be found online at: <https://dataportal.orr.gov.uk/statistics/passenger->

[experience/passenger-rail-service-complaints/table-4100-complaints-closed-by-operator/](#) .

Note that this table provides information based on the number of passenger complaints closed by each operator. The time series for this data set begins in the financial year April 2016 to March 2017.

## ■ Railways: Cross Border Cooperation

**Helen Morgan:**

**[9058]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions she has had with the governments of (a) Wales and (b) Scotland on growing cross-border rail patronage through open-access passenger rail operations.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The Secretary of State has not had any discussions specifically on growing cross-border rail patronage through open access with either the government of Wales or Scotland.

## ■ Railways: Fares

**Charlotte Nichols:**

**[8896]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to simplify railway ticket pricing.

**Simon Lightwood:**

This Government is committed to reviewing the overcomplicated fares system with a view to simplifying it. We have already begun simplifying fares through our pay as you go schemes and work to simplify fares with LNER. More details will be announced in due course.

## ■ Railways: Hampshire

**Dame Caroline Dinéage:**

**[8797]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of the (a) number and (b) frequency of train services in the South Hampshire region.

**Simon Lightwood:**

Department officials work closely with all operators on seeking to increase service levels. The Department needs to balance demand with taxpayer money when approving additional service levels across the country.

## ■ Railways: Standards

**Nick Timothy:**

**[8969]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many train cancellations there were for each railway franchise (a) in total and (b) as a percentage of the number of services run by each franchise, for each of the last ten years.

**Simon Lightwood:**

Information relating to the number of train cancellations for each railway franchise for the past ten years may be found online at:

<https://dataportal.orr.gov.uk/statistics/performance/passenger-rail-performance> in 'Table 3123 - Trains planned and cancellations by operator and cause.

**Nick Timothy:****[8970]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the average percentage of scheduled train miles operated was for each railway franchise in each of the last ten years.

**Simon Lightwood:**

Statistics on the number of train services run are published by the ORR -

<https://dataportal.orr.gov.uk/statistics/performance/passenger-rail-performance/>.

Table 3123 – 'Trains planned and cancellations by operator and cause' shows the average percentage of scheduled trains that did not run.

**■ Stansted Airport: Carbon Emissions****Clive Lewis:****[8837]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of the announced expansion of the Stansted airport on net zero targets.

**Clive Lewis:****[8838]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment her Department has made of the potential implications for her policies of projected annual carbon emissions from Stansted airport.

**Mike Kane:**

The Government is not opposed to airport expansion as long as it contributes to economic growth and is compatible with strict environmental standards. We are committed to achieving the UK's net zero target by 2050 and have made early progress on sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) through the introduction of a mandate from 1 January 2025 and our plans to legislate for a SAF revenue certainty mechanism. We are also committed to airspace modernisation.

Details of the proposals to expand Stansted Airport and the assessment of its impacts, including environmental impacts, were carefully considered as part of the statutory planning process. Its impacts, including environmental impacts, were carefully assessed as part of the statutory planning process held between January and March 2021.

The independent Planning Inspectorate granted planning approval in June 2021 and a copy of its decision notice and statement of reasons, including views on its impacts on environmental obligations can be found [here](#).



## ■ West Coast Main Line: Crime

**Adam Jogee:**

[\[8974\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what data her Department holds on the number of crimes reported on West Coast Mainline trains between London Euston and Manchester Piccadilly in each of the last five years.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The British Transport Police (BTP) are responsible for policing the rail network in Great Britain including the West Coast Mainline. They have provided the following figures, covering all types of crime, reported between London Euston and Manchester Piccadilly on Avanti West Coast and West Midlands Railway trains and stations operated by them on this route.

2020: 1,248

2021: 1,363

2022: 1,894

2023: 2,210

2024 (to August 31<sup>st</sup>): 1,590

It is important to note that for the reporting years 2020 and 2021, overall passenger numbers on the rail network were significantly reduced due to travel restrictions implemented in response to the Covid-19 Pandemic. Passenger numbers continue to increase across the entire rail network - in 2023/24, there was a 16% increase on the previous year.

The BTP is committed to tackling crime across the rail network and they work closely with the Train Operating Companies to target offenders on a daily basis.

## ■ West Midlands Trains: Standards

**Dame Harriett Baldwin:**

[\[8820\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she publish data on the performance of West Midlands Rail services on the Birmingham to Hereford line in each of the last six reporting periods.

**Simon Lightwood:**

Specific route performance for the West Midlands Railway (WMR) operated Birmingham to Hereford line can be found online for the most recent period (18 August to 14 September) online at: [//www.westmidlandsrailway.co.uk/about-us/train-performance](http://www.westmidlandsrailway.co.uk/about-us/train-performance).

This data is updated every four weeks. WMR should be contacted for information about further periods.

**TREASURY**■ **Banks: Urban Areas**

**James McMurdock:** [\[9086\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps she is taking to help protect access to high street banks for the (a) elderly and (b) disabled.

**Tulip Siddiq:**

Access to financial services is key to ensuring that all people, including those who are disabled or elderly and require in-person services, can fully participate in society.

This is why the Government is working closely with industry to roll out 350 banking hubs across the UK. The UK banking sector has committed to deliver these hubs by the end of this parliament. These hubs will provide individuals who need face-to-face support with critical cash and banking services. Over 160 banking hubs have been announced so far, with 100 expected to open by Christmas.

Cash Access UK, who oversee banking hub rollout, work to ensure that their physical premises and services are accessible, and meet the needs of customers.

■ **Churches: VAT**

**Neil O'Brien:** [\[9765\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she plans to extend the scheme making church repairs exempt from VAT beyond March 2025.

**James Murray:**

The Chancellor of the Exchequer will soon set out the details of the government's spending priorities for 25/26 in the usual way at the Spending Review on the 30 October.

■ **Drugs: VAT**

**David Chadwick:** [\[9017\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will remove VAT from medicines for NHS hospitals.

**James Murray:**

As the NHS is a public body and is not in business for VAT purposes, the VAT charged by the supplier on the total price of the medications cannot be reclaimed from HMRC. Many public bodies incur VAT in a similar way whilst delivering their statutory responsibilities, and HM Treasury funds them, including the NHS, with this irrecoverable VAT in mind.

There are no current plans to change the VAT treatment of medicines for NHS hospitals. The government keeps all taxes under review.

## ■ Economic Situation: Equality

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[9724\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps she is taking to reduce economic inequality.

**James Murray:**

The Government is committed to building a fairer society, spreading opportunity, and improving living standards for all.

The Chancellor will set out her Budget on 30 October.

## ■ Government Departments: Communication and Consultants

**John Glen:** [\[8813\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she has provided guidance to (a) Government departments and (b) arm's-length bodies on steps that should be taken to reduce spending on (i) communications and (ii) consultancy fees, in the context of the commitments made in her Department's policy paper entitled Fixing the foundations: Public spending audit 2024-25, CP 1133, published in July 2024.

**Darren Jones:**

The responsibility for spending decisions within Departments and Arms Length Bodies (ALBs) rests with Accounting Officers (AOs).

Overarching guidance for appropriate use of public funds is set out in Managing Public Money, whilst specific guidance on effective use of consultancy services is set out in the government's Consultancy Playbook.

As part of the Spending Review, HM Treasury will require each department to provide updated estimates of their planned spending on consultants and review to ensure compliance. HM Treasury and Cabinet Office continue to monitor consultancy spending to ensure that commitments set out by the Chancellor are met.

To reduce communications spending across government, Government Communication Service conducted a review of all planned major government communications campaigns to ensure that these offer value for money for the taxpayer, are joined-up and deliver the greatest impact.

The Government will provide an update on the delivery of these commitments at the Budget.

## ■ Hospitals: Drugs

**David Chadwick:** [\[9012\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of removing the VAT charges on medicines dispensed in hospitals.

**James Murray:**

Where medications are provided as part of the NHS's statutory obligation of medical care, they are exempt from VAT. This means that medications are VAT-free for

patients when provided to an in-patient in hospital. Furthermore, medications for out-patients prescribed by most hospital pharmacies are zero-rated for VAT, meaning that these pharmacies can recover their VAT costs and the medication is also VAT-free for patients.

While the NHS is unable to reclaim its VAT costs, due to the exemption, this irrecoverable VAT is taken into account in NHS funding.

## ■ National Wealth Fund

**Clive Lewis:** [\[8842\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the National Wealth Fund's statement of strategic priorities will include (a) meeting net zero targets and (b) the promotion of poverty reduction.

**James Murray:**

The National Wealth Fund will operate at arm's length from the government.

The government will provide the National Wealth Fund with a new framework of investment principles and a statement of strategic priorities in the coming months.

## ■ Office for Value for Money

**Ben Obese-Jecty:** [\[8950\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 10 September 2024 to question 3891 on the Office for Value for Money, what progress the Office for Value for Money has made on (a) finalising a workplan and (b) appointing an independent Chair.

**Darren Jones:**

The Office for Value for Money is in the process of appointing an independent Chair and developing its workplan. Further details will be made available in due course.

## ■ Private Education: VAT

**Damian Hinds:** [\[8789\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 2 August 2024 to Question 1651 on Private Education: VAT, whether independent Welsh language schools will be exempt from VAT.

**Damian Hinds:** [\[8790\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether summer schools which are operated by (a) an independent school on its own site and (b) a third party on an independent school site will be liable for VAT; and whether the liability is changed if a significant part of the course content is English language tuition.

**James Murray:**

The draft legislation set out the definition of private schools within the scope of this policy. This includes Welsh language schools if they provide full-time education for children of compulsory school age and/or full-time education for a fee to 16-19 year

olds and are principally concerned with providing education suitable for that age range (for instance, a sixth form) for a charge.

All education, vocational training, and boarding provided by a private school for a charge will be within scope of this policy, including educational summer schools run by a private school. However, if the summer school purely consists of childcare and is not educational in nature, it will remain exempt from VAT, as welfare services are exempt from VAT. For VAT purposes, education means a course, lesson, instruction, or study in any subject (whether or not that subject is normally taught in schools, colleges, or universities), regardless of where and when it takes place. As well as academic subjects, this includes activities such as performing arts, physical training, sports, and arts & crafts

Summer schools run by third-party providers on a private school's premises are not impacted by these changes. Summer schools run by third-parties have always been subject to VAT if the provider was registered and the summer school didn't qualify for the welfare VAT exemption.

Based on the draft legislation, the degree to which a summer school consists of English language tuition does not affect its VAT treatment.

The final policy design will be confirmed at the Budget on 30 October.

**Munira Wilson:**

[\[8877\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether independent school fees for people over the age of 18 who are (a) in education and (b) have an Education Health and Care Plan will be exempt from VAT.

**Munira Wilson:**

[\[8878\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether independent education settings for people over the age of 19 will be VAT-exempt.

**James Murray:**

As set out in our manifesto and confirmed in the Chancellor's July statement, we are ending the VAT break for private schools. The government will introduce 20% VAT on education and boarding services provided for a charge from 1 January 2025.

As per the draft VAT legislation that was published in July, the new VAT charge will apply to education and vocational training provided either at sixth forms attached to private schools or standalone private sixth form colleges. However, education and vocational training provided by further education colleges, which are classified as public sector institutions, will not be subject to VAT. The Government will confirm the final policy design at the Budget.

Support is available to all educational institutions to help them understand any new tax liabilities that result from these changes; alongside existing support for businesses, bespoke HMRC guidance is available online and this will be complemented with webinars intended to talk schools through the steps they will need to take to comply with any new tax liabilities.

The change will not impact pupils with the most acute additional needs, where these can only be met in private schools. Where pupils' places in private schools are being funded by local authorities (LAs) because their needs can only be met in private school (e.g. in England, where attendance at that private school is required by a child's Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)), LAs will be able to reclaim the VAT so it does not apply to those fees.

## ■ Property Development: Taxation

**Frank McNally:** [\[9044\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much funding the Welsh Government (a) has received and (b) is forecast to receive in additional Barnett Formula consequential funding as a result of income raised via the Residential Property Developer Tax.

**Darren Jones:**

The Residential Property Developer Tax is a UK-wide tax. UK-wide tax revenue goes into the UK Consolidated Fund.

The Barnett formula then applies to changes in UK Government departmental budgets.

The Welsh Government receives around 20% more funding per person than equivalent UK Government spending in other parts of the UK. That translates to £3.5 billion more per year on average for the Welsh Government.

**Frank McNally:** [\[9567\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much funding the Scottish Government (a) has received and (b) is forecast to receive in additional Barnett Formula consequential funding as a result of income raised via the Residential Property Developer Tax.

**Darren Jones:**

The Residential Property Developer Tax is a UK-wide tax. UK-wide tax revenue goes into the UK Consolidated Fund.

The Barnett formula then applies to changes in UK Government departmental budgets.

The Scottish Government receives around 25% more funding per person than equivalent UK Government spending in other parts of the UK. That translates to £8.5 billion more per year on average for the Scottish Government.

## ■ Public Sector: Pay

**John Glen:** [\[8130\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the cost to the public purse was of public sector pay deals since 4 July 2024.

**Darren Jones:**

As set out in the 'Fixing the Foundations' document, which was published alongside the Chancellor's Statement on 29 July, the 2024-25 pay awards for Pay Review Body

workforces and the delegated Civil Service grades create an estimated further pressure of £9.4 billion in 2024-25 on top of what the previous government set aside for public sector pay awards. The previous government had only planned for 2% awards when setting budgets at the 2021 Spending Review, and then neglected to set aside the funds that were likely to be needed for these awards.

Since the Chancellor's July Statement, resident doctors accepted the Government's pay deal to provide an additional pay uplift worth an average of 4.05% on top of their existing pay award for 2023-24, which has an estimated cost impact of approximately £350 million per year. This offer has brought an end to industrial action by resident doctors. Industrial action in the NHS alone has cost taxpayers £1.7 billion since April 2023 and cost patients nearly 1.5 million cancelled appointments under the previous government.

The government has also agreed pay mandates for rail staff at train operating companies and Network Rail. The total cost of these pay deals over the three-year period is significantly less than the economic impact strikes have had so far - not to mention the increased costs if industrial action continued.

#### ■ **Soft Drinks: Taxation**

**Dr Beccy Cooper:**

[\[9631\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she plans to expand the Soft Drinks Industry Levy to milk based drinks.

**Mary Kelly Foy:**

[\[9656\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she plans to expand the Soft Drinks Industry Levy to milk based drinks.

**James Murray:**

The SDIL is internationally recognised as a successful tax intervention, with measurable reformulation and consequent health impacts.

As with all taxes, the Government keeps SDIL under review as part of its Budget process.

#### ■ **Taxation**

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:**

[\[9776\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of (a) equalising capital gains tax with income tax, (b) applying national insurance to dividends from (i) shares, (ii) rent from property and (iii) interest on savings, (c) reviewing the effectiveness of (A) assets placed in trust, (B) business relief on AIM-listed shares, (C) agricultural and business relief and (D) other inheritance tax exemptions, (d) introducing a tax on share buybacks and (e) introducing a 2% wealth tax for assets of more than £10 million.

**James Murray:**

The government will set out any changes to taxation at fiscal events. Its plans at the Budget on October 30<sup>th</sup> will support its objectives of restoring fiscal responsibility whilst protecting working people.

■ **Tobacco: Excise Duties**

**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[8780\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make it her policy to (a) reduce and (b) freeze tobacco excise duty.

**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[8781\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the potential implications for her Department's policies on rates of tobacco duty of the Office for Budget Responsibility's report entitled Dynamic scoring of policy measures in OBR forecasts, published on 9 November 2023, in the context of the Laffer curve.

**James Murray:**

The Government is unable to speculate on tax measures outside of fiscal events. As with all taxes, the Government keeps tobacco duty rates under review during its Budget process.

The government accounts for the behavioural impact of tax changes when making tobacco duty policy decisions.

**Paul Holmes:** [\[8897\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential implications for its policies of the Institute of Fiscal Studies' finding relating to tobacco excise duty outlined in paragraph 10, page 3 of its report entitled The outlook for the public finances in the new parliament, published on 10 October 2024.

**Paul Holmes:** [\[8899\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to page 42 of the Institute of Fiscal Studies' report entitled The outlook for the public finances in the new parliament, published on 10 October 2024, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential implications for its policies of the Office for Budget Responsibility's estimate of the impact of the generational smoking ban on revenue from tobacco excise duty by 2060.

**James Murray:**

The Government is committed to delivering its two key objectives on tobacco duty; to raise revenue and protect public health. High taxes reduce the affordability of tobacco products and supports the Government's objective to reduce smoking prevalence.

The Tobacco and Vapes Bill will be the biggest public health intervention in a generation – tackling the harms of smoking and paving the way for a smoke-free UK.



Alongside the Bill, DHSC will publish an impact assessment which will include an estimate for the impact on tobacco duty receipts.

The Government has consulted on proposals for a Vaping Products Duty. This would seek to discourage non-smokers and young people from taking up vaping and to raise revenue. The responses to this consultation are being reviewed and we will respond in due course.

As with all taxes, the Government keeps tobacco duty rates under review during its Budget process.

**Paul Holmes:** [\[8900\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether (a) her Department and (b) the Office for Budget Responsibility has made an assessment of a potential Laffer Curve effect relating to (i) tobacco and (ii) alcohol duties.

**James Murray:**

Under the assumptions used in tobacco and alcohol costings certified by the Office for Budget Responsibility at Spring Budget 2024, increasing tobacco and alcohol duties increases overall duty receipts.

**Paul Holmes:** [\[8901\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Institute of Fiscal Studies' finding relating to the fall in revenues from tobacco duty over the last decade, outlined on page 42 of its report entitled The outlook for the public finances in the new parliament, published on 10 October 2024, what steps she is taking to help tackle the illicit and non-duty paid markets for tobacco.

**James Murray:**

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) launched its first strategy to tackle illicit tobacco in 2000. This, and consequent strategies with Border Force, have reduced the overall tobacco duty tax gap from 21.7% in 2005/6 to 14.5% in 2022/23.

During this time, the duty gap for cigarettes has reduced by a third, and for hand-rolling tobacco by a half.

In January this year HMRC and Border Force published their latest illicit tobacco strategy, 'Stubbing Out the Problem'. The government is committed to reducing the trade in illicit tobacco with a focus on reducing demand, and tackling and disrupting the organised crime groups behind the illicit tobacco trade.

The strategy is supported by £100 million of new smokefree funding over the next 5 years to boost existing HMRC and Border Force enforcement capability.

## ■ Treasury: Civil Servants

**Sir Ashley Fox:** [\[9053\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many civil servants are assigned to work in each of her Department's offices; and how many desks are available in each office.

**Sir Ashley Fox:**[\[9055\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many and what proportion of desks were occupied in each of her Department's offices in the most recent four weeks for which figures are available; and how many staff attended each office in person in the same period.

**James Murray:**

HM Treasury operates a hybrid working policy, in line with other Government departments and cabinet office guidance. Employees are expected to spend a minimum of 60% of their working hours in their contractual work location and work from home for the remaining time.

As of September 2024, HM Treasury had 1610 staff in London (1HGR), 79 staff in Norwich (Rosebery Court), 312 staff in Darlington (Feethams House).

HMT has 1030 desks in London (1HGR) and 52 desks in Norwich (Rosebery Court). In Darlington (Feethams House), a building which operates a fully shared campus model, HMT has a proportional equivalent of 85 workspaces.

On average HMT data indicates our offices were attended 3909 times a week in the last four weeks that we hold full data for.

Based on the above figures, an average of 781 workspaces were occupied daily in the four most recent weeks we hold full data, and with 1167 workspaces, this means on average 67% of workspaces were filled daily in these four weeks.

**■ Treasury: Corporate Hospitality****Paul Holmes:**[\[8898\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans she has for revising her policy on accepting hospitality from the (a) football and (b) music industry.

**James Murray:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answers by my hon. Friend, the Minister without Portfolio, during the Urgent Question, Reporting Ministerial Gifts and Hospitality, on 14 October 2024, Official Report, Columns 594-602.

**■ Treasury: Waste Management****Adam Jogee:**[\[8978\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps she is taking to reduce food waste in her Department.

**James Murray:**

HM Treasury's buildings are managed by the Government Property Agency (GPA). The GPA are responsible for the provision of catering services across our sites and the disposal of food waste.

**WALES****■ Wales Office: Buildings****Sir Ashley Fox:**[\[9283\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, how many and what proportion of desks were occupied in each of her Department's offices in the most recent four weeks for which figures are available; and how many staff attended each office in person in the same period.

**Dame Nia Griffith:**

The Wales Office does not hold a record of the information requested.

**■ Wales Office: Civil Servants****Sir Ashley Fox:**[\[9282\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, how many civil servants are assigned to work in each of her Department's offices; and how many desks are available in each office.

**Dame Nia Griffith:**

The Wales Office currently has 24 civil servants assigned to its London Office and 21 assigned to its Cardiff Office. There are 28 desks available in the London Office and 15 desks in the Cardiff Office.

**WORK AND PENSIONS****■ Children: Maintenance****Dave Doogan:**[\[9216\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking through the Child Maintenance Service to ensure that receiving parents and their children are adequately financially supported when paying parents (a) decide not to return to work after maternity leave to save on childcare costs and (b) take other decisions that forgo income due to their personal circumstances.

**Andrew Western:**

The maintenance calculation is designed to be affordable and sustainable for paying parents, while ensuring they contribute a reasonable amount to support their children.

Calculations are based on a percentage of the Paying Parent's gross weekly income received directly from HM Revenue & Customs. This includes taxable income from employment and can take account of certain unearned income, including from dividends, property income and savings.

Where a paying parent's income reduces due to not returning to work after maternity leave or due to a change in their personal circumstances, and this change means their income decreases by at least 25%, the calculation will then be reassessed.

Whilst the 1991 Child Support Act puts a legal obligation on all parents to support their children regardless of their financial situation. Under the 2012 Child Maintenance Scheme, an individual with income of less than £7 will generally have a “nil” liability.

### ■ Employment: Advisory Services

**Clive Lewis:**

**[9484]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will publish the evidential basis supporting her statement that trials of employment advisers giving CV and interview advice in hospitals has produced dramatic results.

**Alison McGovern:**

Based on over 20 years of research, the Individual Placement and Support employment model is internationally recognised as the most effective way to support people with mental health problems to gain and keep paid employment. Individual Placement and Support services offer intensive, individually tailored support to help people to choose and find the right job, with ongoing support for the employer and employee to help ensure the person sustain their employment.

Randomised Control Trials demonstrated that Individual Placement and Support can achieve up to twice as many job outcomes for people with severe mental illness than traditional programmes. For example, in 2013, 55% of clients were found to be in competitive employment for at least one day compared to 28% of clients in the control group.

Individual Placement Support has been subject to several impact evaluation Randomised Control Trials. All trials have shown significantly better results, in terms of achieving competitive employment for Individual Placement Support participants, compared to conventional vocational rehabilitation services. On average, people who receive Individual Placement Support show employment rates of 30-40% compared to rates in the control group of 10-12%.

The severe mental illness Individual Placement Support programme aims to support an additional 140,000 people living with severe mental illness to access the services by 2028/29. This programme aims to reduce economic inactivity and increase labour market participation and retention for people with severe mental illness.

In August, 38,704 people had accessed Individual Placement services in the previous 12 months, meaning we are above our trajectory to meet the end of year target of 40,500 people accessing these services.

### ■ Employment: Autism

**James McMurdock:**

**[9084]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to support people with autism spectrum disorder conditions into work.

**Alison McGovern:**

We recognise that autistic people face particular barriers to employment, which is reflected in a poor overall employment rate. In our plan to make work pay, we committed to raising awareness of neurodiversity in the workplace.

We have a range of specialist initiatives to support neurodivergent people to stay in work and get back into work. Measures include support from Work Coaches and Disability Employment Advisers in Jobcentres, Access to Work grants, as well as joining up health and employment support around the individual through Employment Advisors in NHS Talking Therapies and Individual Placement and Support in Primary Care.

Employers will also be a large part of our success in this work. Our current support to employers includes [a digital information service for employers](#), and the Disability Confident scheme. We will be considering how to enhance our work with employers in the months ahead.

**■ Medical Certificates and Workwell****Mel Stride:****[9697]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent progress she has made on (a) rolling out the WorkWell programme and (b) implementing (i) trailblazers and (ii) other reforms to the fit note process.

**Alison McGovern:**

The WorkWell pilot areas began to go live from October 1<sup>st</sup>. The majority of the 15 pilot areas are now taking referrals, with the remaining areas expected to begin over the coming weeks.

We launched a Call for Evidence to seek views on how the current fit note process works and the support required to facilitate meaningful work and health conversations to help people start, stay and succeed in work. It closed on the 8 July 2024. We received over 1,900 responses that are now being reviewed and will inform our approach moving forward.

As part of our Get Britain Working plan, more disabled people and those with health conditions will be supported to enter and stay in work, by devolving more power to local areas so they can shape a joined-up work, health, and skills offer that suits the needs of the people they serve .

**■ Sick Leave: Mental Illness****Rachael Maskell:****[9723]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will take steps with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to help reduce the level of work absence as a result of mental ill health.

**Alison McGovern:**

My department and I work closely with our counterparts in DHSC on work and health measures, and we have a joint directorate reporting to us that is charged with improving recruitment, retention and the success at work of disabled people and people with long term health conditions.

We have a range of specialist initiatives to support individuals with mental health conditions to stay in work and get back into work. Measures include support from Work Coaches and Disability Employment Advisers in Jobcentres, as well as joining up health and employment support around the individual through Employment Advisors in NHS Talking Therapies. The Employment Advice in Talking Therapies programme – which is joint funded by the DWP and Department for Health & Social Care - combines the expertise of therapists and employment advisers to give those with mental health conditions the support they need to find work tailored to them, while Access to Work Mental Health Support Service (MHSS) provides up to 9 months of personalised, non-clinical support for people who need mental health support while in employment.

Employers play a key role in increasing employment opportunities and supporting disabled people and people with health conditions to thrive as part of the workforce. Our support to employers includes [a digital information service for employers](#) and the Disability Confident scheme.

**■ Social Security Benefits: Lone Parents**

**Neil Duncan-Jordan:** **[9273]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what data her Department holds on the proportion of parents affected by the two-child benefit cap who are single parents.

**Neil Duncan-Jordan:** **[9274]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what data her Department holds on the proportion of single parents affected by the two-child benefit cap who are in paid employment.

**Neil Duncan-Jordan:** **[9275]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what data her Department holds on the average income of single parents who are affected by the two-child benefit cap.

**Alison McGovern:**

1. About half (52%) of Universal Credit or Child Tax Credit households affected by the policy, or 230,000, are single adult households, and about half (48% or 220,000) are couples, as show in Figure 2 of the latest statistics commentary published here: [Universal Credit and Child Tax Credit claimants: statistics related to the policy to provide support for a maximum of two children, April 2024 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

2. In April 2024, 82,000 (40%) of single parents who are affected by the policy were in work.

3. In April 2024, the mean average take home pay of single parents who are affected by the policy and were in work was £1,038 per month.

## ■ Universal Support

**Mel Stride:** [\[9698\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what progress she has made on the roll-out of the Universal Support Programme.

**Alison McGovern:**

My Department continues to work in collaboration with local areas to support their development and delivery of the new employment support programme, shaped around local services and priorities. The programme will primarily help economically inactive disabled people, people with long term conditions and people with additional barriers, to help them find and fulfil their potential to work.

We will shortly be launching the grant guidance for the programme, after which local authorities will work with DWP and local partners to design their local programmes. It is anticipated that some areas will begin delivery of the new programme from spring 2025 but this will be a phased roll out, led by local authorities.

## ■ Universal Support: Finance

**Mel Stride:** [\[9699\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how much funding has been allocated to the Universal Support programme for each financial year from 2023-24 onward, broken down by local authority area.

**Alison McGovern:**

Universal Support money has been allocated to a new Supported Employment Programme. Figures from the most recent Business Case approved by HMT in October 2024 show a total spend of c.£1.4bn from 2023/24 to 29/30. However funding beyond the current spending review is not confirmed.

Annual breakdowns of spend will be determined by local delivery plans. This information is not available at this point in time while planning work continues with Local Authorities.

## ■ Winter Fuel Payment

**Mel Stride:** [\[9700\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Responses to Freedom of Information requests on Equality Impact Assessments produced for targeting Winter Fuel Payment, published on 13 September 2024, for what reason the assessment undertaken by HM Treasury concluded that women will be disproportionately impacted and the assessment undertaken by her Department concluded that men will be disproportionately impacted by changes to the eligibility criteria for the Winter Fuel Payment; whether she plans to update her Department's equality impact assessment;

and whether processes are in place to ensure equality analyses by different Departments are consistent.

**Emma Reynolds:**

The assessments undertaken by the Department and HM Treasury do not contradict each other. They are on a different basis. HM Treasury analysis is based on Census 2011 data and compares pensioners to the non-pensioner population. Whereas the Department's analysis uses pensioner benefit administrative data to assess pensioners in receipt of Pension Credit at November 2023, compared to those who received a Winter Fuel Payment in 2022/23.

Where both documents consider the likelihood of receiving Pension Credit, both show that women are less likely to be impacted by changes to the eligibility criteria for the Winter Fuel Payment, due to them being more likely to claim Pension Credit. The HM Treasury assessment states that "PC specifically is disproportionately claimed by older, single women." Older, single women are, therefore, more likely to retain their eligibility for a Winter Fuel Payment and, as a result, are less likely to be affected by the policy. This chimes with the Department's conclusion that "this policy will have the highest proportional impact on couples, and a marginally greater impact on men than women."

As part of the Public Sector Equality Duty, the Department will continue to monitor and review the impact of the policy, using this to inform future decisions.



## WRITTEN STATEMENTS

### DEFENCE

#### ■ **Publication of the Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Associations Annual Reports and Accounts**

**Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Minister for Veterans) (Al Carns):**

[\[HCWS151\]](#)

I have today placed in the Library of the House a copy of the Council of the Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Associations (RFCA) Annual Reports and Accounts 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23, in accordance with the RFCA Regulations 2014.

### EDUCATION

#### ■ **Mainstream Free Schools**

**Secretary of State for Education (Bridget Phillipson):**

[\[HCWS150\]](#)

Education is at the heart of the Government's mission to break down barriers to opportunity and give every young person the best start in life, no matter their background. This Government is determined to drive high and rising education standards for children across the country. We can only achieve this by making sure government funding is targeted where it is most needed.

Under the last administration, substantial funds were allocated to the free schools programme, often resulting in surpluses in school capacity. The National Audit Office set out in 2017 that of the 113,500 new places in mainstream free schools due by 2021, an estimated 57,500 amounted to spare capacity in the new schools' local area. Not only is this poor value for money, the oversupply of places can be detrimental to the other, more established schools in that area - who might lose pupils, as well as teachers, to their new competitor.

Meanwhile, in the fourteen years since the cancellation of the Building Schools for the Future programme, some of this funding could have been put to better use improving the deteriorating condition of our existing schools and colleges. We do not underestimate the scale of the challenge that we have inherited and this will not be a quick fix.

I have therefore asked officials to review the mainstream free schools planned by the last government, that have not yet opened. We will look at whether they will meet a need for places in their local area and offer value for taxpayers' money. We will also take into account whether projects would provide a distinctive curriculum and any impact on existing local providers. Officials will work with local authorities and academy trusts to take this work forward over the autumn and will write to them now, setting out next steps in relation to individual projects. There are 44 centrally delivered, mainstream projects where we will engage with local authorities and trusts to review whether the school

should open. More detail on schools in scope of the review will be provided in due course.

Our priority is to ensure children thrive in education, whatever type of school they are in – including free schools. Capacity varies from place to place, so we will continue to open new schools where they are needed. We also value the role of academy trusts within the school system. Strong trusts use their collaboration and leadership to deliver exceptional results for children and young people, including those in disadvantaged areas. Academy trusts will continue to have a crucial role in our mission to break down the barriers to opportunity.

We are setting this out now, so that we can work transparently and openly with trusts and local authorities as we undertake this important work.

The review announced today will only examine mainstream free school projects that were approved by central government. It does not include those being delivered through competitions run by local authorities, which will continue as planned.

The government is clear it wants to make sure all children with special educational needs and disabilities receive the support they need to achieve and thrive. That is why the manifesto set out a clear ambition to improve inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools, while ensuring that special schools cater for children with the most complex needs.

Work to deliver special and alternative provision free schools is continuing. As with all government investment, special and alternative provision free school projects will be subject to value for money consideration through their development, in line with the government's vision for the special educational needs system.

Access to high-quality school places that enable all children to achieve and thrive, including those who are disadvantaged and those with SEND, is fundamental in delivering our mission to break down the barriers to opportunity.

## FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

### ■ EU Foreign Affairs Council

**Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (Mr David Lammy):** [\[HCWS154\]](#)

I attended the EU's Foreign Affairs Council in Luxembourg on 14 October. Ukrainian Foreign Minister, Andrii Sybiha, also attended via VTC.

This was the first time a UK Foreign Secretary has attended this meeting in over two years – and the first attendance at a regular FAC since Brexit. My visit, following that of the Prime Minister's to Brussels on 2 October, marks a significant moment in our reset with Europe and has established a course towards a new UK-EU security partnership to address common threats and challenges.

Ahead of the Foreign Affairs Council meeting, I met with the EU High Representative to take stock on the shared challenges facing Europe, including Russia's war against Ukraine and the situation in the Middle East. The High-Representative and I agreed to establish a regular, six-monthly strategic dialogue, with the first meeting in early 2025 to reaffirm the importance of the relationship between the UK and the EU and strengthen our cooperation in this difficult geopolitical context. In addition, we agreed to launch four new regular working groups on Russia/Ukraine, the Indo-Pacific, the Western Balkans and Hybrid threats.

At the Foreign Affairs Council itself, I described the common challenges facing our continent. I reiterated the UK's ironclad commitment to Ukraine, and pushed for bold action including accelerated financial and military support, ratcheting economic pressure on Russia, and tackling third-country support to Russia's military industrial complex. I emphasised that investment in Ukraine's security today was critical to ensuring Europe's security for generations to come.

On the Middle East, I called for an immediate ceasefire across the Israel-Lebanon border and stressing the UK's unwavering support to UNIFIL's role in South Lebanon, as mandated in UN Resolution 1701. On Gaza, I called for the immediate release of hostages, unhindered access for humanitarian aid and renewed focus on a two-state solution. I condemned recent attacks on Israel and Iran's ballistic missile supply to Russia, committing to sanction Iran's regime in response.

In the margins of the Foreign Affairs Council meeting, I held a series of bilateral engagements with European counterparts from Germany, France, Romania, Spain, and Luxembourg.

This meeting marked a significant step forward in our reset of the UK's relationship with our European neighbours and friends, to deepen ties, grow our economies, and enhance our shared security against shared challenges. Together with my ministerial colleagues, this government will continue to progress this work.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

### ■ Point of Care Medicines Manufacture Regulations

**Minister of State for Health (Secondary Care) (Karin Smyth):**

[\[HCWS152\]](#)

I am pleased to announce that the draft Human Medicines (Amendment) (Modular Manufacture and Point of Care) Regulations 2024 were laid before Parliament yesterday. When approved by Parliament, this instrument will create a new regulatory framework for innovative manufacturing methods for medicines that must be made near the patient, innovative medicines manufactured at the 'point of care', and modular manufacturing (MM), where products are manufactured in modular, relocatable units.

The UK will be the first country worldwide to introduce such a regulatory framework. These regulatory changes will support the development of medicines at the forefront of technology, enable patient access to pioneering medicines, and help move treatment closer to the patient.

Point of Care manufactured products are often highly personalised, such as cell or gene therapies, 3D-printed medicines, or treatments derived from a patient's own blood. These products can have extremely short shelf lives, sometimes as brief as an hour or even a few minutes. This requires manufacturing and supply either at the point of care or close to where the patient is being treated. This could include in hospital wards, operating theatres, community health centres, or even the patient's home.

The current regulations are not geared for manufacturing at multiple different sites across the country in this way, and current regulatory barriers would make such manufacture complicated and burdensome. Current regulations also limit other innovative manufacturing models, such as 'modular', where products need to be manufactured in relocatable units, for example, where cancer biopsies and blood derived components are taken from a patient and sent to a local manufacturing site to manufacture a personalised cancer vaccine specific for that patient's disease.

Many of these technologies are currently in early development. Providing regulatory clarity now will enable new products and manufacturing approaches to be developed. A tailored framework will ensure that these novel medicines meet the same rigorous standards of safety, quality, and efficacy as more traditional treatments, whilst removing barriers to using innovative manufacturing methods.

The new framework will bring a range of benefits to:

- Patients and carers – will benefit from access to new and more personal treatments in a timely and more convenient manner with the potential for less travel and time in hospitals
- Healthcare professionals – by providing a greater range and more effective treatment options and improving patients' response to treatment
- Innovators – by providing clear regulatory expectations and enabling speedier product development.

This instrument follows a [public consultation](#) which gained feedback from a range of individuals and organisations across the UK and internationally. The overwhelming majority of responses were positive, with 91% of responders agreeing that a new framework was required, and 94% agreeing with the framework proposed.

The regulations, along with the associated explanatory memorandum and impact assessment, have been published on GOV.UK.

## HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### ■ Local Government Best Value Update

**Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution (Jim McMahon):**  
[\[HCWS155\]](#)

All Honourable Members will recognise the importance of having well-functioning local councils which provide essential statutory services local residents rely upon. Local

councils must be fit, legal and decent. Today, I would like to update the House on the statutory intervention in Birmingham, which is a year old as of 5 October, and my plans to reset the relationship between central and local government with a focus on reform and recovery. I will also update the House on the statutory intervention in Slough, which has been in place since December 2021.

Birmingham City Council remains in a challenging place. Significant challenges continue to face the Council, as outlined in the Commissioners' first progress report which I am publishing today. Steps towards financial stability have been taken, including setting the 2024/25 budget, and I am grateful for the significant oversight and direction from Commissioners who have been fundamental to this progress. The Council is committed to leading its own recovery. I want to recognise the progress made by the Council to date under the leadership of Councillor Cotton and his commitment to resolving the challenges facing the city. Whilst there remains much more that needs to be done, I am keen that the intervention moves as quickly as possible to a model based around a more equal partnership with the Council, working in the interests of the people of Birmingham.

Birmingham City Council is committed to achieving financial stability, including finding a resolution to its significant equal pay liabilities once and for all, delivering the necessary savings to bridge the projected budget gap for 2024/25 and 2025/26 to move to a more stable financial footing and transforming local services, many of which still require significant improvement. I know that difficult decisions will need to be taken in the coming weeks and months. I am confident that Joanne Roney CBE, who has recently taken up her post as Managing Director at the Council, will work with both officers and members to improve the culture and governance of the organisation and shift the focus to growth opportunities in the city.

I am exploring options to reset and reform the system to provide a more supportive approach to stewardship for local councils, establishing partnerships across local government built on mutual respect, genuine collaboration and meaningful engagement. In any system with adequate checks and balances there will always be a need for Government to work directly with a small number of councils in difficulty, but I am clear that this should be done in a different way that is not punitive and is based on genuine partnership to secure improvements.

Building a wider partnership to deliver for the city of Birmingham is essential. I encourage Birmingham City Council to consider establishing and deepening partnerships with private and public partners in the region, including Mayor Parker of the West Midlands Combined Authority, so they can be more involved in shaping decisions around asset realisation and the growth strategy, linking in with local growth plans as necessary. Such partnerships will help unlock Birmingham's huge potential for growth and drive forward skills, jobs and opportunities in the wider region.

I have asked that Commissioners provide a further assessment of the Council's progress in January, including their assessment of how the Council's growth strategy can support the Council's recovery and contribute to this Government's wider ambition for national renewal. I would like to place on record my gratitude to Lord Hutton, who is stepping down from his role as a political advisor to the intervention, for his knowledge and

expertise which has been of immense value to both the Council and the wider Commissioner team.

I also want to acknowledge the diligent and hard-working members of staff at the Council who do their utmost to provide essential front-line services for residents. I, in turn, will do my utmost to ensure that all interested parties/partners work collaboratively to guarantee Birmingham's recovery remains on track so that residents have a well-functioning local authority with a set of statutory services they deserve.

I will keep the House and the public updated on any changes to the intervention, including publishing the second Commissioners' report in the new year.

Slough Borough Council has been in intervention since December 2021 and this House has received a series of updates on the recovery of the Council. The last update was in February, when the view of Commissioners was that the Council would continue to need support beyond the scheduled end of the intervention on 30 November this year. Significant challenges continue to face the Council, as outlined in the Commissioner's report from April and update letter from September, both of which I am publishing today.

While some improvements have been made since the start of the intervention, there are still a substantial number of areas which require further improvement. There remains volatility in the Council's financial position, and there is not yet a Target Operating Model that aligns with the medium-term financial outlook. A robust and resourced transformation plan that aligns to the Target Operating Model is needed to drive change, which must be underpinned by strong leadership and a comprehensive workforce strategy to foster and embed cultural change. Further improvements still need to be secured relating to risk management, governance, including the scrutiny function and audit committee, evidence-based decision making and resident engagement. Separately, the continued progress in children's social care and SEND services under Department for Education intervention has been noted.

Having considered carefully the findings and evidence presented in the Report and update letter, I have concluded that the Council is not yet meeting its Best Value Duty and that issuing new directions will provide Slough Borough Council with ongoing government support via Commissioners. They would continue to assist the Council to design, implement and embed the necessary changes and improvements. Accordingly, I am now seeking representations by 4 November on the Report and update letter and a proposal to issue new Directions under section 15 of the Local Government Act 1999. These would set a new end date for the intervention of 30 November 2026, require the Council to take actions that are consistent with both the existing Directions and the priorities the Commissioners have set for the Council, and provide for Commissioners to continue to be able to exercise council functions relating to governance, finance and appointments. I understand that the Council would welcome the extension of the intervention, given the challenges ahead that they also recognise, and I am keen to explore further opportunities to work in partnership to support their reset, reform and recovery.



If, following my consideration of any representations, I decide to implement my proposal, I intend to reappoint the existing Commissioner team of Gavin Jones, Denise Murray and Ged Curran, who I know are working with the Council with mutual respect, genuine collaboration and meaningful engagement. To further support the Council to lead its own recovery, I also intend to appoint the interim Chief Executive, Will Tuckley, as Managing Director Commissioner.

I again want to acknowledge the diligent and hard-working members of staff at the Council who do their utmost to provide essential front-line services for residents, and reinforce my commitment to support Slough's recovery remaining on track so that residents have a well-functioning local authority with a set of statutory services they deserve.

I will keep the House and the public updated on my proposed change to the intervention.

I will deposit in the House library copies of the documents I have referred to, which are also being published on gov.uk today.

## JUSTICE

### ■ Sentencing Review and Prison Capacity Package

**Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice (Shabana Mahmood):**  
[\[HCWS156\]](#)

As I informed the House earlier today, this government inherited a prison system at the point of crisis. Prior to September, the adult male prison estate was running at over 99% capacity for 18 months, and the system was at risk of imminent collapse with grave consequences for public safety and the whole Criminal Justice System (CJS).

In July, we made the difficult but necessary decision to introduce a temporary change in the law to reduce the eligible Standard Determinate Sentence release point from 50% to 40% (SDS40), with the second tranche of releases being implemented today. There are important offence exclusions for serious violent offences with a sentence of four years or more, sex offences, and certain domestic abuse-connected offences, and a commitment to review the change in 18 months. This decision was not taken lightly, but we are clear that this was the safest way forward given the scale of the emergency facing our prisons.

SDS40 bought us valuable time, which has ensured that we could keep sending criminals to prison, protect the public, and make prisons safer for hardworking staff. We have already ended the previous Government's End of Custody Supervised Licence scheme, which released over 10,000 offenders early, often with very little warning to probation officers, placing them under enormous strain. We have also deactivated Operation Safeguard, which saw cells in police custody suites made available to hold prisoners temporarily when reception prisons did not have space to accept new prisoners. The headroom created by SDS 40 enabled us to increase magistrates' court sentencing powers – from 6 to 12 months' maximum custodial for a single triable either way offence – in order to bear down on our large remand population. This measure will also help reduce the Crown Court backlog. However, SDS40 was not a permanent solution, and

we must now turn our attention to implementing a sustainable solution to the population crisis.

New prison places will continue to form a key part of our solution. We are committed to continuing the prison build programme the last Government promised but did not deliver, building 14,000 places through the construction of a further four new prisons, as well as the expansion and refurbishment of the existing estate. We will also publish a 10-year capacity strategy later this year, which will set out our long-term plan for the prison estate, including streamlining the planning process.

However, we cannot build our way out of this crisis. The prison population is rising by around 4,500 each year. The current level of demand would see us need to build three mega-jails a year. The last Conservative government managed to build three prisons in the last 10 years. However fast we build, increasing demand will outstrip supply. Whilst there will always be a place for prison to punish offenders and keep the public safe, we must therefore review our sentencing framework, ensuring we never run out of prison places again.

We have therefore today commissioned an Independent Review of Sentencing, which will deliver on the Government's manifesto commitment to bring sentencing up to date. It has a clear objective to re-evaluate the sentencing framework to ensure that this Government is never again in a position where it is forced into the emergency release of prisoners. To ensure an effective and coherent justice system, the Sentencing Review will be guided by three principles:

- First, sentences must punish offenders and protect the public, and there must always be space in prison for dangerous offenders
- Second, sentences must encourage offenders to turn their backs on a life of crime
- Third, we must expand the use of punishment outside of prison. In doing so, the review will look at how technology can support the administration of sentences outside of prison.

This will be chaired by the former Lord Chancellor, the Rt Hon David Gauke, supported by a panel which will include judicial expertise and expertise from across the justice system.

After the violent disorder, we came dangerously close to a disaster. Without action, we would have faced the prospect of a total breakdown of law and order. As a result, pressure on the system has increased, and so we must implement further urgent measures that will ensure the prison system avoids collapse before the Sentencing Review concludes and we can implement its recommendations. We will take a transparent approach that is proportionate to the levels of pressures seen, and this will not mean any further emergency releases.

We will:

- Extend the maximum curfew period that offenders can spend on Home Detention Curfew (HDC) from 6 to 12 months, meaning that those released on HDC will



spend less time in prison and longer in the community subject to electronically monitored curfew.

- Change the policy of Risk Assessed Recall Review (RARR) to enable its use in a greater number of low risk cases than at present to target the unsustainable growth in the recall population.
- Work with the Home Office to identify further ways to speed up the removal of Foreign National Offenders from prison.

The measures on HDC and recall reform will make greater requirements of the Probation Service. In addition to our commitment to fund at least 1,000 additional trainee probation officers by the end of March 2025, HMPPS will also be considering what operational changes may be required in order to maintain a focus on higher risk individuals supervised in the community and ensure that the public continue to be protected.

We are extremely grateful for the ongoing support shown by all those working in the Criminal Justice System, who have worked tirelessly to keep the system from collapsing. This Government will always put the country and its safety first and will take steps so the prison system is never allowed to reach this point again.

## TRANSPORT

### ■ Consultation on a UK Airspace Design Service

**Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport (Mike Kane):** [\[HCWS149\]](#)

Today, the Department for Transport (DfT) and Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) are launching a consultation proposing the creation of a new UK Airspace Design Service (UKADS) that would act as a single guiding mind for modernising the design of UK airspace.

The consultation demonstrates the government's commitment to delivering holistic and modernised UK airspace as part of the CAA's Airspace Modernisation Strategy (AMS). The AMS vision is to provide quicker, quieter and cleaner journeys and more capacity for the benefit of those who use and are affected by UK airspace.

Modernisation will help meet the needs of passengers, businesses and the wider economy, while bringing environmental improvements that contribute towards the aviation sector achieving net zero emissions by 2050.

UK airspace is an invisible but vital piece of our national infrastructure. Using an aging network of ground navigation beacons, its design has remained largely unchanged since the 1950s when there were fewer than 1 million flights per year in UK airspace. This compares with 2.5 million flights in 2019 and projections of 3 million annually by 2030[1]. In many cases, today's aircraft still use the same outdated routes flying further than necessary at sub-optimal altitudes and speeds because the routes rely on the location of the ground navigation beacons, instead of following shorter, more efficient flight paths.

Doing nothing is not an option. If UK airspace is not modernised, NATS (En Route) plc (NERL), the UK's licensed provider of en route air traffic control services, estimates that by 2040, delays at a national level may increase by more than 200% which would result in one in five flights experiencing disruption of more than 45 minutes[2].

Modernised airspace will make it easier for aircraft to fly more direct routes, with better climb and descent profiles to and from energy-efficient cruising altitudes to help reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. It will also ensure that future technologies such as remotely piloted aircraft systems can operate beyond visual line of sight in the UK in a safe and efficient manner.

The current model for airspace change requires airports and air traffic control providers to develop their own airspace designs individually. Coordinating these changes creates significant challenges, particularly for the airports in and around the complex London area where airspace designs overlap.

The consultation proposes creating a new single guiding mind on future airspace design, to deliver much-needed modernisation at scale and at pace. This will help to instil confidence among stakeholders in the delivery of airspace changes that will facilitate overall reductions in carbon emissions, noise and delays.

The consultation seeks views on the overall concept of a UKADS, including its responsibilities, governance and funding. Views from stakeholders will be critical to the next phase of work and we welcome responses from all interested parties.

[1] NATS (En Route) plc forecast traffic growth estimates (2026 to 2040)

[2] Airspace Change Masterplan Iteration 2, CAP2312b, ACOG (2022)

## TREASURY

### ■ UK Support to Ukraine

**The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Rachel Reeves):**

[\[HCWS153\]](#)

The UK is committed, alongside our G7 allies, to supporting Ukraine for as long as it takes. Ensuring Ukraine's security is in the interest of our own national security and shared values. We and our G7 partners have also repeatedly underscored that Russia's obligations under international law are clear: Russia must pay for the damage it has caused to Ukraine.

The Government has today announced that the United Kingdom will contribute £2.26bn (\$3bn) to the G7 'Extraordinary Revenue Acceleration' (ERA) Loans to Ukraine scheme. The ERA was announced on 14 June 2024. The scheme will provide Ukraine with approximately \$50bn of additional funding. This funding will be provided through budget support from the G7, repaid using the extraordinary profits generated on immobilised Russian sovereign assets primarily held in the EU.

This funding is additional to both the £3bn per year of bilateral military support which the UK has committed to for as long as required, and UK Export Finance's overall £3.5bn

capacity for Ukraine, including support for defence requirements. The UK has also committed to up to \$5 billion in fiscal support through loan guarantees on World Bank lending to Ukraine since 2022.

The UK's contribution to Ukraine under the ERA scheme will be used for budgetary support earmarked for military procurement, bolstering Ukraine's capacity for self-defence in the face of Russia's illegal war, and providing vital equipment and support to the front line.

The Government will introduce primary legislation, when parliamentary time allows, seeking parliamentary spending authority to provide this financial assistance. Subject to achieving Royal Assent and concluding a bilateral agreement with Ukraine, the UK will be able to begin disbursing funds to Ukraine and receiving repayments via the EU's Ukraine Loan Cooperation Mechanism. The Government intends to begin disbursements within this financial year.

## WORK AND PENSIONS

### ■ Pensions Dashboard

**Parliamentary Secretary, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Pensions) (Emma Reynolds):** [\[HCWS148\]](#)

The Government wants to shape the pensions system to serve the interests of savers and future pensioners, ensuring decent, secure retirement incomes for all. As part of achieving that goal, we want to make it easier for people to understand their pensions information so they can better prepare for financial security in later life.

As people often move around the labour market throughout their working lives, this can make it difficult for individuals to keep track of their pensions savings. To help solve this problem, the Government is committed to the delivery of pensions dashboards.

Pensions dashboards will provide a secure way for individuals to view a summary of their pensions picture online, including information about the State Pension. This will help people find their lost pension pots and promote greater engagement – empowering individuals to plan their future more confidently.

The Pensions Dashboards Programme (PDP), which is part of the Money and Pensions Service (MaPS), recently concluded a formal Reset process which generated a revised delivery plan. In line with that plan, the Programme has begun testing the connection journey with a small number of external organisations which will help facilitate wider industry connections. Alongside this, the PDP has published an updated draft Code of Connection, technical standards, and data standards to support the pensions industry to prepare for connection. As a result of the PDP's progress, the Infrastructure and Projects Authority has increased its confidence in the Programme's ability to deliver against their revised plan.

While it is too early to confirm a launch date for public use, we are taking steps to help the public realise the benefits of using a pensions dashboard at the earliest opportunity. I

have directed the PDP to focus its efforts on the connection and launch of the MoneyHelper dashboard service (provided by MaPS), before turning to the work of connecting commercial dashboard services.

The Government supports the principle of enabling multiple commercial pensions dashboard services, which will provide savers with greater choice to access their pensions information from organisations they are familiar with, promoting greater engagement with pensions. However, in the interests of ensuring consumers have the best experience on dashboards, it is prudent to allow a period while only the MoneyHelper dashboard is operational. Prioritising the launch of the government-backed dashboard in this way will provide an opportunity to obtain better insights into customer behaviour and ensure greater confidence in operational delivery, security, and consumer protection before facilitating the connection of commercial dashboards.

We are committed to the existing published timetable for the connection of pension schemes and providers to the pensions dashboards ecosystem, which is expected to begin in April 2025, as well as the overall connection deadline of 31 October 2026. It is therefore essential that the pensions industry continues to prepare for connection, having regard to the timetable set out in DWP's guidance.

Facilitating the launch of pensions dashboards is a challenging and complex undertaking, but the Government is firmly committed to their successful delivery and to unlocking the potential benefits they will offer to future pensioners.