



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 23 October 2024 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:32 P.M., 23 October 2024). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

ATTORNEY GENERAL

■ Attorney General: Ministers

Charlie Dewhirst:

[9362]

To ask the Solicitor General, what meetings (a) Ministers and (b) her officials have held with external stakeholders since 5 July 2024.

Sarah Sackman:

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.

BUSINESS AND TRADE

■ Foreign Investment in UK: China

John Glen:

[8123]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether his Department issues guidance on investment from (a) the People's Republic of China and (b) organisations associated with the Chinese Communist Party.

Sarah Jones:

The government does not direct the private sector's commercial partnerships. Ministers and Officials are in regular contact with leaders across all UK industries and may provide advice and support as appropriate.

The UK will attract investment due to its stable business environment and resilient national security framework that safeguards investments as well as the nation's security. Under the NSI Act, the government has the authority to scrutinise and intervene in business transactions involving foreign investment in sensitive sectors to protect national security, regardless of the origin of the investment.

■ Hospitality Sector Council: Membership

Ian Lavery:

[9178]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what the selection criteria for membership to the Hospitality Sector Council is.

Gareth Thomas:

The Hospitality Sector Council's [Terms of Reference](#) is publicly available, outlining that membership is by invitation only and is subject to final agreement by the Department for Business and Trade (DBT) Ministers in consultation with the joint chairs. Members are selected to provide a breadth of knowledge and experience across the hospitality sector and Government. All members are selected in a

personal capacity and will be expected to speak for their areas of expertise rather than the specific interests of their organisation.

Membership is reviewed by DBT and it may be amended to take account of changing priorities in the sector to ensure appropriate representation and expertise is maintained.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Cabinet Office

Charlie Dewhirst: [\[9338\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what meetings (a) Ministers and (b) his officials have held with external stakeholders since 5 July 2024.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

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.

■ Council of the Nations and Regions

Wendy Chamberlain: [\[900742\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if the Government will publish a summary of the first meeting of the Council of the Nations and Regions.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

The inaugural Council of the Nations and Regions met on 11 October in Edinburgh to discuss growth and investment. On 17 October the UK Government published the Terms of Reference for the Council and a communique summarising the discussion. A communique will be published following each meeting of the Council, which can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/council-of-the-nations-and-regions-inaugural-meeting>.

■ Covid-19 Inquiry: Costs

Rupert Lowe: [\[9301\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to reduce the costs associated with the covid-19 inquiry.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

It is important that lessons are learnt from the Covid-19 pandemic and the response to it. The UK Covid-19 Inquiry is independent of government and it is right that we allow the Chair to continue her important work. The Chair is under a statutory obligation to avoid unnecessary costs in the Inquiry's work, and she has been clear in her intention to complete her work as quickly and efficiently as possible.

■ UK Relations with EU: Citizens' Assemblies

Ellie Chowns:

[\[9893\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of establishing a citizens assembly to consider the future relationship between the UK and the EU.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

The Government has no plans to establish a citizens' assembly to consider the future relationship between the UK and EU. We fully recognise the importance of maintaining an effective dialogue encompassing a broad range of views across civil society, including through the TCA Civil Society Forum and Domestic Advisory Group, as we work to reset our relationship with the EU.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Department for Culture, Media and Sport

Charlie Dewhurst:

[\[9353\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what meetings (a) Ministers and (b) her officials have held with external stakeholders since 5 July 2024.

Stephanie Peacock:

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.

■ Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme

Adam Jogee:

[\[9392\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme.

Chris Bryant:

The Department continues to closely monitor the implementation and impact of the grant scheme through the regular reporting of the grant administrator, EMB. Since 2010, the Government has returned over £350 million to listed churches, synagogues, mosques and temples through the grant scheme. This has helped protect our listed places of worship and enabled them to continue their work as centres of worship and community assets.

■ Music: Tickets

Mr Luke Charters:

[\[4128\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department has made a recent assessment of the impact of dynamic ticket pricing on the accessibility of music gigs for the general public.

Chris Bryant:

The Government is clear that fans should be kept at the heart of live events, and we are concerned to see vastly inflated prices excluding many ordinary fans from having the opportunity to enjoy their favourite musicians.

We have committed to introducing new protections for consumers on ticket resales, and we will launch a consultation in the autumn to seek views on potential options. Alongside the consultation we will publish a call for evidence on price transparency for live events tickets which will include dynamic pricing.

■ Tourism: Seas and Oceans**Edward Morello:**[\[8619\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make an assessment with Cabinet colleagues of the potential economic impact of sewage discharges into the sea on the tourism industry.

Chris Bryant:

The Government is focused on protecting and enhancing the environment and putting right the failures of the past. VisitBritain/VisitEngland are working with the tourism sector to celebrate and amplify best practice, and to coordinate an industry response that promotes the UK as a leader in sustainable tourism and puts the UK's natural landscapes and communities at the heart of the country's brand proposition.

Where water safety is at risk, we will work closely with the UK Health Security Agency, water companies and the Environment Agency to mitigate any adverse impacts on the tourism sector and our natural environment from sewage leaks.

DEFENCE**■ Ballistic Missile Defence****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[9137\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the Strategic Defence Review on the ballistic missile defence capabilities of the Royal Navy.

Andrew Rosindell:[\[9138\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the Strategic Defence Review on the aircraft carrier capabilities of the Royal Navy.

Luke Pollard:

Ballistic missile and aircraft carrier capabilities are important to Defence. The importance of maritime power more broadly has been highlighted by the recent Royal Navy response to protect international shipping - vital to our way of life and economic security - from Houthi missile attacks in the Red Sea.

It is only right that we do not pre-determine what may happen in the review. The Strategic Defence Review will set out recommendations on the roles, capabilities, and reforms which UK Defence must have to meet the challenges, threats and opportunities of the twenty-first century.

■ Ministry of Defence

Charlie Dewhirst:

[\[9342\]](#)

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

Al Carns:

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.

■ Rosyth Dockyard: Nuclear Submarines

Christine Jardine:

[\[9536\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to (a) ensure the safety of and (b) mitigate potential risks posed by the decommissioning of nuclear submarines at Rosyth Royal Dockyard for surrounding residential areas.

Maria Eagle:

All the submarines currently stored at Rosyth have already been defueled, which has significantly reduced overall potential risk. Further, steps include contractual requirements with Babcock International around safety and environmental factors. These include regular sampling of surrounding waters and beaches, and dismantling one boat as a demonstrator to determine the safest methods before starting on other boats.

In addition to the safety and environmental activities the Ministry of Defence and Babcock undertake, we also comply with permits and regulatory requirements from the Defence Nuclear Safety Regulator (DNSR), the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA). This includes annual emergency exercises with ONR to plan and test for any potential incidents, in the very unlikely event that a significant issue may occur.

EDUCATION

■ Breakfast Clubs: Disadvantaged

Damian Hinds:

[\[5982\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of (a) primary, (b) secondary, (c) special schools and (d) alternative provision with 40% or more pupils in bands A-F of the income deprivation affecting children index took up the National School Breakfast Club programme in 2023-24.

Stephen Morgan:

The National School Breakfast Programme (NSBP) currently supports up to 2,700 participating schools in disadvantaged areas, meaning that thousands of children from low-income families are being offered free nutritious breakfasts to better support their attainment, wellbeing, and readiness to learn.

Information on the number and types of schools, when accounting only for schools with 40% or more pupils in the income deprivation affecting children index (IDACI) A to F areas, will be available in due course.

Breakfast Clubs: Secondary Education**Damian Hinds:**[\[7415\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to change the eligibility criteria for funding for secondary school breakfast clubs.

Stephen Morgan:

The National School Breakfast Club Programme (NSPB) currently provides breakfast clubs in up to 2,700 participating schools, including secondary, in disadvantaged areas, supporting pupils' attainment, wellbeing, and readiness to learn.

The department is making no changes to the existing eligibility criteria for secondary schools participating in the NSBP which runs until July. Future spending commitments, including on the Breakfast Club programme, will be set out as part of the Spending Review process.

Department for Education**Charlie Dewhirst:**[\[9351\]](#)

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

Janet Daby:

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.

Educational Institutions: Sexual Offences**Wera Hobhouse:**[\[9521\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to Ofsted's report entitled Review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges, published on 10 June 2021, what discussions her Department has had with Ofsted on the extent to which it has implemented the recommendations under actions for the inspectorates.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department has regular discussions with Ofsted on a wide range of aspects, including its approaches to inspection and the safeguarding of children and young people. On the specific matter of Ofsted's implementation of the actions set out in its

report, I have asked His Majesty's Chief Inspector, Sir Martyn Oliver to write to the hon. Member directly and a copy of his reply will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

■ Erasmus+ Programme

Alex Easton:

[\[8904\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of rejoining the Erasmus+ programme.

Janet Daby:

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

Following their meeting in Brussels on 2 October, the President of the European Commission and my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister have agreed to strengthen the relationship between the EU and UK, putting it on a more solid, stable footing. The government will now work with the EU to identify areas where it can strengthen co-operation for mutual benefit, such as the economy, energy, security and resilience.

The government recognises and supports the benefits of collaborating with its international partners on education. The department is working with the higher education sector to ensure our world leading universities continue to attract outstanding students from around the world and support our economy. However, we have no plans for rejoining the Erasmus+ Programme.

■ Further Education: Teachers

Ian Lavery:

[\[9179\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to increase pay in the further education sector.

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[9234\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to help tackle low pay in the further education sector.

Ayoub Khan:

[\[9357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to help tackle low pay in the further education sector.

Janet Daby:

The government does not set or recommend pay in further education (FE). This remains the responsibility of individual colleges who are free to implement pay arrangements in line with their local needs.

The government recognises the vital role that FE teachers play in developing the skills needed to drive our missions to improve opportunity and economic growth. That is why the department is investing around £600 million in FE across the financial

years 2024/25 and 2025/26. This includes extending retention payments of up to £6,000 after tax to eligible early career FE teachers in key subject areas. The department also continues to support recruitment and retention with teacher training bursaries worth up to £30,000 tax-free in certain key subject areas and with support for industry professionals to enter the teaching workforce through our Taking Teaching Further programme.

My right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, has announced a Budget on 30 October, to be followed by a multi-year Spending Review in the spring of next year. Decisions about future post-16 funding and capital programmes will be subject to the outcomes of these fiscal events.

■ Higher Education: Freedom of Expression

Rupert Lowe:

[\[9298\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to protect free speech for students in higher education.

Janet Daby:

This government is absolutely committed to freedom of speech and academic freedom. Higher education (HE) must be a space for robust discussion and intellectual rigour. This is outlined in the existing legislation, whereby universities have a legal obligation to protect lawful freedom of speech, and protections for free speech are also set out in the Office for Students' registration conditions.

The government took the decision to pause the implementation of further parts of the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act to ensure that it is workable in practice and that it protects freedom of speech for students.

The department is continuing to meet with a full range of stakeholders, including academics with concerns about constraints on freedom of speech and mission groups representing the voice of students in HE. This will feed into decision making on the future of the Act and this government's longer-term policy on protecting freedom of speech across the HE sector.

■ Holiday Activities and Food Programme

Ellie Chowns:

[\[9681\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make it her policy to fund the holiday activities and food programme on a permanent basis.

Stephen Morgan:

The future of the Holiday Activities and Food programme beyond the 31 March 2025 is subject to the next government Spending Review, which is taking place this autumn. The outcome of that process will be communicated in due course.

■ Mental Health: Curriculum

Tom Hayes:

[\[9677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to improve mental health inclusion within the national curriculum.

Catherine McKinnell:

In health education, part of mandatory relationships, sex and health education, there is a strong focus on mental wellbeing, including a recognition that mental wellbeing and physical health are linked. It is important pupils understand that good physical health, for both men and women, contributes to good mental wellbeing.

The aim of teaching pupils about mental wellbeing and physical health is to give them the information they need to make good decisions about their own health and wellbeing, recognise signs of poor health or wellbeing in themselves and others and, when issues arise, seek support as early as possible from appropriate sources.

The government has established an independent Curriculum and Assessment Review, covering ages 5 to 18, chaired by Professor Becky Francis CBE, an expert in education policy, including curriculum and social inequality. The review is looking at the whole of the curriculum and how it fits together to ensure that there is space for schools to provide a curriculum which is rich and broad, inclusive and innovative.

■ Overseas Students: British Overseas Territories

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[9144\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she is taking steps to make tertiary education in the UK more accessible for British Overseas Territory citizens.

Janet Daby:

Since 2007, persons who have settled status in the UK, and who have come to the UK from specified British Overseas Territories, have been eligible for home fee status if they meet the requirement of three years' ordinary residence in the UK, Channel Islands, Isle of Man and/or specified British Overseas Territories.

Since 2022/23 those starting designated full-time and part-time undergraduate courses are also now eligible for tuition fee loans in England if they meet the residency requirements. These requirements are that they have been ordinarily resident in the UK, Channel Islands, Isle of Man and/or specified British Overseas Territories throughout the three-year period preceding the first day of the first academic year of the course, with at least part of that period having been spent in the British Overseas Territories.

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[9145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to help support (a) primary and (b) secondary education for citizens of British overseas territories.

Catherine McKinnell:

Education is a devolved matter and decisions about primary and secondary education is the responsibility of each Overseas Territory (OT). The department responds positively to direct requests from the OTs for support to enhance or reform their education systems by sharing information on approaches in England and facilitating opportunities to engage with policy and technical experts.

Montserrat, the Pitcairn Islands, St Helena and Tristan da Cunha are in receipt of Official Development Assistance through the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), which is used to assist their governments in the delivery of essential services including education. This includes funding for teaching staff and the FCDO work in partnership with the local governments to agree targets to improve outcomes and standards in education. Work is underway to establish partnerships between education teams in the OTs with counterparts in the UK, similar to the partnerships the FCDO have helped to establish on child safeguarding.

The FCDO funded capital investment programme in Montserrat has included improvements to building in the secondary school and equipment for schools in St Helena.

■ Peking University HSBC Business School**James Wild:****[8893]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the oral answer of 9 September 2024 from the Secretary of State for Education, Official Report column 551, whether she has asked the Office for Students to look into reports regarding the operation of Peking University HSBC Business School in Oxford.

Janet Daby:

As my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education outlined in her response of 9 September, decisions relating to the conditions of registration and requirements of higher education (HE) providers in England are a matter for the Office for Students (OfS) as the independent regulator.

In order to meet the regulatory requirements of the OfS, English HE providers must uphold applicable public interest governance principles. These include principles on free speech, academic freedom and accountability, such as operating openly and with integrity. As such providers are responsible for ensuring they have adequate governance and risk management procedures in place, including on the acceptance of donations.

The OfS has informed the department that it is engaging with relevant parties as appropriate to understand the issues that have been raised regarding the operation of Peking University HSBC Business School UK Campus (PKBS-UK). PKBS-UK is a registered HE provider in the 'approved' category, which means its students cannot access tuition fee loans for its courses.

As outlined in its regulatory framework, if the OfS identifies a breach of a specific or general ongoing condition of registration as part of its enquiries, then it will consider

the use of formal sanctions, which may include monetary penalties, suspension from the register or deregistration.

This government has committed to an audit of the UK's relationship with China to improve its ability to understand and respond to the challenges and opportunities it poses. This will guide a consistent and coherent approach to relations with China rooted in UK and global interests.

■ Pupils: Bullying

Josh Babarinde: [\[9254\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the impact of her Department's anti-bullying funding on schools; and whether she plans to reinstate that funding.

Josh Babarinde: [\[9255\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what support her Department plans to provide to tackle bullying in schools based on (a) perceived difference and (b) protected characteristics.

Stephen Morgan:

The department's most recent anti-bullying grants, which totalled over £3 million and ran between August 2021 and March 2024, were procured to support schools to target bullying related to protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. The department is currently reviewing the impact of these previous programmes and considering next steps for future programmes aimed at tackling bullying in schools. Funding beyond 31 March 2025 is subject to the next government Spending Review which will take place this autumn. The outcome of the Review will be communicated in due course.

The department published advice in 2017 to support schools with addressing incidences of bullying, including bullying based on perceived differences and protected characteristics. This is available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/625ee64cd3bf7f6004339db8/Preventing_and_tackling_bullying_advice.pdf.

In 2016, the department also published a practical tool to help schools, which can be found on the Educate Against Hate website. This can be accessed at:

<https://educateagainsthate.com/resources/respectful-school-communities-self-review-signposting-tool-2/>.

■ Schools: Buildings

Alice Macdonald: [\[9588\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what guidance the Government provides to local authorities on the inspection of school ceilings.

Stephen Morgan:

Responsibility for keeping buildings safe and well-maintained lies with responsible bodies, such as local authorities and academy trusts, along with their schools. The department supports them by providing capital funding, delivering major rebuilding programmes and offering guidance and support.

The department provides good estate management for schools (GEMS), which is a manual and toolkit to support responsible bodies and schools with their estate management. The guidance can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/good-estate-management-for-schools>.

The guidance contains a range of information that can help organisations to manage their school estate, including strategic estate management, maintenance and health and safety compliance. This includes guidance on carrying out condition surveys and how to procure professional services, which can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/good-estate-management-for-schools/understanding-land-and-buildings#assessing-the-condition-of-your-estate> and here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/good-estate-management-for-schools/planning-and-organising-your-estate-resources#buying-goods-works-and-services>.

■ Schools: Food

Ellie Chowns: [9682]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to (a) monitor and (b) manage the standard of food provided by schools.

Ellie Chowns: [9685]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to increase the procurement of sustainable local food for school meals.

Stephen Morgan:

It is important that children eat nutritious food at school and the department encourages schools to have a whole school approach to healthy eating. The School Food Standards regulate the food and drink provided at lunchtime and at other times of the school day. Compliance with the School Food Standards is mandatory for all maintained schools, academies and free schools. School Governors have a responsibility to ensure compliance and should appropriately challenge the headteacher and the senior leadership team to ensure the school is meeting its obligations.

The government's ambition is to source half of all food served in public sector settings from local producers or from growers certified to meet higher environmental standards, where possible. The government wants to use the purchasing power of the public sector food supply chain to lead the way and to set best practice in delivering our wider ambitions on sustainability, animal welfare, economic growth, nutrition and health. The government has also committed to supporting schools to improve the sustainability of school food. Schools can voluntarily follow the government buying standards, which include advice around sustainable sourcing.

Ministerial teams are working with department officials on plans to deliver the government's manifesto commitments, including making quick progress to deliver breakfast clubs in every primary school. Our aim is to deliver better life chances for all, through a system which works for all. As part of this, as with all government programmes, we will keep our approach to school food under continued review.

■ Schools: Leisure Centres

Josh Dean:

[8006]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what financial support is available for school-owned leisure centres that have had departmental funding removed following changes to the Educational and Skills Funding Agency.

Janet Daby:

In previous years, some local authorities have applied to the department to request approval to allocate additional funding for schools with leisure facilities, as 'exceptional circumstances' funding, within their local funding formulae. The department is not yet in a position to confirm how 'exceptional circumstances' funding will operate for 2025/26 but will do so in due course.

■ Skills Bootcamps

Alex Burghart:

[7836]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many skills bootcamps have been delivered in each of the last three years, by (a) local authority area and (b) discipline.

Janet Daby:

The department is awaiting finalised data for the 2023/24 financial year from providers so cannot provide data for this year.

The department has published separate reports on the implementation of Skills Bootcamps for the 2022/23 (Wave 3) and 2021/22 (Wave 2) financial years, which can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66e9a3f824c4f1826d81bcbd/Skills_Bootcamps_Wave_3_Implementation_Report.pdf and here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66d5bdfd701781e1b341db13/Evaluation_of_Skills_Bootcamps_Wave_2_Implementation_Report_updated_2024.pdf.

These reports include breakdown of Skills Bootcamp starts by region and course type (discipline). The department does not include breakdowns by local authority area in these reports and is referring to Skills Bootcamps starts with these figures.

1. Table 1 (page 21) of Wave 3 report: Breakdown of applicants and starts for Wave 3 and Wave 2 Skills Bootcamps (course type)
2. Table 5 (page 25) of the Wave 3 report: Applications and starts by Government Office Region
3. Table 4 (page 26) of Wave 2 report: Applications and starts by Government Office Region

To note:

- Totals are lower than the reported total starts because some management information (MI) records do not have an accurate postcode, or no postcode listed. Totals also do not reflect any updates to starts figures that the department makes to its published statistics releases, following publication of the implementation report.
- The number of starts in the Wave 3 MI data is slightly higher than the published starts data which was due to challenges with the HGV data and accurately calculating starts. The starts release was a more conservative estimate of starts compared to the MI.
- At Wave 2, Rail was classified as part of Skills Bootcamps in Green Skills.

■ Special Educational Needs: Ashford

Sojan Joseph:

[\[9864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the provision of SEND services in Ashford constituency.

Catherine McKinnell:

Following the inspection of Kent's special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) services by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) in January 2019, inspectors reported nine significant areas of weakness, requiring the local area to produce a Written Statement of Action.

A revisit by Ofsted and CQC took place in September 2022. The report was published on 9 November 2022 and judged that the local area had not made sufficient progress in addressing any of its significant weaknesses, which were:

- (i) A widely held concern of parents that the local area is not able, or in some cases not willing, to meet their children's needs.
- (ii) A variable quality of provision and commitment to inclusion in schools.
- (iii) That parents and carers have a limited role in reviewing and designing services for children and young people with SEND.
- (iv) An inability of current joint commissioning arrangements to address known gaps and eliminate longstanding weaknesses in services.
- (v) Poor standards achieved and poor progress made by too many children and young people with SEND.
- (vi) The inconsistent quality of the education, health and care (EHC) plan process.
- (vii) Weak governance of SEND arrangements across the EHC system at strategic and operational level.
- (viii) Unacceptable waiting times for children and young people to be seen by some health services.

(ix) A lack of effective systems to review and improve outcomes for those children and young people whose progress to date has been limited by weaknesses in provision.

Every child and young person with SEND should have access to high quality services. Where a council does not meet requirements to provide appropriate support for these children, the department will take action to prioritise their needs and bring about rapid improvement. That is why Kent County Council (KCC) was issued with an Improvement Notice in March 2023, setting out the steps expected of them to raise standards in their SEND services.

After reviewing the actions that KCC has taken to improve its SEND services, the department lifted its Improvement Notice in August 2024 on the basis that KCC has met the conditions set out within it. The department continues to maintain close oversight of services and the further improvements KCC must make to ensure every child and young person with SEND has access to high quality services, including through regular review meetings, close working with NHS England, and the continued support of a department commissioned SEND Advisor.

■ Special Educational Needs: Autism

Jim Shannon:

[\[9168\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what support her Department provides to young girls with autism in schools.

Catherine McKinnell:

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

For too long the education and care system has not met the needs of all children, particularly children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), with parents struggling to get their children the support they need and deserve.

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 large majority of pupils diagnosed with autism as their primary type of need are boys. There is ongoing research and awareness on the different presentation of autism traits according to gender and the late, under and misdiagnosis of girls and women. This gender imbalance is greater for autism than for any other primary type of need.

The department holds and funds the Universal SEND Services contract, which brings together SEND-specific continuing professional development and support for the school and further education workforce. The programme aims to improve outcomes for children and young people, including those with autism. As part of the contract, the Autism Education Trust (AET) provide a range of training and support for staff on

autism including a live 90 minute 'making sense of autism' training. The training covers topics such as understanding autism, reasonable adjustments for pupils and how to listen to and learn from the perspectives of autistic pupils. The AET offer also addresses autism in girls and helps education staff understand more about how autism may present differently in girls. Since the contract began in May 2022, over 185,000 professionals have received training from AET training partners.

■ Special Educational Needs: Reigate

Rebecca Paul:

[9367]

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

Catherine McKinnell:

The department is continuing to support and challenge Surrey to improve the delivery of its special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) services, following the most recent local area SEND inspection by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission in September 2023.

This inspection found that the local area partnership's arrangements led to inconsistent experiences and outcomes for children and young people. In response, the Surrey partnership has developed a strategic plan with specific actions to address the areas for improvement that were identified in the inspection report.

The four areas for improvement identified were:

- The partnership board should further develop their strategic evaluation of all partnership projects and interventions, in order to improve their ability to monitor at a systemic level the impact of these projects and interventions and their outcomes on children and young people.
- Leaders across the partnership should improve communication from special educational needs case officers and practitioners to parents and carers, so that all stakeholders are supported to understand the system and decision-making, and feel fully involved in the journey with their child or young person.
- Leaders across health, social care and education should ensure that improvements continue in line with their recovery plan in respect of:
 - reducing waiting times for health assessments;
 - increasing timeliness and quality of needs assessments; and,
 - increasing timeliness and quality of education, health and care plans and annual reviews.
- Leaders in education should continue to review the breadth and offer of alternative provision (AP), in order to inform commissioning so that AP meets children and young people's needs and improves their outcomes.

The department, working alongside NHS England, has put into place systems to track the progress that the Surrey partnership is making against these areas for

improvement and to offer support where appropriate. For example, the department has put in place a SEND advisor who will continue to provide support and advice to the local authority.

Furthermore, Surrey County Council entered into a Safety Valve agreement with the department in March 2022, with a view to addressing the effectiveness and financial sustainability of the local high needs system.

■ STEM Subjects

James McMurdock:

[\[9376\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to promote STEM subjects in state-maintained secondary schools.

Catherine McKinnell:

High quality teaching is the factor that makes the biggest difference to a child's education, and therefore ensuring we have sufficient science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) teachers is crucial to the department's efforts to promote STEM subjects. That is why we have pledged to recruit 6,500 new expert teachers and have taken the first step towards delivering this by agreeing a 5.5% teacher pay award and nearly £1.1 billion additional funding for schools.

The department is also offering bursaries worth £29,000 tax free and scholarships worth £31,000 tax free to encourage talented trainees to become mathematics, physics, chemistry and computing teachers. Additionally, we offer a Targeted Retention Incentive, which is worth up to £6,000 after tax, for teachers of the same subjects in the first five years of their careers who work in disadvantaged schools.

Bursaries and scholarships are available to non-UK national physics trainees. Non-UK teachers of physics moving to England to start work in the 2024/25 academic year may also be eligible for the international relocation pilot payment worth £10,000.

Additionally, the department supports a range of programmes to improve the teaching of STEM subjects, including Maths Hubs programme, the National Centre for Computing Education which also supports uptake of computer science qualifications, and the Advanced Mathematics Support Programme, which delivers high quality teacher professional development for Level 3 mathematics.

Further, the STEM Ambassadors programme and Stimulating Physics Network promote STEM across our schools boosting the quality of teaching and enabling young people to explore and develop their skills and interest in STEM.

■ Students: Loans

Neil O'Brien:

[\[6456\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many graduates of each higher education institution (a) have outstanding student loans and (b) are paying off such loans.

Janet Daby:

The attached table shows the number of borrowers who are liable to repay (i.e. are past their Statutory Repayment Due Date (SRDD) and have an outstanding loan) and of those, how many have ever made a repayment, split by Higher Education Provider (HEP).

The data has been supplied by the Student Loans Company. The data is for England domiciled borrowers who undertook full-time undergraduate courses. Please note the following caveats regarding the data:

- The data is not directly comparable across HEPs due to different course offerings, student numbers, communities served, and demographics of student cohorts. For example, some demographics of graduates may be more likely to take part-time employment, which is less likely to result in earnings over the repayment threshold.
- Borrowers from newer providers, where the majority have only just passed their SRDD, are less likely to have made a repayment as yet.
- The figures represent a snapshot in time and will change as borrowers pass their SRDD and may move into employment.
- Figures less than 11 in the 'liable to repay' column and less than 6 in the 'repaying' column have been suppressed.
- Where HEPs' names are duplicated, this can be for a number of reasons, including two different providers having the same name.

Attachments:

1. 6456_table [6456_table.xlsx]

Alex Sobel:**[8850]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the average maintenance loan received by English-domiciled students (a) studying away from home in London, (b) living at home and studying in London and (c) studying in London in total was in each of the last three financial years.

Janet Daby:

Student finance is awarded on an academic year basis, not a financial year basis, so the average amounts are provided by academic year. The mean average maintenance loan amounts presented below are for England-domiciled full-time undergraduate borrowers:

a) Studying away from home in London

ACADEMIC YEAR	AVERAGE MAINTENANCE AWARD (£)
2021/22	10,746
2022/23	11,072
2023/24	11,593

b) Living at home and studying in London

ACADEMIC YEAR	AVERAGE MAINTENANCE AWARD (£)
2021/22	5,760
2022/23	5,793
2023/24	5,917

c) Studying in London in total

ACADEMIC YEAR	AVERAGE MAINTENANCE AWARD (£)
2021/22	9,148
2022/23	9,442
2023/24	9,863

To note:

- The location of the student (Parental Home or Elsewhere in London) in the autumn term is assumed to be their location throughout the year.
- Long Course Loans are excluded from these figures.

■ Truancy

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[9143\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to reduce unauthorised school absences.

Stephen Morgan:

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

To address this, backed by £15 million, the government will expand the investment and reach of attendance mentoring. This will help to reach 10,000 more children and cover an additional ten areas which have some of the worst attendance rates across the country.

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

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

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

■ Universities: Admissions

Jim Shannon:

[9167]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to encourage boys to apply for university.

Janet Daby:

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

The department will support the aspiration of every person who meets the requirements and wants to go to university, regardless of their background and personal characteristics. Access to higher education (HE) should be based on ability and attainment. Opportunity should be available to all and it is our aspiration that no groups are left behind.

It is critical that both boys and girls are supported with good advice, quality options and fair and transparent processes which ensure there are no barriers to them accessing high quality courses suited to their ability, interests and aspirations.

The department expects schools and colleges to provide a stable, structured careers programme in line with the Gatsby Benchmarks. The Benchmarks include a clear expectation that every pupil should meet providers of the full range of learning opportunities, including universities. By the age of 18, all pupils who are considering applying for university should have had at least two visits to universities to meet staff and pupils

All English HE providers that are registered with the Office for Students (OfS) and intend to charge higher fees must have an access and participation plan (APP) approved by the OfS. APPs should set out how a university or college will challenge risks to equality of opportunity in HE and include the underrepresented groups it will support. HE providers should refer to the Equality of Opportunity Risk Register published by the OfS when considering risk. They should also consider other local risks based on available evidence to address areas of under-representation.

UCAS has introduced reforms to the admissions application form to increase transparency and improve clarity around the process. These include a new academic reference for the 2024 cycle, a new entry grades tool for the 2025 cycle and personal statement reform. These changes aim to enable students to make informed, ambitious choices and ensure universities hear from students in their own words.

■ Universities: Student Numbers

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[9146\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a cap on student numbers per university, in the context of recent trends in the availability of student housing.

Janet Daby:

Student accommodation is a busy part of the housing market, and this government recognises the concerns that some students may have about the availability of accommodation. As universities and landlords are private, autonomous bodies, the government has no role in student admissions or the provision of student accommodation, nor a remit to intervene in how it is allocated.

Nevertheless, the department is working with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to promote the importance of a strategic approach to meeting student housing needs to providers and local authorities.

The department expects universities and private landlords to review their accommodation policies to ensure they are affordable, fair, clear and promote the interests of students.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

■ Batteries: Storage

Darren Paffey:

[\[9894\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of developing large-scale battery storage within the Port of Southampton area.

Michael Shanks:

This Government recognises that batteries have a key role to play in decarbonising the power sector by 2030 by balancing the electricity system and facilitating the integration of renewable power.

The Government does not intend to commission an assessment of storage in this specific area. To ensure that we develop the right strategic mix of energy infrastructure in the appropriate locations, the government has commissioned the National Energy System Operator (NESO) to develop a Strategic Spatial Energy Plan (SSEP) to support a more actively planned approach to energy infrastructure across Great Britain.

■ Boiler Upgrade Scheme

Freddie van Mierlo:

[\[9847\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending the boiler upgrade scheme to include (a) heat batteries and (b) other low carbon heating technologies.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government is committed to incentivising properties to transition to cleaner, affordable heating. At present, the Boiler Upgrade Scheme, does not apply to alternative electric heating technologies, such as heat batteries. We are targeting support at technologies, like heat pumps, that current evidence suggests offer the greatest potential to decarbonise our buildings.

However, the Government will keep its position on alternative electric heating technologies under review and make further assessments as the evidence base develops. Our Warm Homes Plan will offer grants and low interest loans to support investment in low carbon heating and other home improvements to cut bills.

■ British Coal Staff Superannuation Scheme

Grahame Morris:

[\[9910\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how many former employees were recipients of the British Coal Staff Superannuation Scheme in (a) Easington constituency and (b) the UK in October 2024.

Sarah Jones:

We are unable to provide the breakdown requested. However, information from the trustees shows that, as at 22 July 2024, the number of pensioner and dependant members in the UK was 39,251 and in Easington was 748.

Grahame Morris:

[\[9911\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how many dependents were recipients of the British Coal Staff Superannuation Scheme in (a) Easington constituency and (b) the UK in October 2024.

Sarah Jones:

We are unable to provide the breakdown requested. However, information from the trustees shows that, as at 22 July 2024, the number of pensioner and dependant members in the UK was 39,251 and in Easington was 748.

Grahame Morris:

[\[9912\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how many members of the British Coal Staff Superannuation Scheme have not reached pension age.

Sarah Jones:

Information from the Trustees indicates that there were 1,861 members who have not yet reached pension age as at 9 September 2024.

Grahame Morris: [\[9913\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how many members of the British Coal Staff Superannuation Scheme are yet to receive their pension because they have deferred their pension.

Sarah Jones:

Information from the Trustees indicates that, as of 9 September 2024, there were 1,143 members who had yet to receive their pension because they have deferred.

Grahame Morris: [\[9914\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether his Department has made direct payments to the British Coal Staff Superannuation Scheme under the existing guarantee arrangements.

Sarah Jones:

No such payments have been made.

Grahame Morris: [\[9915\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether his Department has made direct payments to the British Coal Staff Superannuation Scheme under the guarantee arrangements before the surplus sharing arrangements ended.

Sarah Jones:

No such payments have been made.

Carbon Emissions**Danny Beales:** [\[10025\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department has taken to help increase public understanding of the (a) costs and (b) benefits of reducing carbon emissions; and what steps he is taking to increase public awareness of practical steps they can take to reduce emissions.

Kerry McCarthy:

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

Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: Ministers**Charlie Dewhurst:** [\[9339\]](#)

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

Michael Shanks:

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

Published declarations include the purpose of the meeting and the names of any additional external organisations or individuals in attendance.

■ Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: Tony Blair Institute for Global Change**Sir John Hayes:**[\[9122\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether Ministers in his Department have met representatives of the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change since 5 July 2024.

Michael Shanks:

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

Published declarations include the purpose of the meeting and the names of any additional external organisations or individuals in attendance.

■ Energy: Billing**Jim Shannon:**[\[9170\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what discussions he has had with his counterparts in the devolved Administrations on potential energy bill increases.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

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.

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

Published declarations include the purpose of the meeting and the names of any additional external organisations or individuals in attendance.

■ Great British Nuclear: Recruitment and Secondment**Wera Hobhouse:**[\[9196\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, pursuant to the Answer of 2 September 2024 to Question 2122 and of 10 September 2024 to Question 5089 on Great British Nuclear: Recruitment, from what organisations how many personnel have been (a) seconded and (b) recruited to Great British Nuclear.

Michael Shanks:

GBN has grown rapidly as an organisation to deliver on its mission and now has over 100 personnel working for it, including 51 staff seconded from 16 organisations. GBN has permanent recruitment underway, and all roles are advertised, with applications welcomed from candidates from all backgrounds and organisations.

Heat Pumps**Victoria Collins:**[\[9548\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of listing air-to-air heat pumps as a cost-effective way to improve a property's energy performance certificate rating.

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.

Heating: Non-ionizing Radiation**Kevin Hollinrake:**[\[9185\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether his Department has made a recent assessment of the cost-effectiveness of using infrared heating to meet upcoming energy efficiency regulations.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

Infrared heating is a promising technology, which when used with room-by-room control systems, could reduce electricity use relative to a direct electric heating system. However, previous Government research, such as the Cost Optimal Domestic Electrification Project, has found that lifetime costs of infrared heating are generally higher than other electric heating technologies, like heat pumps. The Government remains open to new evidence that would challenge this view and on the role infrared heating could play in decarbonising our buildings.

Renewable Energy: Community Development**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[9135\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make supporting the growth of community-based renewable energy schemes an aim of Great British Energy.

Michael Shanks:

Great British Energy's Founding Statement is clear that the Local Power Plan will be one of Great British Energy's core functions. Through the Local Power Plan, Great

British Energy will support local and combined authorities – as well as community energy groups – to roll out small and medium-scale renewable energy projects. The Secretary of State will have the ability to set Great British Energy’s strategic priorities to ensure it remains focused on the Government’s aim to accelerate the delivery of homegrown clean energy. The Secretary of State will set out Great British Energy’s strategic priorities in due course.

■ Renewable Energy: Housing

Alex Easton: [\[9333\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what additional steps he plans to take to support households to move toward using (a) solar power and (b) renewable energy.

Michael Shanks:

The Government will work with the private sector to radically increase the deployment of onshore wind, solar and offshore wind by 2030. Changes to permitted development rights rules will mean more homeowners and businesses will be able to install solar panels on their roofs without going through the planning system. The Government is working to support household renewables through community benefits, energy efficiency schemes and the Smart Export Guarantee.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Animal and Plant Health Agency

Dr Ben Spencer: [\[9227\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the planned upgrade and improvement works at the Animal and Plant Health Agency on (a) current and (b) future trade agreements.

Daniel Zeichner:

Work to safeguard and enhance the Animal & Plant Health Agency (APHA) site in Weybridge continues. This capability ensures the Government can continue to manage a wide range of biosecurity threats which may otherwise affect our ability to trade. Defra is committed to the strongest possible standards of biosecurity which protects the country, boosting our resilience against animal diseases and protecting our economic growth.

■ Bridges: Runnymede and Weybridge

Dr Ben Spencer: [\[9574\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the causes of delays in repairing bridge 142 in Runnymede and Weybridge constituency.

Emma Hardy:

To ensure public safety and prevent access to the bridge, Egham Hythe (Bridge 142) will be closed until the Environment Agency (EA) has completed the necessary repair. Following a tree strike in 2023 the EA has conducted several specialist surveys of this bridge which identified cracks within the iron structure. The bridge refurbishment will require Defra grant in aid funding to be allocated to it and we will ensure this forms part of future Government Spending Review bids. Any temporary crossing would similarly require new Defra funding in order to be progressed. The EA is, however, exploring possible routes for partnership funding, which may help accelerate the refurbishment programme

Cats: Animal Breeding**Wendy Chamberlain:**[\[9947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answers of 15 October 2024 to Questions 7849 and 8458 on Cats: Animal Breeding, whether his Department plans to include cat breeding in his Department's post-implementation review of the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018.

Daniel Zeichner:

Defra's post-implementation review of the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018 considers whether the Regulations have met their original objectives, their impact and effectiveness, including in relation to the protections provided to cats. The review will be published in due course.

Flood Control: Central Suffolk and North Ipswich**Patrick Spencer:**[\[9550\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with Suffolk County Council on the costs of implementing section 19 actions in Central Suffolk and North Ipswich constituency.

Emma Hardy:

S19 recommendations are far reaching and span across several organisations. If all recommendations were to be implemented the cost in central Suffolk and North Ipswich would be in the tens of millions. Efficiency is gained through close partnership working, for example between Suffolk County Council (SCC) and the Environment Agency (EA). The EA has been working closely with SCC and will continue to work together for the communities impacted.

Flood Control: Finance**Alex Mayer:**[\[9989\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that the water industry provides funding for catchment-based solutions for natural flood management.

Emma Hardy:

Defra recognises that nature and catchment-based solutions in the water sector have an important role to play. The strategic policy statement in 2022 set out the governments priorities for Ofwat. This set out that water companies should significantly increase their use of nature and catchment-based solutions to achieve multiple benefits for the environment and the public including natural flood management. We expect companies and regulators to work towards delivering these solutions as a matter of preference.

The Working with Natural Processes (NFM) Evidence Directory, will be updated this year provides natural flood management information and case studies:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-with-natural-processes-to-reduce-flood-risk>. The Environment Agency is producing new long-term investment scenarios to quantify the benefits of natural flood management for the next 50 to 100 years in England.

■ Floods Resilience Taskforce**Ben Obese-Jecty:****[9258]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 14 October 2024 to Question 6809 on Flood Control: Huntingdon, what the responsibilities are of the Lead Local Flood Authority within the Floods Resilience Taskforce.

Emma Hardy:

The Taskforce will consider both near-term resilience and preparedness, and longer-term resilience and wider floods strategy, for all sources of flooding. Defra is working with Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government to engage Lead Local Flood Authorities between the Taskforce meetings.

■ Food Data Transparency Partnership**Dr Simon Opher:****[9595]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has had discussions with the Secretary of State for Business and Trade on introducing mandatory reporting for food businesses on (a) health and (b) environmental metrics.

Daniel Zeichner:

This Government is committed to tackling the challenges faced by our health system with the shift to prevention central to this ambition. Under the Government's Health Mission we are considering what preventative action is needed to support people live longer, healthier lives, to reduce the amount of time spent in ill health, tackle health inequalities and drive economic growth. We face an obesity crisis and will explore the most impactful interventions to shift food business sales to healthier food.

Defra is not planning to introduce a sector-specific legislative requirement for food and drink companies to report metrics related to the environment such as greenhouse gas emissions. This is because the Department for Business and Trade

are currently considering the endorsement of the International Sustainability Disclosure Standards, to create UK Sustainability Reporting Standards that may include reporting against some environmental metrics. The Government and Financial Conduct Authority will consider whether to mandate these Standards for certain economically significant entities across all sectors.

Through the Food Data Transparency Partnership, Defra is supporting food and drink businesses with greenhouse gas emissions reporting by standardising the data and methods used by the industry. The initial focus has been on GHG emissions, where the science and the reporting requirements are most mature. Moving forwards, the ambition is to consider a broad range of environmental metrics beyond carbon.

■ Food: Waste

Sir John Hayes:

[\[9900\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will have discussions with major (a) supermarkets and (b) food retailers on reducing food waste.

Mary Creagh:

Defra engages with retailers on a regular basis as part of ongoing efforts to ensure alignment on key policies. This includes regular bilateral conversations with individual organisations and forums that include all the major supermarkets. Agendas are adjusted according to priorities.

Defra supports the Courtauld Commitment, an industry-led initiative delivered by the Waste and Resource Action Programme (WRAP), which has a target of 50% per capita reduction in food waste by 2030 against the UK's 2007 baseline. Membership of Courtauld includes all the major retailers and their trade organisation, the British Retail Consortium (BRC). Defra engages in Courtauld's collaborative approach, attending working group discussions with industry on how to tackle food waste in the supply chain.

■ Forestry England: Public Consultation

Stuart Anderson:

[\[9622\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he is taking steps to increase engagement with public consultations undertaken by Forestry England.

Mary Creagh:

Forestry England remains committed to ensuring the public has the opportunity to comment on its future plans, such as in cases of new woodland creation.

Forestry England will continue to make sure that its consultation process supports its duty to balance and maximise the multiple benefits offered by forestry as a land use.

■ Incinerators: Air Pollution

Mike Amesbury: [9761]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment has he made of the impact of incinerators on air quality (a) in Halton and (b) nationally.

Emma Hardy:

The Environment Agency (EA) are responsible for issuing permits to allow new incinerators (also known as energy from waste or EfW plants) to operate in England. When the EA receives a permit application for a new EfW plant, or to change the operation of an existing plant in a way which could affect its emissions, they carry out a comprehensive air quality impact assessment.

The EA will only grant a permit for an EfW plant, or a variation to an existing permit, if they are satisfied that the proposal would not give rise to any significant pollution of the environment or harm to human health, including via impacts on air quality. This has been done for the Runcorn EfW plant in the Borough of Halton. A copy of the latest air quality impact assessment for Runcorn can be found in Section 1 of the document at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5c8faadee5274a4c32a1597d/Application_Variation_-_Decision_Document.pdf

The EA also consult the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) for their views on every new permit application they receive. The UKHSA's position is that modern, well-run and regulated municipal waste incinerators are not a significant risk to public health. This view is based on detailed assessments of the effects of air pollutants on health and on the fact that these incinerators make only a very small contribution to local and national concentrations of air pollutants.

■ Inland Waterways: Standards

Dr Ben Spencer: [9225]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what enforcement powers he has over the Environment Agency if they fail to remove (a) a tree under the Wey Bridge and (b) other waterway obstructions.

Dr Ben Spencer: [9226]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what metrics are in place to (a) monitor and (b) enforce the timely response of the Environment Agency to reports of (i) waterway obstructions, (ii) lack of waterway maintenance and (iii) damaged or broken assets.

Emma Hardy:

The Environment Agency (EA) is accountable to Parliament via the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). As the principal sponsor of the EA, Defra works closely with EA officials at every level to provide constructive challenge and support on EA performance and delivery. Defra ministers regularly meet with the

EA leadership to discuss the EA's performance and delivery of departmental priorities.

The EA has powers to undertake maintenance on main rivers. Where the EA undertakes watercourse maintenance to reduce flood risk, it focuses its efforts and resources on those areas where the consequences of flooding for communities, businesses, property and infrastructure are greatest.

The EA measures, and reports on, the percentage of assets that are at target condition. Where assets are not at required condition, this identifies that work is needed. It does not 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 EA.

■ Internal Drainage Boards: Finance

Rupert Lowe:

[\[9578\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will (a) review and (b) implement changes to the funding structure for Internal Drainage Boards to reduce the financial impact on local councils.

Emma Hardy:

Defra has committed to work with the internal drainage board (IDB) sector and the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government to review IDBs' current funding and costs. This will include examination of whether any changes are needed to their funding model and will consider the findings carefully.

IDBs are local independent statutory public bodies, mainly funded by the beneficiaries of their work. This includes farmers who pay drainage rates and local authorities that pay special levies. Those beneficiaries are represented on the boards of IDBs, where decisions are made on the forthcoming programme of work and the annual drainage rates and special levies.

■ Peat: Sales

Ayoub Khan:

[\[10187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will introduce legislation to end retail sales of horticultural peat.

Mary Creagh:

I refer the hon. Member to the response given to [PQ 4272](#) on 12 September 2024.

■ Pets: Animal Housing

Tim Farron:

[\[8784\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the animal welfare provision and conditions within the Animal and Plant Health Agency licensed quarantine kennel and cattery facilities.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Government is committed to preserving high animal welfare and biosecurity standards.

Authorised quarantine premises are approved and regularly inspected by the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) to ensure they meet the standards specified in the conditions of their authorisation, which includes welfare standards.

We keep the adequacy of the animal welfare provision and conditions within authorised quarantine premises under regular review.

Plastics: Treaties**Damien Egan:** [\[9584\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what diplomatic steps his Department is taking to secure an (a) ambitious and (b) legally binding target to cut plastic production at the UN Global Plastics Treaty.

Emma Hardy:

As a member of the High Ambition Coalition to End Plastic Pollution and a signatory to the Bridge to Busan Declaration, the UK is pushing for an ambitious treaty that addresses the full lifecycle of plastics, including reducing production and consumption of primary plastic polymers to sustainable levels. The UK has played an active role in negotiations including at high-level Ministerial consultations on this matter during the UN General Assembly in New York.

Property Development: Floods**Caroline Voaden:** [\[9845\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what his expected timetable is for implementing Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 to deliver standardised sustainable drainage systems in new developments.

Emma Hardy:

The Government is currently assessing how best to implement its ambitions on sustainable drainage, while also being mindful of the cumulative impact of new regulatory burdens on the development sector.

Sewage: Runnymede and Weybridge**Dr Ben Spencer:** [\[8892\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take enforcement action against Thames Water in response to sewer flooding in the Runnymede and Weybridge Constituency.

Emma Hardy:

The Environment Agency (EA) assesses all incident reports and responds to those which pose the greatest risk to the environment. The EA has received one recent report of sewer flooding in the Runnymede and Weybridge Constituency (since 1

September 2024). This related to the hydraulic overload of Thames Water's sewer network and was assessed as having a low impact on the environment. The EA has no plans for enforcement action relating to this incident in line with its Enforcement & Sanctions Policy.

This policy has been in place since December 2023. The current Government is examining ways to strengthen these powers.

■ **Sewage: Weybridge**

Dr Ben Spencer:

[\[9570\]](#)

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

Emma Hardy:

The Environment Agency (EA) has required Thames Water to improve the Event Duration Monitoring of storm overflows at Weybridge Sewage Treatment works as part of the current Water Industry National Environment Programme (WINEP) 2020-25. The EA has inspected Weybridge Sewage Treatment Works in 2024 and is currently investigating possible permit breaches at the site. The regulators will not let companies get away with illegal activity and where breaches are found, will not hesitate to hold companies to account.

Further improvement schemes are planned as part of the WINEP 2025-2030 including tightening of environmental permit limits for phosphorous.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ **Argentina: Foreign Relations**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[9142\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Argentinian counterpart on the Falkland Islands.

Stephen Doughty:

The UK is resolutely committed to defending and supporting the Falkland Islanders' right of self-determination and our sovereignty of the Falkland Islands. The Foreign Secretary met Argentine Foreign Minister Diana Mondino on 24 September and he conveyed the clarity of the UK's unequivocal position on these matters during the meeting.

■ **Azerbaijan: Corruption**

Jim Shannon:

[\[9173\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he is taking steps with his Azerbaijani counterpart to help tackle corruption by politicians in that country.

Stephen Doughty:

The UK acknowledges that like many countries around the world, Azerbaijan faces challenges with tackling corruption. We remain in close contact with the Azerbaijani authorities and stand ready to provide support and expertise in tackling this issue.

■ **Azerbaijan: Prisoners****Ruth Cadbury:**[\[8830\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make a request to his Azerbaijani counterpart for a UK delegation to visit the 23 Armenian prisoners being held by Azerbaijan in order to (a) verify their conditions and (b) ensure that international standards and conventions are being complied before COP29 in Baku in November.

Stephen Doughty:

The UK has consistently urged the Azerbaijani authorities, including ahead of COP29, to ensure that those in detention are afforded a fair trial and are provided safe conditions, in accordance with Azerbaijan's international obligations and commitments. We are in touch with the UK delegation visiting Azerbaijan for COP29 to ensure a smooth visit to the country, however we have not received a formal request for UK Government support to visit Armenian prisoners held in Azerbaijan.

Joe Powell:[\[9858\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the arbitrary detention of prisoners in Azerbaijan.

Stephen Doughty:

The UK remains concerned at the increased number of detentions of independent journalists, human rights defenders and civil society representatives over the last year, and we continue 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. The UK has consistently called on Azerbaijan to ensure that those in detention are afforded a fair trial and are provided safe conditions, in accordance with Azerbaijan's international obligations and commitments. British Embassy Baku regularly raises these issues with the Azerbaijani authorities at senior levels.

■ **Bangladesh: Hinduism****Joe Powell:**[\[10220\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help ensure the safety of Hindus in Bangladesh.

Catherine West:

The UK has a long-standing commitment to the protection of human rights. We are committed to Freedom of Religion or Belief for all. In July, the Foreign Secretary and I raised concerns publicly and privately about the unprecedented levels of violence and

we urged for a de-escalation of the situation. The Interim Government in Bangladesh has the UK's full support as it works to restore peace and order. We welcome the Chief Advisor's recent comments on the need to support minority communities in Bangladesh, particularly in the lead up to Durga Puja.

■ **British Indian Ocean Territory: Detainees**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[9139\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many illegal immigrants are currently being detained by the United Kingdom within the British Indian Ocean Territory (Chagos Islands).

Stephen Doughty:

64 migrants are currently under the care of the BIOT Administration on Diego Garcia, with 8 of those receiving medical treatment off island. The Government are working at pace to find a solution for the migrants that both protects their welfare and the integrity of UK borders.

■ **Disputed Territories: Overseas Trade**

Clive Lewis:

[\[8835\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has issued recent guidance to businesses operating in internationally-disputed territories.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The Overseas Business Risk service provides information on various risks in overseas markets. UK government staff in country produce these guides with specific information provided per country. These can be found on: Overseas Business Risk - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

■ **European Convention on Human Rights**

Nigel Farage:

[\[9031\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of the UK withdrawing from the European Convention on Human Rights.

Stephen Doughty:

This Government is unequivocally committed to the European Convention of Human Rights and will not withdraw from it. The UK government maintains profound respect for international law and remains fully committed to the international human rights framework and the important role that multilateral organisations like the Council of Europe play in upholding it.

■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Charlie Dewhirst: [\[9340\]](#)

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

Catherine West:

The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) publishes details of Ministers' meetings with external organisations, gifts (given and received), hospitality and overseas travel every 3 months.

The FCDO also publishes details of the Permanent under Secretaries, Directors General, and Finance and Commercial Directors external meetings every 3 months.

This data is available on Gov.uk.

Information for the period from 5 July 2024 will be published in due course.

■ Hong Kong: British Nationality

Sir Iain Duncan Smith: [\[8752\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 7 October 2024 to Question 5527 on China and Hong Kong: Diplomatic Service, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that Hongkongers who (a) arrived in the UK under the BN(O) scheme and (b) will be naturalised as British citizens are recognised as British nationals by the (i) Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and (ii) Chinese government.

Catherine West:

FCDO's Travel Advice for China explains that China does not recognise dual nationality and anyone born in China to a Chinese national parent would be considered by the Chinese authorities to be of Chinese nationality and treated as a Chinese citizen. This advice applies to all British citizens travelling to China including those naturalised under the BN(O) scheme.

■ Russia: Oil

Liam Byrne: [\[9907\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the impact of (a) UK and (b) other countries' sanctions on individual vessels on preventing Russian circumvention of oil export sanctions.

Stephen Doughty:

The government is committed to closing down sanctions loopholes, and cracking down on ever more desperate forms of sanctions circumvention, working closely with our partners. Tackling Putin's shadow fleet is a key part of this work. Since gaining the power to 'specify' vessels, the UK has sanctioned 43 tankers transporting

Russian oil. A significant number of these vessels have suffered disruption or struggled to re-enter the Russian oil trade. Additionally, last week we announced that the Department for Transport is working alongside the Joint Maritime Security Centre (JMSC) and the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) to challenge shadow fleet vessels with suspected inadequate insurance to provide details of their insurance status as they pass through the English Channel. We have also targeted the Kremlin's energy revenues by sanctioning 9 liquefied natural gas (LNG) vessels involved in the shipping of Russian LNG, including from Russia's flagship Arctic LNG 2 project.

■ **Russia: Sanctions**

Neil Coyle:

[\[9719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of sanctioning (a) Leonard Blavatnik and (b) other Russian people under sanction in Ukraine but not in the UK.

Stephen Doughty:

The UK remains steadfast in our support to Ukraine. Together with our international partners, we have implemented the most severe package of sanctions ever imposed on a major economy. The UK alone has sanctioned more than 2,000 individuals and entities under the Russia sanctions regime. Just this week, we launched our largest ever ship specification package targeting Putin's Shadow Fleet.

We do not comment on future or individual designations. Furthermore, we do not comment on our partner's decisions on individual designations.

■ **Ukraine: Military Aid**

Fabian Hamilton:

[\[9129\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of transferring] frozen Russian assets held in the UK to Ukraine to support the war effort.

Stephen Doughty:

Russia's obligations under international law are clear: it must pay for the damage it has caused to Ukraine. That is why on 22 October the Chancellor announced that we will provide £2.26 billion in additional support to Ukraine, as part of the G7 Extraordinary Revenue Acceleration (ERA) Loans to Ukraine scheme. In line with the Government's commitment to ensure that Russia pays for its illegal invasion of Ukraine, the UK's contribution will be repaid using the extraordinary profits generated on immobilised Russian sovereign assets. We will continue to consider all possible lawful avenues by which Russia can be made to meet its obligations to Ukraine under international law.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE■ **Aldesleukin****Jim Shannon:**[\[8825\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the viability of aldesleukin as a routine treatment for people who have had a heart attack.

Andrew Gwynne:

The National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) Cambridge Biomedical Research Centre and the NIHR Cambridge Clinical Research Facility are supporting research into the benefits of low doses of aldesleukin for people who have experienced a heart attack, to reduce inflammation in the arteries after the initial heart attack.

■ **Arthritis and Musculoskeletal Disorders****Danny Beales:**[\[10026\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure people living with (a) arthritis and (b) musculoskeletal conditions are considered in the NHS 10-year plan.

Andrew Gwynne:

As part of the Government's five long-term missions, we will launch a 10-Year Health Plan to reform the National Health Service and make it fit for the future. The plan will set out a bold agenda to deliver on the three big shifts needed, to move healthcare from the hospital to the community, from analogue to digital, and from sickness to prevention.

Improving health and good work outcomes for the 20 million people in the United Kingdom who live with musculoskeletal conditions, including arthritis, also forms a key part of the Government's missions to kickstart economic growth, while building an NHS fit for the future. We will carefully be considering policies with input from the public, patients, health staff, and our stakeholders, as we develop the plan.

■ **Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: Drugs****Darren Paffey:**[\[9850\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the number of NHS prescribers for ADHD medication.

Karin Smyth:

No specific assessment has been made. It is the responsibility of integrated care boards to make available appropriate provision to meet the health and care needs of their local population, including attention deficit hyperactivity disorder services, in line with relevant National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines.

■ Brain: Tumours

David Simmonds:

[9028]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 10 October 2024 to Question 7591 on Brain: Tumours, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of Government funding into brain tumour research.

Andrew Gwynne:

Research is crucial in tackling cancer, which is why the Department spends £1.5 billion each year on research through its research delivery arm, the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). Cancer is the largest area of spend, at over £121.8 million in 2022/23, and with the NIHR spending more on cancer than any other disease group, reflecting its high priority.

Over the last five years, the NIHR has directly invested £11.3 million on brain tumour research. In addition, our wider investments in NIHR research infrastructure, facilities, services, and the research workforce, allows us to leverage research funding from other donors and organisations. These investments are estimated to be £31.5 million, between 2018/19 and 2022/23, and have enabled 227 brain cancer research studies to take place in the same period. In total, NIHR investments have enabled 8,500 people to participate in potentially life-changing research in the National Health Service over this time. These investments are complemented by efforts led by UK Research and Innovation and the Medical Research Council.

Brain cancer remains one of the hardest to treat cancers in both adults and children and we urgently need more research to inform our efforts, which is why the NIHR announced new research funding opportunities for brain cancer research last month, spanning both adult and paediatric populations. This includes a national NIHR Brain Tumour Research Consortium, to ensure the most promising research opportunities are made available to adult and child patients, and a new funding call to generate high quality evidence in brain tumour care, support, and rehabilitation. Further information is available at the following link:

<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/news/new-funding-opportunities-novel-brain-tumour-research-launched>

Brain cancer and children's cancer research will continue to be a priority into the future, and the Department, through the NIHR, will continue to fund high-quality science to expand lifesaving and life-improving research.

■ Chronic Fatigue Syndrome: Health Services

Dr Ben Spencer:

[8474]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what meetings he has had with (a) NHS clinical teams specialising in the care and treatment of myalgic encephalomyelitis or chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS), (b) researchers, (c) patients and (d) patient group representatives on ME/CFS.

Dr Ben Spencer: [\[8475\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to produce a national myalgic encephalomyelitis or chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS) strategy.

Dr Ben Spencer: [\[8476\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has issued guidance to integrated care systems (ICS) on commissioning specialist care and treatment services for myalgic encephalomyelitis or chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS); and whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of requiring ICSs to commission minimum levels of those services.

Andrew Gwynne:

[Holding answer 17 October 2024]: The Government has made a commitment to publish a final delivery plan for ME/CFS. The consultation responses, alongside continued stakeholder engagement, will inform the development of the final delivery plan, which we aim to publish in the winter of 2024/25. The plan will focus on boosting research, improving attitudes and education, and bettering the lives of people with this debilitating disease.

In 2021, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) published guidance on the management and diagnosis of ME/CFS. The NICE's guideline provides recommendations on principles of care for people with severe ME/CFS, including hospital care, and adapting a multidisciplinary approach with access to a range of health and social care professionals based on needs. Although NICE guidance is not mandatory, the Government does expect healthcare commissioners to take the guidelines fully into account in designing services to meet the needs of their local population, and to work towards their implementation over time.

My Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has not yet had any meetings with National Health Service clinical teams specialising in myalgic encephalomyelitis, also known as chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS), ME/CFS researchers, patients, or patient group representatives.

■ Chronic Fatigue Syndrome: Research

Dr Ben Spencer: [\[8473\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has had recent discussions with the National Institute for Health and Care Research on support for research into (a) care and (b) treatment for people with myalgic encephalomyelitis or chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS).

Andrew Gwynne:

[Holding answer 16 October 2024]: My Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has not had any recent discussions with the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) specifically on research into myalgic encephalomyelitis, also known as chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS). Departmental officials are working with the NIHR on behalf of my Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of

State for Health and Social Care. The NIHR and the Medical Research Council are committed to funding high-quality research to understand the causes, consequences, and treatment of long COVID and ME/CFS, and are actively exploring next steps for research in these areas.

■ **Defibrillators: Sportsgrounds**

Nadia Whittome:

[\[9962\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help increase the number of defibrillators in sports stadiums.

Andrew Gwynne:

The treatment and prevention of cardiovascular disease is a priority for the Government. We want people to have the best chance of survival from cardiac arrest, and rapid intervention is central to improving outcomes. This is why the Government is increasing the number of publicly accessible Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs).

The Government is committed to improving access to AEDs in public spaces, and reducing inequalities in access to these life saving devices. We have made a further £500,000 available from August 2024 to fulfil existing applications to the Department's Community AED Fund. The criteria specified for the original grant continues to apply, and will go to applications for AEDs in areas where there is the greatest need, including in areas of high footfall, hot spots for cardiac arrest, and areas that already have low access to AEDs, which could include sports stadiums.

■ **Dental Services: Great Yarmouth**

Rupert Lowe:

[\[9998\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what measures he plans to take to help improve access to NHS dentistry in Great Yarmouth constituency.

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

The responsibility for commissioning primary care dentistry to meet the needs of the local population has been delegated to the integrated care boards (ICBs) across England. ICBs are responsible for commissioning primary care services, including NHS dentistry, to meet the needs of the local populations and to determine the priorities for investment. For the Great Yarmouth constituency, this is the NHS Norfolk and Waveney ICB.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Paternity Leave and Paternity Pay**Shaun Davies:**[\[6707\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what entitlements male staff in his Department and have for paternity (a) pay and (b) leave; and what information his Department holds on the same entitlements for male staff employed by NHS England in each (i) hospital trust and (ii) integrated care board.

Karin Smyth:

The information requested is contained in the attached document, due to the length of the information.

Attachments:

1. Leave Policy for PQ6707 [PQ6707 - Leave Policy.pdf]

■ General Practitioners: Thurrock**James McMurdock:**[\[9636\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps she plans to take to reduce wait times for GP appointments in Thurrock.

Stephen Kinnock:

We know that patients are finding it harder than ever to see a general practitioner (GP) and we are committed to fixing the the crisis in GPs to secure the long-term sustainability of the National Health Service.

Our plan to restore GPs and improve the waiting times to see a GP will require both investment and reform. We have already invested £82 million to recruit over 1,000 newly qualified GPs through the Additional Roles Reimbursement scheme, which will continue to increase the capacity in GPs, as well as take pressure off those currently working in the system. We have committed to train thousands more GPs and to finally end the 8:00am scramble for GP appointments by introducing a modern booking system.

■ Health Services: Standards**Liam Conlon:**[\[8541\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the implications for his policies of the report by Lord Darzi entitled Independent investigation of the NHS in (a) England and (b) Beckenham and Penge constituency.

Karin Smyth:

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

The plan will be a key element of how we deliver the change needed to meet the three mission goals, specifically: a fairer system where everyone lives well for longer: an NHS that is there when people need it: and fewer lives lost to the biggest killers.

This is a long-term challenge and will take time to deliver, and so the plan will consider both the immediate actions needed to get the NHS back on its feet and bring waiting lists down, as well as the longer-term changes needed to make the health service fit for the future.

■ HIV Infection

Neil O'Brien:

[\[9770\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many new HIV diagnoses there were in each year since 2012, by world region of birth.

Andrew Gwynne:

[Holding answer 22 October 2024]: This data is published routinely on gov.uk.

Attachments:

1. HIV Diagnosis by World Region of Birth for 9770 [FORMATTED TABLE FOR MINISTERIAL CLEARANCE Number of HIV Diagnosis by World Region of Birth.pdf]

■ Infant Foods: Nutrition

Freddie van Mierlo:

[\[9896\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of taking steps to improve the nutritional content of commercial baby food.

Andrew Gwynne:

A 2019 evidence review showed that babies and young children are exceeding their energy intake requirement and are eating too much sugar and salt. Some commercial baby foods, particularly finger foods, had added sugar or salt, or contained ingredients that are high in sugar or salt.

More recently, the independent Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) highlighted in their 2023 report, Feeding Young Children aged 1 to 5 years, that free sugar intakes are above recommendations for children at all ages where recommendations have been set. Furthermore, commercial baby food and drinks contributed to approximately 20% of free sugar intake in children aged 12 to 18 months. The SACN also recommended that in diets of children aged one to five years old, foods, including snacks that are high in salt, free sugars, saturated fat, or are energy dense, should be limited. The SACN also recommended that commercially manufactured foods and drinks marketed specifically for infants and young children are not needed to meet nutrition requirements.

We face a childhood obesity crisis, and the Government is committed to raising the healthiest next generation ever. Under our health mission and shift to prevention, we

are considering what action is needed to respond to the SACN's commercial baby food recommendations to establish healthy habits as early as possible.

Freddie van Mierlo: [\[9897\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions his Department has had on the impact of the nutritional labelling and packaging of infant and baby products on children's dietary health and consumption of excess (a) sugar, (b) salt and (c) fat.

Andrew Gwynne:

We face a childhood obesity crisis, and the Government is committed to raising the healthiest generation of children ever. The Department speaks with many stakeholders about its policies to improve the diets and associated public health outcomes for the population.

It is vital that labelling and packaging of infant and baby food products are accurate and honest, to support parents and carers to make the best choices for feeding their young children. This is why infant and baby food products are already subject to robust regulations which set nutrition, composition, and labelling standards.

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

Melanie Onn: [\[7791\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of agreeing to the asks of the striking maternity support workers in Great Grimsby and Cleethorpes constituency.

Karin Smyth:

No assessment has been made. Resolution is for local determination by the employing organisation and respective trade unions. Employers are responsible for correctly and consistently implementing the NHS Job Evaluation scheme.

■ **Pancreatic Cancer: Health Education**

Alex Mayer: [\[9985\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he has taken to improve awareness of the hereditary risk of pancreatic cancer.

Andrew Gwynne:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave to the Hon. Member for Colne Valley on 14 October 2024 to Question [7305](#).

■ **Pancreatic Enzyme Replacement Therapy: Supply Chains**

Steve Darling: [\[9003\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish a regional breakdown of the supply chain issues with Creon.

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 is not collected on a local level.

The Department has been working with suppliers to address current supply issues with Creon, which is used by patients with conditions such as cystic fibrosis and certain cancers, including pancreatic cancer. The supply issues with Creon are impacting countries throughout Europe and have been caused by limited availability of raw ingredients and manufacturing capacity constraints to produce the volumes needed to meet demand. These issues have resulted in knock-on supply disruptions of alternative pancreatic enzyme replacement therapy (PERT) medications. The Department is continuing to work with all suppliers of PERT to help resolve the supply issues in the short and longer term. This includes asking that they expedite deliveries, source stock from other markets, and increase production.

The supplier of Creon has advised that they expect to have regular supplies released each month going forward, and are working to increase the quantities released. Serious Shortage Protocols are in place for Creon 10,000 and 25,000 capsules which pharmacists can use to restrict supply to one month at a time to ensure more patients have access to it whilst stock is limited.

We have worked closely with colleagues in NHS England to issue comprehensive guidance to healthcare professionals about these supply issues, and encourage sharing of local solutions. The guidance provides advice on how to manage patients whilst there is disruption to supply and is being kept under review, with updates made as necessary.

■ Primodos**Darren Paffey:**[\[9559\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will (a) review evidence on the health impacts of Primodos and (b) make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a financial redress scheme for people affected by Primodos.

Andrew Gwynne:

[Holding answer 22 October 2024]: We are hugely sympathetic to the families who believe that they have suffered because of using Hormone Pregnancy Tests (HPTs). Currently, the available scientific evidence does not support a causal association between the use HPTs during early pregnancy and adverse pregnancy outcomes.

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, together with the wider Government, has committed to review any new scientific evidence which comes to light since the conclusions of the 2017 independent Expert Working Group convened by the Commission on Human Medicines.

Due to the unavailability of scientific evidence supporting a causal association between the use of HPTs and adverse pregnancy outcomes, options for financial redress have not been considered further.

■ Prostate Cancer: Dunstable and Leighton Buzzard**Alex Mayer:**[\[9839\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve prostate cancer (a) screening and (b) awareness in Dunstable and Leighton Buzzard constituency.

Andrew Gwynne:

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

The UK NSC regularly reviews its recommendations, and an evidence review for prostate cancer screening is underway, and plans to report within the UK NSC's three-year work plan. NHS England is taking steps to raise awareness of prostate cancer, where there are opportunities to do so. For example, NHS England partners with Cancer Alliances, charities, and local representatives to reach people through projects in the heart of their communities. Cancer Alliances have also been undertaking action to alert at risk groups about prostate cancer, which is determined at a local level and so will vary depending on local needs and priorities.

■ Prostate Cancer: Screening**Stuart Anderson:**[\[9945\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he expects the publication of the National Screening Committee's review for prostate cancer.

Andrew Gwynne:

The UK National Screening Committee's (UK NSC) evidence review for prostate cancer screening is already underway, and plans to report within the UK NSC's three-year work plan.

■ Queen Elizabeth Hospital King's Lynn: Accident and Emergency Departments**Sir John Hayes:**[\[8627\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce accident and emergency waiting times at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Kings Lynn.

Karin Smyth:

The Government has committed to supporting the NHS to improve performance across the country including in Kings Lynn. This includes returning NHS standards to those set out in the NHS Constitution, including that 95% of patients attending

accident and emergency departments are admitted, transferred, or discharged within four hours.

As a first step, my Rt hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care appointed Professor Lord Darzi to lead an independent investigation of the NHS' performance. The investigation's findings were published on 12 September and will feed into the Government's work on a 10-year plan to radically reform the NHS and build a health service that is fit for the future.

■ Respiratory Diseases

Sarah Coombes: [\[9812\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether improving respiratory health will be central to the new NHS 10-year plan.

Andrew Gwynne:

The 10-Year Health Plan will consider the change needed to meet the three health mission goals: a fairer system where everyone lives well for longer; a National Health Service that is there when people need it; and fewer lives lost to the biggest killers. We will carefully be considering policies with input from the public, patients, health staff, and our stakeholders as we develop the plan.

■ Tourette's Syndrome: Research

Rebecca Long Bailey: [\[6293\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps is he taking to improve support for children and young people with Tourette's syndrome.

Rebecca Long Bailey: [\[6294\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to increase funding into (a) the causes of and (b) treatments for Tourette's syndrome.

Rebecca Long Bailey: [\[6295\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to increase the number of specialist practitioners (a) researching and (b) treating Tourette's syndrome.

Andrew Gwynne:

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

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

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

The Department funds research through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). The NIHR welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health and social care, including Tourette's syndrome. These applications are subject to peer review and judged in open competition, with awards being made on the basis of the importance of the topic to patients and health and care services, value for money, and scientific quality. In all areas, the amount of NIHR funding depends on the volume and quality of scientific activity. The NIHR has funded a number of research projects on Tourette's syndrome. For example, the NIHR has funded the Online Remote Behavioural Treatment for Tics study to evaluate online behavioural interventions for children with tics and Tourette's syndrome. Researchers at the NIHR's Great Ormond Street Biomedical Research Centre are also supporting the TIC Genetics programme, which aims to identify the genetic factors that cause Tourette Syndrome using a family-based approach.

■ Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme: Applications

Rupert Lowe:

[9994]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many applications were made to the Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme in each of the last three years; and how many and what proportion of those applications were unsuccessful.

Andrew Gwynne:

Between January to December 2021, a total of 686 applications were made to the Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme. Between January and December 2022, 2,828 applications were made to the Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme, and between January and December 2023, 5,611 applications were made.

From January to December 2021, 574 applications, or 84%, made to the Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme were unsuccessful. From January to December 2022, 2,587 applications, or 91%, were unsuccessful, and from January to December 2023, 4,361 applications, or 78%, were unsuccessful. For the purpose of this reply, unsuccessful applications refer to applications which have been rejected following a completed medical assessment, and applications deemed invalid to the Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme.

HOME OFFICE

■ Abortion: Clinics

Sir John Hayes:

[9693]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish guidance on safe access buffer zones around abortion clinics.

Sir John Hayes:[\[9694\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish guidance on the application of safe access zones around abortion clinics to private property within such zones.

Jess Phillips:

This Government's priority has been to commence Safe Access Zones as quickly as possible. The College of Policing and the Crown Prosecution Service will produce guidance for the police and prosecutors.

■ Agricultural Machinery: Theft**Sir John Hayes:**[\[9127\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of trends in the level of farm machinery theft in the last five years.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Government recognises the importance of tackling rural crime and the impact stolen farm machinery can have on businesses. We are committed to safeguarding rural communities, with tougher measures to clamp down on anti-social behaviour, strengthened neighbourhood policing, and stronger laws to prevent farm theft and fly-tippers.

We will implement the Equipment Theft (Prevention) Act 2023, which aims to prevent the theft and re-sale of high-value equipment, particularly for use in an agricultural setting.

■ Antisocial Behaviour**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[9214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent steps she has taken to support (a) the police and (b) local authorities in tackling antisocial behaviour.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Tackling anti-social behaviour is a top priority for this Government, and a key part of our Safer Streets Mission. We will put thousands of neighbourhood police and community support officers into local communities and crack down on those causing havoc on our high streets by introducing tougher powers including new Respect Orders to tackle repeat offending.

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

■ British National (Overseas): Children**Gavin Robinson:** [\[9925\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will take steps to provide British citizenship to the children of British National (Overseas) passport holders from Hong Kong that are in the UK.

Seema Malhotra:

British National (Overseas) status holders who are on the BN(O) route in the UK may apply for British citizenship after 5 years' qualifying residence, and being free from immigration time restrictions for a further year.

Their children who have come to the UK as their dependants can apply when they meet the requirements.

Children born to BN(O)s in the UK will be able to apply for registration as a British citizen once their parent becomes settled.

■ Home Office: Ministers**Charlie Dewhirst:** [\[9349\]](#)

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

Dame Diana Johnson:

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.

■ Immigration Controls: Airports**Ruth Cadbury:** [\[9470\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the roll-out of Electronic Travel Authorisation requirements for non-UK passengers transiting through UK airports on (a) passenger experience and (b) the UK aviation industry.

Ruth Cadbury: [\[9471\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the roll-out of Electronic Travel Authorisation requirements on (a) processing times for non-UK based passengers transiting through airports in the UK and (b) queuing times.

Seema Malhotra:

The UK Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) scheme was launched to secure our borders and make the UK safer, by enhancing our ability to screen travellers upstream. The scheme will apply to passengers from eligible countries who are transiting the UK. ETAs form part of our long-term plan for a slicker, more efficient

border, with a greater number of passengers able to benefit from automation at the border, enabling our highly skilled Border Force officers to focus on those who pose the most harm or are at the most risk.

We continue to engage positively with industry, and support the aviation sector in understanding what ETAs and wider digitisation will mean for passengers.

■ Immigration: Detainees

Olivia Blake:

[\[9238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the oral contribution of the Minister of State in her Department in debate on the Immigration (Guidance on Detention of Vulnerable Persons) Regulations 2024 in Grand Committee in the House of Lords on 14 October 2024, Official Report, column 17GC, what the (a) timetable is and (b) terms of reference are for the review into immigration detention.

Dame Angela Eagle:

We intend to complete the Adults at Risk review in Spring 2025, including Rule 34 and Rule 35 of the detention centre rules.

■ Knives: Crime

Neil Coyle:

[\[9467\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of using Nightingale Courts to tackle (a) mobile phone thefts, (b) other robberies at knifepoint and (c) other knife crime.

Dame Diana Johnson:

No specific assessment has been made about the use of Nightingdale Courts for these specific offences ; 20 of which remain open and will continue to be used by judges until at least March 2025.

This Government is committed to halving knife crime over 10 years. Knife enabled robbery accounts for 42% of all police recorded knife crime, so tackling it is a key focus. We are convening a Knife Enabled Robbery Taskforce with policing leaders to take immediate action to halt its rise.

We have implemented a ban on zombie-style knives and zombie-style machetes and will act to ban Ninja swords. We are also introducing the Young Futures programme to stop young people being drawn into a life of violent crime in the first place.

As part of our Safer Streets mission, this government is also determined to crack down on theft and other crimes that make people feel unsafe in our communities.

Set against soaring levels of snatch thefts and pickpocketing in the last year of the previous government, and the demand for stolen mobile phones increasing, we have announced a Home Office Mobile Phone Theft Summit, drawing together the tech companies and law enforcement to see what more can be done to break the business model of mobile phone thieves.

■ Nuisance: Motor Vehicles**Tristan Osborne:****[9272]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what data her Department holds on the use of section 59 of the Police Reform Act 2002 by police forces to tackle nuisance behaviour involving (a) motorbikes, (b) e-bikes, (c) e-scooters, (d) quad bikes and (e) any other type of motor vehicle.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Information about the powers the police use to tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB) incidents is not held centrally by the Home Office, and is collected by HMICFRS.

The Home Office collects and publishes data about the number of ASB nuisance incidents on a quarterly basis, however information about which of these incidents involved motor vehicles is not currently identifiable.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) publishes data quarterly on the proportion of respondents who experienced types of ASB in their local area, including "Vehicle related behaviour", in the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) – however the type of vehicle used is not currently identifiable.

Both the ONS and Home Office datasets for ASB in the year to March 2024 can be found here:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/crimeinenglandandwalesotherrelatedtables>

Information for the year to June 2024 will be published on 24th October 2024.

■ Offenders: Foreign Nationals**Rupert Lowe:****[9294]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department holds data on where foreign nationals released from prison reside.

Dame Angela Eagle:

We are committed to delivering justice for victims and safer streets for our communities.

Any foreign national offender (FNOs) convicted of a crime who receives a custodial sentence in the UK is referred to the Home Office for deportation consideration following sentencing. We are focussing resource on those cases currently serving custodial sentences and maximising removals directly from prison.

Where removal is not immediately possible, electronic monitoring can be used to manage foreign national offenders in the community. Electronic monitoring allows for more effective contact management of individuals, enabling us to manage and correct behaviours so that they comply with their immigration bail conditions until they are removed

We will pursue deportation action against individuals living in the community rigorously, actively monitoring and managing cases through the legal process and negotiating barriers to removal.

Rupert Lowe:

[9295]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of leaving the European Convention on Human Rights on her Department's ability to deport foreign national offenders.

Dame Angela Eagle:

This Government is unequivocally committed to the European Convention on Human Rights.

■ **Police: Community Development**

Rupert Lowe:

[9296]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that police officers are able to effectively engage with all communities.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Police forces that reflect the communities they serve are crucial to maintaining public trust and confidence in a modern diverse society, and the police workforce is now more representative than it has ever been.

The Home Secretary has also made a clear commitment to strengthen neighbourhood policing through the introduction of a Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee, which includes the addition of thousands more neighbourhood police personnel, as part of the Government's Safer Streets mission.

■ **Polygamy**

Sir John Hayes:

[8756]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has made an estimate of how many polygamous marriages are valid in the UK.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Home Office does not collect data on polygamous marriages

■ **Retail Trade: Crimes of Violence**

Amanda Hack:

[9308]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent steps her Department has taken to reduce the wait time to report assaults on retail staff by telephone in Leicestershire.

Amanda Hack:

[9309]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent steps her Department has taken to protect retail staff from (a) intimidation and (b) assault.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Shoplifting has increased at an unacceptable level in recent years, with more and more offenders using violence and abuse against shopworkers to do this. We will not stand for it.

This Government will introduce a new offence of assaulting a retail worker to protect the hardworking and dedicated staff that work in stores. We will also end the effective immunity, introduced by the previous Government, granted to low level shoplifting of goods under £200. These will be introduced in the first session Crime and Policing Bill.

The police made operational commitments in its October 2023 Retail Crime Action Plan, [Retail Crime Action Plan \(nbcc.police.uk\)](https://nbcc.police.uk) including a commitment for police across England and Wales to prioritise attendance where violence has been used towards shop staff.

Reporting crime to the police is the first crucial step in ensuring an appropriate police response. The Home Office is providing funding to the National Business Crime Centre to make it easier for retailers to report crime. We are also encouraging closer local partnerships between police and retailers, for example through Business Crime Reduction Partnerships, to help local police respond effectively to crimes reported.

■ Taylor Swift

Jim Shannon: [\[9166\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with her Austrian counterpart on security for Taylor Swift concerts.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The government's protective security system is rigorous and proportionate.

It is our long-standing policy not to provide detailed information on those arrangements, as doing so could compromise their integrity and affect individuals' security.

■ UK Trade with EU: Import Controls

Mike Reader: [\[9316\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of the EU Entry and Exit System on (a) freight traffic across the Short Straits and (b) GB-EU trade at peak passenger periods.

Mike Reader: [\[9317\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of the EU Entry Exit System on (a) goods trade across the short straits, (b) goods availability in the UK and (c) prices of goods in the UK.

Seema Malhotra:

The implementation of the EU Entry Exit System (EES) has been postponed by the European Commission while they review their plans, with an updated roadmap to be announced in due course. We are continuing to work with the EU and its member states, as well as industry, to understand their plans and potential impacts.

Comprehensive freight traffic management plans are already in place on the Kent road network, and HM Government is closely aligned with the Kent and Medway Resilience Forum to manage any disruption and keep both passenger and freight traffic flowing through the Port of Dover and Eurotunnel.

Once the EU has set out its plans, we will be able to continue to work to understand the impacts of EES on the UK, including on freight traffic and goods trade across the Short Straits.

■ Visas: Ukraine**Mark Sewards:**[\[10396\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department plans to extend the Ukraine Extension Scheme.

Seema Malhotra:

To provide future certainty, Ukrainians who have been provided with sanctuary in the UK under the Ukraine schemes will be able to apply for further permission to remain in the UK through a bespoke Ukraine Permission Extension (UPE) scheme due to open in early 2025. The new route will provide an additional 18 months' permission.

The scheme will provide the same rights and entitlements as the existing Ukraine Schemes, to access work, benefits, healthcare and education. Further details on eligibility and application processes will be available before the scheme opens.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**■ Affordable Housing: Basildon****James McMurdock:**[\[9081\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to help build more affordable homes in Basildon.

Matthew Pennycook:

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

Our proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework include setting a clear expectation that housing needs assessments must consider the needs of those requiring Social Rent homes, and that local authorities should specify their expectations on Social Rent delivery as part of broader affordable housing policies.

We have asked Homes England and the Greater London Authority to maximise the number of Social Rent homes in allocating the remaining Affordable Homes Programme funding. The Government has started to review the increased Right to Buy discounts introduced in 2012, on which we will bring forward more details and secondary legislation to implement changes in the autumn. We have also announced new flexibilities for how councils can use their Right to Buy receipts to deliver replacement homes; these flexibilities will be in place for an initial 24 months, subject to review.

We are committed to setting out details of future Government investment in social and affordable housing at the Spending Review.

■ Domestic Abuse: Sleeping Rough

Jim Shannon:

[\[9171\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will hold discussions with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive on women sleeping rough because of domestic abuse.

Rushanara Ali:

The Deputy Prime Minister has been clear about the importance of resetting this department's relationship with devolved governments so that we are increasing collaboration on shared opportunities and challenges. UK Government ministers talk regularly to counterparts in Northern Ireland across the full range of government business.

Domestic abuse is a societal issue which affects people, mostly women and girls, across the UK. This Government is committed to tackling this horrendous crime, in line with our manifesto commitment to halve violence against women and girls within a decade.

I recognise that the four nations of the UK face common challenges regarding domestic abuse and homelessness, which are devolved matters. In England, local authorities have a statutory duty to ensure support in safe accommodation is available to all victims of domestic abuse who need to flee their homes, and victims of domestic abuse have priority need for homelessness assistance meaning local authorities have a duty to secure suitable accommodation, including temporary accommodation, until settled accommodation is secured.

■ First Time Buyers: Lincolnshire

Sir John Hayes:

[\[8758\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to support first-time buyer households in (a) South Holland and the Deepings constituency and (b) Lincolnshire.

Matthew Pennycook:

The affordability challenges facing prospective first-time buyers in Lincolnshire and across the country mean that too many people are now locked out of homeownership.

In addition to increasing the supply of homes of all tenures, the Government has committed to introducing a permanent, comprehensive mortgage guarantee scheme and to giving first-time buyers the first chance to buy homes.

Food: Production**Sir John Hayes:**[\[8761\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make the Fens a designated area for food production in planning policy.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government place great importance upon our agriculture and food production, and this is reflected in the National Planning Policy Framework. The Framework is clear that local planning authorities should recognise the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, including that found in the Fens. Where significant development of agricultural land is shown to be necessary, the relevant planning authority should seek to use poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality.

Housing Revenue Accounts**Neil Coyle:**[\[9718\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of Housing Revenue Account borrowing on investment in council homes.

Matthew Pennycook:

We recognise the importance of borrowing for investment in new council homes. Local authorities have access to a preferential rate from the Public Works Loans Board to support housebuilding in the Housing Revenue Account. The preferential rate of gilts +0.4% is available until June 2025. The Government is committed to supporting councils to build their capacity and invest in new social rented homes.

Housing: Bricks**Dr Simon Opher:**[\[9241\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of mandating the use of swift bricks in new build housing.

Matthew Pennycook:

I refer the Hon Member to the answer to Question UIN [4279](#) on 12 September 2024.

■ Housing: Construction**Dr Simon Opher:** [\[9240\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of allowing local authorities to prevent developers land banking in their area.

Matthew Pennycook:

I refer the Hon Member to the answer to Question UIN [900294](#) on 2 September 2024.

■ Housing: Key Workers**Neil Coyle:** [\[9468\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of allocating a proportion of new-build homes to (a) teachers, (b) police officers, (c) NHS staff and (d) other key workers in (i) London and (ii) England.

Matthew Pennycook:

The affordability challenges facing prospective first-time buyers mean that too many people, including key workers, are now locked out of homeownership.

In addition to increasing the supply of homes of all tenures, the Government has committed to introducing a permanent, comprehensive mortgage guarantee scheme and to giving first-time buyers the first chance to buy homes.

Local authorities are delivering First Homes which can be targeted towards key workers. These are homes which are sold to first-time buyers with a discount of at least 30% from full market value.

■ Housing: Local Government**James McMurdock:** [\[9097\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will bring forward legislative proposals to prevent local authorities from bidding for housing stock outside of their own areas.

Matthew Pennycook:

The government has no current plans to bring forward legislative proposals to prevent local authorities from bidding for housing stock outside of their own areas.

Local authorities are best placed to consider ways in which they can increase their stock and make decisions about the types of homes needed in their communities.

When delivering new social housing, councils are encouraged to achieve a good balance between acquisitions and new builds.

When placing households in temporary accommodation, homelessness legislation sets out that local authorities should try to place individuals within their own area, and when this is not possible, they should place the household as near as possible to the

original local authority. The Government is clear that local authorities should, as far as possible, avoid placing households out of their borough.

■ Housing: Reform

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:

[\[7824\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will publish the papers produced for her meeting with local authorities to discuss housing reforms in August 2024.

Matthew Pennycook:

It is not standard practice to publish the papers for this kind of confidential meeting.

■ Housing: Sewers

Dr Ben Spencer:

[\[9948\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the impact of her increased housing targets on sewerage capacity by (a) water company region and (b) constituency.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government recognises the importance of water and wastewater provision on new developments. Water companies are under a statutory duty to provide new water and sewage connections to residential properties, as well as planning to meet the needs of growth as part of Water Resource Management Plans and Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans.

The way that water resources are planned for is being considered as part of a commission reviewing the Water Sector Regulatory System, as recently announced by the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

■ Leasehold

Joe Powell:

[\[9387\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when she plans to commence Section 49 of the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024.

Joe Powell:

[\[9388\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when she plans to commence Section 64 of the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government intend to act quickly to provide homeowners with greater rights, powers, and protections over their homes by implementing the provisions of the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024. These include the provisions at Sections 49 and 64 of the Act. We will set out details in due course about the extensive programme of secondary legislation needed to bring the Act into force.

■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government**Charlie Dewhirst:** [\[9347\]](#)

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

Alex Norris:

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.

■ Multiple Occupation**Gareth Snell:** [\[9191\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 14 October 2024 to Question 6378 on Multiple Occupation, what steps her Department is taking to review those rights.

Gareth Snell: [\[9192\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 14 October 2024 to Question 6378 on Multiple Occupation, whether her Department has received recent representations from local authorities on the permitted development rights for home owners seeking to covert their properties from C3 to C4 usage.

Gareth Snell: [\[9195\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 14 October 2024 to Question 6378 on Multiple Occupation, what assessment her Department has made of the potential effectiveness of Article 4 directions for the purposes of regulating C3 to C4 conversions.

Matthew Pennycook:

National permitted development rights allow a C3 dwellinghouse to change use to a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) with up to 6 occupants (C4) without the need for a planning application.

Local authorities have planning powers to limit any proliferation of HMOs by introducing an 'Article 4' direction. There is no need for a local authority to seek permission from the Secretary of State before doing so.

As set out in the response to Question [6378](#) on 14 October, we will keep permitted development rights under review.

Gareth Snell: [\[9193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 14 October 2024 to Question 6378 on Multiple Occupation, what plans her Department has for the future regulation of housing in multiple occupation.

Gareth Snell:[\[9194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to ensure that landlords of houses in multiple occupancy comply with all relevant regulations.

Matthew Pennycook:

Local authorities have robust powers to ensure landlords of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) comply with all relevant regulations. This includes powers to issue civil penalties, prosecute landlords and obtain banning orders.

The Renters' Rights Bill introduces reforms to improve the regulation of private rented sector properties, including HMOs, and drive-up standards within the sector. This includes a Decent Homes Standard and new enforcement powers for local authorities.

We will keep the regulation of HMOs under review.

■ **Political Parties: Finance****Lloyd Hatton:**[\[9327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to take steps to strengthen the rules on donations to political parties.

Alex Norris:

I refer my Hon Friend to my answer to Question UIN [7510](#) on 15 October 2024.

■ **Private Rented Housing: Construction****Paula Barker:**[\[8916\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the implications for her policies of (a) trends in level of planning applications granted for buy-to-let developments and (b) the potential impact of those trends on first-time buyers.

Matthew Pennycook:

The department does not hold data on planning applications for buy-to-let developments and we are therefore unable to assess the impact of trends in applications on first-time buyers.

■ **Private Rented Housing: Disability****James McMurdock:**[\[9336\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to improve accessible housing for disabled people in the private rental market.

Matthew Pennycook:

Everyone deserves to live in a secure, decent, and accessible home in which they feel safe. The Renters' Rights Bill, by ending Section 21 'no fault' evictions, will also

provide all tenants with greater security and stability and empower them to challenge bad practice without fear of retaliatory eviction. Disabled people in all housing tenures can apply for a Disabled Facilities Grant to adapt their home to enable them to live safely and independently.

■ Social Rented Housing

Dr Simon Opher:

[\[9239\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department plans to take to increase the availability of social housing across England.

Matthew Pennycook:

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

Our proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework include setting a clear expectation that housing needs assessments must consider the needs of those requiring Social Rent homes, and that local authorities should specify their expectations on Social Rent delivery as part of broader affordable housing policies.

We have asked Homes England and the Greater London Authority to maximise the number of Social Rent homes in allocating the remaining Affordable Homes Programme funding. The Government has started to review the increased Right to Buy discounts introduced in 2012, on which we will bring forward more details and secondary legislation to implement changes in the autumn. We have also announced new flexibilities for how councils can use their Right to Buy receipts to deliver replacement homes; these flexibilities will be in place for an initial 24 months, subject to review.

We are committed to setting out details of future Government investment in social and affordable housing at the Spending Review.

■ Social Rented Housing and Temporary Accommodation

Dr Becky Cooper:

[\[8939\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the economic impact of (a) building more social housing and (b) reducing the number of families living in temporary accommodation.

Dr Roz Savage:

[\[9018\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of (a) building more social housing and (b) keeping families out of temporary accommodation on the economy.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government is clear that homelessness is too high and that too many families are living in temporary accommodation. We intend to take a long-term approach to prevent and end homelessness. 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. Our aspiration is to ensure that, in the first full financial year of this Parliament (2025-26), the number of Social Rent homes is rising rather than falling.

Our proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework include setting a clear expectation that housing needs assessments must consider the needs of those requiring Social Rent homes, and that local authorities should specify their expectations on Social Rent delivery as part of broader affordable housing policies.

We have asked Homes England and the Greater London Authority to maximise the number of Social Rent homes in allocating the remaining Affordable Homes Programme funding. The Government has started to review the increased Right to Buy discounts introduced in 2012, on which we will bring forward more details and secondary legislation to implement changes in the autumn. We have also announced new flexibilities for how councils can use their Right to Buy receipts to deliver replacement homes; these flexibilities will be in place for an initial 24 months, subject to review.

We are committed to setting out details of future Government investment in social and affordable housing at the Spending Review.

■ UK Shared Prosperity Fund: South Holland and the Deepings**Sir John Hayes:****[9124]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how much funding was provided through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to projects in South Holland and the Deepings constituency in each year since 2019.

Alex Norris:

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) was launched in 2022/23. Funding is allocated to lead local authorities; data is not collected at a constituency level. Details of full funding allocations for lead local authorities, including the hon. Member's local authority area can be found at the following [link](#). An annual breakdown of allocations can also be found in the spreadsheet [here](#).

JUSTICE**■ Crown Court: Opening Hours****Jack Abbott:****[8312]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate she has made of the number of crown court sitting days that have been reduced.

Heidi Alexander:

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

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

To support efforts to maximise capacity, the Lord Chancellor has since agreed to fund an additional 500 days.

But there has been over listing against this budget – with more trials scheduled than the funding allows.

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

Jake Richards:**[8690]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether she has made an assessment of the effectiveness of the process to determine the number of sitting days in the Crown Court in each financial year.

Heidi Alexander:

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

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

To support efforts to maximise capacity, the Lord Chancellor has since agreed to fund an additional 500 days.

But there has been over listing against this budget – with more trials scheduled than the funding allows.

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

The Lord Chancellor has said that the first concordat process under this Government will be different, and clearer.

Linsey Farnsworth:[\[8705\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of reducing the cap on the number of Crown Court sitting days on the average time taken for cases to be heard.

Heidi Alexander:

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

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

To support efforts to maximise capacity, the Lord Chancellor has since agreed to fund an additional 500 days.

But there has been over listing against this budget – with more trials scheduled than the funding allows.

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

Ministry of Justice**Charlie Dewhurst:**[\[9350\]](#)

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

Alex Davies-Jones:

Details of ministers' and senior officials' meetings with external stakeholders 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.

Prisoners' Release**Lee Anderson:**[\[8863\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment her Department has made of the effectiveness of the roll out of the early prison release scheme.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

SDS40 is a necessary measure to avoid the collapse of the Criminal Justice System. In designing the measure, we took every possible step to mitigate risk including an 8-week implementation period, clear offence exclusions, and a huge amount of collaboration with partners across the Criminal Justice System. Once released offender will be subject to strict licence conditions and face being immediately recalled to prison should they breach those conditions.

Following the first tranche of SDS40 releases that took place on 10 September, the Ministry of Justice and His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service have consulted our frontline and cross government partners on how things went. Following the

release of prisoners under Tranche 1 on 10 September and Tranche 2 on 22 October, we are determined to continue to take every step possible to bring the prisons system under control, reduce reoffending and to keep the public safe.

As the Lord Chancellor has previously announced, the change will be reviewed in 18 months.

■ Prisoners' Release: Homicide

Jim Shannon: [\[9165\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether she has had discussions with her Northern Irish counterpart on the release from prison of convicted murderers.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The Lord Chancellor has not yet had discussions with Ministers in the Northern Ireland Executive, however Ministers wish to meet counterparts soon. Officials regularly discuss a broad range of release policy issues through meetings such as the 5 Nations Forum which convenes quarterly.

■ Prosecutions

Ben Goldsborough: [\[9290\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people were prosecuted under the single justice procedure by offence in each month of 2023; and what the plea rates were for offences charged under the single justice procedure in the same period.

Heidi Alexander:

The attached table shows the number of people prosecuted under the Single Justice Procedure by offence in each month of 2023 and the plea rates for offences charged in the same period.

Attachments:

1. Table [2024-10-23 PQ 9290 table.xlsx]

Ben Goldsborough: [\[9291\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, which (a) people, (b) companies and (c) other organisations pursued prosecutions under the single justice procedure in 2023.

Heidi Alexander:

The attached table shows the number of people prosecuted under the Single Justice Procedure in 2023 by Prosecutor type.

Attachments:

1. Table [2024-10-23 PQ 9291 table.xlsx]

Ben Goldsborough: [\[9292\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many Single Justice Procedure prosecution notices went undelivered in 2023.

Heidi Alexander:

Single Justice Procedure Notices are served by the individual prosecutors and not the magistrates' court. We therefore do not hold the data in relation to the number of notices that went undelivered in 2023.

Sexual Offences: Cornwall and Devon**Jayne Kirkham:****[9874]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps she is taking to reduce the charge to finalisation rate for (a) rape and (b) sexual offences in (i) Devon and (ii) Cornwall.

Alex Davies-Jones:

We recognise that, due to the complex nature of cases, victims and survivors of rape and sexual offences can experience disproportionately long wait times for their trial.

To address this, we have committed to fast-tracking rape cases through the courts and are working with the Judiciary to find the best way to deliver this nationally.

This Government is also committed to ensuring that victims and survivors of rape and sexual offences are supported at every stage of the Criminal Justice System. In addition to fast-tracking rape cases, we have committed to increase the powers of the Victims' Commissioner and introduce specialist rape and sexual offence teams in every police force. We will also be rolling out free, independent legal advocates who will help victims and survivors of adult rape uphold their rights.

LEADER OF THE HOUSE**Members' Interests****Neil Coyle:****[9720]**

To ask the Leader of the House, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of current mechanisms monitoring the potential receipt of funding by hon. Members from (a) companies and (b) individuals sanctioned by (i) Ukraine and (ii) other allies.

Lucy Powell:

The rules governing the receipt of benefits by members are a matter for the House of Commons. The Commons 'Code of Conduct', together with 'The Guide to the Rules', contain specific provisions regarding the registration of interests as well as gifts and benefits received from sources outside of the UK. Both of these can be found on the parliament website (available at:

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/commons/hoc-code-of-conduct/>).

Any alleged breaches of these rules are investigated by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards with the oversight of the House's Committee on Standards.

In addition, there are parliamentary rules which require All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs) to refrain from accepting secretariats provided by foreign governments. These can be found within the 'Guide to the Rules on APPGs' on the

parliament website (available at: <https://www.parliament.uk/about/mps-and-lords/members/apg/rules-on-appgs/>).

Separately, the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 contains clear rules on donations, with members obliged to carry out permissibility checks on the donations they receive and report to the Electoral Commission eligible donations they receive in connection with their political activities.

These mechanisms ensure transparency is at the centre of the parliamentary standards system and reduce the possibility of undue foreign influence in our democratic institutions.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Andrew Rosindell: [\[900745\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what steps he is taking with Cabinet colleagues to help maintain the UK internal market.

Hilary Benn:

We are committed to taking all steps necessary to protect the UK internal market and Northern Ireland's place in it, while implementing the Windsor Framework.

As part of this, we are taking forward policies in Safeguarding the Union, including implementing the new UK Internal Market System.

Charlie Dewhurst: [\[900746\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what discussions he has had with the Northern Ireland Executive on the redevelopment of Casement Park.

Hilary Benn:

Regrettably, given the lack of action by the previous Government, Casement Park could not be built in time for the Euros. The NI Executive and the GAA, who remain committed to the redevelopment of the stadium, will now need to bring forward an alternative proposition.

■ Elections: Proof of Identity

Alex Burghart: [\[9529\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, whether the Armed Forces Veteran Cards can now be used as Voter ID in forthcoming elections in Northern Ireland.

Hilary Benn:

Legislation is required to add documents to the list of ID documents that may be produced in Northern Ireland polling stations in order to vote. The Government intends to legislate to add the HM Forces Veteran Card to the Northern Ireland voter identity document list in advance of the next elections in Northern Ireland which are scheduled to be held in 2027.

■ Terrorism: Northern Ireland

Alex Burghart:

[\[9932\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to the Answer of 17 October to Question 8847 on Terrorism: Northern Ireland, for what reason he will not publish the details of these requests.

Hilary Benn:

There is no obligation to publish details of the requests the government receives for public inquiries. I do not intend to do so, especially as there are victims, survivors and families at the heart of those requests, who should be treated with respect and confidentiality.

I have written directly to those whose requests I have recently considered. Further requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

■ Department For Science, Innovation And Technology: Ministers

Charlie Dewhurst:

[\[9343\]](#)

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

Feryal Clark:

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.

■ Research: Publishing

Fabian Hamilton:

[\[9903\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he is taking steps to support (a) affordable and (b) open-access models in academic publishing.

Feryal Clark:

The Government supports open science because it drives innovation and collaboration by enabling researchers, innovators and policymakers to access and use the latest science and evidence. UKRI Open Access policy ensures that findings from research funded by the public through UKRI can be freely accessed. The policy supports around 45,000 research articles a year, being made OA immediately. In 2022 over 85% of all articles arising from UKRI funded research were open access.

UKRI Open Access Awards support over 150 universities, research institutes and PSREs in meeting the requirements of the UKRI open access policy. These awards cover article publishing charges (APCs) under certain value for money terms and supports open publishing agreements where there is no article fee. The grants also

support improvements to digital research infrastructures, repository management and guidance for researchers.

SCOTLAND

■ Community Assets: Scotland

Chris Kane: [9663]

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what discussions he has had with the Scottish Government on supporting community ownership of (a) land and (b) buildings in Scotland.

Ian Murray:

This government is committed to the communities sector and community ownership through empowering communities to own and run those local assets which mean the most to them. To date, the UK Government's Community Ownership Fund has helped more than 40 Scottish community organisations with around £17m in grants. As part of this programme, the UK Government is working closely with the Scottish Government to look for opportunities to jointly support projects, including through the Empowering Communities Programme and the Scottish Land Fund.

The projects awarded funding to date can be found online at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/community-ownership-fund-first-round-successful-bidders>.

■ Scotland Office: Ministers' Private Offices

Sir Ashley Fox: [9830]

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

Ian Murray:

The Scotland Office has not spent any money on new furniture and fittings and other refurbishments of Ministerial offices since the dissolution of the last Parliament.

TRANSPORT

■ Bus Services: Cheshire East

Tim Roca: [9895]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she plans to take steps to ensure that Cheshire East Council has the power to hold bus companies to account.

Simon Lightwood:

Improving local transport services is a key part of this government's growth mission, and the government has set out plans to deliver better bus services, grow passenger numbers and drive opportunity to under-served regions.

As announced in the King's Speech on 17 July 2024, the government will introduce a Buses Bill later this session. This will put the power over local bus services back in the hands of local leaders right across England, including in Cheshire East, to ensure networks meet the needs of the communities who rely on them.

The Bill will seek to increase the powers available to local leaders to choose the model that works best in their area, whether that be franchising, high-quality partnerships with private operators or local authority ownership. The government will continue working closely with local leaders and bus operators to deliver on its ambitions.

■ Bus Services: Concessions**Mike Amesbury:**[\[9541\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing free bus passes to blind passengers for travel before 9.30am.

Simon Lightwood:

The English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) provides free off-peak bus travel to those with eligible disabilities and those of state pension age, currently sixty-six. Local authorities in England have the power to go beyond their statutory obligations under the ENCTS and offer additional discretionary concessions, such as extending the times at which concessionary passes can be used.

■ Bus Services: Disability**Ms Julie Minns:**[\[9264\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to increase the accessibility of bus services outside of London and combined authority areas for (a) wheelchair users, (b) people who are blind or visually impaired and (c) people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Simon Lightwood:

The government wants everyone to have access to public transport and is committed to improving services so they are more inclusive and enable disabled people to travel safely, confidently and with dignity.

On October 1st, the first phase of Public Service Vehicle Accessible Information Regulations came into force, meaning that local services will provide audible and visible information on stops, destination and diversions by 2026. The government has set out an action plan for improving the bus network, based on giving local leaders the tools they need to ensure bus services reflect the needs of the communities they serve.

As announced in the King's Speech, the government will also introduce a new Buses Bill later in this parliamentary session which will help bring to an end the postcode lottery of bus services by giving local leaders the freedom to take decisions to deliver their local transport priorities and ensure networks meet the needs of the communities who rely on them. As part of this legislation we will be looking at what measures could address accessibility barriers to support disabled passengers to use bus services.

■ **Bus Services: Fares**

Sarah Dyke: [9800]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her Department has carried out an impact assessment of ending the £2 bus fare cap.

Simon Lightwood:

Delivering reliable and affordable public transport services for passengers is one of the government's top priorities as we know how important this is for passengers and for local growth. The government is looking at the future of the £2 fare cap as a matter of urgency and is considering the most appropriate and affordable approach for the future of the scheme.

The Department also published an interim report in September 2023 setting out emerging trends in key outcomes from the first two months of the scheme. The report is available on GOV.UK at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evaluation-of-the-2-bus-fare-cap/2-bus-fare-cap-evaluation-interim-report-february-2023>.

■ **Bus Services: Rural Areas**

Sojan Joseph: [9888]

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

Simon Lightwood:

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

■ Department for Transport

Charlie Dewhirst:

[\[9360\]](#)

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

Mike Kane:

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 Transport: Buildings

Sir Ashley Fox:

[\[9280\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, 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.

Mike Kane:

The Department for Transport is a federated organisation comprising a central department and 5 executive agencies. The information, where recorded, is contained in the attached document. Data is not recorded for Active Travel England, the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency and the Vehicle Certification Agency.

Attachments:

1. Number of Desks Occupied by Office [Number of desks occupied by office.xlsx]

■ Department for Transport: Civil Servants

Sir Ashley Fox:

[\[9279\]](#)

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

Mike Kane:

The information requested is provided in the table below.

LOCATION	CIVIL SERVANTS	DESKS
7&8 Wellington Place, Leeds	350	167
Baskerville House, Birmingham	281	316
Berkley House, Bristol	192	Not recorded
Contact Centre, Swansea	1054	1137
Eastgate Office Centre, Bristol	141	147

LOCATION	CIVIL SERVANTS	DESKS
Ellipse, Swansea	400	212
Great Minster House, London	2,733	1,234
Morrison, Swansea	4,961	4,400
One Priory Square, Hastings	116	52
Quarry House, Leeds	110	70
Queen Elizabeth House, Edinburgh	9	6
Scottish Provident Building, Belfast	2	2
Spring Place, Southampton	429	443
The Colmore Building, Birmingham	301	151
The Ellipse, Swansea	116	48
The Lightbox and Tyneside House, Newcastle	256	Not recorded
Ty William Morgan, Cardiff	2	2
Tyneside House, Newcastle	15	14
Unity Square, Nottingham	277	180
VCA Midlands Centre, Nuneaton	93	98
West Offices, York	69	54

■ Driving Tests: Ashford

Sojan Joseph:

[\[9886\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to help reduce driving test waiting times in Ashford constituency.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency's (DVSA's) main priority is to reduce car practical driving test waiting times, whilst upholding road safety standards.

DVSA continues to take measures to increase test availability. These include the recruitment of driving examiners (DEs), conducting tests outside regular hours,

including at weekends and on public holidays and buying back annual leave from DEs.

DVSA currently employs 7.33 full-time equivalent DEs at Ashford, Canterbury and Folkestone driving test centres (DTCs). It has made offers of employment to a further eight potential new DEs who, if successful in training, will join these DTCs.

In total DVSA has made offers to 15 potential new DEs in Kent. DVSA launched its latest recruitment campaign in September 2024. From this campaign DVSA aims to recruit a further eight DEs in the Kent area.

■ **Electric Vehicles: Lincolnshire**

Sir John Hayes:

[\[9125\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many publicly available roadside electric vehicle chargers will be required for the phase out of the sale of internal combustion engine vehicles in (a) South Holland and the Deepings constituency and (b) Lincolnshire.

Lilian Greenwood:

More charging infrastructure is needed across the country to support the transition to electric vehicles, and this Government has committed to accelerate the rollout.

The number of public charging devices required depends on a variety of factors such as the availability of off-street parking, future charging behaviour and local driving patterns. To accelerate the rollout of local charging infrastructure, Lincolnshire County Council, in which South Holland and the Deepings sits, has been allocated £6,380,592 capital and resource funding under the Government's Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Fund. This will help Lincolnshire work with industry to rollout additional public chargepoints to support demand.

■ **Pedestrian Areas: Visual Impairment**

Ms Julie Minns:

[\[9262\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of whether floating bus stops are compatible with Rule H1 of the Highway Code.

Ms Julie Minns:

[\[9263\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has had recent discussions with disability organisations on the potential merits of introducing a moratorium on floating bus stops.

Simon Lightwood:

The Department is fully aware of the concerns raised by some groups, particularly visually impaired people, over the use of floating bus stops and is working with Active Travel England on ways to address these concerns. It is a complex issue and we are carefully considering a wide range of options in developing next steps.

The Hierarchy of Road Users is a well-established concept which ensures that those road users who can do the greatest harm have the greatest responsibility to reduce

the danger or threat they may pose to other road users. It is for local authorities to ensure any infrastructure they place is developed with this in mind.

The Department engages regularly with a wide range of stakeholders. The Disabled Persons' Transport Advisory Committee provides advice on disability transport issues in their role as a statutory advisory body, including advice on buses and local transport.

■ **Taxis: Licensing**

Amanda Hack: [\[9304\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, What recent steps her Department has taken to ensure consistency in local authorities' taxi license-issuing regimes.

Simon Lightwood:

The Department for Transport issues guidance to licensing authorities in England to help them regulate the sector. One of the aims of the guidance is to improve consistency in the licensing standards required by licensing authorities. Statutory guidance was issued in 2020 on measures that should be taken to protect children and vulnerable adults, and by extension all passengers, when using these services. Last year the Department issued updated best practice guidance which made recommendations to promote regulation that enables the provision of safe, accessible, available, and affordable services that meet the wide range of passenger needs by a thriving sector.

■ **Transport**

Alex Mayer: [\[9841\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her Department plans to publish an integrated national transport strategy.

Lilian Greenwood:

Better integrating transport networks is one of the Transport Secretary's five strategic priorities.

The current transport system is fragmented, lacks join up and cohesion and does not cater for the needs of all the people who use it.

In future, transport should be designed, built and operated with people and their needs at its heart. The Secretary of State will set out further details shortly.

TREASURY

■ **Boarding Schools: Armed Forces**

Rupert Lowe: [\[9299\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps she plans to take to support military families who rely on fee-paying boarding schools for their children.

James Murray:

The Government is committed to breaking down barriers to opportunity, ensuring every child has access to high-quality education. We have made the decision to end tax breaks for private schools, to raise revenue for essential public services, including investing in the education system.

Recognising the enormous sacrifices our military families make, the Ministry of Defence provide the Continuity of Education Allowance (CEA) to eligible Service Personnel. The government will monitor closely the impact of these policy changes on affected military families and the Spending Review is the right time to consider any changes to this scheme.

Defibrillators: VAT**Max Wilkinson:**[\[9246\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of removing VAT from defibrillators in the forthcoming Budget.

James Murray:

The Government currently provides VAT reliefs to aid the purchase of defibrillators. This means that charities pay no VAT if they purchase a defibrillator and then donate it to an eligible body.

VAT is a broad-based tax on consumption, and exceptions to the standard rate have always been limited and balanced against affordability considerations. Following the spending audit, the Chancellor has been clear that difficult decisions lie ahead on spending, welfare and tax to fix the foundations of our economy and address the £22 billion hole in the public finances left by the last government.

The government keeps all taxes under review.

Domicil**Rupert Lowe:**[\[9297\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether her Department has carried out a cost-benefit analysis of removing non-domiciled tax status.

James Murray:

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

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

Further details of this policy will be announced at the Budget, including a Tax Information and Impact Note (TIIN), as is routine for tax policy.

■ Energy: Conservation**Freddie van Mierlo:**[\[9289\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she has made a recent assessment with the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero of the potential merits of taking fiscal steps to help support the adoption of (a) heat batteries and (b) other energy saving technologies.

James Murray:

The Government recently announced a new Warm Homes: Local Grant and confirmed the continuation of the Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund to support those with low incomes with energy performance upgrades and cleaner heating. Both support a range of energy saving technologies. Further details will be set out following the Spending Review.

The installation of qualifying energy saving materials in residential accommodation and buildings used solely for a relevant charitable purpose also benefit from a temporary VAT zero rate until March 2027, worth over £1 billion. The Government currently has no plans to add further technologies to this VAT relief but keeps all taxes under review.

■ Fuels: Excise Duties**Dame Caroline Dinenage:**[\[8795\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of maintaining the level of fuel duty on inflation in the next three financial years.

Dame Caroline Dinenage:[\[8798\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment her Department has made of the impact of freezing fuel duty on inflation since 2010.

James Murray:

Fuel duty applies to petrol, diesel and other fuels for road and non-road uses, such as construction. The Government carefully considers the impacts of fuel duty rates on the fiscal position and the economy, including on inflation, with decisions on rates made at fiscal events.

The Office for Budget Responsibility provide an assessment of the impact of government policies on inflation in their economic and fiscal outlook after each fiscal event.

■ Further Education: VAT**Darren Paffey:**[\[9625\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she plans to reimburse VAT to colleges.

James Murray:

The Government strongly supports the work colleges do to enable people to gain the skills they need to thrive in the modern labour market.

Maintained schools who are funded by local authorities are able to recover their VAT through the s33 VAT refund scheme, which aims to ensure VAT is not a burden on local taxation. Academies can also recover their VAT under s33B, to ensure they are not disincentivised from leaving LA control. FE colleges do not meet the rationale for admission to either refund scheme.

Decisions on funding for the sector will be considered as part of the Spending Review.

■ Housing: Carbon Emissions**Freddie van Mierlo:****[9285]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment with the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero of the potential merits of (a) providing VAT relief for heat batteries and (b) taking other fiscal steps to help support the decarbonisation of homes.

James Murray:

This Government is committed to improving the quality and sustainability of our housing stock, through improvements such as low carbon heating, insulation, solar panels, and batteries. This will be vital to making the UK more energy resilient and meeting our 2050 Net Zero commitment. Our Warm Homes Plan will increase ambition in this area, working with the private sector to make progress and ensuring the energy efficiency of privately rented homes improves.

The Government recently announced a new Warm Homes: Local Grant to help low-income homeowners and private tenants with energy performance upgrades and cleaner heating, and confirmed the continuation of the Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund to support social housing providers and tenants. Further details of the Warm Homes Plan will be set out through the Spending Review.

The installation of qualifying energy-saving materials in residential accommodation and buildings used solely for a relevant charitable purpose also benefits from a temporary VAT zero rate until March 2027.

Last year, a Call for Evidence (CfE) seeking views on additional technologies to potentially include within this relief was run. Heat batteries were one of the technologies put forwards by respondents. As set out in the Government response to the CfE, at that time, the Government was unable to identify sufficient independent data regarding the efficiency of heat batteries, making it difficult to assess the technology's energy-saving properties objectively.

The Government currently has no plans to add further technologies to this VAT relief. Nevertheless, the Government keeps all taxes under review as part of the policy

making process. Changes to the tax system are announced at fiscal events in the usual way.

■ Income Tax

Neil Duncan-Jordan: [9379]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many people are (a) below the threshold for income tax, (b) paying income tax at 20%, (c) paying income tax at 40% and (d) paying income tax at 45%.

Neil Duncan-Jordan: [9380]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an estimate of the additional income generated per year by adding 1% to the (a) 40% and (b) 45% rate of income tax.

James Murray:

The number of individuals with a tax liability, set out by tax band, can be found in Table 2.1 below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/number-of-individual-income-taxpayers-by-marginal-rate-gender-and-age>

HMRC does not publish estimates on the number of individuals below the Personal Allowance. However, the population statistics in the link below provide estimates of the total population, from which an assessment of non-taxpayers (those in the population but without sufficient income to pay Income Tax) can be estimated.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/bulletins/annualmidyearpopulationestimates/mid2023>

The Exchequer Impact of changing the rates of income tax by 1 percentage point can be found in HMRC's "Direct Effects of Illustrative Tax Changes" publication, and includes the impact of a 1p change on the higher rate (40% rate of income tax) and the impact of an increase in the additional rate (45% rate of income tax) by 1p.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/direct-effects-of-illustrative-tax-changes>

■ Individual Savings Accounts

Daisy Cooper: [9222]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make it her policy to increase the Lifetime ISA property cap threshold in line with the rate of house price inflation.

James Murray:

Data from the latest [UK House Price Index](#) shows that while the average price paid by first-time buyers has increased, it is still below the LISA property price cap in all regions of the UK except for London, where the average price paid is affected by boroughs with very high property values.

The Government keeps all aspects of savings tax policy under review.

■ Local Government: Borrowing

Dr Roz Savage:

[\[9271\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will increase the discounted Public Works Loan Board rate to local councils for investment in social housing.

Darren Jones:

The Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) lending facility exists to provide cost effective loans to local authorities to support investment and service delivery. HM Treasury keeps all PWLB rates under review, including the discounted rate for investment in social housing. The current discounted rate for Housing Revenue Account lending remains available until June 2025.

■ Orchestras: Tax Allowances

Liz Jarvis:

[\[9242\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of including voice as an eligible instrument for the purposes of Orchestra Tax Relief.

James Murray:

The creative industries play a key role in driving economic growth, and the Government is committed to supporting them.

Orchestra Tax Relief (OTR) provides tax relief at a rate of 50% on production costs. To qualify for the relief, a concert must be performed by a group of at least 12 instrumentalists. The voice is not considered to be an instrument. However, orchestra concerts with a vocal element are not excluded from the relief. Concerts with a vocal element may be eligible provided that the instrumentalists are the primary focus.

These rules help ensure OTR fulfils its objective of supporting and incentivising orchestra concerts specifically. The Government keeps the tax system under review and any changes will be announced at a fiscal event.

■ Pensions: Taxation

Neil Duncan-Jordan:

[\[9384\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential savings to the public purse if the higher rate of pension tax relief was reduced to (a) 30 and (b) 20 percent.

Tulip Siddiq:

The Government does not publish such estimates.

■ Private Education: VAT

Rupert Lowe:

[\[9300\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an estimate of the cost to the public purse of legal fees relating to the introduction of VAT on independent school fees.

James Murray:

Following scrutiny of the Government's costing by the independent Office for Budget Responsibility, the Government will confirm its approach to these reforms at the Budget on 30 October, and set out its assessment of relevant expected impacts of this policy change in a Tax Information and Impact Note (TIIN).

Rebecca Paul:**[R]** [\[9365\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps she is taking to ensure HMRC is adequately resourced for changes in the level of VAT registrations by schools from 1 January 2025.

James Murray:

HMRC is putting in place extra measures to support schools and ensure they can register for VAT on time. This includes new bespoke guidance, hosting webinars, updating VAT registration systems and training additional staff to manage increased demand for registrations.

HMRC are confident these actions will enable them to deliver the measure for the 1 January 2025 start date set out in the draft legislation published on 29 July. The final version of the legislation will be confirmed at Budget.

Rebecca Paul:**[R]** [\[9366\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate she has made of the potential impact of independent schools recovering VAT through the Capital Goods Scheme on the benefit to the public purse of charging VAT on school fees.

James Murray:

Following scrutiny of the Government's costing by the independent Office for Budget Responsibility, the Government will confirm its approach to these reforms at the Budget on 30 October, and set out its assessment of relevant expected impacts in a Tax Information and Impact Note (TIIN).

■ Tax Avoidance and Tax Evasion**Neil Duncan-Jordan:****[R]** [\[9383\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps she is taking to assess the levels of (a) tax avoidance and (b) tax evasion within the economy.

James Murray:

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) estimates the size of the tax gap, which is the difference between the amount of tax that should, in theory, be paid to HMRC, and what is actually paid. The tax gap statistics are published annually and are available at: Measuring tax gaps 2024 edition: tax gap estimates for 2022 to 2023 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).

Table 7.1 of the online tables shows the illustrative tax gap time series by behaviour, including avoidance and evasion. The tax gap for avoidance was £1.8 billion and for evasion was £5.5 billion in tax year 2022 to 2023. The online tables are available at: Measuring tax gaps tables - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).

■ Taxation

Neil Duncan-Jordan:

[\[9382\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of hypothecating future tax increases to fund specific public services.

Darren Jones:

It is right that public spending is sustainably funded through a mix of taxes.

The government will ensure that its tax reforms support its wider objectives of making the tax system fairer whilst protecting working people.

The Chancellor will set out tax and spending plans at the Budget on 30 October.

■ Tobacco: Excise Duties

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[9134\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of increasing the powers of Trading Standards officers to tackle tobacco duty avoidance.

James Murray:

Trading Standards have a range of powers to effectively tackle the illicit supply of tobacco.

In 2023 those powers were extended to enable Trading Standards to tackle non-compliance with the UK's Tobacco Track and Trace system, which regulates tobacco at all stages of the supply chain, from manufacture through to retail.

These powers enable Trading Standards to make referrals to HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) on potential breaches of the law, and for HMRC to impose penalties. HMRC are responsible for tackling tax avoidance and evasion.

Trading Standards and HMRC work closely together on tackling tobacco duty evasion. In 2021 they launched a joint initiative, called Operation CeCe to specifically target the illicit tobacco market. Through sharing of intelligence, combined with local knowledge and expertise, Operation CeCe contributes significantly to the detection and seizure of illicit tobacco products at retail level. Since introduction, more than 4,900 seizures have been made, and over £28 million of revenue loss has been prevented.

■ Treasury

Charlie Dewhirst:

[\[9348\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what meetings (a) Ministers and (b) her officials have held with external stakeholders since 5 July 2024.

James Murray:

Details relating to the department's meetings with external stakeholders at ministerial level are published in line with Cabinet Office guidelines as part of the transparency

reporting commitment. The details relating to the period in question will form part of the agreed Q2 publication set. This is due to be published at the end of October.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Access to Work Programme

Mel Stride: [\[9705\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans her Department has to make changes to the Access to Work scheme.

Alison McGovern:

The Access to Work Scheme provides grant funding for disabled people, and those with a health condition, who are in or about to start work. The grant supports with workplace adjustments that go beyond what would normally be expected from an employer through their duty to provide reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010

The Department for Work and Pensions is committed to reducing waiting times for new applications for Access to Work, as well as renewals. We are considering the best way to deliver that for customers. We have increased the number of staff processing Access to Work claims and have prioritised applications from customers who are about to start a job, and renewals.

■ Carer's Allowance

Mr Lee Dillon: [\[9555\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the claim career allowance eligibility rules on individuals already receiving existing benefits.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Carer's Allowance cannot normally be paid with another income replacement benefit. It has been a long-held feature of the GB benefit system, under successive Governments, that where someone is entitled to two benefits for the same contingency, then whilst there may be entitlement to both benefits, only one will be paid to avoid duplication for the same need. This includes Carer's Allowance and State Pension.

Carer's Allowance replaces income where the carer has given up the opportunity of full-time employment to care for a severely disabled person and is unable to undertake full time employment due to their caring responsibilities, while State Pension for example replaces income in retirement. For this reason, social security rules operate to prevent them being paid together, to avoid duplicate provision for the same need.

Where Carer's Allowance cannot be paid, the person will keep underlying entitlement to the benefit. In addition to Carer's Allowance, carers on low incomes can claim

income-related benefits, such as Universal Credit and Pension Credit. These benefits can be paid to carers at a higher rate than those without caring responsibilities through the carer element and the additional amount for carers respectively. Currently, the Universal Credit carer element is £198.31 per monthly assessment period. The additional amount for carers in Pension Credit is £45.60 a week.

■ Child Maintenance Service: Complaints

Amanda Hack:

[\[9310\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent data her Department holds on the number of complaints made per month about the Child Maintenance Service.

Andrew Western:

The number of complaints made to DWP regarding the Child Maintenance Service is published within table 11 of the Child Maintenance Service Official Statistics: [Child Maintenance Service statistics - GOV.UK](#). Data is presented on a quarterly basis.

Table 1: Number of complaints received by the Child Maintenance Service

QUARTER	COMPLAINTS RECEIVED
Jan to Mar 2015	625
Apr to Jun 2015	625
Jul to Sep 2015	760
Oct to Dec 2015	715
Jan to Mar 2016	645
Apr to Jun 2016	635
Jul to Sep 2016	710
Oct to Dec 2016	695
Jan to Mar 2017	840
Apr to Jun 2017	760
Jul to Sep 2017	645
Oct to Dec 2017	745
Jan to Mar 2018	990
Apr to Jun 2018	1,400
Jul to Sep 2018	1,595

QUARTER	COMPLAINTS RECEIVED
Oct to Dec 2018	1,810
Jan to Mar 2019	2,430
Apr to Jun 2019	2,485
Jul to Sep 2019	2,830
Oct to Dec 2019	2,410
Jan to Mar 2020	2,590
Apr to Jun 2020	1,360
Jul to Sep 2020	1,430
Oct to Dec 2020	1,865
Jan to Mar 2021	1,815
Apr to Jun 2021	1,710
Jul to Sep 2021	1,545
Oct to Dec 2021	1,505
Jan to Mar 2022	1,570
Apr to Jun 2022	1,455
Jul to Sep 2022	1,450
Oct to Dec 2022	1,380
Jan to Mar 2023	1,420
Apr to Jun 2023	1,285
Jul to Sep 2023	1,385
Oct to Dec 2023	1,260
Jan to Mar 2024	1,435
Apr to Jun 2024	975

Note: Figures are rounded to the nearest 5

■ Department for Work and Pensions**Charlie Dewhirst:**[\[9356\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what meetings (a) Ministers and (b) her officials have held with external stakeholders since 5 July 2024

Andrew Western:

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 Work and Pensions: Buildings**Sir Ashley Fox:**[\[9287\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, 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.

Andrew Western:

Data regarding the number of staff attending each site is not held on our central system. Details are held at individual team level by line managers and as such we would have to contact all line managers for input. As the Department does not keep this information centrally, to provide it would incur disproportionate costs.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Civil Servants**Sir Ashley Fox:**[\[9286\]](#)

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

Andrew Western:

DWP has over 800 sites where staff are assigned. Gathering and collating data on staffing numbers and desks from each site would incur disproportionate costs.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Ministers' Private Offices**Sir Ashley Fox:**[\[9288\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, 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.

Andrew Western:

I can confirm that there has been nil investment on (a) new furniture and fittings and (b) other refurbishment of Ministerial Offices for the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions since the dissolution of the last Parliament.

■ Employment Schemes: Mental Illness

Jim Shannon:

[\[9172\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions she has had with the Department of Communities in Northern Ireland on supporting young adults with mental health issues back into work.

Alison McGovern:

Social security is devolved in Northern Ireland and is administered by the Department for Communities and it is for the Devolved Government to decide how to deliver employment support.

The Department understands the longstanding negative implications unemployment may have on young people. Disabled people and people with health conditions are a diverse group who deserve access to the right work and health support, in the right place, at the right time. We therefore have a range of specialist initiatives to support individuals to stay in work and get back into work, including those that join up employment and health systems.

Through our Get Britain Working Plan, we will introduce a new Youth Guarantee in England, meaning more opportunities for training, an apprenticeship or help to find work for all 18 to 21-year-olds. This will prevent young people becoming excluded from the world of work at a young age and ultimately help support better mental health. This will require input and expertise from a wide range of stakeholders, and we will engage with the devolved governments, including the Department for Communities as our plans develop.

■ Flexible Support Fund

Rupert Lowe:

[\[9593\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how much her Department spent on the Flexible Support Fund for (a) laptops and (b) mobile phones in the last financial year.

Alison McGovern:

The information requested is not collated centrally and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

■ Housing Benefit: Housing Associations

Neil Coyle:

[\[9717\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how much (a) housing benefit and (b) equivalent benefit as part of Universal Credit was paid to housing associations in each of the last three years.

Sir Stephen Timms:

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

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

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

■ **Jobcentres: Translation Services**

Rupert Lowe:

[\[9592\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how much was spent on translation in Jobcentres in the last financial year.

Alison McGovern:

The total spend for jobcentres in 23/24 was £3,420,480.

■ **Menopause: Employment**

Ian Lavery:

[\[9181\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps the Government is taking to help ensure employers support women managing the menopause in the workplace.

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[9236\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to ensure that employers are supporting women managing menopause.

Ayoub Khan:

[\[9359\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to ensure that employers are supporting women managing menopause.

Alison McGovern:

The Government believes in the vital importance of equality of opportunity and of treatment in the workplace. The plan to Make Work Pay includes clear action to place equality, diversity and inclusion issues on a statutory footing. This includes requiring large employers to publish plans detailing the action they're taking to improve gender equality and support employees during the menopause. Alongside this, the Government has appointed a Menopause Employment Ambassador who will work with employers to improve the support for women experiencing menopause symptoms at work.

■ Personal Independence Payment: Disability**Nadia Whittome:**[\[9963\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will take steps to ensure that participation in disability sports does not affect eligibility for the Personal Independence Payment.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Personal Independence Payment (PIP) is intended as a contribution towards the extra costs faced by people with a long-term health condition or disability. It is assessed on the basis of needs arising from a long-term health condition or disability, rather than the health condition or disability itself, and can be paid at one of eight different rates to reflect those needs.

Participation in sport is not necessarily an indication of needs reducing. We would hope that disabled people will take every opportunity to participate in sport, as we know that can improve health, wellbeing and overall independence. However, where needs change, it is right that the level of support in PIP should change to match those needs.

■ Poverty**Rachael Maskell:**[\[9725\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps is she taking to reduce the number of people in (a) relative poverty, (b) absolute poverty and (c) destitution.

Alison McGovern:

This government is committed to tackling poverty.

We know that good work can significantly reduce the chances of people falling into poverty so alongside social security this will be the foundation of our approach. The Get Britain Working White Paper, to be set out in the Autumn, will develop measures to reduce inactivity and help people to find better paid and more secure jobs.

Alongside this, we have committed to reviewing Universal Credit by listening to the full range of views on potential changes, so that our social security system is fit for purpose.

We promised concrete actions in our manifesto to support children and families which is why we announced our Ministerial Taskforce on the 17th July, jointly chaired by the Work and Pensions and Education Secretaries, to begin work on an ambitious Child Poverty Strategy, to reduce child poverty, tackle the root causes, and give every child the best start in life. The Taskforce will publish the Child Poverty Strategy in Spring 2025 and will explore all available levers to drive forward short and long-term actions across government to reduce child poverty.

We are already taking steps to tackle poverty, including free breakfast clubs in every primary school so children don't go hungry, protecting renters from arbitrary eviction, slashing fuel poverty and banning exploitative zero hours contracts. As well as this, we announced funding to extend the Household Support Fund in England for a

further 6 months, from 1 October 2024 until 31 March 2025. An additional £421 million will be provided to enable the extension of the Household Support Fund in England, plus funding for the Devolved Governments through the Barnett formula to be spent at their discretion, as usual. As has been done for previous schemes, the Fund is available to County Councils and Unitary Authorities in England to provide discretionary support to those most in need with the cost of essentials.

■ Social Security Benefits

Neil O'Brien:

[\[9771\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people claiming out of work benefits were (a) born in the UK and (b) not born in the UK.

Andrew Western:

The Department does not consistently record data on the birthplace of those claiming out of work benefits across all benefit lines. DWP policy responsibility lies in establishing a customer's eligibility to claim benefits. An individual's place of birth does not play a role in this. The Department therefore does not consistently collect information on place of birth at the point of benefit claim.

■ Social Security Benefits: Disability and Health

Mel Stride:

[\[9703\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she plans to implement the policy paper entitled Transforming Support: The Health and Disability White Paper, published on 15 March 2023.

Sir Stephen Timms:

This government is committed to breaking down the barriers to opportunity for disabled people and people with health conditions, improving our employment and health support offer and tackling rising levels of economic inactivity. We will replace or reform the Work Capability Assessment alongside putting in place a proper plan to support disabled people into work, and continue to engage with stakeholders to keep the views of disabled people and people with health conditions at the heart of what we do. We will be considering our own approach to social security in due course.

■ Social Security Benefits: Employment

Mel Stride:

[\[9701\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the press notice entitled New Chance to Work Guarantee will remove barriers to work for millions, published on 22 November 2023, what her Department's (a) planned timetable is bringing the Chance to Work Guarantee into effect and (b) policy is on reassessments of claimants on the (i) Employment and Support Allowance and the (ii) Universal Credit health journey (1) before and (2) after the planned changes to the Work Capability Assessment descriptors are implemented; and what steps she plans to take to review her

Department's policy on reassessments for claimants on health-related benefits who move into employment.

Sir Stephen Timms:

[Holding answer 22 October 2024]: We are committed to delivering on our manifesto pledge to give disabled people the confidence to start working without the fear of an immediate benefit reassessment if it does not work out. We will set out plans for this in due course.

■ **Social Security Benefits: Foreign Nationals**

Rupert Lowe:

[\[9992\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 14 October to Question 6949 on Social Security Benefits: Foreign Nationals, if she will make it her policy to collect data on the nationality of those claiming benefits.

Andrew Western:

There are no plans to start consistently collecting nationality data across all DWP benefit lines. This is because DWP policy responsibility lies in establishing a customer's eligibility to claim benefits. An individual's specific nationality does not play a role in this.

The Department checks immigration status when assessing eligibility for benefits, but this information is not collated centrally across all benefit lines and hence is not readily available. We are, however, exploring the feasibility of developing suitable statistics related to the immigration status of non-UK / Irish customers.

■ **Unemployment: Young People**

James McMurdock:

[\[9600\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions she has had with local authorities on tackling youth unemployment in South Basildon and East Thurrock constituency.

Alison McGovern:

The forthcoming Youth Guarantee is testament to our commitment to do more to help young people achieve their potential and how we intend to maximise the role of as wide a range of local partners as possible in helping us to achieve this goal.

Recent examples of positive collaboration in South Basildon and East Thurrock include strong support for and active signposting of young people to Basildon local authority's recent Apprenticeship Day; and hub-based support for young care leavers in Basildon delivered collaboratively by Local Authority support workers and Jobcentre Plus Work Coaches.

■ Universal Credit

Richard Foord:

[\[9970\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will take steps to ensure that people with incomes (a) that fluctuate and (b) from multiple sources are accurately assessed for Universal Credit; and if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of increasing (i) savings and (ii) earnings thresholds for Universal Credit.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Wherever possible, employed earnings are received through the Real Time Information (RTI) system used by employers to report Pay As You Earn (PAYE) data to HMRC (His Majesty's Revenue and Customs). RTI enables a customer's Universal Credit award to be automatically adjusted to reflect their earnings each month, which eases the reporting burden on customers.

If earnings are not reported through RTI for any reason, the customer needs to self-report their earnings.

Unearned income such as pension payments and certain benefits, including new style Jobseeker's Allowance or new style Employment and Support Allowance are taken into account when calculating Universal Credit entitlement. Where these are not paid monthly they are calculated as a monthly equivalent. This is to reflect the Universal Credit monthly assessment period and to 'smooth' the calculation of award.

The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions is required by law to undertake an annual review of benefits and State Pensions. The outcome of the Secretary of State's review will be announced in the usual way.

■ Work Capability Assessment

Mel Stride:

[\[9702\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she plans to implement the changes to the Work Capability Assessment that were announced at the Autumn Statement 2023.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Labour's manifesto is clear that we intend to reform the Work Capability Assessment alongside a proper plan to support disabled people to work. We will say more about these plans in the months ahead, including genuine employment support for disabled people.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

EDUCATION

■ Schools: Finance

Ellie Chowns:

[\[7167\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will make it her policy to restore school funding in real terms to the level provided in May 2010.

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

Catherine McKinnell:

This government is increasing overall core revenue funding for schools to almost £61.8 billion this **financial** year (2024/25). In July, the department announced that it is providing schools with almost £1.1 billion of additional funding in the 2024/25 **academic** **financial** year through the new core schools budget grant (CSBG), to support them with overall costs. This matches what the department has calculated is needed to fully fund, at a national level, the teacher pay award and the support staff pay offer in the 2024/25 financial year, after accounting for the available headroom in schools' existing budgets.

This increase in funding shows the government's commitment to supporting schools as a part of the government's mission to break down barriers to opportunity.

Departmental expenditure limits for the 2025/26 financial year are yet to be agreed across government and will be set alongside the Budget on 30 October. This will include 2025/26 schools' funding - **in the 2025/26 financial year.**

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

BUSINESS AND TRADE

■ Regulatory Partnership for Growth Fund

Secretary of State for Business and Trade (Jonathan Reynolds): [\[HCWS157\]](#)

Today I am announcing a new £2.3million Regulatory Partnership for Growth Fund (RPGF), which will help to unlock export opportunities worth nearly £5 billion for UK companies over five years.

The RPGF will help UK regulators work with international partners to remove trade barriers and shape markets in various growing sectors. The Department for Business and Trade will offer Grant Funding Agreements to UK regulators and standard setting bodies in order to undertake targeted, specific interventions to unlock regulatory market access barriers.

The Fund builds on the Prime Minister's call at the International Investment Summit last week for UK regulators to support the Government's growth mission, keep pace with emerging industries and upgrade the regulatory regime to make it fit for the modern age.

This will see UK businesses, including in growth-driving sectors, benefit from almost £5 billion of new export opportunities over five years, with trade barriers worth £300 million being targeted within the first 12 months – equivalent to an average of £135 in exports per pound invested.

For example, the fund will generate new opportunities for the UK offshore wind supply chain to export their products and services globally; enable the UK's pharmaceutical industry to more easily sell medicines in markets around the world; and improve the process for accreditation of UK education providers to sell their services abroad.

List of organisations to receive funding

Architects Registration Board (ARB)

Operators of UK National Information Centre for global qualifications and skills (Ecctis)

The Food Standards Agency (FSA)

The Law Society of England and Wales

The National Institute of Health and Care Excellence (NICE)

Offshore Renewable Energy Catapult (OREC)

Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)

DEFENCE**■ Agreement on Defence Co-operation between the United Kingdom and Germany****Secretary of State for Defence (John Healey):****[[HCWS159](#)]**

Earlier today I, together with my German counterpart Boris Pistorius, signed an Agreement on Defence co-operation between the United Kingdom and Germany. The Agreement will strengthen bilateral defence co-operation and will enhance our mutual security. It represents a significant milestone in the defence relationship between our two countries and underscores our shared commitment to maintaining peace and stability in Europe.

This Defence Agreement builds on the strong foundation of co-operation between the UK and Germany and reflects our shared values and strategic interests. It is a testament to the enduring partnership between our two nations and our commitment to working together to address common security challenges. The agreement will contribute to the security of the Euro-Atlantic region and will help to support the defence industries of both countries by enhancing co-operation in research and technology, and developing co-operative equipment programs. The agreement will also enhance bilateral interoperability between our armed forces, across all domains, and will support us in working together to strengthen standardisation in NATO.

The agreement will provide a comprehensive structure to ensure bilateral co-operation is managed in a holistic and systemic way; a new Defence Ministerial Council will oversee co-operation across the whole of Defence, providing greater strategic co-ordination across the breadth and depth of the relationship.

The Defence Agreement will see the UK and Germany work together systemically for years to come on a range of ground-breaking defence projects. We will jointly develop and procure extended Deep Precision Strike capabilities to provide a conventional deterrent in Europe; focussing on developing new capabilities which far exceed the ranges of our current systems.

In the Air domain, we will work jointly to develop and employ uncrewed aerial and offboard air systems, and enhance connectivity, to ensure interoperability between our respective Future Combat Air Systems. To enhance our co-operation on Land, we will foster a deep industrial partnership between our defence industries and work to strengthen NATO by developing doctrine, uncrewed systems, and enabling capabilities, to transform our land forces.

We will enhance undersea co-operation between the UK and Germany in the North Atlantic and North Sea, significantly contributing to the protection of Critical Undersea Infrastructure and Sea Lines of Communications. We will facilitate episodic deployments of German P-8A Poseidon Maritime Patrol Aircraft in the UK, and co-ordinate combined and joint Anti-Submarine Warfare operations with ships, submarines, and aircraft.

The UK Government remains steadfast in its commitment to the defence of the United Kingdom and our Allies; we are confident that this agreement will contribute to the

security and prosperity of both our nations and the wider European region. We look forward to working closely with Germany to ensure its successful implementation.

This Defence Agreement will serve as the first pillar of a new comprehensive bilateral Treaty, which is currently being negotiated with Germany by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and is due to be signed by early 2025.

A copy of the joint communique can be found on gov.uk here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-germany-trinity-house-agreement-on-defence>

TREASURY

■ **The Double Taxation Convention between the United Kingdom and Ecuador**

The Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury (James Murray):

[\[HCWS160\]](#)

A Double Taxation Convention with Ecuador was signed in Quito on 6 August 2024. The text of the Convention is available on HM Revenue and Customs' pages of the GOV.UK website and will be deposited in the Libraries of both Houses. The text of the Convention will be scheduled to a draft Order in Council and laid before the House of Commons in due course.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ **Tackling Child Poverty: Developing Our Strategy**

Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Liz Kendall):

[\[HCWS158\]](#)

Today, my right Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education (The Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson), and I are pleased to announce that we are publishing '*Tackling Child Poverty: Developing our strategy*'.

Since 2010, child poverty has increased by 700,000, with over four million children living in poverty in the UK, and 800,000 children using foodbanks to eat. This is a scar on our society, which holds back children's life chances and damages our country's prospects. Breaking the link between background and success in life is at the heart of our Opportunity and Growth Missions.

The Prime Minister has tasked us to develop an ambitious Child Poverty Strategy which will be published in Spring 2025. This is a shared endeavour across all parts of the UK, and we can learn from action being taken in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Our Government will tackle overall child poverty, assessed by the leading and internationally recognised measure of poverty, but also go beyond that to focus on children in deepest poverty lacking essentials, and what is needed to give every child the best start in life.

Today, our publication sets out how we will develop the Strategy which will harness all available levers to deliver a reduction in child poverty this Parliament as part of an ambitious ten-year strategy which addresses root causes including:

1. Supporting households to increase their income, including considering social security reforms that support people into work and alleviate poverty.
2. Helping to bring down essential household costs.
3. Increasing financial resilience by tackling problem debt and helping families manage financial shocks through savings and affordable credit.
4. Alleviating the negative experience of living in poverty, including through supporting families and the role of public services.

Over the coming months, the Child Poverty Taskforce will hear directly from experts on each of the Strategy's themes including children and families living in poverty and work with leading organisations, charities, and campaigners.

1. In October, we have invited partners in industry, regulation and the charity sector to share evidence and ideas on options to reduce essential costs for low-income families.
2. In November, employers, trade unions and think tanks will be invited to discuss options to increase incomes and financial resilience in low-income households.
3. In December, experts on children's health, early years and education and representatives from civil society will be invited to share experience and expertise on ensuring low-income families are able to access quality services to tackle the impacts of poverty.

Ministers will take part in engagement events across the nations and regions of the UK, bringing together a diverse range of voices. A new forum of parents and carers living across the UK will be set up to ensure the experiences of children in poverty, including disabled children and those with special educational needs, are included. They will feed directly into the Strategy.

Living in poverty not only harms children's lives now, it damages their future prospects and holds back our country. Children living in poverty are denied the opportunities that should enable them to achieve and thrive. And Britain cannot see maximum economic growth when the talents of so many children are being lost. Our ambitious Child Poverty Strategy will reduce child poverty, tackle the root causes, and give every child the best start in life.