



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 24 October 2024 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:31 P.M., 24 October 2024). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

CONTENTS

ANSWERS	7	■ Ministers: Members' Interests	12
BUSINESS AND TRADE	7	CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT	13
■ Certification Quality Marks	7	■ Publishing: Research	13
■ Databases: Blyth	7	DEFENCE	13
■ Imports	7	■ Antisatellite Weapons	13
■ Products: Regulation and Safety	7	■ Armed Forces: Satellite Communications	14
■ Titanium Dioxide: Import Duties	8	■ Arms Trade: Exports	14
■ Trade	8	■ Arms Trade: Trade Agreements	14
■ UK Trade with EU	8	■ Aviation: Israel	15
CABINET OFFICE	9	■ Bangladesh: Armed Forces and Police	15
■ Advisory Committee on Business Appointments	9	■ Defence: Expenditure	16
■ Cabinet Office: Flags	9	■ Defence: Industry	16
■ Civil Servants: Recruitment	9	■ Defence: Procurement	17
■ Civil Servants: Workplace Pensions	10	■ Electronic Warfare	17
■ Civil Service: Reform	10	■ Germany: Armed Forces	18
■ Crafts: Northern Ireland	11	■ Germany: Military Bases	18
■ Government Departments: Directors	11	■ Information Warfare	18
■ House of Lords Appointments Commission	11	■ Israel: Air Force	19
■ Infected Blood Compensation Scheme	12	■ Joint Requirements Oversight Committee	19
■ Labour: Conferences	12	■ Lasers: Weapons	20
		■ Lebanon: Peacekeeping Operations	20

■ Middle East: Air Force	20	ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND	
■ NATO: Space Technology	21	RURAL AFFAIRS	31
■ Shipbuilding	21	■ Animal Welfare	31
■ Shipbuilding: Job Creation	21	■ Animal Welfare: Fireworks	31
■ Skynet: Procurement	22	■ Drinking Water: EU Law	32
■ Space Technology: Job Creation	22	■ Inland Waterways	32
■ Strategic Defence Review	22	■ Newts	33
■ Unmanned Air Vehicles	23	■ Pesticides	33
■ Unmanned Air Vehicles and Unmanned Marine Vehicles	23	■ Plastics: Recycling	34
■ Veterans: Great Yarmouth	23	■ Sewage: Waste Disposal	34
EDUCATION	24	■ Sewage: West Dorset	35
■ Children: Carers	24	FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE	35
■ Further Education: Conditions of Employment	25	■ Bangladesh: Religious Freedom	35
■ Further Education: Southampton Itchen	25	■ China: Foreign Relations	36
■ Pupil Numbers	26	■ Diplomatic Service: Married People	36
■ Schools: Adrenaline Auto-injectors	26	■ Francesca Albanese	36
■ Schools: Staff	27	■ Israel: United Nations	37
■ Schools: Uniforms	28	■ Israeli Defence Force: British Nationals Abroad	37
■ Special Educational Needs	28	■ Russia: Oil	37
■ Teachers: Pay	28	■ Syria: Sanctions	38
ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO	29	■ Tsai Ing-wen	39
■ Electric Cables: Agriculture	29	■ Western Sahara: Self-determination of States	39
■ Heating: Housing	29	■ Yemen: Baha'i Faith	40
■ Liquefied Petroleum Gas: Payments	30	HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	40
■ Refineries: Grangemouth	30	■ Alzheimer's Disease: East of England	40
■ Warm Home Discount Scheme: Northern Ireland	31	■ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: Drugs	41
		■ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: Leeds	42
		■ Cancer: Rural Areas	43

■ Care Workers	43	■ Mid and South Essex NHS Foundation Trust	55
■ Care Workers: Cumbria	44	■ NHS: Parking	55
■ Care Workers: Domestic Violence	44	■ NHS: Training	56
■ Carers: Children	45	■ NHS: Vacancies	56
■ Community Health Services: Children	45	■ Non-surgical Cosmetic Procedures: Licensing	56
■ Community Hospitals	46	■ Palliative Care	57
■ Darent Valley Hospital: Attendance	46	■ Palliative Care: Disadvantaged	58
■ Dental Services	46	■ Palliative Care: Finance	58
■ Dental Services: Recruitment	47	■ Pancreatic Cancer: Medical Treatments	59
■ Dental Services: Sleeping Rough	48	■ Patients: Homelessness	59
■ Electronic Cigarettes: Licensing	48	■ Pharmacy	60
■ Food: Nutrition	49	■ Pharmacy: Closures	61
■ General Practitioners	49	■ Pharmacy: Community Health Services	61
■ General Practitioners: Digital Technology	49	■ Pharmacy: Finance	61
■ General Practitioners: Rural Areas	50	■ Pharmacy: Health Services	62
■ General Practitioners: Standards	50	■ Pharmacy: Lincolnshire	63
■ GP Surgeries: Closures	51	■ Podiatry: Cheshire	63
■ Health Services: Disadvantaged	51	■ Primary Health Care	64
■ Health Services: Foreign Nationals	52	■ Psychiatric Hospitals: Autism	64
■ Hip Replacements	52	■ Psychiatric Patients: Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Trust	65
■ HM Courts and Tribunals Service: NHS	53	■ Sick Leave	65
■ Hospices: Finance	53	■ Social Services	66
■ Long Covid: Medical Treatments	54	■ Social Services: Disabled	66
■ Methylphenidate: Shortages	54	■ Social Services: Fees and Charges	66
		■ Social Services: Finance	67
		■ Social Services: Recruitment	68
		■ Special Educational Needs: Children	68

■ Speech and Language Therapy: Children	69	■ District Councils: Finance	81
■ Suicide: Young People	69	■ Housing: Infrastructure	81
■ Virtual Wards	70	■ Leasehold: Reform	82
■ Visual Impairment: Rehabilitation	70	■ Private Rented Housing: Pets	82
HOME OFFICE	70	■ Sleeping Rough: Migrants	83
■ 5G: Emergency Services	70	■ Temporary Accommodation: Children	83
■ Asylum	71	■ Trading Standards: Staff	83
■ Deportation: Bangladesh	71	■ Voting Rights	84
■ Electric Bicycles and Electric Scooters: Fires	72	JUSTICE	84
■ Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority	72	■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]	84
■ Police: Training	73	■ Cannabis	84
■ Prostitution: Edinburgh North and Leith	73	■ Intimate Image Abuse	85
■ Radicalism: Young People	75	■ Prison Sentences	85
■ Tools: Theft	76	■ Prisoners' Release	86
■ Visas: Students	76	■ Prosecutions	87
■ Young Futures Hubs	76	■ Reoffenders: Cannabis	88
HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT	77	NORTHERN IRELAND	88
■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]	77	■ Drugs: Northern Ireland	88
■ Buildings: Fire Prevention	78	■ Northern Ireland Office: Buildings	88
■ Buildings: Safety	78	■ Northern Ireland Office: Civil Servants	89
■ Civic Dignitaries and Members: Age	79	■ Northern Ireland Office: Ministers' Private Offices	90
■ Cladding Safety Scheme: Hertfordshire	79	SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY	90
■ Community Ownership Fund: South Holland and the Deepings	80	■ 4G: Aerials	90
■ Council Tax	80	■ Data Protection: Business	90
■ Devolution: Gloucestershire	81	■ Data Protection: UK Relations with EU	90
		■ Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Departmental Responsibilities	91

■ Digital Technology: Disadvantaged	91	■ Cancer	100
■ Digital Technology: Schools	91	■ Credit: Northern Ireland	100
■ Emergency Calls: Voice over Internet Protocol	91	■ Electronic Commerce: Money Laundering	100
■ Government Departments: Telecommunications	92	■ Pension Funds: British National (Overseas)	101
■ Huawei: 5G	92	■ UK Infrastructure Bank: Northern Ireland	101
■ Information Commissioner's Office	93	■ Wines: Excise Duties	102
■ Internet: Data Protection	93	WORK AND PENSIONS	102
■ NHS: Digital Technology	94	■ Child Maintenance Service: Standards	102
■ Research: Publishing	94	■ Disability Living Allowance	103
■ Space Technology: Cornwall	94	■ Disability Living Allowance: Standards	103
■ Spaceflight: Training	95	■ Employment: Mental Illness	103
■ UK Space Agency	95	■ Hearing Impairment: Children	105
■ UK Space Agency: Goonhilly Earth Station	95	■ Pension Credit	105
■ UK Space Agency: Scotland	95	■ Pension Credit: Applications	105
SCOTLAND	96	■ Pension Credit: Park Homes	106
■ Scotland Office: Buildings	96	■ Poverty: Children	106
■ Scotland Office: Civil Servants	96	■ State Retirement Pensions: British Nationals Abroad	107
TRANSPORT	96	■ State Retirement Pensions: Women	107
■ Bus Services: Concessions	96	■ Unemployment: Young People	108
■ Bus Services: Franchises	97	■ Universal Credit: Domestic Abuse	108
■ Bus Services: Wakefield	97	■ Winter Fuel Payment	108
■ High Speed 2 Line: Costs	98	■ Winter Fuel Payment: Kent	110
■ High Speed 2 Line: Euston Station	98	■ Working Conditions: Temperature	111
■ Rail Delivery Group: Disclosure of Information	98	WRITTEN STATEMENTS	112
■ Railway Stations: Access	99	CABINET OFFICE	112
■ Railway Stations: Disability	99	■ Progress to Implement the UK Biological Security Strategy	112
TREASURY	99		
■ Agriculture: Tax Allowances	99		

■ Update on Interim Compensation Payments for Victims of Infected Blood	113	SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY	118
CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT	114	■ Transfer of regulatory responsibility and staff from the Phone-paid Services Authority to Ofcom	118
■ The Internet Television Equipment Regulations 2024	114	WORK AND PENSIONS	119
FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE	115	■ Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) Annual Report and Accounts 2023-2024	119
■ Sudan	115		
HOME OFFICE	117		
■ Windrush	117		

Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

BUSINESS AND TRADE

■ Certification Quality Marks

Clive Jones:

[\[10260\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make it his policy to negotiate mutual recognition of conformity assessment results between the European Union and the United Kingdom.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

This Government is committed to working with the EU to identify areas where we can strengthen cooperation for mutual benefit and realise the potential of the UK-EU relationship by tackling unnecessary barriers to trade to support growth in the UK and Europe.

■ Databases: Blyth

Saqib Bhatti:

[\[7859\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether his Department has had recent discussions with Northumberland County Council on the construction of an artificial intelligence data centre in Cambois.

Sarah Jones:

Officials within my Department work closely with Northumberland County Council to support investment into the region. This includes collaboration to support Blackstone and QTS' recently confirmed investment into an artificial intelligence data centre in Blyth.

■ Imports

Mike Reader:

[\[9313\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he plans to include measures to grow imports in the forthcoming trade strategy.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

The Trade Strategy will support businesses trade and drive economic growth. Further details on this will be published in due course.

■ Products: Regulation and Safety

Clive Jones:

[\[10259\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make it his policy to foster collaboration between (a) UK regulatory authorities and (b) relevant EU agencies on (i) expertise, (ii) data and (iii) best practices for manufactured goods (A) regulation and (B) safety.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

This Government values strong UK-EU trading relations and recognises the importance of regulatory cooperation to maximising the benefits from our trade relationship, including ensuring consumer safety. The UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) provides a basis for cooperation in respect of manufactured goods. The TCA's sectoral working groups facilitate mutual information exchange and discussion of regulatory developments in motor vehicles and parts, medicinal and organic products. This Government is also committed to advancing discussions on systematic exchange of data on unsafe non-food products as outlined in the TCA and looks forward to exploring further opportunities for UK-EU collaboration.

■ Titanium Dioxide: Import Duties**Melanie Onn:**[\[9481\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing tariffs on Chinese-produced imported titanium dioxide in the context of recent tariff decisions taken by the (a) EU and (b) US.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

The Department remains alert to significant trade remedy cases between WTO members and will continue to closely monitor those cases where the UK has an interest.

While there has not yet been an assessment, as the Trade Remedies Authority has no open investigations on imports of dumped or subsidised titanium dioxide, we would encourage UK producers to contact the Trade Remedies Authority, who may consider an investigation, if they do have concerns.

■ Trade**Clive Jones:**[\[8573\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, which stakeholders his Department plans to consult during the development of his proposed trade strategy.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

We recognise the importance of stakeholder engagement, which will play a crucial role in the development of the trade strategy. We will share further details on stakeholders' involvement in due course.

■ UK Trade with EU**Mike Reader:**[\[9315\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what (a) mechanism and (b) resources his Department is allocating to (i) monitor, (ii) evaluate and (iii) manage (A) passive and (B) active regulatory divergence between the UK and EU to minimise the impact on UK (1) businesses and (2) consumers.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

This Government continues to follow EU regulatory developments with interest, engaging with the EU on key regulatory developments via TCA structures. I also recognise the importance of maintaining an effective dialogue with UK industry leaders and civil society to understand the passive impacts.

DBT's Assimilated Law Dashboard and Report captures changes to UK legislation inherited from the EU which will create active UK-EU divergence. These are updated biannually per requirements of the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Act 2023.

Government departments proposing regulatory reform consider the impact of those changes through impact assessments or proportionate analysis.

CABINET OFFICE**■ Advisory Committee on Business Appointments****Phil Brickell:**[\[9976\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he plans to reform the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments by (a) making it statutory, (b) providing it with greater enforcement powers and (c) increasing its level of resourcing.

Georgia Gould:

The government has committed to reviewing and updating the Business Appointment Rules. An update on this work will be provided in due course.

■ Cabinet Office: Flags**John Glen:**[\[9164\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 5 September 2024 to Question 2323 on Cabinet Office: Flags and with reference to the guidance entitled Union Flag flying guidance for UK government buildings, updated on 5 February 2024, if he will publish a schedule of any other flags to be flown on (a) 70 Whitehall and (b) 10 Downing Street in the next 12 months; and whether he plans to continue to fly the Ukraine flag.

Georgia Gould:

I have nothing further to add to the response to PQ 2323.

■ Civil Servants: Recruitment**John Glen:**[\[6060\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if the Prime Minister will ask the Independent Adviser on Ministerial Interests to investigate the appointment of officials to the civil service without open and fair competition where Ministers may have previously benefited from (a) donations and (b) donations in-kind relating to those individuals.

Georgia Gould:

As was the case under the previous Government, where over 9,000 such exceptions were used in the year ending March 2023, exceptions are a long-established part of bringing talent and expertise into the Civil Service. Often this is to fulfil specialist, short term or urgent requirements. Where appointments are made by exception to the principle of fair and open competition, in all such cases, the employing department must be satisfied that the use of the relevant exceptions route was justified and that the individuals in question could uphold the values of the Civil Service Code.

Andrew Griffith:[\[9966\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what guidance he issues to the Civil Service Commission on considering the Northcote-Trevelyan principles when assessing applications for appointment made by exception.

Georgia Gould:

The statutory basis for the management of the Civil Service is set out in the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010. The Act requires the Civil Service Commission, which is independent of Government, to publish a set of principles to be applied for the purposes of appointing civil servants on merit on the basis of fair and open competition. The recruitment principles are published here:

<https://civilservicecommission.independent.gov.uk/publications/recruitment-guidance/>

■ Civil Servants: Workplace Pensions**John Glen:**[\[10444\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many people will be subject to an annual allowance tax charge due to the retrospective application of the McCloud remedy on Civil Service pensions.

Georgia Gould:

It is not possible for the Cabinet Office to determine which members are subject to a tax charge. This will depend on their personal circumstances and in particular the total pension contributions (including other pension schemes they might contribute to) and their total income, which Cabinet Office would not necessarily know about.

■ Civil Service: Reform**John Glen:**[\[5302\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what his policy is on Civil Service reform.

Georgia Gould:

This Government will develop a strategic plan for a more efficient and effective civil service that is equipped to deliver the Government's missions for the UK.

■ Crafts: Northern Ireland

Jim Allister:

[\[10214\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether, in the context of the vote in the Northern Ireland Assembly on the applicability motion in relation to EU Regulation 2023/2411 on 19 March 2024, whether he has made a decision on the application of that regulation to Northern Ireland.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

The Government continues to evaluate the implications of Regulation 2023/2411, reflecting the applicability motion vote in the Northern Ireland Assembly and the conditions set out in Schedule 6B of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

■ Government Departments: Directors

John Glen:

[\[6097\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, for what reason the Government lead non-executive director was removed from his position; and whether he held discussions with the Prime Minister on this matter prior to making this decision.

Georgia Gould:

The Prime Minister accepted the resignation of the Government Lead Non-Executive Director on 9 August 2024.

The Prime Minister and the Government Lead Non-Executive Director did not meet prior to the resignation being accepted.

■ House of Lords Appointments Commission

Phil Brickell:

[\[9978\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of (a) placing the House of Lords Appointment Commission (HOLAC) on a statutory footing, (b) providing HOLAC with a right of veto where candidates are not deemed fit and proper, (c) requiring the publication of supporting rationale for HOLAC decision making and (d) requiring increased scrutiny of proposed appointments where candidates have (i) acted as a fundraiser for and (ii) made sizeable financial contributions to a political party.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

The Government committed in its manifesto to reform the process of appointments to the House of Lords to ensure the quality of new appointments and to seek to improve the national and regional balance of the second chamber and is actively considering how this can be achieved.

This Government has also already introduced the House of Lords (Hereditary Peers) Bill. This Bill delivers the Government's manifesto commitment to bring about an immediate reform by removing the right of the remaining hereditary peers to sit and vote in the House of Lords.

■ Infected Blood Compensation Scheme

Damien Egan: [\[9801\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent progress has been made on establishing the Infected Blood Compensation Scheme.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

In August, we laid regulations that give the Infected Blood Compensation Authority the powers necessary to pay compensation through the core route to the infected, both living and deceased. On 17 October, the Infected Blood Compensation Authority began to reach out to the first claimants under these Regulations and the Government expects the Authority to begin making payments by the end of the year. On 24 October, the Government opened the process under which estates can apply for interim compensation payments of £100,000 for deaths not yet recognised. Subject to Parliamentary approval, the Government is aiming for the second set of Regulations to be in place by 31 March 2025. This will support our aim of payments to people who are affected to begin in 2025.

■ Labour: Conferences

John Glen: [\[8121\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many officials in her Department attended this year's Labour Party Conference.

Georgia Gould:

Guidance on Party Conferences is published on gov.uk and can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-servants-and-party-conferences-guidance>

There is no central record of any Cabinet Office civil servants attending this year's Labour Party Conference.

■ Ministers: Members' Interests

Paul Holmes: [\[9561\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the oral contribution of the Minister without Portfolio during the debate on Reporting Ministerial Gifts and Hospitality of 14 October 2024, Official Report, column 594, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of including in the planned update to the Ministerial Code or proposed new guidance a financial (a) threshold and (b) test for the acceptance of donations, gifts and hospitality by a Minister after which that Minister should themselves from the issues relating to the business or policy area of the donor.

Georgia Gould:

As set out by the Minister without Portfolio, the updated Ministerial Code will be published in due course. It will include details of a new Register of Ministers' Gifts and Hospitality, which will bring the publication of ministerial transparency data more closely into line with the parliamentary regime for gifts and hospitality.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Publishing: Research****Fabian Hamilton:**[\[9905\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she is taking steps with academic publishers to help ensure that they are not influenced by foreign powers that seek to (a) censor and (b) otherwise restrict the dissemination of research.

Chris Bryant:

The Government recognises concerns about overseas interference in our higher education sector, including those related to overseas funding. The Government works with the Office for Students, and other stakeholders to ensure that overseas funding does not interfere with academic freedom.

DEFENCE**■ Antisatellite Weapons****James Cartlidge:**[\[9493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to increase the UK's sovereign capabilities in space-warfare and communications.

Maria Eagle:

Defence is an important part of the government's efforts on space, and is delivering a programme to enhance our national interests in and through space. We are continuing the investment of over £5 billion in our world-renowned sovereign SKYNET constellation of satellites to provide global, secure satellite communications. The Ministry of Defence (MOD) is also investing £1.5 billion in additional defence space technologies in support of our mission to protect and defend the space domain. As technology and the security context evolves we will continue to invest in world-leading technology to maintain our advantage in the space domain.

James Cartlidge:[\[9496\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to improve sovereign capabilities in satellite development.

Maria Eagle:

The aim is to establish viable UK-based industrial expertise to support national programmes and international sales.

The specification for the next generation of the Skynet communications Satellites obligates the bidders to meet certain requirements related to the UK technical and manufacturing content of their offered solutions. The Satellites will be owned by the Ministry of Defence.

In conjunction with Surrey Satellite Technology Ltd and Defence Equipment & Support, UK Space Command recently launched its first Satellite - Tyche. Tyche

represents the first of a future constellation of Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance satellites that the UK will launch over the coming years.

■ **Armed Forces: Satellite Communications**

James Cartlidge: [\[9734\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the strategic value of maintaining sovereign capabilities in military satellite communications.

Maria Eagle:

The UK's military satellite communications programme is based on the principles of freedom of action, operational advantage and operational independence, and therefore 'sovereign control' is a core design tenet. This is regularly validated through the Department's requirements and investment approvals processes.

In order to deliver its tasks of providing assured, positive command and control of UK Armed Forces and support to other government departments, an appropriate level of UK sovereign control is required for this capability.

■ **Arms Trade: Exports**

James Cartlidge: [\[9743\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of exporting (a) sovereign defence capabilities and (b) military satellite communications.

Maria Eagle:

The UK Government continually assesses the defence export market and plays an important role in supporting industry partners with the export of UK defence equipment, including satcom capabilities, across a number of global campaigns. Ministers across Government are actively involved in these campaigns. The Government is determined to work with industry to support growth – defence will be a key sector in delivering that growth.

■ **Arms Trade: Trade Agreements**

James Cartlidge: [\[9742\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of pursuing Government to Government agreements on defence exports.

Maria Eagle:

The United Kingdom's defence industry produces world class capabilities for our Armed Forces, allies and partners. His Majesty's Government (HMG) remains committed to supporting and enabling the UK defence industry to export, recognising the benefits such exports can bring to the UK defence industry, HMG, and the purchasing nation.

We recognise that in some instances countries may wish to procure via a Government to Government agreement, and doing so can enable the UK to offer

access to exports through the assured processes of our delivery agents such as Defence Equipment & Support, as well as generating a wider relationship beyond the procurement of military equipment to allies and partners e.g. training and development.

For this reason, HMG is developing an improved Government to Government offer and will bring forward a Defence Industrial Strategy to support growth and strengthen both the UK defence industry and HMG's relationships with allies and partners.

■ **Aviation: Israel**

John McDonnell:

[\[9404\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many applications for approval or exemption to overfly the UK when carrying munitions of war for which the final destination is Israel have been (a) received and (b) approved since 7 October 2023.

Luke Pollard:

For operational security reasons and as a matter of policy, the Ministry of Defence will neither confirm, deny, nor comment on any foreign nations' military aircraft movement or operations within UK airspace.

■ **Bangladesh: Armed Forces and Police**

Apsana Begum:

[\[9785\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 9 September 2024 to Question 2525 on Bangladesh: Armed Forces and Police, how many members of the Bangladeshi (a) police and (b) rapid action battalion have been trained at Sandhurst in the last ten years.

Luke Pollard:

No Bangladeshi International Officer Cadets who have been trained at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst in the last ten years were members of the Bangladeshi Police or Rapid Action Battalion, either at the point of commencement or on completion of training.

The Department does not hold records on whether these personnel went on to join the Bangladeshi Police or Rapid Action Battalion following completion of training.

Apsana Begum:

[\[9786\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 9 September 2024 to Question 2525 on Bangladesh: Armed Forces and Police, what assessment his Department makes of the human rights obligations of the (a) UK and (b) other country when determining whether to train that country's armed forces personnel.

Luke Pollard:

The Ministry of Defence uses an Overseas Security and Justice Assistance (OSJA) assessment to ensure that our training and assistance work defends and promotes human rights. This is a longstanding framework used across Government. The OSJA

framework is intended to assess and reduce the risks of our assistance contributing to human rights abuses by foreign governments and partners.

Assessments are continuously reviewed as and when either the proposed assistance or the situation in country changes.

■ Defence: Expenditure

Stuart Anderson: [\[9219\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of increasing defence expenditure to 2.5% of GDP by 2030 for small businesses in supply chains.

Maria Eagle:

Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) play a vital role in a vibrant and flexible UK defence industry, delivering innovation and supporting a wide variety of high quality jobs across the United Kingdom. The Strategic Defence Review and the Defence Industrial Strategy will both help make defence a more attractive market for SMEs by encouraging small businesses to contribute fully in Defence procurement and make the most of future growth within the Defence supply chain.

■ Defence: Industry

James Cartlidge: [\[9737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he plans to take to engage with industry as part of the development of the defence industrial strategy.

Maria Eagle:

This Government recognises the vital role the defence industry plays not only in our national security but also to the economic prosperity and growth of the UK. Our industry partners, of all sizes, are at the heart of our One Defence approach and we recognise the value that suppliers bring to the defence enterprise. The Defence Community, including industry Primes and SME's, will be consulted throughout the development of the new Defence Industrial Strategy, which aims to deliver a better, more innovative and more resilient defence sector that contributes to national security and wider UK prosperity.

James Cartlidge: [\[9739\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he plans to publish the defence industrial strategy.

Maria Eagle:

The Government will issue its new Defence Industrial Strategy in 2025. With defence identified as a high-growth sector within the UK Industrial Strategy, the Defence Industrial Strategy will be developed at pace in parallel to, but independent of, the Strategic Defence Review. The Defence Industrial Strategy will ensure that the imperatives of national security and a high-growth economy are aligned.

James Cartlidge:

[\[9740\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he plans to prioritise increasing UK sovereign capability across defence as part of the defence industrial strategy.

Maria Eagle:

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

This Government is committed to developing a UK defence industrial base that is able to better support our own and allies' security. That is why this Government is committed to bringing forward a Defence Industrial Strategy which will align our defence, security and economic priorities. The new Defence Industrial Strategy will review the consideration of sovereign capability and capacity and will align our security and economic priorities.

■ Defence: Procurement

James Cartlidge:

[\[9492\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will direct officials to score UK sovereign capability and jobs in all procurement decisions.

Maria Eagle:

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

This Government is committed to developing a UK defence industrial base that is able to better support our own and allies' security. That is why we are bringing forward a Defence Industrial Strategy that will review the consideration of sovereign capability and capacity and will align our security and economic priorities.

■ Electronic Warfare

James Cartlidge:

[\[9494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to increase the UK's sovereign capabilities in cyber-warfare.

Luke Pollard:

UK Defence has invested significantly in sovereign cyber capabilities, standing up the National Cyber Force in 2020 to counter and contest those who would do harm to the UK or its allies. In addition, Defence has also invested in programmes to improve cyber resilience. The UK is a leading responsible and democratic cyber power and Defence is committed to further investment to both grow the National Cyber Force and build further defensive cyber capabilities. The importance of digital and cyber to future warfare is also being considered as a next step within the Strategic Defence Review. Defence will continue to work together with the Cabinet Office, National Cyber Security Centre and other partners as part of a whole of society approach to delivering the National Cyber Strategy.

■ Germany: Armed Forces

John McDonnell: [\[9408\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much the withdrawal of UK military presence in Germany cost which was completed in 2019.

Luke Pollard:

From the start of withdrawal in 2010 to date, it has cost approximately £2.15 billion to remove the British Army footprint from Germany.

■ Germany: Military Bases

John McDonnell: [\[9407\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will list all sites (a) owned and (b) operated by his Department in Germany.

Luke Pollard:

The following sites are currently owned by the Ministry of Defence in Germany.

SITE	CITY/TOWN
AYRSHIRE BARRACKS	MONCHEGLADBACH
ATHLONE BARRACKS	PADERBORN
NORMANDY BARRACKS	SENNELAGER Included as part of Normandy Barracks group:Antwerp BarracksTalbot BarracksCavalry BarracksPolish BarracksDepot 90Sennelager NAAFI
BRITISH ALPINE CENTRE GERMANY	WITTENBERG

The British Army also uses the Wulfen site in Dorsten for ammunition storage, however this site is German owned.

■ Information Warfare

Mr Calvin Bailey: [\[9973\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Joint Concept Note 2/18 entitled Information Advantage, published by his Department in November 2018, whether his Department has made a recent assessment of the potential impact of the level of resources available to the BBC World Service on the UK's (a) strategic information capability, (b) capacity to counter adversaries' use of information as a weapon and (c) capacity to use digital technology to achieve influence.

Maria Eagle:

Joint Concept Note (JCN) 2/18, Information Advantage, sets out proposals for how Defence could use information differently, it is not Government policy. The BBC

World Service is not part of Defence and therefore its funding is not a matter for the Ministry of Defence.

■ Israel: Air Force

John McDonnell: [\[5837\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Royal Air Force operated aircraft flew to Israel from 9 May to 4 July 2024.

Luke Pollard:

Four Royal Air Force operated aircraft flew to Israel from 9 May to 4 July 2024.

John McDonnell: [\[5838\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, , how many Royal Air Force operated aircraft have flown to Israel since 5 July 2024.

Luke Pollard:

As of 7 October 2024, eight Royal Air Force operated aircraft have flown to Israel since 5 July 2024.

■ Joint Requirements Oversight Committee

James Cartlidge: [\[9741\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the (a) names and (b) roles are of each person who sits on the Joint Requirements Oversight Council; and what meetings of the council (i) have taken and (ii) are scheduled to take place in 2024.

Maria Eagle:

The Joint Requirement Oversight Committee (JROC) is chaired by the Vice Chief of Defence Staff, General Dame Sharon Nesmith DCB ADC.

The Committee is formed from representatives from across Defence, and the standing attendance is: Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff (Military Capability), Lieutenant General Sir Rob Magowan KCB CBE; the Second Sea Lord, Vice Admiral Martin Connell CBE; the Deputy Chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant General David James Eastman MBE; Deputy Chief of the Air Staff, Air Marshal Paul Lloyd CBE; Deputy Commander UK Strategic Command, Lieutenant General Tom Copinger-Symes CBE, and; Mr Ben Moores, Procurement Adviser to the Secretary of State for Defence.

Subject matter experts from other areas of Defence including intelligence, scientific, exports, commercial, and information, may be requested to provide advice to the Committee on an ad hoc basis, subject to the agenda items being discussed.

This attendance is usually at Director General level, or the equivalent military rank.

The following JROC sessions have occurred, or will occur, in 2024: 16 January 2024, 28 February 2024, 18 March 2024, 15 April 2024, 15 May 2024, 22 July 2024, 18 September 2024, 16 October 2024 and 20 November 2024.

■ Lasers: Weapons

James Cartlidge:

[\[9495\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to increase the UK's sovereign capabilities in direct energy weaponry.

Maria Eagle:

The Ministry of Defence has committed to accelerating the continued investment in UK Sovereign Directed Energy Weapon (DEW) technology, to provide cutting edge capability to the Armed Forces swiftly. The programme is delivering capability demonstrators, accelerated Minimum Deployable Capabilities including DragonFire, delivering Laser DEW into operational capability from 2027, and preparing to deliver DEW capability into core service in the 2030's. Since 2018, Defence has invested in the Directed Energy Weapons Programme and is focused on stimulating UK industry through delivering a capability that prioritises a UK sovereign approach.

■ Lebanon: Peacekeeping Operations

Harpreet Uppal:

[\[9870\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions he has had with (a) his international counterparts, (b) the United Nations and (c) Cabinet colleagues on attacks on UN peacekeepers in Lebanon.

Luke Pollard:

The Secretary of State for Defence has regular conversations with international partners and Cabinet colleagues, including on the situation in Lebanon.

As expressed in the G7 Defence Ministers joint statement on 17 October 2024, and in the joint statement by the Foreign Ministers of the UK, France, Germany and Italy on 14 October, the UK is concerned by the latest events in Lebanon and the risk of further escalation, as well as by all threats to UNIFIL's security.

The UK has been clear that Israel and all parties must uphold their obligations to always ensure the safety and security of UNIFIL personnel and to allow UNIFIL to continue carrying out its mandate. The protection of peacekeepers is incumbent upon all parties to a conflict any deliberate attack against UNIFIL goes against international humanitarian law.

The UK also reaffirms the importance of supporting UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces in their role of ensuring the stability and security of Lebanon.

■ Middle East: Air Force

John McDonnell:

[\[5839\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many planes operated by the Royal Air Force have landed in (a) Lebanon, (b) Egypt, (c) Jordan and (d) Syria since 7 October 2023.

Luke Pollard:

The RAF undertakes regular flights to the Middle East region as part of our routine engagement and to support regional partners. For operational security considerations I will not comment further.

■ NATO: Space Technology

James Cartlidge: [\[9733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions his Department has had with NATO on (a) planning and (b) collaboration in space.

Luke Pollard:

We hold regular discussions with NATO on how the UK can support efforts to strengthen allied utilisation of the space domain.

The UK actively participates in tabletop exercises and wargames, and actively contributes to NATO satellite communications projects. At Octobers meeting of NATO Defence Ministers, the UK signed up to NATO's STARLIFT programme, that could see allies use UK launch vehicles and space ports to deploy space assets, further developing NATO's space capabilities.

■ Shipbuilding

James Cartlidge: [\[9736\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what his policy is on the 30 year shipbuilding pipeline outlined in the refresh to the national shipbuilding strategy.

Maria Eagle:

This Government is committed to delivering a thriving shipbuilding sector across the UK.

The National Shipbuilding Office provides strategic oversight of all Government shipbuilding activity, driving forward transformative change in the sector. This includes a 30-year pipeline of Government shipbuilding opportunities which gives industry a clear demand signal from the public sector, supporting them to invest in research and development, infrastructure and people.

■ Shipbuilding: Job Creation

James Cartlidge: [\[9501\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to support the creation of new jobs in the shipbuilding sector.

Maria Eagle:

This Government recognises the vital role shipbuilding and its skilled workforce plays, not only in our national security but also in the economic prosperity and growth of the United Kingdom (UK).

The National Shipbuilding Office provides strategic oversight of all Government shipbuilding activity, driving forward transformative change in the sector. This

includes a 30-year pipeline of Government shipbuilding opportunities which provides clarity and certainty for UK industry and supports the creation of UK jobs.

■ Skynet: Procurement

James Cartlidge: [\[9735\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what weighting will be given to sovereign capability in the procurement of the SKYNET Enduring Capability Satellite System.

Maria Eagle:

The specification for the next generation of the Skynet communications Satellite obligates the bidders to meet certain requirements related to the UK technical and manufacturing content of their offered solutions. As this is a live competition it is not possible to share details on the relative weightings as they are commercially sensitive.

■ Space Technology: Job Creation

James Cartlidge: [\[9499\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to support the creation of new jobs in the space sector.

Maria Eagle:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) supports the creation of new jobs in the space sector through major spending on projects such as the SKYNET secure global satellite communications programme, worth £5 billion over ten years, and the ISTARI programme which develops a range of world-leading technology. The contracts from these programmes directly support businesses in the UK to grow and recruit in a globally competitive market. As an example, the MOD's contracts with Surrey Satellite Technology Ltd have directly supported around 100 jobs, with many more indirectly. In addition, programmes like SKYNET include requirements for industrial sponsorships, educational schemes and skills development to bring new talent into the industry.

■ Strategic Defence Review

James Cartlidge: [\[9491\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what challenge committees have been set up as part of the Strategic Defence Review; and if he will list their membership.

Luke Pollard:

The second phase of the Strategic Defence Review will run through October and November, focused on Review and Challenge. Panels of external, independent experts have been chosen by the Reviewers to provide robust challenge to proposition submissions, in order to inform the drafting of the final Review recommendations. The membership is evolving subject to availability during the Review and Challenge phase.

■ Unmanned Air Vehicles**James Cartlidge:**[\[9498\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what measures he is taking to improve sovereign capabilities in anti-UAV manufacturing.

Maria Eagle:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) continues to evolve and strengthen our Counter-Uncrewed Air Systems (C-UAS) capabilities. To counter the growing threat from UAS, the MOD has developed and procured a broad range of cutting-edge C-UAS capabilities, including from UK industries.

The Strategic Defence Review will guide future capability to ensure the United Kingdom is both secure at home and strong abroad.

However, I am withholding the detailed information requested as its release would, or would be likely to, prejudice the capability, effectiveness or security of the Armed Forces

■ Unmanned Air Vehicles and Unmanned Marine Vehicles**James Cartlidge:**[\[9497\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to improve sovereign capabilities in drone manufacturing.

Maria Eagle:

Our industry partners are at the heart of producing cutting edge uncrewed systems for defence. That is why this Government is committed to bringing forward a Defence Industrial Strategy aligning our security and economic priorities. We will ensure that this will link into the government's wider 'Invest 2025' Modern Industrial Strategy, which includes a clear focus on promoting UK industry. This is directly informing our discussions through the SDR as we continue to foster close relationships with industry. The Ministry of Defence is also expanding the governance and assurance around uncrewed systems to ensure that Industry get a clear understanding of what Defence requires.

■ Veterans: Great Yarmouth**Rupert Lowe:**[\[9997\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he plans to take to support homeless military veterans in Great Yarmouth constituency.

Al Carns:

This is a Government of service that will always stand up for those who serve our country. I am working across Government to ensure veterans across the UK have access to the support they need on housing, as well as health, employment and other areas.

The Government will develop a new cross-Government strategy, working with Mayors and Councils across the country, to put Britain back on track to ending homelessness. The Ministry of Defence will support that work to take a long term approach and to tackle the root causes of homelessness.

Veterans in need of housing support can contact Op FORTITUDE, a single referral pathway to connect veterans with help and support at this link:

<https://www.gov.uk/support-for-veterans/op-fortitude>.

This system provides housing guidance and assistance to veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness across the UK. As of October 2024, over 2,600 referrals have been made and over 700 veterans have been supported into housing.

EDUCATION

■ Children: Carers

Helen Whately: [9503]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to improve support to young carers in schools.

Helen Whately: [9504]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has had recent discussions with the Secretary of State for Education on improving the support to young carers in schools.

Janet Daby:

The government is committed to helping children and young people, including young carers, thrive and wants the best for every child and family. This department, the Department for Health and Social Care and NHS England work closely together, along with other government departments and key stakeholders, to ensure support is provided for young carers across all aspects of their wellbeing, education and development and are currently giving careful consideration to the recently published report by the Carer's Trust: 'Caring and classes: the education gap for young carers'. This report can be accessed here: <https://carers.org/downloads/young-carers-in-education-reportfinal.pdf>.

Young carers as a specific group within the education system were added to the school census in the 2022/23 academic year. Ofsted has committed to developing and consulting upon a revised schools' inspection framework for September 2025. This will support the new school report card, which will also be in place from that time. A consultation on the framework and report card is scheduled to launch early in the new year.

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

The Children's Social Care National Framework, issued in December 2023, is statutory guidance for local authorities. It provides clarity on the outcomes that leaders and practitioners should achieve when supporting children, young people, and families, including young carers. Safeguarding partners, and other relevant agencies including education, should read and engage with the National Framework as they have an important role in supporting positive outcomes and improving access to opportunities.

The department is clear that everyone working within children's social care should use the National Framework to understand how they can improve the outcomes and breakdown barriers for opportunity for children, young people, and families. Specific expectations have been included in the framework for practice for senior leaders, practice supervisors and practitioners to draw on the range of expertise from virtual school heads, designated safeguarding leads or designated teachers when providing help to children, young people and families, including young carers.

■ Further Education: Conditions of Employment

Mary Glendon:

[\[9713\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will take steps to introduce binding sectoral bargaining to the further education sector.

Janet Daby:

The government does not set or recommend pay in further education (FE) as this remains the responsibility of individual colleges who are free to implement pay arrangements in line with their local needs. There are no current plans to introduce binding sectoral bargaining in FE.

The department is investing around £600 million across in FE in the 2024/25 and 2025/26 financial years. This includes extending retention payments of up to £6,000 after tax to eligible early career FE teachers in key subject areas, including in sixth form colleges. We also continue 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 the Taking Teaching Further programme. The department will also work with the FE sector to recruit 6,500 additional teachers across schools and colleges to raise standards for children and young people.

■ Further Education: Southampton Itchen

Darren Paffey:

[\[9849\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made an assessment of the potential (a) funding and (b) capital investment implications for her policies of trends in the number of 16-year olds entering further education in Southampton Itchen constituency.

Janet Daby:

Funding for the number of 16 year olds entering further education in Southampton Itchen constituency is part of the 16 to 19 funding allocations, which uses student numbers from the previous year as a basis for the calculation. To support providers that have exceptional increases in the number of students, compared to their allocation, the department announced in year growth funding ahead of the GCSE results on 22 August. Details of the funding are available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/16-to-19-funding-in-year-growth-for-2024-to-2025/16-to-19-funding-in-year-growth-for-2024-to-2025>.

Capital investment to support the demographic increase in 16 to 19 learners has been available through the Post-16 Capacity Fund, which provides funding to schools and colleges. This includes projects by Itchen Sixth Form College to ensure enough capital capacity in schools and colleges to accommodate the additional learners. It has made available £238 million in capital funding since 2021.

All future funding commitments are subject to the Spending Review.

■ Pupil Numbers**Mr Richard Holden:****[10166]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many pupils are in state education per year group in England.

Catherine McKinnell:

The most recently published statistics on the number of pupils at schools in England are from the January 2024 school census and can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics>.

The table at the following link gives the number of state-funded school pupils by national curriculum year group as of that census: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/c9d612cd-f178-4ca0-a02a-08dcedcd278c>.

■ Schools: Adrenaline Auto-injectors**Dr Ben Spencer:****[9228]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of (a) staff training and (b) equipment for the emergency treatment of anaphylaxis in schools.

Catherine McKinnell:

Section 100 of the Children and Families Act 2014 places a duty on maintained schools, Academies and Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) to make arrangements to support pupils with medical conditions.

The accompanying statutory guidance, entitled Supporting Pupils at School with Medical Conditions, makes clear to schools what is expected of them in taking

reasonable steps to fulfil their legal obligations and to meet the individual needs of pupils with medical conditions, including allergies. Schools should ensure they are aware of any pupils with medical conditions and have policies and processes in place to ensure these can be well managed.

The guidance is clear that policy should include how it will be implemented, what should happen in an emergency situation and the role individual healthcare plans play in supporting pupils. The policy should set out how staff will be supported in carrying out their role to support pupils, including how training needs are assessed and how training is commissioned and provided. Any member of school staff providing support to a pupil with medical needs should have received suitable training.

The department included a reminder to schools of these duties in its regular schools' email bulletin in both March and September this year. In the same communication, the department also alerted schools to the newly created Schools Allergy Code. The Code was developed by The Allergy Team, Independent Schools' Bursars Association (ISBA) and the Benedict Blythe Foundation, who are all trusted voices on the matter of allergies. The department has now also added a link to the Code to its online allergy guidance on GOV.UK.

Regarding equipment, in 2017, the Department of Health (now the Department of Health and Social Care) published non-statutory guidance to accompany a legislative change to allow schools to purchase spare adrenaline auto-injectors (AAIs) from a pharmacy, without a prescription and for use in an emergency situation. This guidance is kept under review and gives clear advice to schools on the recognition and management of an allergic reaction and anaphylaxis, and outlines when and how an AAI should be administered for pupils in schools.

■ Schools: Staff

Mr Richard Holden:

[10165]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many (a) teachers, (b) teaching assistants and (c) other staff are employed in state schools in England.

Catherine McKinnell:

Information on the school workforce, including the headcount and full-time equivalent number of teachers, teaching assistants, and other support staff in state-funded schools, is published in the 'School Workforce in England' statistical publication available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england>.

The specific information requested is available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/db9348ac-a1d5-453e-1737-08dcedc9c179>.

■ Schools: Uniforms**Sarah Hall:** [9842]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will commission a review into the potential impact of school uniform pricing on the average price of school uniforms.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department keeps the price of school uniforms under regular review and recently published its latest research on the cost of school uniforms, which is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cost-of-school-uniforms-survey-2023>.

The department also already publishes statutory guidance on the costs of school uniform.

However, too many families still tell the department that the cost of school uniform remains a financial burden. That is why, as part of the Kings Speech, the department has committed to legislate to limit the number of expensive branded items of uniform and PE kit that schools can require.

■ Special Educational Needs**James Wild:** [9580]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 9 October 2024 to Question 6213 on Special Educational Needs, whether she plans to introduce SEND and alternative provision partnerships.

Catherine McKinnell:

Local authorities have existing statutory responsibilities to collaborate with local partners in the strategic planning and commissioning of the local offer provision for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

The department has been testing the implementation of SEND and alternative provision (AP) partnerships through the SEND and AP Change Programme. We are reviewing the evidence gathered and will continue to explore options to strengthen partnerships as part of SEND and AP reforms.

■ Teachers: Pay**Darren Paffey:** [9848]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to take steps to reduce pay differentials between (a) school teachers and (b) college lecturers.

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 department 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 we are investing around £600 million in FE across the 2024/25 and 2025/26

financial years, including 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 provides support for industry professionals to enter the teaching workforce through the 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.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

■ **Electric Cables: Agriculture**

Dave Doogan:

[\[10130\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of overhead lines on GPS equipment used by farmers.

Michael Shanks:

Any developer of electricity network infrastructure projects undertakes an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for individual projects and EIAs for projects in rural areas will almost always include assessment of agricultural impacts. These assessments are then considered in the consenting process for projects. In addition, consultation on proposed projects includes engagement with relevant stakeholders, including farmers.

■ **Heating: Housing**

Wera Hobhouse:

[\[9524\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he plans to take steps to provide financial support to the homes that his Department considers to be too expensive or difficult to install a heat pump into.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government recognises that heat pumps may not be feasible in a small number of properties, and these homes will require alternative low-carbon heating solutions to help them decarbonise.

The Government is committed to incentivising properties to transition to cleaner, affordable heating and our Warm Homes Plan will offer grants and low interest loans to support investment in insulation, low carbon heating and other home improvements to cut bills.

■ Liquefied Petroleum Gas: Payments**Helen Morgan:** [\[10182\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will have discussions with liquid gas supplier companies on customer payment processes.

Michael Shanks:

The Secretary of State and I meet regularly with a range of stakeholders.

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.

■ Refineries: Grangemouth**Brian Leishman:** [\[10364\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether the Grangemouth Oil Refinery is a site of national strategic importance.

Brian Leishman: [\[10366\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of the closure of Grangemouth Oil Refinery on energy security.

Brian Leishman: [\[10367\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure the ongoing operation of the Grangemouth Oil Refinery.

Brian Leishman: [\[10370\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of closing (a) Grangemouth refinery and (b) Finnart terminal on changes to the level of emissions from shipping arising from those closures.

Michael Shanks:

It is deeply disappointing that Petroineos confirmed its previous decision to close the oil refining operation at Grangemouth. We stand with the workers at this difficult time and worked closely with the Scottish Government to announce a joint £100 million investment plan to support the Falkirk and Grangemouth community.

Grangemouth is important to the fuel supply of Scotland, and Petroineos will now convert the refinery into an import terminal to continue to provide a secure and flexible fuel supply. Alongside the Scottish Government, we have also invested £1.5 million into Project Willow to find a viable long-term future for the site in clean energy.

The Department has not undertaken an assessment of the changes to the level of emissions from shipping.

Brian Leishman:

[\[10368\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether (a) he and (b) his Department has held discussions with (i) PetroChina and (ii) INEOS on the Grangemouth oil refinery since the general election.

Michael Shanks:

As per my answer of 8 October, since taking office, the Secretary of State and I have taken joint action with the Scottish Government to urgently engage with the company and its shareholders. This included discussions with PetroChina and INEOS, the shareholders.

■ Warm Home Discount Scheme: Northern Ireland

Jim Shannon:

[\[9459\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what discussions he has had with the Northern Ireland Department for Communities on extending the warm homes plan to Northern Ireland.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

We are committed to engaging with all Devolved Governments on our ambitious energy security and net zero plans going forward, while respecting the devolution settlements.

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.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Animal Welfare

Chris Bloore:

[\[10322\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what his (a) plans and (b) priorities are for tackling animal cruelty (i) in the UK and (ii) abroad.

Daniel Zeichner:

This Government was elected on a mandate to introduce the most ambitious plans to improve animal welfare in a generation. We will be outlining more detail in due course.

■ Animal Welfare: Fireworks

Mark Pritchard:

[\[10062\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will commission research into the (a) public health and (b) animal welfare impact of quiet fireworks.

Emma Hardy:

The Government is looking at existing policy to decide if and where policy changes may be needed. We also intend to engage with business, consumer groups and charities to gather evidence on issues with and impacts of fireworks, including on animal welfare.

The use of fireworks is governed by the Fireworks Act 2003. The Fireworks Regulations, introduced in 2004, were made under this Act and prohibit the use of fireworks between 11pm and 7am. Exceptions apply for New Year's Eve, Chinese New Year, Diwali, and 5 November. Enforcement is the responsibility of the police.

Local authorities are responsible for investigating any noise or nuisance issues brought to their attention under Section 79 of the Environmental Protection Act. For noise – including from fireworks - to count as a statutory nuisance it must unreasonably and substantially interfere with the use or enjoyment of a home or other premises, injure health or be likely to injure health.

■ Drinking Water: EU Law

Chris Bloore: [\[9035\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the EU's revised Drinking Water Directive on UK manufacturers of water-related products; and what steps he is taking to support businesses to meet the new compliance requirements.

Chris Bloore: [\[9037\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the divergence between (a) UK and (b) EU regulations on products in contact with drinking water; and whether he is taking steps to help with additional compliance costs for companies supplying the UK market.

Emma Hardy:

Our drinking water regulations and approved regulator specifications are designed, in part, to protect human health by reducing the likelihood of contamination of drinking water supplies.

Our current Regulations allow certain other national specifications to be accepted by water undertakers, if they can demonstrate an equivalent level of protection and performance with our drinking water standards.

■ Inland Waterways

Dr Ben Spencer: [\[10157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many enforcement actions to require riparian landowners to discharge their watercourse maintenance obligations were taken by the Environment Agency in each constituency in 2023.

Emma Hardy:

In 2023 the Environment Agency (EA) recorded 404 incidents nationally where riparian ownership was referenced.

Where offences were identified the EA took action in line with their [enforcement and sanctions policy](#) to protect the environment.

One warning letter, one advice and guidance letter and one site warning were issued during 2023. There were no prosecutions.

■ Newts**Mr Lee Dillon:****[10248]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the impact of planning developments on habitats for great crested newts; and whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of implementing local authority district-level licenses for relocating newts.

Mary Creagh:

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

Protected species are afforded legal protection in England due to their conservation status. A mitigation licence is required for developers to carry out various types of work that may affect a protected species or their habitat.

Defra and Natural England recognise that schemes that take a national, strategic approach to such licensing rather than on a site-by-site basis can deliver improved outcomes for the environment and for planning developments.

In 2017, the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government funded Natural England to develop a strategic approach to licensing for great crested newts (GCN) to facilitate a quicker regulatory process, cost and time savings for developers, as well as better conservation outcomes. This resulted in Natural England's District Level Licensing (DLL) Scheme which, together with third party providers of comparable schemes licensed by Natural England, is now operational across 212 local planning authorities. DLL is underpinned by strategic assessments, which are undertaken to assess impacts on GCN and their habitat, and to target the creation of new habitat for colonisation.

On-site mitigation licenses remain available. Having two routes to support great crested newts means that the most appropriate mitigation for newts can be applied in an area while also supporting development.

■ Pesticides**Claire Hanna:****[10174]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when the updated National Action Plan on the Sustainable Use of Pesticides will be published.

Emma Hardy:

We intend to publish a National Action Plan in due course that reflects the Government's priority to minimise the risks and impact of pesticides on human health and the environment and facilitate sustainable use.

Plastics: Recycling**Brian Mathew:**[\[9880\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to encourage (a) recycling, (b) composting organic waste and (c) chemically recycling film plastic; and if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of levying a charge on producers of film plastic to fund its recycling.

Mary Creagh:

The Government has confirmed its commitment to delivering the Collection and Packaging Reforms to the announced timelines, subject to spending review. The reforms will mean that people across England will be able to recycle the same materials, whether at home, work or school. This will include a weekly food waste collection for every household and, from March 2027, kerbside collections of plastic film packaging. Separately, packaging Extended Producer Responsibility will place a charge on all household packaging that is placed on the market, including plastic film, to cover the local authority costs of its collection, treatment and disposal.

Together with mechanical recycling, chemical recycling technologies play a role in enabling the transition towards a circular economy. The government is aware that some stakeholders with an interest in chemically recycling plastic film are keen that a mass balance approach is used to calculate chemically recycled content in plastic packaging for the purposes of the Plastic Packaging Tax. His Majesty's Treasury consulted on the incorporating of mass balance into the Plastic Packaging Tax in October 2023 and are preparing to publish their response before the end of the year.

Sewage: Waste Disposal**Caroline Voaden:**[\[7138\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Environment Agency guidance entitled Water companies: environmental permits for storm overflows and emergency overflows, published on 13 September 2018, how exceptional circumstances, in which the use of storm overflows is permitted, are defined.

Emma Hardy:

The guidance document referred to in the question does not define 'exceptional circumstances' for storm overflows.

'Exceptional circumstances' were not referenced in either the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive or the regulations which transposed this Directive in England and Wales: the Urban Waste Water Treatment (England and Wales) Regulations 1994. The term 'exceptional circumstances' was, however, used in relation to storm overflows by the Court of Justice of the European Union in the European Commission

v UK (Re Storm Water Overflows) case, where 'situations such as unusually heavy rainfall' were characterised as 'exceptional circumstances'.

In its 2018 Storm Overflow Assessment Framework guidance, the Environment Agency (EA) sets out a methodology for assessing 'exceptional rainfall'.

Defra, the EA and Ofwat are currently reviewing and updating the guidance on the regulation of storm overflows and sewerage. This will include further clarification on how 'exceptional circumstances' may be defined.

■ Sewage: West Dorset

Edward Morello:

[\[10208\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much funding his Department has provided to help tackle pollution caused by untreated sewage overflow to local authorities in West Dorset constituency in the 2024-25 financial year.

Emma Hardy:

It is the responsibility of water companies to invest in infrastructure and other improvements to reduce untreated wastewater pollution incidents.

Since 2021 Water Companies have invested in 65 schemes in the West Dorset constituency which includes 6 improvement schemes for water quality and 39 monitoring programmes, with 63 of these due for completion by 31/3/2025.

All storm overflows, including those in the West Dorset constituency are now fitted with Event Duration Monitors, which provide discharge data from storm overflows in near real time. This will help provide information to support regulators' investigations.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Bangladesh: Religious Freedom

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[9748\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to coordinate with the interim government of Bangladesh to protect Hindu and other religious minority communities.

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 UK government expressed concern about the situation in Bangladesh and called for all sides to end the violence. We support the fact-finding mission by the United Nations to identify human rights violations in Bangladesh. 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. The Interim Government in Bangladesh has the UK's full support as it works to restore peace and order.

■ China: Foreign Relations**Sir Iain Duncan Smith:** [\[9395\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of statements on the UK's role in the century of humiliation made by Chinese officials at celebrations at the Chinese Embassy of the 75th anniversary of the foundation of the People's Republic of China.

Catherine West:

This Government will take a consistent, long term and strategic approach to managing the UK's relations with China, rooted in UK and global interests.

We will carry out an audit of the UK's relationship with China as a bilateral and global actor, to improve our ability to understand and respond to the challenges and opportunities China poses.

■ Diplomatic Service: Married People**Will Stone:** [\[10186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of allowing spouses of people sent on British diplomatic missions to continue working if (a) they work for a Government organisation and (b) their security needs are met.

Catherine West:

The FCDO supports the principle of spouses, partners or dependents overseas taking up employment outside the Mission, in accordance with the law of the receiving State. Where local laws or regulations impose restrictions on such employment, we encourage Posts to make representations to the receiving State to try to assist the efforts of accompanying family members to seek outside employment, ideally through a formal bilateral arrangement (where no formal arrangement is already in place) but also on a case-by-case basis.

■ Francesca Albanese**Sir Edward Leigh:** [\[9120\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether (a) Ministers and (b) officials in his Department have (i) met and (ii) had discussions with UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

I am not aware of any recent meetings by FCDO Ministers or senior officials with UNSR Francesca Albanese. The Foreign Secretary regularly engages with UN representatives to discuss aspects of shared interests and concerns. Minister Dodds and I met Sigrid Kaag, the UN Senior Coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territories, on 21 October, where we highlighted the urgent need to increase aid and protect civilians in Gaza. The Foreign Secretary spoke with Secretary-General

António Guterres on 16 October, to discuss the indispensable role of the UN in addressing the challenges in the Middle East.

■ Israel: United Nations

Uma Kumaran:

[\[9386\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will support an independent investigation into shots fired at UN peacekeepers by Israeli forces.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK condemns the recent attacks on UN Peacekeepers. We have been clear: Israel must act in accordance with International Humanitarian Law. Alongside the Foreign Ministers of France, Germany and Italy, the Foreign Secretary expressed deep concern about attacks by Israeli Defense Forces on United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) bases and condemned all threats to UNIFIL's security. The Prime Minister has spoken with international leaders, including Prime Minister Netanyahu, His Majesty King Abdullah II, President Macron and Chancellor Scholz, to press the case for a ceasefire. This builds on extensive discussions by the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary at the UN with regional leaders. We have been working with all parties to prevent escalation and will spare no effort to reduce tensions and find a path to stability.

■ Israeli Defence Force: British Nationals Abroad

Chris Law:

[\[9184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what information his Department holds on (a) how many and (b) the identities of UK citizens who have travelled to Israel to volunteer for military service with the (i) Israeli Air Force and (ii) other branches of the Israel Defense Forces in Gaza since 7 October 2023.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

We are aware of reports of UK citizens travelling to fight for the Israel Defense Force (IDF), but the Government does not estimate the numbers of those who have done so. The UK recognises the right of British nationals with more than one nationality to serve in the legitimately recognised armed forces of their additional nationalities.

■ Russia: Oil

Liam Byrne:

[\[9906\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the sanctions placed on individual vessels announced by his Department on 11 September 2024 and 17 October 2024, what additional steps he has (a) taken and (b) considered with Cabinet colleagues to help prevent Russia circumventing 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 liquified natural gas (LNG) vessels involved in the shipping of Russian LNG, including from Russia's flagship Arctic LNG 2 project. We actively consider all options to close loopholes and further constrain Russia's energy revenues funding their illegal war in Ukraine.

■ Syria: Sanctions**Mary Glendon:**[\[9709\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of the Syria (Sanctions) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 on the Lebanese refugee population in Syria.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK is actively monitoring the displacement of refugees from Lebanon into Syria and continues to work closely with the UN and other partners to ensure that sanctions do not impact humanitarian operations. UK support includes Mobile Medical and Integrated Mobile Teams on the ground, which are offering critical services, such as healthcare, food and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) as well as essential support for women and girls, child protection and GBV needs. This is being directed towards border crossings and near areas where returnees are based.

Mary Glendon:[\[9710\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the effectiveness of the Syria (Sanctions) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 in encouraging the Syrian regime to (a) refrain from actions, policies or activities which repress the civilian population and (b) participate in negotiations in good faith to reach a negotiated political settlement to bring about a peaceful solution to the conflict in Syria; and how frequently his Department reviews those regulations.

Mary Glendon:[\[9712\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of the Syria (Sanctions) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 on human rights in Syria.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

Sanctions are one of the levers used to hold the Assad regime to account for the atrocities committed in Syria and it is right the UK has a robust sanctions regime in place. They target individuals and entities where there is evidence of their involvement in repressing the Syrian civilian population or have provided support to or benefitted from the Assad regime. Sanctions have significantly weakened both the capability and legitimacy of the Assad regime. The FCDO remains closely engaged across Government, with non-governmental organisations, and Syrian civil society to monitor their impact on the Syrian population. In concert with these efforts, the UK actively uses its leadership in the UN Security Council (UNSC) and Human Rights Council to draw attention to human rights abuses and push for a political settlement as laid out in UNSC Resolution 2254.

Mary Glendon:[\[9711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the Syria (Sanctions) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 on levels of food security in Syria.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

Food, medical supplies and other humanitarian goods are not subject to UK sanctions. Culpability for the humanitarian situation in Syria lies with Bashar al-Assad and his backers, notably Russia. We have taken action to ensure that the Syria (Sanctions) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 include humanitarian provisions. In May 2024, the UK introduced a statutory instrument to further facilitate the provision of fuel to those delivering humanitarian assistance in Syria.

■ **Tsai Ing-wen****Sir Iain Duncan Smith:**[\[9394\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department advised postponement of the visit to London of former Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen.

Catherine West:

The UK's longstanding position on Taiwan has not changed. The UK does not have diplomatic relations with Taiwan but a strong unofficial relationship based on deep and growing ties in a wide range of areas and underpinned by shared democratic values.

There is a long history of visits between the UK and Taiwan, including many conducted independently of HMG.

■ **Western Sahara: Self-determination of States****Ben Lake:**[\[9750\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Answer of 8 February 2024 to Question 13004 on Western Sahara: Politics and Government and pursuant to the Answers of 5 August 2024 to Question 1972

on Western Sahara: Self-determination of States, and of 12 September 2024 to Question 4190 on Western Sahara: Politics and Government, what steps he is taking at the UN to help ensure the people of Western Sahara are able to exercise their right to self-determination in line with the UN Charter.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK supports UN-led efforts to reach a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution, based on compromise, which will provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara. The UK continues to support the UN-led efforts and the work of Staffan de Mistura as Personal Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for Western Sahara, who I met with on 18 September. Officials regularly discuss Western Sahara with international partners, and we continue to encourage constructive engagement with the political process.

■ **Yemen: Baha'i Faith**

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[9747\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his counterparts in Yemen on the restriction of religious or belief for Bahai's in that country.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

We actively track the treatment of the Baha'i community in Yemen, including through meeting their representatives in the UK and lobbying the relevant authorities. Following the Houthis' arbitrary abduction of 17 members during a peaceful gathering in Sana'a in May 2023, we were pleased to welcome the release of the final four hostages in August 2024.

However, we strongly condemn the continued persecution of Baha'i members and other ethnic and religious minorities in Yemen.

The Government champions freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) for all. No one should live in fear because of what they do or do not believe in. We will work to uphold the right to FoRB through our position at the UN, G7 and other multilateral fora and in our important bilateral work.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ **Alzheimer's Disease: East of England**

Alice Macdonald:

[\[9589\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that people with Alzheimer's disease in the East of England receive (a) an early diagnosis and (b) swift treatment.

Stephen Kinnock:

Improving dementia care is one of four workstreams delivering NHS England's Ageing Well Strategy. The dementia workstream is looking at improving early

diagnosis and early access to care and support for patients, families, and carers, as well as taking preventative action through public health messaging, promoting healthy lifestyle choices, and expanding NHS Health Checks. The workstream is also looking at improving local services and delivering an integrated approach to care across statutory, voluntary, community, and social enterprises, as well as other services, and providing dementia training for the workforce.

A Norfolk and Suffolk system-wide Dementia Round Table event was held in September 2024 to identify what changes need to be made to the pathway in order to meet the needs of a complex patient group in a rural geography. The findings of this event have since evolved into a set of priorities focussed on the review of the clinical model and commissioning arrangements.

Norfolk and Waveney's statutory partners have signed-up to a Dementia Charter and have agreed to a set of best practice principles and way of working which will mean that people using dementia services will have a smooth transition between services and organisations.

In the last four months, community diagnostic centres have opened at the James Paget Hospital and the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, which will help to make it easier and speed-up the time it takes for people to get diagnosis scans. A further diagnostic centre will be opening at the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital early next year.

■ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: Drugs

Freddie van Mierlo:

[\[9846\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of shortages of ADHD medication on (a) children and (b) their families.

Karin Smyth:

No assessment has been made. To aid ADHD service providers and prescribers further we have widely disseminated our communications and continually update a list of currently available and unavailable ADHD products on the Specialist Pharmacy Service website, helping ensure that those involved in the prescribing and dispensing of ADHD medications can make informed decisions with patients.

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

We are continuing to work to resolve supply issues where they remain for methylphenidate prolonged-release tablets. We are engaging with all suppliers of methylphenidate prolonged-release tablets to assess the challenges faced and their actions to address them. We are also directing suppliers to secure additional stocks, expedite deliveries where possible, and review plans to further build capacity to

support continued growth in demand for the short and long-term. We anticipate intermittent regional supply disruptions to continue, and we expect supply to improve in the United Kingdom from October 2024 onwards.

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

■ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: Leeds

Alex Sobel: [\[9935\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department (a) is taking and (b) plans to take steps to support increased capacity for adult ADHD assessments in (i) Leeds and (ii) England.

Alex Sobel: [\[9936\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department (a) is taking steps and (b) plans to take steps to support the adult ADHD service in Leeds to reopen their referrals.

Alex Sobel: [\[9937\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential impact of the temporary suspension of non-urgent adult referrals by the adult ADHD service in Leeds on people with ADHD in that area.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Department is currently considering next steps to improve access to attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) services. It is the responsibility of integrated care boards (ICBs) to make appropriate provision to meet the health and care needs of their local population, including ADHD care pathways, in line with relevant National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines.

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

The West Yorkshire ICB advises that the Leeds and York Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (LYPFT) is taking steps to assess and respond to the impact of the suspension of non-urgent referrals. This includes working to redesign the adult ADHD pathway in Leeds and setting up a new care navigator service for people on the

waiting list who would like to discuss what support they need and their options under the NHS Choice Framework.

The ICB will be working with the ADHD patient support groups for Leeds and West Yorkshire on what they can do collectively to support patients during the pause to referrals, as well as involving them in the redesign of the local service.

A quality impact assessment and an equality impact assessment have been completed by the LYPFT, which will continue to be updated as the local NHS learns more about the impact of the suspension.

■ **Cancer: Rural Areas**

Kevin Hollinrake:

[\[9186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help support people in rural and farming communities to see their GP when they develop cancer symptoms.

Stephen Kinnock:

Increasing the diagnostic rates of cancer is a priority for the Government, and general practices (GPs) are key in achieving this goal. To encourage a wide range of groups, including people in rural and farming communities, to see their GP, NHS England runs Help Us Help You campaigns to increase the knowledge of cancer symptoms and address barriers to acting on them, to encourage people to come forward as soon as possible to see their GP. The campaigns focus on a range of symptoms as well as encouraging body awareness to help people spot symptoms across a wide range of cancers at an earlier point.

The Government is also increasing capacity in GPs, so patients have better access to GPs. We will recruit over 1,000 newly qualified GPs through an £82 million boost to the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme, which will increase the number of appointments delivered in GPs, secure the future supply of GPs and appointments, and take pressure off those currently working in the system. We will also bring back the family doctor by incentivising continuity of care so patients can see the same doctor at each appointment, which is key to managing ongoing conditions.

■ **Care Workers**

Helen Whately:

[\[9509\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to (a) recognise and (b) reward care workers who take on nursing responsibilities.

Stephen Kinnock:

Care workers deserve to be recognised and supported for the vital work they do. We want social care to be regarded as a profession, and for the people who work in care to be respected as professionals. That is why, as part of our health mission, we will task regulators with assessing the role social care workers can play in supporting health treatment and monitoring.

We are continuing to develop a national career structure for the adult social care workforce, which will recognise the work care workers undertake, including more advanced and complex care, for instance delegated healthcare interventions. We will also publish updated guiding principles on effective delegation of healthcare interventions to care workers, including the benefits for care workers, the registered nursing workforce, and people who access care.

■ Care Workers: Cumbria

Tim Farron: [\[9150\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to help (a) recruit and (b) retain a social care workforce in Cumbria.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Government recognises the scale of the reforms needed to make the adult social care sector attractive. We are committed to ensuring the adult social care workforce feels supported and recognised, and that there are opportunities to develop and progress, all of which contributes to recruitment and retention. This includes: delivering the Adult Social Care Learning and Development Support Scheme; the continuing development of the Care Workforce Pathway; a universal career structure for the workforce setting out the knowledge, skills, values, and behaviours needed to work in adult social care; and launching a new Level 2 Adult Social Care Certificate qualification.

We are introducing the first ever Fair Pay Agreement to the adult social care sector so that care professionals are recognised and rewarded for the important work that they do. We will engage and consult those who draw upon, work in, and provide care and support, as well as local authorities, unions, and others from across the sector, and this work will be an important part of the first step towards a National Care Service.

■ Care Workers: Domestic Violence

Chris Vince: [\[9329\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to support care workers to recognise the signs of domestic violence.

Stephen Kinnock:

Care Quality Commission regulated providers have a key role in safeguarding adults. All relevant professions are subject to employer checks and controls, and employers in the health and care sector must satisfy themselves regarding the skills and competence of their staff.

In January 2024, the Department published the first part of the Care Workforce Pathway, the new national career structure for adult social care, and linked to this we have also launched the new Level 2 Adult Social Care Certificate. Both the pathway and new qualification cover the learning outcome to reduce the likelihood of abuse, linked to safeguarding.

On 6 September 2024, the Department launched the Adult Social Care Learning and Development Support Scheme. This scheme allows eligible employers to claim funding for certain training and qualifications on behalf of eligible care staff, including the new Level 2 Adult Social Care Certificate.

■ Carers: Children

Neil Duncan-Jordan:

[\[8930\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing annual health check-ups for young carers under 18.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Department recognises the importance of all young carers having their support needs identified, assessed, and met in a timely manner. Local authorities have a statutory duty to identify when a young carer may need support, and to what extent. The local authority needs assessment provides a holistic approach to understanding the young person's caring responsibilities and the impact it may have on their education, well-being, and development.

NHS England is working to increase identification and support for young carers. This includes working in partnership with key stakeholders and sharing data and insights on young carers with colleagues in education, to improve the support we provide.

■ Community Health Services: Children

John McDonnell:

[\[5831\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure the adequacy of (a) children's community health services and (b) staffing levels in such services.

Stephen Kinnock:

We are committed to reducing long waits for children's community services and improving timely access. National Health Service planning guidance asks local systems to reduce overall waiting times for community health services, with a particular focus on reducing the longest waits.

NHS England does not hold any specific data on staffing levels for children's community health services, but has commissioned NHS Benchmarking to develop further understanding of the specific service lines and associated waiting times. NHS England has advised that this should be available by April 2025.

We will launch a 10-Year Health Plan to reform the NHS and make it fit for the future. The 10-Year Health Plan will set out a bold agenda to deliver on the three big shifts needed to move healthcare from hospital to the community, analogue to digital, sickness to prevention.

■ Community Hospitals

Stuart Anderson: [\[9624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he is taking steps to (a) increase funding available and (b) improve recruitment for community hospitals.

Stephen Kinnock:

Departmental budgets for 2025/26 will be confirmed at my Rt Hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer's next Budget, on 30 October 2024. We are committed to training the staff we need to ensure patients are cared for by the right professional, when and where they need it. There are a number of national recruitment programmes, aimed at increasing recruitment by widening access, supporting diversity, and attracting people new to care from local communities, as well as improving recruitment processes via the national Entry Careers programme and national Overhauling Recruitment programme. The Overhauling Recruitment programme seeks to support all National Health Service providers, including community hospitals. The national programme maintains a strong collaborative approach with regions as experts in their area, knowing their systems, geography, and demographics at a local employment level.

■ Darent Valley Hospital: Attendance

Jim Dickson: [\[10573\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many appointments were (a) cancelled and (b) missed at Darent Valley Hospital on 21 October 2024.

Karin Smyth:

The data regarding cancelled and missed appointments at Darent Valley Hospital on 21 October 2024 is not currently available to the Department.

■ Dental Services

Noah Law: [\[7249\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to bring forward legislative proposals on the provision of dental services.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 10 October 2024]: We are currently reviewing the previous Government's Dental Recovery Plan and what elements of that can be taken forward effectively and within National Health Service budgets. It is also clear that plan did not go far enough and so we are also working on further measures, prioritising initiatives that will see the biggest impact on access to NHS dental care.

The Government is committed to tackling the challenges for patients trying to access NHS dental care with a rescue plan to provide 700,000 more urgent dental appointments and to recruit new dentists to areas that need them most. To rebuild dentistry in the long term, we will reform the dental contract, with a shift to focus on

prevention and retaining NHS dentists. Not all improvements to the provision of NHS dental services may require legislative changes.

Neil O'Brien:

[9773]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many units of (a) orthodontic and (b) dental activity were (i) commissioned and (ii) delivered per head of population in each region in each year since 2006.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 22 October 2024]: We do not hold data on the units of dental activity delivered per head of population in each region and each year since 2006. Activity in National Health Service dentistry is measured by the number of Units of Dental Activity (UDAs) commissioned and delivered, and by the number of courses of treatment delivered. Data on the number of UDAs commissioned and delivered is published each month on the NHS Business Services Authority Open Data Portal, which is available at the following link:

<https://opendata.nhsbsa.net/dataset/english-contractor-monthly-general-dental-activity>

The data for 2023/24, and for the years prior to 2023/24, is respectively available at the following two links:

<https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/statistical-collections/dental-england/dental-statistics-england-202324>

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/nhs-dental-statistics>

■ Dental Services: Recruitment

Tim Farron:

[9153]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to expand the dental recruitment incentive scheme beyond the seven surgeries in the scheme in NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board.

Stephen Kinnock:

NHS England has published guidance for practices on the Golden Hello incentive scheme, which will encourage dentists into under-served areas through bonus payments of up to £20,000 to work there for up to three years. More information is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/dental-recruitment-incentive-scheme-2024-25/>

The responsibility for commissioning primary care, including dentistry, to meet the needs of the local population has been delegated to all integrated care boards (ICBs) across England. For the Westmorland and Lonsdale constituency, this is the NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria ICB. Dental practices in specific areas, determined locally, were invited by their ICB to apply for the scheme, and were notified about the outcome of their application by their local ICB.

■ Dental Services: Sleeping Rough

Deirdre Costigan:

[\[6770\]](#)

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

Stephen Kinnock:

The Department recognises the importance of reducing barriers to services for those experiencing homelessness and rough sleeping. This is why we supported the development and implementation of the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's guidance, which provides recommendations on ways to improve access to, and engagement with, health and social care services for people experiencing homelessness. This guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng214>

Certain groups of patients, such as rough sleepers, may be vulnerable to oral health problems and may find it difficult to access dental care. Integrated care boards are responsible for assessing the needs of their population and ensuring that the relevant dental services are available. Individuals with no recourse to public funds including failed asylum seekers remain eligible to receive help with dentistry costs through the NHS Low Income Scheme. Dentists are not required to ask for proof of identity, proof of address or proof of immigration status from individuals applying to become an NHS patient.

We are tackling the immediate dental crisis with a rescue plan to provide 700,000 more urgent dental appointments and to recruit new dentists to the areas that need them most.

■ Electronic Cigarettes: Licensing

Sarah Hall:

[\[9652\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a Vape Licensing Scheme.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Government is concerned about the access of vapes to children, with a quarter of children aged between 11 and 15 years old having ever tried vaping in 2023, and acknowledges that a licensing scheme for the retail sale of vapes could help to strengthen enforcement and support legitimate businesses.

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

We will set out more details soon.

■ Food: Nutrition

Dr Beccy Cooper:

[\[9629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of improving access to healthy food on NHS waiting lists.

Karin Smyth:

Poor diet and obesity are major drivers of physical and mental ill health. No assessment has been made to date to specifically assess the impact of improving access to healthy food on National Health Service waiting lists, however shifting the focus from treatment to prevention is one of the three shifts for the Government's mission for an NHS fit for the future, and is a cornerstone of supporting people to live healthier lives.

■ General Practitioners

Tim Farron:

[\[9154\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to expand the additional roles reimbursement scheme for primary care to include funding for (a) additional GPs and (b) associated reimbursement schemes for related roles.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Government is investing £82 million to fund the recruitment of over 1,000 newly qualified general practitioners (GPs), via the Additional Roles reimbursement Scheme (ARRS), so patients can get the care they need. The ARRS is subject to annual review as part of the consultation on the GP contract with professional and patient representatives. NHS England works closely with the Department to implement any changes identified as part of this process.

■ General Practitioners: Digital Technology

Sarah Green:

[\[9798\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of the recommendations contained in the Health Services Safety Investigations Body's report entitled Digital tools for online consultation in general practice.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 23 October 2024]: While patient safety incidents related to online consultation tools are very rare, even one is too many, and the Government takes these very seriously. NHS England produced guidance on the implementation of digital services in May 2024. The guidance provides key rules to help guide practices on how best to implement services to reduce risks and improve patient safety, in line with the recommendations made in the Health Services Safety Investigations Body's (HSSIBs) report. The Government welcomes the HSSIB's work to support patient safety in primary care.

Sarah Green:

[\[9799\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce risks to patient safety from the use of online consultation tools in general practice.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 23 October 2024]: Although patient safety incidents related to online consultation tools are extremely rare, even a single incident is one too many, and the Government takes them very seriously. NHS England published the Primary Care Patient Safety Strategy (PCPSS) on 26 September 2024 which builds on the 2019 Patient Safety Strategy, and outlines how the National Health Service will continue to enhance patient safety in primary care.

Commissioners and primary care providers can purchase digital tools from approved suppliers in the Digital Care Services catalogue. These suppliers must ensure they show compliance with clinical risk management standards. Integrated care boards should involve general practice staff and patients in the procurement process, and provide support for safe and effective tool implementation. Only services that meet required standards, including patient safety, can be procured. The PCPSS sets out additional safety requirements for suppliers to meet in future procurements.

■ **General Practitioners: Rural Areas**

Steff Aquarone:

[\[10001\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of establishing a fund to support GP services in (a) rural and (b) other remote areas.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 23 October 2024]: General practitioners receive global sum funding for providing core services, comprising approximately 50 to 60% of practice income. The global sum is a capitated payment, calculated based on the size of a practice's registered list of patients, and weighted using the Carr-Hill formula. Through the Carr-Hill formula, payments to practices are adjusted in consideration of several factors, including the geographical location of a practice. This includes accounting for the additional costs of delivering services in rural areas, and in areas where staff costs are higher.

■ **General Practitioners: Standards**

James McMurdock:

[\[9861\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the impact of above average waiting times for GP appointments on patient health outcomes.

Stephen Kinnock:

We recognise the potential impact that above-average waiting times for general practice (GP) appointments will have on patient health. The GP contract requires

practices provide patients with an appropriate response on the day they make contact, based on the urgency of their clinical needs. It also stipulates that patients requiring an appointment within two weeks must be accommodated, and those with urgent needs should be seen on the same day.

As highlighted in Lord Darzi's review, timely access to care and the quality of treatment are fundamental to the social contract between the National Health Service and the public. The NHS is in crisis, and the Government is committed to addressing this crisis through reform and investment.

■ GP Surgeries: Closures

Steff Aquarone:

[\[10000\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to review recent closures of GP surgeries.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 23 October 2024]: The closure of a general practice (GP) surgery is an issue that is considered and decided upon by local commissioners, following an application from a GP provider. Practices close for a variety of reasons, including mergers or retirement, and so do not necessarily indicate a reduction in the quality of care. When a practice does close, patients are informed of the closure and advised to register at another local practice of their choice, within their area.

Commissioners are accountable for ensuring that patients have access to a GP. In the event of a closure, commissioners will assess the need for a replacement provider before transferring patients to alternative practices when a GP surgery closes.

■ Health Services: Disadvantaged

Sarah Coombes:

[\[9813\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the impact of the current NHS resource allocation formula on more deprived areas.

Karin Smyth:

The National Health Service resource allocation formula is intended to support equal opportunity of access for equal need, taking account of NHS England's duty to have regard to the need to reduce health inequalities. The formula takes account of factors such as demography, morbidity, deprivation, and the unavoidable cost of providing services in different areas. In addition, a further adjustment to address health inequalities and unmet needs increases the resources directed to deprived areas. The formula is based on independent academic research which is overseen by the Advisory Committee on Resource Allocation, which in turn provides advice to the Chief Executive of NHS England on whether changes to the formula should be considered.

■ Health Services: Foreign Nationals

James McMurdock:

[\[9885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to prevent health tourism to the UK.

Karin Smyth:

The National Health Service is a residency-based system, so only those who are 'ordinarily resident' in the United Kingdom, or otherwise exempt from charges under the NHS (Charges to Overseas Visitors) Regulations 2015 (the Charging Regulations), are eligible for free care.

Being ordinarily resident broadly means living here on a lawful and properly settled basis for the time being, with individuals subject to immigration control also requiring 'indefinite leave to remain' in the UK.

Patients who are not ordinarily resident or subject to another exemption under the Charging Regulations are legally required to be charged upfront, in full, for all treatment not regarded as urgent or immediately necessary. Overseas visitors accessing NHS care whilst here are expected to have insurance or funds to cover the cost of any treatment which may arise, as would be the same for UK residents visiting other countries.

Failure to pay NHS debt can lead to significant consequences for an overseas visitor. An outstanding NHS debt of £500 or more that has not been paid for two months must be reported to the Home Office. The Home Office can use this information to inform future immigration decisions.

■ Hip Replacements

Sir Julian Lewis:

[\[9691\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate he has made of the number of NHS patients harmed by cobalt poisoning from modular neck hip replacements in each of the last three years.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 22 October 2024]: The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) is aware of concerns regarding modular neck hips and the risk of cobalt poisoning. We are investigating the issue with our stakeholders including the British Orthopaedic Association, British Hip Society, and the National Joint Registry to support.

The term modular neck covers a broad range of designs, and adverse incident reports of this sort typically include descriptions of symptoms rather than a definitive diagnosis of cobalt poisoning. In addition, it is not possible to uniquely identify cobalt poisoning from hip replacements in the ICD-10 coding scheme currently used in Hospital Episode Statistics.

The UK Medical Devices Regulations provide clear requirements for manufacturers to undertake post-market surveillance activities to ensure safety action is taken, when

appropriate. The MHRA is working towards implementing a future regime for medical devices regulation. This will put in place strengthened legal requirements for how manufacturers monitor and report on their devices once they are being used in the real world.

■ **HM Courts and Tribunals Service: NHS**

Neil Coyle: [\[9716\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what financial contribution the NHS makes to the tribunal service.

Karin Smyth:

The HM Courts and Tribunals Service is funded primarily by the Ministry of Justice. Where the National Health Service is party to a tribunal where a fee is levied, for instance immigration and asylum, and other fee charging special tribunals, they will pay this in the usual way. We would not expect the NHS to be a significant source of income through these tribunal fees, however the HM Courts and Tribunals Service's annual report and accounts do not provide the level of detail required to be able to provide a figure.

■ **Hospices: Finance**

Daisy Cooper: [\[8875\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has received recent representations from the charitable hospice sector on the impact of statutory funding levels on the adequacy of (a) service levels, (b) staffing levels and (c) patient care.

Stephen Kinnock:

Whilst the majority of palliative and end of life care is provided by National Health Service staff and services, we recognise the vital part that voluntary sector organisations, including hospices, also play in providing support to people at end of life, and their loved ones. Most hospices are charitable, independent organisations which receive some statutory funding for providing NHS services. The amount of funding charitable hospices receive varies by integrated care board (ICB) area, and will, in part, be dependent on the breadth of palliative and end of life care provision within each ICB catchment area.

I am aware from meetings with, and published reports and correspondence from, the charitable hospice sector linking the level of statutory funding for hospices to reductions in the adequacy of service levels, staffing levels, and patient care. I have also recently met NHS England and discussions have begun on how to reduce inequalities and variation in access to, and the quality of, palliative and end of life care.

We, alongside key partners NHS England, will continue to proactively engage with our stakeholders, including the voluntary sector and independent hospices, on an ongoing basis, in order to understand the issues they face. We will consider next steps on palliative and end of life care, including funding, in the coming months.

■ Long Covid: Medical Treatments

Sarah Green:

[\[9967\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help improve the treatment of long covid in the NHS.

Andrew Gwynne:

Since 2020, the National Health Service in England has invested significantly in supporting people with long COVID. This includes setting up specialist post-COVID services nationwide for adults, and children and young people, as well as investing in ensuring general practice (GP) teams are equipped to support people affected by the condition.

As of 1 April 2024, there are over 90 adult post-COVID services across England, along with an additional 10 children and young people's hubs. These services assess people with long COVID and direct them into care pathways which provide appropriate support and treatment. GPs will assess patients that have COVID-19 symptoms lasting longer than four weeks, and refer them into a long COVID service where appropriate. Referral should be via a single point of access, which is managed by clinician-led triage.

The Government has invested £58 million in research through two specific funding calls to better understand long COVID and how to treat it. The projects funded aim to improve our understanding of the diagnosis and underlying mechanisms of the disease and the effectiveness of both pharmacological and non-pharmacological therapies and interventions, as well as to evaluate clinical care. The NHS and scientific community are working at pace to progress long COVID research.

■ Methylphenidate: Shortages

Freddie van Mierlo:

[\[9576\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he estimates supply shortages of Methylphenidate for ADHD will be resolved.

Karin Smyth:

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

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

intermittent regional supply disruptions to continue, and we expect supply to improve in the UK from October 2024 onwards.

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

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

■ **Mid and South Essex NHS Foundation Trust**

James McMurdock:

[\[9862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to support the Mid and South Essex NHS Trust.

Karin Smyth:

The Mid and South Essex NHS Foundation Trust is in segment four of the NHS Oversight Framework. This means that the trust has been in receipt of national mandated support via NHS England's Recovery Support Programme (RSP) since April 2024. NHS England's National Recovery Support team is working closely with the trust and region to ensure delivery of improvements. We are working closely with NHS England to monitor the situation.

■ **NHS: Parking**

Satvir Kaur:

[\[10334\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of removing car-parking charges for NHS patients and staff.

Karin Smyth:

No assessment has been made of the potential merits of removing car-parking charges for National Health Service patients and staff.

All NHS trusts that charge for hospital car parking provide free parking to in-need groups, which include NHS staff working overnight, frequent outpatient attenders, disabled people, and parents of children staying overnight in hospital.

■ NHS: Training**Rachael Maskell:** [\[9731\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve the training provided to NHS medical staff.

Karin Smyth:

The standard of undergraduate medical training is the responsibility of the General Medical Council (GMC), who set the outcomes and standards expected. Medical schools are responsible for their curricula, and for ensuring that they deliver high quality placements that enable their students to meet the GMC's requirements.

The curricula for postgraduate specialty training are set by the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges for foundation training, and by individual royal colleges and faculties for specialty training. The GMC approves curricula and assessment systems for each training programme. Employers in the health system are responsible for ensuring that their staff are trained to the required standards to deliver appropriate treatment for patients.

■ NHS: Vacancies**James MacCleary:** [\[10207\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many vacancies were advertised in the NHS in each year since 2010.

Karin Smyth:

The Department does not hold the information requested. NHS England publishes a compendium of NHS Vacancy Statistics each quarter. Whilst none of the data published is the exact number of vacancies advertised in the National Health Service, the information does currently provide three measures of the level of vacancies in the NHS. Detailed information on the definition of collected data and the available timeseries, along with the measure's strengths and weaknesses, is available at the following link:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/nhs-vacancies-survey>

The earliest data within this collection is from 2016, and no data is held prior to this period. Due to the complex nature of how NHS vacancy data is defined and collected, all data sources should be treated with a degree of caution.

■ Non-surgical Cosmetic Procedures: Licensing**Laura Trott:** [\[10153\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to respond to the consultation entitled The licensing of non-surgical cosmetic procedures in England which closed on 2 September 2023.

Karin Smyth:

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

■ Palliative Care**Helen Whately:****[9513]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to increase transparency to the public accessing of data on palliative care commissioned by local ICBs.

Stephen Kinnock:

We want a society where every person receives high-quality, compassionate care from diagnosis through to end of life. Palliative care services are included in the list of services an integrated care board (ICB) must commission. To support ICBs in this duty, NHS England has published statutory guidance and service specifications, which are respectively available at the following two links:

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

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

There is data available from National Health Service bodies to support local quality monitoring, most notably local palliative and end-of-life care profiles, through the data service Fingertips, and other guidance, analyses, and bulletins issued by the National End of Life Care Intelligence Network of the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, within the Department. Further information on local palliative and end-of-life care profiles through the Fingertips data service is available at the following link:

https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/end-of-life#page/4/gid/1938133060/pat/159/par/K02000001/ati/15/are/E92000001/iid/92489/age/162/sex/4/cat/-1/ctp/-1/yrr/1/cid/4/tbm/1/page-options/car-ao-1_car-do-0_tre-do-1

Additionally, the Care Quality Commission publishes ratings for the quality of end-of-life care in hospitals and hospices, and has carried out national reviews. Where people die in acute, community, or mental health hospitals, the National Audit of Care at the End of Life monitors standards related to the quality of the end-of-life care provided.

Furthermore, NHS England has developed a palliative and end of life care dashboard, which brings together all relevant local data in one place. The dashboard helps commissioners understand the palliative and end of life care needs of their local population, enabling ICBs to put plans in place to address and track the improvement of health inequalities and ensure that funding is distributed fairly, based on prevalence. Access to the platform is available to anyone with an NHS.net email account.

I recently met with NHS England and discussions have begun on how to reduce inequalities and variation in access to, and the quality of, palliative and end of life care. We will consider next steps on palliative and end of life care in the coming months.

■ Palliative Care: Disadvantaged

Rachael Maskell:

[\[9727\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to tackle inequalities in access to end of life care services.

Stephen Kinnock:

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

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

NHS England has developed a palliative and end of life care dashboard, which brings together all relevant local data in one place. The dashboard helps commissioners understand the palliative and end of life care needs of those their local population, including the ability to filter the available information, such as by deprivation or ethnicity, thereby enabling ICBs to put plans in place to address and track the improvement of health inequalities.

Through the National Institute for Health and Care Research, the Department is investing £3 million in a new Policy Research Unit in Palliative and End of Life Care. This unit launched in January 2024 and will build the evidence base on palliative and end of life care, with a specific focus on inequalities.

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

■ Palliative Care: Finance

Rachael Maskell:

[\[9729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of providing a universal palliative care service.

Stephen Kinnock:

No estimate has been made of the cost to the public purse of providing a universal palliative care service. It is difficult to quantify the total provision of, or spend on, palliative and end of life care at either a national or local integrated care board (ICB)

level in England, because it is delivered every day by a wide range of specialist and generalist health and care workers in multiple settings, including in primary care, community care, in hospitals, in hospices, in care homes, and in people's own homes. So not all palliative and end of life care will be recorded or coded as such.

Palliative care services are included in the list of services an ICB must commission. This promotes a more consistent national approach and supports commissioners in prioritising palliative and end of life care. To support ICBs in this duty, NHS England has published statutory guidance and service specifications. We want a society where every person receives high-quality, compassionate care from diagnosis through to the end of life.

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

■ **Pancreatic Cancer: Medical Treatments**

Tim Farron:

[\[10063\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing a specialist 21-day pancreatic cancer treatment pathway.

Karin Smyth:

The Department has not made an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a specialised 21-day pancreatic cancer treatment pathway. NHS England is delivering a range of interventions that are expected to improve early diagnosis and treatment for patients with suspected and diagnosed pancreatic cancer. This includes providing a route into pancreatic cancer surveillance for patients at inherited high-risk, to identify lesions before they develop into cancer, and diagnose cancers sooner.

In March 2024, NHS England published guidance for providers and systems to implement a timed Hepato-Pancreato-Biliary cancer pathway with the aim of ensuring that patients with some suspected tumour types, including suspected pancreatic cancer, receive a diagnosis or have cancer ruled out within 28 days of urgent referral.

■ **Patients: Homelessness**

Mike Amesbury:

[\[10123\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that people facing homelessness are discharged safely from hospital.

Ben Goldsborough:

[\[10398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that people facing homelessness are discharged safely from hospital.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Department is committed to promoting safe and timely discharge for people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness to appropriate accommodation. Every acute hospital has access to a care transfer hub to manage discharge for people with more complex needs, who need extra support.

The Department of Health and Social Care and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government have published guidance and supporting materials for health and care staff on discharging people at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness. This ensures that every health and care interaction with a homeless person acts as an opportunity to provide support and signposting, with the aim of ending rough sleeping. This joint guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/discharging-people-at-risk-of-or-experiencing-homelessness/discharging-people-at-risk-of-or-experiencing-homelessness>

The Department of Health and Social Care continues to work with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on the development of the Government's plans for social and affordable housing.

■ Pharmacy**Dr Neil Shastri-Hurst:****[9051]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the findings of Lord Darzi's Independent investigation of the NHS in England, published on 12 September 2024, what steps his Department is taking to support community pharmacies with (a) funding, (b) workforce and (c) medicine supply challenges.

Stephen Kinnock:

We are committed to expanding the role of pharmacies and better utilising the skills of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians. From 2026, all newly qualified pharmacists will be independent prescribers, and we are investing in training legacy staff to develop clinical and technical roles.

The consultation with Community Pharmacy England on the national funding and contractual framework arrangements has not yet been concluded, and we are looking into this as a matter of urgency.

We have inherited ongoing global supply problems that continue to impact medicine availability. We know how frustrating this can be for patients and community pharmacists. We are working closely with industry, the National Health Service, manufacturers, and other partners in the supply chain to resolve issues as quickly as possible to make sure patients can access the medicines they need.

■ Pharmacy: Closures

Rebecca Smith:

[\[8922\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of community pharmacy closures on health outcomes (a) in South West Devon constituency and (b) nationally.

Stephen Kinnock:

We are aware of the reduction in the number of pharmacies in recent years and recognise that pharmacy closures can impact on local communities. Local authorities are required to undertake a pharmaceutical needs assessment (PNA) every three years to assess whether their population is adequately served and must keep these assessments under review. Integrated care boards give regard to the PNAs when reviewing applications from the new contractors. Contractors can also apply to open a new pharmacy to offer benefits to patients that were not foreseen by the PNA.

■ Pharmacy: Community Health Services

Rebecca Smith:

[\[8739\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help increase referrals from GP surgeries to community pharmacies under the Pharmacy First service.

Stephen Kinnock:

In August 2024, approximately 71% of general practices (GPs) in England made at least one referral into the Pharmacy First Service. To help increase uptake, NHS England is working closely with the integrated care boards (ICBs), GP stakeholders, and the community pharmacy sector to improve referral pathways. Funding has been provided to ICBs to recruit Primary Care Network engagement leads who will be well placed to support GP teams to refer into the service.

Digital systems are being improved to integrate the referral process, and most pharmacies can now receive Pharmacy First referrals from GPs straight into their NHS England assured pharmacy IT systems. NHS England is continuing to promote the Pharmacy First service to increase public awareness and knowledge around accessing community pharmacy services. This will include a targeted public communications campaign with associated media materials.

■ Pharmacy: Finance

Lee Anderson:

[\[8858\]](#)

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

Lee Anderson:

[\[8859\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help reduce the number of pharmacy closures.

Stephen Kinnock:

Pharmacies play a vital role in our healthcare system. We are committed to expanding the role of pharmacies and better utilising the skills of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians. That includes making prescribing part of the services delivered by community pharmacists, as we shift care from hospitals to the community.

The consultation with Community Pharmacy England on the national funding and contractual framework arrangements for 2024/25 has not yet been concluded, and we are looking into this as a matter of urgency.

Pharmacies are private businesses and decisions to close reflect many factors. Patient access to pharmaceutical services remains good in England, with four in five people living within a 20-minute walk from a pharmacy, and twice as many pharmacies in the most deprived areas. Patients can also access approximately 400 Distance Selling Pharmacies, who must operate nationally and send medicines to patients' home free of charge, and in rural areas, Dispensing Doctors can supply medicines.

Rebecca Smith:[\[8923\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of reducing the activity thresholds for the Pharmacy First Service monthly fixed payment.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Minimum Activity Requirements for the Pharmacy First Service have been amended for the remainder of 2024/25, to 20 for October, November, and December, 25 for January and February 2025, and 30 for March 2025.

■ Pharmacy: Health Services**Sarah Olney:**[\[6368\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much funding has been allocated to pharmacy services as part of the Delivery Plan for Recovering Access to Primary Care since May 2023.

Sarah Olney:[\[6369\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much and what proportion of the funding for pharmacy services under the Delivery Plan for Recovering Access to Primary Care was spent on administration fees since May 2023.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Delivery Plan for Recovering Access to Primary Care, announced in May 2023, announced an allocation up to £645 million up until March 2024. This supported the launch of Pharmacy First as well as the expansion of the Blood Pressure Checking service and Pharmacy Contraception Service.

Funding from this allocation has been used to pay fees for the Pharmacy First, Blood Pressure Check or Contraception service delivery or invested in the development of

IT infrastructure to enable the safe and effective delivery of the services and a mass media campaign to help increase awareness and public engagement. None of the allocated funding has been used for administrating the new services.

The staff costs associated with the development of service specifications, governance and monitoring, and agreeing payments to contractors have been met by extant Departmental and NHS England budgets.

■ Pharmacy: Lincolnshire

Sir John Hayes:

[\[9126\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on the number of community pharmacies that have closed in (a) South Holland and the Deeping constituency and (b) Lincolnshire since 2014.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Department does not hold data prior to September 2016. There were 13 community pharmacies providing National Health Service pharmaceutical services in the South Holland and Deeping constituency on 30 June 2024, which is three fewer than in September 2016. There were 177 community pharmacies providing NHS pharmaceutical services in Lincolnshire County on 30 June 2024, which is 16 fewer than in September 2016.

■ Podiatry: Cheshire

Mike Amesbury:

[\[7847\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an estimate of the average waiting time for podiatry appointments in (a) Halton' b) Cheshire West and (c) Cheshire.

Stephen Kinnock:

Podiatry services are commissioned locally. The podiatry services catchment area for Halton, Cheshire West, and Cheshire is split between the Bridgewater Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust and the Cheshire and Wirrall Partnership NHS Foundation Trust. Both trusts record data in different ways, and as such there is no way to provide a consistent picture of waits across the area.

The Bridgewater Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust provides podiatry services in Halton. The average wait for podiatry services in Halton is 18 weeks. The Cheshire and Wirrall Partnership NHS Foundation Trust provides podiatry services in Cheshire West and Cheshire. The trust has advised that patients are waiting an average of six weeks for nail surgery, 15 weeks for podiatry biomechanics services, and for those patients that are high risk, with additional complex health needs like diabetes, the average wait is three weeks.

■ Primary Health Care

Mark Swards:

[\[10002\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase the availability of (a) GP appointments and (b) other primary care services.

Stephen Kinnock:

We know that patients are finding it harder than ever to see a general practitioner (GP) and access other primary care services, and we are committed to fixing the crisis in GPs.

Our plan to increase the number of GP appointments delivered 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. This will increase the number of appointments delivered in general practice and take pressure off those currently working in the system. We will also train thousands more GPs, securing the future of the workforce, and end the 8:00am scramble for GP appointments by introducing a modern booking system.

We will provide 700,000 more urgent dental appointments and recruit new dentists to areas that need them most. Additionally, to rebuild dentistry in the long term and increase access to National Health Service dental care, we will reform the dental contract, with a shift to focus on prevention and the retention of NHS dentists.

We are also committed to expanding the role of pharmacies and better utilising the skills of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians, including by cutting red tape. That includes making prescribing part of the services delivered by community pharmacists as we shift care from the hospital to the community.

■ Psychiatric Hospitals: Autism

Jo Platt:

[\[9544\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will have discussions with (a) the National Autistic Society and (b) other autism charities on (i) mental health reform and (ii) the detention of autistic people in mental health hospitals.

Stephen Kinnock:

On 17 July 2024, the King's Speech set out the Government's commitment to modernise the Mental Health Act. Department officials are now working to prepare the Mental Health Bill for introduction when parliamentary time allows.

As part of the Department's preparations, plans are underway for stakeholder engagement once the bill is introduced. This will involve engaging with autism charities, including the National Autistic Society, on a range of related issues.

■ **Psychiatric Patients: Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Trust**

Tom Gordon:

[\[7892\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many avoidable or preventable deaths of mental health patients at Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS trust there have been in each of the last three years.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 15 October 2024]: Information on the number of deaths reported to Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust's incident reporting system are shown in the table. These are not categorised as preventable or avoidable.

REPORTING YEAR	TOTAL
2023/24	2,163
2022/23	2,329
2021/22	1,322

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

It is important to note that the majority of deaths of people in the Trust's care from natural causes and therefore include end of life care and longstanding poor physical health. There is further detail and context within the Trust's Quality Account for each year.

■ **Sick Leave**

Helen Whately:

[\[9506\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on improving the support for people who are signed off sick to help them return to work.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Department for Work and Pensions and the Department for Health and Social Care are committed to supporting disabled people and people with long-term health conditions, and have a range of support available so individuals can stay in work and get back into work, including those that join up employment and health systems.

Some measures include joining up health and employment support around the individual through Employment Advisors in NHS Talking Therapies and Individual Placement and Support in Primary Care, as well as support from Work Coaches and Disability Employment Advisers in Jobcentres and Access to Work grants.

We also support the role employers play in increasing employment opportunities and supporting disabled people and people with health conditions to be part of the workforce, including through increasing access to Occupational Health, a digital

information service for employers, and the Disability Confident scheme. This information service is available at the following link:

<https://www.support-with-employee-health-and-disability.dwp.gov.uk/support-with-employee-health-and-disability>

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

■ Social Services

Neil Duncan-Jordan: **[8749]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to create a National Care Service; and what his planned timetable is for this.

Stephen Kinnock:

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

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

■ Social Services: Disabled

Ben Coleman: **[9390]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he would make an assessment of the potential impact of removing social care charging on working-aged disabled adults.

Stephen Kinnock:

We are committed to building consensus on the long-term reform needed to create a National Care Service that tackles the challenges working age disabled adults currently face, and that is shaped for those who will have support needs in the future. The Government will set out next steps for a process that engages with adult social care stakeholders, including people with lived experience, in due course.

■ Social Services: Fees and Charges

Connor Naismith: **[9108]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to support people who require long term care for (a) dementia and (b) other debilitating diseases with the costs of such care.

Stephen Kinnock:

We want a society where every person, including those with dementia and other long-term conditions, receives high-quality, compassionate continuity of care, with their families and carers also supported. Central to this is the provision of personalised care.

This person-centred approach is echoed throughout the Dementia Well Pathway. This includes diagnosing well, living and supporting well, and dying well. The pathway highlights that services need to be integrated, commissioned, monitored, and aligned with National Institute for Health and Care Excellence standards for each component of the pathway.

Some individuals with the highest levels of complex, intense, and unpredictable needs may be eligible for NHS Continuing Healthcare. This is a package of health and social care arranged and funded solely by the National Health Service for adults assessed as having a primary health need.

■ Social Services: Finance**Nadia Whittome:**[\[9965\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the written statement of 30 July 2024 on Adult Social Care Workforce, HCWS50, whether he plans to make a further statement about how funding for Adult Social Care Learning and Development will be administered.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 23 October 2024]: On 6 September 2024, the Department launched the Adult Social Care Learning and Development Support Scheme. This scheme is intended to help the non-regulated adult social care workforce to complete courses and qualifications, gain recognition for existing expertise, and develop new skills and specialisms. Funding is distributed via a new online claims service administered by NHS Business Services Authority. Eligible adult social care providers can claim funding towards the cost of certain courses and qualifications, on behalf of eligible employees. Full details of the training covered by the Learning and Development Support Scheme have been published on GOV.UK website.

Helen Morgan:[\[9968\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the 2024-25 funding allocations of the Accelerating Reform Fund will be released.

Helen Morgan:[\[9969\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of delaying the release of the 2024-25 funding allocation of the Accelerating Reform Fund on unpaid carers.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 23 October 2024]: The Government recognises that innovation is vital to support adult social care to adjust to the changing needs of the population.

We want to support local authorities to adopt new approaches to delivering care, improving outcomes of people who draw on care and their unpaid carers. This includes enshrining home-first principles that enable people to live independently in their communities for longer.

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

The Accelerating Reform Fund (ARF) aims to address barriers to the adoption and scaling of innovation in adult social care and improve support for unpaid carers. A decision on the release of 2024/25 funding allocations for the ARF will be shared shortly.

■ Social Services: Recruitment

Helen Morgan:

[8911]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help improve recruitment in adult social care.

Stephen Kinnock:

Whilst much of the responsibility for recruitment rests with adult social care employers, the Department recognises the scale of reforms needed to support sustainable workforce growth. These reforms include: the Adult Social Care Learning and Development Support Scheme, allowing funding for certain training courses and qualifications; the continuing development of the Care Workforce Pathway, a universal career structure for the workforce setting out the knowledge, skills, values, and behaviors needed to work in adult social care; and the launch of a new Level 2 Adult Social Care Certificate qualification.

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

■ Special Educational Needs: Children

Helen Morgan:

[8907]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of the number of children with education and health care plans who will require support after the age of 25 on the adult social care system.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 17 October 2024]: The Department commissions the Care Policy and Evaluation Centre (CPEC) at the London School of Economics to produce projections of the long-term demand and cost of adult social care services in

England. These include projections of the number of working aged adults, namely those aged between 18 and 64 years old, in receipt of local authority-funded care services. The most recently published CPEC projections show that the number of working age adults in receipt of social care services is projected to increase by 29% between 2018 and 2038. As with any projection of the future, CPEC estimates are based on a specific set of data and assumptions and should therefore be treated with caution. The projections are available at the following link:

<https://www.lse.ac.uk/cpec/assets/documents/cpec-working-paper-7.pdf>

The Department is committed to building consensus on the long-term reform needed to create a National Care Service that addresses challenges working age disabled adults currently face and that is shaped for those who will have support needs in the future, including children who currently have health and care plans. The Government will set out next steps for a process that engages with adult social care stakeholders in due course.

■ **Speech and Language Therapy: Children**

Steve Darling:

[9635]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment with Cabinet colleagues of the potential impact of providing auditory verbal therapy to deaf young children on (a) their employment prospects and (b) other outcomes.

Stephen Kinnock:

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

■ **Suicide: Young People**

James McMurdock:

[9087]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to provide suicide prevention support for young adults.

Stephen Kinnock:

We will recruit an additional 8,500 new mental health workers, and these new staff will be specially trained to support people at risk of suicide. The five-year Suicide Prevention Strategy for England identifies young people as a priority area for action to reduce suicides, and we will explore opportunities to go further.

The Department continues to provide funding to a wide range of national and local voluntary and community organisations to support their work on suicide prevention through the £10 million Suicide Prevention Grant Fund, which runs to March 2025. This includes PAPYRUS Prevention of Young Suicide, who play an important role in supporting young people at risk of mental ill health and suicide.

■ Virtual Wards

Helen Whately: [\[9511\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help extend access to virtual wards to (a) avoid admission to hospital and (b) speed up discharge.

Stephen Kinnock:

We are continuing to expand services to treat patients outside of hospitals when they have urgent needs, helping to prevent avoidable hospital admissions and speed up discharges. This includes using virtual wards which have benefited more than 240,000 people across the country so far. The expansion of these innovative services is allowing people to get the specialist care they need safely, and in the comfort of familiar surroundings.

A new virtual wards operational framework by NHS England sets out the further action being taken to improve access to virtual wards. The framework is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/virtual-wards-operational-framework/>

■ Visual Impairment: Rehabilitation

Paul Davies: [\[10013\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 4 October 2024 to Question UIN 7300 on Visual Impairment: Rehabilitation, what evidence informed his Department's decision not to regulate vision rehabilitation specialists.

Karin Smyth:

The Government has made no assessment of the potential merits of extending statutory regulation to vision rehabilitation specialists. Whilst statutory regulation is sometimes necessary where significant risks to users of services cannot be mitigated in other ways, it is not always the most proportionate means of ensuring public protection.

HOME OFFICE

■ 5G: Emergency Services

Andrew Griffith: [\[10179\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has had discussions with the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology on the potential merits of the adoption of standalone 5G for the emergency services.

Dame Diana Johnson:

DSIT and the Home Office work closely on the technical requirements for commercial mobile coverage. ESN will operate over a commercial mobile network based on technology designed to evolve and improve alongside consumer technologies.

Currently 4G offers best coverage and device availability and sufficient bandwidth for critical communications needs. ESN will use 5G standalone after its initial launch. Market trends suggest 4G and 5G will coexist for many years.

■ Asylum

Sir John Hayes:

[9692]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of asylum claims her Department has processed since 5 July 2024.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Home Office publishes data on asylum in the '[Immigration System Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'. Data on asylum claims, initial decisions and asylum claims awaiting an initial decision is published in tables Asy_D01, Asy_D02 and Asy_D03 of the '[Asylum applications, initial decisions and resettlement detailed datasets](#)'. Information on how to use the datasets can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbooks.

The latest data relates to year ending June 2024. Data for July to September 2024 will be published on 28 November 2024.

■ Deportation: Bangladesh

Apsana Begum:

[9784]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people have been deported to Bangladesh as a result of the returns agreement dated 16 May 2024.

Apsana Begum:

[9787]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department held discussions with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office on Bangladesh's human rights record before a returns agreement was signed with that country in May 2024.

Apsana Begum:

[9788]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of the foreign travel advice for Bangladesh published by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, updated on 27 August 2024, on the returns agreement with that country.

Apsana Begum:

[9789]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when the Joint Working Group on Home Affairs with Bangladesh has met in the last 12 months.

Apsana Begum:

[9790]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether his Department has held recent discussions with their counterparts in Bangladesh on the asylum claims made in the UK by people from that country.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The first UK-Bangladesh Joint Working Group (JWG) on Home Affairs was held on 16 May and will be held on an annual basis. During the dialogue, and in compliance with Home Office disclosure and confidentiality guidance and the Immigration Rules, asylum and migration issues were discussed. To date, the Standard Operating Procedure for returns, signed at the JWG, has yet to be fully implemented by the Government of Bangladesh, though returns to Bangladesh continue in the meantime.

The Home Office and FCDO are in regular communication regarding human rights issues in Bangladesh. FCDO travel advice is aimed at British nationals and is not the relevant test for deciding protection claims. The Home Office remains satisfied that Bangladesh is currently safe for returns of those with no legal basis to stay in the UK.

■ Electric Bicycles and Electric Scooters: Fires**Charlotte Nichols:****[9791]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what information her Department holds on the number of fires that have been caused by the batteries of (a) e-scooters and (b) e-bikes in the last 12 months.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Home Office collects data on incidents attended by Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs), with this data including the cause of the fire and the source of ignition. This data is published in a variety of publications, available here: [Fire statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/fire-statistics)

Data collected through the Incident Recording System (IRS) does not include data on whether fire incidents attended were caused by or involved batteries of either e-bikes or e-scooters..

We are reviewing the IRS, and the data it collects, and considering what categories to record in the future. Adding new categories, including lithium-ion batteries, electric vehicles, e-scooters and e-bikes, to the data collection will be considered as part of the work to reform the IRS with a modern, secure, and flexible system.

■ Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority**Wendy Chamberlain:****[10142]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to her answer of 12 September 2024 to Question 4167 on Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority: Staff, how many in-person inspections were carried out by GLAA officers on farms in Scotland in each of the last five years.

Jess Phillips:

The GLAA has conducted, at minimum, the following number of inspections on farms in Scotland over the last 5 years:

- 2019 – 5
- 2020 – 10

- 2021 – 22
- 2022 – 7
- 2023 – 7

These figures include compliance and enforcement inspections, as well as joint inspections with other enforcement bodies, such as UKVI.

In England and Wales, the GLAA has responsibilities to investigate reports of Modern Slavery. In Scotland, the primacy for this lies with Police Scotland but the GLAA support this activity to target, dismantle and disrupt serious and organised crime.

■ **Police: Training**

Neil Coyle:

[\[10089\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 17 October 2024 to Question 8159 on Police: Training, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing protective security measures for people from Hong Kong with BNO status.

Dan Jarvis:

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

We continually assess potential threats in the UK, and take protection of individuals' rights, freedoms, and safety in the UK very seriously. Any attempt by any foreign power to intimidate, harass or harm individuals in the UK will not be tolerated and will be thoroughly investigated.

Any individuals who believe they are a victim of a crime should report their concerns to the Police.

Home Office officials work closely with the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, as well as other government departments, to ensure that the UK is a safe and welcoming place for both those who hold BN(O) (British National Overseas) status and other Hongkongers.

■ **Prostitution: Edinburgh North and Leith**

Tracy Gilbert:

[\[10003\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what support her Department is providing to help victims of sexual exploitation in Edinburgh North and Leith constituency exit prostitution.

Jess Phillips:

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

The criminal justice system and support for victims are devolved matters. However, given the cross-border nature of sexual exploitation, the Home Office works closely with the Scottish Government and law enforcement partners to ensure our approach to victim identification and support, and our pursuit of perpetrators is joined up.

We have several ways to estimate the scale of sexual exploitation. Victims of sexual exploitation make up a significant proportion of referrals to the National Referral Mechanism (the framework for identifying and referring potential victims of modern slavery to appropriate support). The most recent statistics show that in 2023, sexual exploitation accounted for 10% (1,679) of all referrals, a 2% increase from the previous year, with 9% (1,470) of referrals relating to women. The Home Office does not hold data specific to Edinburgh North and Leith. However, between January and June 2024, there were 13 potential victims of modern slavery referred to the NRM who reported (either part or whole) sexual exploitation which was disclosed as occurring in the City of Edinburgh. We understand this will not be the full extent.

Available academic research on prostitution highlights the challenges in estimating prevalence. Research conducted by the University of Bristol focusing on England and Wales was unable to identify a single prevalence estimate. However, it assessed a number of existing national estimates made over the last 20 years which ranged from 35,882 to 104,964, across England and Wales.

Online platforms are a significant enabler of sexual exploitation. The Online Safety Act 2023 sets out priority offences, including sexual exploitation and human trafficking offences, and companies will need to adopt measures and put in place systems and processes to identify, assess and address these offences based on a risk assessment.

Tracy Gilbert: [\[10004\]](#)

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

Tracy Gilbert: [\[10005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the level of commercial sexual exploitation in Edinburgh North and Leith constituency.

Tracy Gilbert: [\[10006\]](#)

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

Jess Phillips:

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

The criminal justice system and support for victims are devolved matters. However, given the cross-border nature of sexual exploitation, the Home Office works closely with the Scottish Government and law enforcement partners to ensure our approach to victim identification and support, and our pursuit of perpetrators is joined up.

We have several ways to estimate the scale of sexual exploitation. Victims of sexual exploitation make up a significant proportion of referrals to the National Referral Mechanism (the framework for identifying and referring potential victims of modern slavery to appropriate support). The most recent statistics show that in 2023, sexual exploitation accounted for 10% (1,679) of all referrals, a 2% increase from the previous year, with 9% (1,470) of referrals relating to women. The Home Office does not hold data specific to Edinburgh North and Leith. However, between January and June 2024, there were 13 potential victims of modern slavery referred to the NRM who reported (either part or whole) sexual exploitation which was disclosed as occurring in the City of Edinburgh. We understand this will not be the full extent.

Available academic research on prostitution highlights the challenges in estimating prevalence. Research conducted by the University of Bristol focusing on England and Wales was unable to identify a single prevalence estimate. However, it assessed a number of existing national estimates made over the last 20 years which ranged from 35,882 to 104,964, across England and Wales.

Online platforms are a significant enabler of sexual exploitation. The Online Safety Act 2023 sets out priority offences, including sexual exploitation and human trafficking offences, and companies will need to adopt measures and put in place systems and processes to identify, assess and address these offences based on a risk assessment.

■ Radicalism: Young People

Nigel Farage:

[\[8691\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to work with young people to help prevent radicalisation.

Dan Jarvis:

The Government is committed to ensuring all children and young people are safe, including from radicalisation.

The Prevent programme tackles ideological causes of terrorism and provides early intervention for people at risk of radicalisation.

Where a young person has been exposed to harmful terrorist narratives, early intervention through Prevent can provide vital safeguarding measures. The programme provides training for educators, healthcare staff and other frontline staff to help them identify and protect those susceptible to radicalisation.

The Home Secretary has commissioned the Counter-Extremism Sprint to identify gaps in current policy approaches and to recommend a new approach to tackling radicalisation that can draw individuals to hateful ideologies, both online and offline.

We will continue to consider any new measures to prevent youth radicalisation.

■ Tools: Theft

Helen Grant:

[\[9436\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will bring forward legislative measures to require power tool manufacturers to include unique product code numbers to help deter rural crime.

Dame Diana Johnson:

We recognise the significant impact the theft of tools can have, especially on people who rely on these to earn a living.

We are committed to implementing 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.

The Act requires secondary legislation before it can come into effect. We will be carefully considering the views of those who may be affected by the legislation and its regulations, to understand the potential implications and determine the scope of the legislation.

■ Visas: Students

Tom Hayes:

[\[9875\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of amending the 20-hour work limit on student visas in the context of increases in the cost of living.

Tom Hayes:

[\[9879\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to review the self-employment restriction on student visas.

Seema Malhotra:

All students applying to study within the UK are required to demonstrate that they have sufficient funds to support themselves financially throughout their studies.

Working hour limits are in place to ensure students have sufficient time to devote to their main purpose coming to the UK: to study. We currently have no plans to increase these working hour limits. There are alternative routes available for individuals who wish to come to the UK to work.

Students are not currently permitted to be self-employed or engage in business activity. There are currently no plans to change this policy.

■ Young Futures Hubs

Alex Mayer:

[\[9840\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if her Department will outline a planned timeline for the rollout of Young Futures hubs.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Government is committed to rolling out a new Youth Futures programme, including a network of Young Futures Hubs which will bring together services to help improve the way young people can access the support they need.

Officials from across a range of departments are already working together, using evidence of what works to start to shape how the prevention partnerships and hubs will work in practice. As part of this we are engaging with local communities, the police, charities, and other key partners to support the design of the programme and explore options for its delivery, ensuring we are making use of the vast knowledge and experience that already exists. This includes considerations of the most suitable locations as well as how best to engage with those young people who would benefit most from their support.

We will provide further detail on the future timelines for delivery as the work develops.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Jess Brown-Fuller:****[900838]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will have discussions with Cabinet colleagues on the potential merits of reforming the electoral system used to elect Members of Parliament.

Olly Glover:**[900849]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will have discussions with Cabinet colleagues on the potential merits of reforming the electoral system used to elect Members of Parliament.

Alex Norris:

I refer the hon Member to the answer given to Question UIN [5974](#) on 14 October 2024.

Zöe Franklin:**[900841]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on the potential merits of lowering the voting age to 16.

Alex Norris:

As per the manifesto, the Government is committed to act during this Parliament to give 16- and 17-year-olds the right to vote in all elections, strengthening our democracy, empowering young people to participate and building an informed and empowered electorate.

■ Buildings: Fire Prevention

Sir Oliver Dowden:

[\[9472\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department is taking to support leaseholders at Horizon Place in Borehamwood affected by cladding remediation issues.

Alex Norris:

Vistry Group has signed a developer remediation contract with government obligating Vistry Group to remediate or pay to remediate all life-critical fire safety defects in buildings listed in its contract, including Horizon Place, as quickly as reasonably practicable. This means that leaseholders will not pay for remediation. The contract requires developers to make sure that residents and leaseholders are kept up to date. The Ministry monitors developer performance and acts where a developer is failing to comply with its contractual obligations.

Work has been ongoing to bring about ways to reduce premiums for leaseholders, and the Government will review how to better protect leaseholders from costs and push for fair premiums for leaseholders in buildings with fire safety issues.

Leaseholders wanting to sell their properties to buyers who require a mortgage, should be aware of the industry statement on cladding, signed by 10 lenders. It confirms that, even if a property has building safety issues, lenders will consider mortgage applications if the building has funding for works from government or the developer, as is the case at Horizon Wood, or the property is protected by the leaseholder protections in the Building Safety Act.

■ Buildings: Safety

Jenny Riddell-Carpenter:

[\[9876\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps the Building Safety Regulator takes to ensure a (a) consistent and (b) transparent approach in determining decisions for building assessment certificate applications.

Jenny Riddell-Carpenter:

[\[9877\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will publish (a) the assessment criteria and (b) other relevant documentation used by the Building Safety Regulator when determining decisions for building assessment certificate applications.

Alex Norris:

The Building Safety Regulator is required by Section 81(2) of the Building Safety Act 2022 to assess applications for a building assessment certificate received from principal accountable persons. The Regulator has developed criteria for assessors to use based on the requirements of the Act and associated regulations.

The criteria used to assess building assessment certificate applications will be published in the next few weeks on the Building Safety Regulator's website (

<https://buildingsafety.campaign.gov.uk/>). The Regulator will promote the publication of the criteria using social media and via key industry stakeholders.

■ **Civic Dignitaries and Members: Age**

Sir Oliver Dowden:

[9478]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 11 October 2024 to Question 5416 on Civic Dignitaries and Members: Age, what meetings she has had with (a) stakeholders in the (i) electoral, (ii) devolved and local government, (iii) education and (iv) civil society sectors and (b) young people on this topic.

Alex Norris:

Pursuant to the answer to Question UIN [5416](#) on 11 October 2024, the Government is committed to working with stakeholders in the electoral sector and civil society organisations as it seeks to make improvements to our electoral system. Ministers and officials meet regularly with the electoral sector and the devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

We are clear that electoral reform will require careful consideration and widespread engagement with civil society and, of course, young people themselves as work progresses. Details of ministerial meeting with external organisations are published on gov.uk.

■ **Cladding Safety Scheme: Hertfordshire**

Sir Oliver Dowden:

[9473]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many residential buildings have registered with the Cladding Safety Scheme in (a) Hertsmere constituency and (b) Hertfordshire.

Sir Oliver Dowden:

[9474]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many residential buildings have registered with the Building Safety Fund in (a) Hertsmere constituency and (b) Hertfordshire.

Alex Norris:

In the county of Hertfordshire, 40 buildings registered for funding from the Building Safety Fund. Fewer than five of these have been deemed eligible, the remaining registrations either withdrew, were deemed to be ineligible or transferred to other schemes.

Of the 40 in Hertfordshire, seven of them are in the constituency Hertsmere all of which were deemed ineligible. Ineligibility can include those buildings that are under the height threshold (17.7m) or those with no eligible materials.

To date, there have been seven applications to the Cladding Safety Scheme in Hertfordshire, one of which is in the Hertsmere constituency. Two of these

applications are currently undergoing eligibility checks and five are confirmed as in programme.

The Hertsmere application has been started and the CSS are currently carrying out checks of the applicant's uploaded Fire Risk Appraisal of External Wall (FRAEW) survey and further information from the applicant is required. Once this process has been finalised, we will confirm eligibility in no more than 10 days.

For the remaining application that is undergoing eligibility checks (based in the Broxbourne constituency), the application has been started and we are awaiting the FRAEW submission to carry out our review. Once this process has been finalised, we will confirm eligibility in no more than 10 days.

■ **Community Ownership Fund: South Holland and the Deepings**

Sir John Hayes:

[\[9411\]](#)

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

Alex Norris:

The Community Ownership Fund was initially launched in 2021 under the previous government. Across its lifetime It has awarded around £100 million to over 300 projects across every region of the UK. Applications have been assessed by a fair and transparent framework that is publicly available on gov.uk.

Projects must demonstrate their ability to run a sustainable business under community ownership and meet minimum scoring criteria to be considered for funding. Development support has been on offer to assist applicants. To date there have been no projects from South Holland and The Deepings who have met the threshold to be considered for funding.

■ **Council Tax**

Lewis Cocking:

[\[R\]](#) [\[8919\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to introduce a referendum cap for council tax increases for the next financial year.

Jim McMahon:

The Government is committed to keeping taxes on working people as low as possible. Decisions on future local authority funding will be a matter for the next Spending Review and Local Government Finance Settlement in which we are engaged.

■ Devolution: Gloucestershire

Dr Roz Savage: [\[9013\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the role that district councils will have in a potential devolution deal for Gloucestershire.

Jim McMahon:

This Government believes that the benefits of devolution are best achieved through the establishment of combined authorities or combined county authorities over sensible economic geographies and supported by a mayor.

The Government recognises the vital role district councils play and strongly encourages their involvement in combined county authorities in a number of ways, including non-constituent membership, positions on overview and scrutiny and audit committees, and via local joint working on key issues.

■ District Councils: Finance

Dr Beccy Cooper: [\[8940\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the impact of trends in public sector pay over the last three years on district council budgets.

Dr Beccy Cooper: [\[8941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the impact of contract inflation on the cost of district council services.

Dr Roz Savage: [\[9019\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of changes in the level public sector pay on district council budgets over the last three years.

Jim McMahon:

Local authorities are independent employers responsible for the management and organisation of their own workforces, including remuneration. The Government recognises the challenges local authorities are facing as demand increases for critical services. Future local authority funding decisions will be a matter for the Budget and Local Government Finance Settlement in which we are engaged.

■ Housing: Infrastructure

Dr Beccy Cooper: [\[9632\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of ensuring that new housing developments have sufficient opportunities for residents to easily access healthy foods.

Matthew Pennycook:

The National Planning Policy Framework already expects policies and decisions at the local level to enable and support healthy lifestyles, including through access to healthier food.

As part of the consultation on proposed reforms to the Framework and other changes to the planning system, the Government sought views on how the planning system could better support local authorities in promoting healthy communities, and specifically, in tackling childhood obesity. This included considering whether a more consistent approach to controlling hot food takeaways near schools though planning policies would be effective.

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

Leasehold: Reform

Mike Amesbury: [\[9537\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when she plans to publish a draft of the Leasehold and Commonhold Reform Bill.

Mike Amesbury: [\[9542\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when her Department will enact the provisions of the Leasehold and Freehold 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. We will set out details in due course about the extensive programme of secondary legislation need to bring the Act into force.

Neil O'Brien: [\[9767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when her Department plans to publish the Leasehold and Commonhold Reform Bill; and what discussions she has had with the Leader of the House on making parliamentary time for that Bill.

Matthew Pennycook:

I refer the Hon Member to the answer I gave to Question [UIN 7625](#), on the 14 October 2024. We will announce further details in due course.

Private Rented Housing: Pets

Tony Vaughan: [\[9679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department plans to publish guidance on the circumstances in which permission to keep a pet may be unreasonably refused under the Renters' Rights Bill.

Matthew Pennycook:

Yes, the government will provide guidance to help both landlords and tenants understand the new regulations and will maintain ongoing communication with the rental sector to address any concerns.

■ Sleeping Rough: Migrants**Deirdre Costigan:**[\[10397\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 21 October 2024 to Question 9670 on Sleeping Rough: Undocumented Migrants, whether her Department collects data on (a) no recourse to public funds amongst people sleeping rough and (b) undocumented migrants sleeping rough.

Rushanara Ali:

As outlined in the response to Question UIN [9670](#) on 21 October 2024, MHCLG does not publish data on no recourse to public funds amongst people sleeping rough and on undocumented migrants sleeping rough.

■ Temporary Accommodation: Children**Clive Jones:**[\[9883\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what proportion of households with children in temporary accommodation had been in that accommodation for (a) less than six months, (b) between six months and one year, (c) between one and two years, (d) between two and five years and (e) over five years as of 31 March 2024.

Rushanara Ali:

Statutory homelessness statistics for 2023-24 publishes data on the length of time that households with children stay in temporary accommodation. As of 31 March 2024, there were 17,430 households with children in temporary accommodation for less than six months, 11,080 between six months to one year, 12,260 between one to two years, 16,690 between two to five years and 16,790 for over five years.

This information is available at table TA4C

[Additional temporary accommodation breakdowns 31 March 2024.ods \(live.com\)](#).

■ Trading Standards: Staff**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[8782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will take steps to increase funding for Trading Standards officers.

Jim McMahon:

For 2024/25, the Local Government Finance Settlement made available £64.7 billion. The majority of this funding is unringfenced for local authorities to use as they wish, including funding for Trading Standards officers.

Future local authority funding decisions will be a matter for the next Spending Review and Local Government Finance Settlement in which we are engaged. The department will work with local government leaders to ensure they are better able to fulfil their statutory duties.

■ Voting Rights

Sir Oliver Dowden: [\[9477\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of retaining the electoral franchise in its current form.

Alex Norris:

The government was elected on a manifesto commitment to extend the franchise to 16–17-year-olds, and we intend to deliver on that commitment.

JUSTICE

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Darren Paffey: [\[10271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether she plans to review the eligibility criteria for legal aid.

Heidi Alexander:

This Government fully recognises that access to legal aid is central to helping those individuals who are unable to afford legal services to resolve their legal issues – provided it is in scope and meets the merits test. We are giving careful consideration to the criteria that govern financial eligibility for legal aid, to support the most financially vulnerable in society in resolving their legal issue.

■ Cannabis

Sir Iain Duncan Smith: [\[10037\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people received custodial sentences for personal possession of cannabis excluding people imprisoned for intent to supply, production, or importation in each of the last ten years.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The Ministry of Justice publishes data on the number of offenders who received custodial sentences for possession of cannabis in the [Outcomes by Offence tool: December 2023](#).

This can be accessed by navigating to the 'Sentence Outcomes' tab and using the 'Sentence Outcome' filter to select immediate custody and the 'HO Offence Code' filter to select the following HO offence codes:

09261 - Having possession of a controlled drug - class B (cannabis, including cannabis resin, cannabinal and cannabinal derivatives)

09266 - Having possession of a controlled drug - class C (cannabis, including cannabis resin, cannabidiol and cannabidiol derivatives) – historic

Offence groups and offence types are continually revised to reflect offences accurately. However, it is important to note that data have been extracted from large administrative data systems generated by the courts. As a consequence, offences that have been repealed may still be used by court administration and appear in the data.

■ Intimate Image Abuse

Laura Trott:

[\[10154\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether she plans to introduce a criminal offence to prosecute individuals who create sexually explicit deepfakes.

Alex Davies-Jones:

This Government refuses to tolerate violence against women and girls, which is why our manifesto included a commitment to ban the creation of degrading and harmful sexually explicit deepfakes.

We are looking at options to deliver this manifesto commitment as effectively as possible.

■ Prison Sentences

Kim Johnson:

[\[9796\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of people serving an imprisonment for public protection sentence in prison were originally given a tariff of (a) six months, (b) 12 months, (c) 18 months, (d) two years, (e) three years and (f) five years or under.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The number of prisoners serving a sentence of Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) who have never been released, as of 30 June 2024, and were sentenced to tariffs of six months, 12 months, 18 months, two years, three years and five years or under, five years to ten years are set out in the table below.

ORIGINAL TARIFF	COUNT	PROPORTION OF THOSE UNRELEASED IN PRISON
Less than 6 months	5	0.4%
6 months to less than 12 months	15	1.3%
12 months to less than 18 months	47	4.2%
18 months to less than 2 years	121	10.7%

ORIGINAL TARIFF	COUNT	PROPORTION OF THOSE UNRELEASED IN PRISON
2 years to less than 3 years	253	22.3%
3 years to 5 years	372	33.0%
5 years to 10 years	280	24.7%
Tariff not recorded	2	

Notes:

1. Tariff length is the time between date of sentencing and tariff expiry date and does not take into account any time served on remand.

2. 'Tariff not recorded' includes cases where a confirmed tariff expiry date has yet to be received, and any unmatched records.

It is right that IPP sentences were abolished, and we are committed to working at pace to support the progression of all those serving the IPP sentence, but not in a way that undermines public protection.

■ **Prisoners' Release**

Jim Shannon:

[\[9456\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent assessment she has made of the effectiveness of recent changes to the early 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, offenders will be closely monitored by probation and subject to strict licence conditions, which if breached could lead to their immediate recall to prison.

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 2024 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.

■ Prosecutions

Ben Goldsborough:

[\[9293\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of delivering Single Justice Procedure prosecution notices by (a) signed and (b) tracked post to ensure receipt.

Heidi Alexander:

The Single Justice Procedure (SJP) Notice is a prosecutor notice which is issued and served by the prosecutor.

The rules governing service of SJP Notices is covered by Rule 4 of the Criminal Procedure Rules - [The Criminal Procedure Rules 2020 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#).

There is no requirement for an SJP Notice to be sent by either signed for or tracked post and to do so would be a decision for the prosecutor.

If a defendant does not know about the case until after it has finished, they can make a statutory declaration to that effect, which will start the proceedings again from the beginning.

This Government is determined to ensure the SJP operates fairly and transparently. We are currently reviewing potential changes to the Procedure and will consider legislative reform if necessary.

Ben Goldsborough:

[\[9334\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps her Department is taking to ensure defendants under the Single Justice Procedure are aware they have the option to elect for a court hearing.

Heidi Alexander:

This Government is determined to ensure the Single Justice Procedure (SJP) operates fairly and transparently. We are currently reviewing potential changes to the Procedure and will consider legislative reform if necessary.

As it stands, there are multiple points in the SJP process where a defendant is notified of their right to elect for a court hearing.

When a prosecutor presses charges under the SJP they issue the defendant with a SJP Notice. The information leaflet which accompanies the SJP Notice states that the defendant will need to decide whether or not they want to go to court and explains the process should they elect for a court hearing.

The SJP Notice also provides the following link - [Single justice procedure notices - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#), which is publicly available and where it states clearly 'You can choose if you want to go to court or not'.

The plea form, which defendants responding to an SJP Notice are asked to fill out, also states that, if pleading guilty, the defendant must choose whether they want to go to court and there is a tick box with the options 'Yes – I want to come to court' or 'No – I do not want to come to court'.

■ Reoffenders: Cannabis**Sir Iain Duncan Smith:** [\[10038\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of people who were convicted for simple cannabis possession were also convicted for another offence by the category of that other offence in each of the last five years.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The Ministry of Justice publishes data on the total number of convictions for possession of cannabis on all-offence basis in the [All-offence prosecutions and convictions data tool](#).

A breakdown on how many offenders convicted for possession of cannabis were also convicted for another offence, and where an offender has been convicted of multiple counts of possession of cannabis at the same time, will count each individual conviction. Therefore, the information requested, on a defendant basis has been provided in Table 1 and Table 2.

Attachments:

1. Table [2024-10-24 PQ 10038 table.xlsx]

NORTHERN IRELAND**■ Drugs: Northern Ireland****Robin Swann:** [\[10344\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what steps the Government are taking to ensure the continued supply of medicines to Northern Ireland, in the context of the implementation of the Windsor Framework.

Hilary Benn:

The Windsor Framework secures the long-term stability of medicines supply to Northern Ireland, ensuring that medicines will be available in the same packaging and with a single licence across the UK, reflecting the long standing preference of industry.

The Government continues to work closely with industry to support readiness for the implementation of these arrangements from 1 January 2025 and ensure there is no disruption. Transitional measures are also available to support companies, such as the temporary use of stickers and the arrangement that all medicines that are on the market before 1 January 2025 can continue to be supplied in existing packaging.

■ Northern Ireland Office: Buildings**Sir Ashley Fox:** [\[9823\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, how many and what proportion of desks were occupied in each of his 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.

Hilary Benn:

The Northern Ireland Office employs a desk booking system (Matrix) to monitor desk occupancy. Staff can book desks in advance of their intended attendance, or the same day. The following data was gathered from Monday 23 September until Friday 18 October 2024 and relates to the open plan areas in London and Belfast which use the desk booking system. There are 59 desks in the London open plan area and 62 desks in Belfast open plan area available for booking. The information below does not cover Ministerial Offices and other business areas not covered by the booking system.

	LONDON AVERAGE DAILY OCCUPANCY	LONDON AVERAGE DAILY STAFF ATTENDANCE	BELFAST AVERAGE DAILY OCCUPANCY	BELFAST AVERAGE DAILY STAFF ATTENDANCE
w/c 23 September 2024	47%	28	64%	40
w/c 30 September 2024	52%	31	61%	38
w/c 7 October 2024	52%	31	60%	38
w/c 14 October 2024	54%	32	66%	41

■ **Northern Ireland Office: Civil Servants**

Sir Ashley Fox:

[\[9822\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, how many civil servants are assigned to work in each of his Department's offices; and how many desks are available for staff to work in that individual office.

Hilary Benn:

The total number of people by full-time equivalent hours (FTE) at 30 September 2024 is 159.96, which is 165 headcount; 86 members of staff are based in the Belfast office and 79 are based in the London office.

There are 121 bookable desks available in total across both offices. There are 59 desks in the London open plan area and 62 desks in Belfast open plan area available for booking. This figure does not cover Ministerial Offices or other business areas not covered by the booking system.

■ Northern Ireland Office: Ministers' Private Offices**Sir Ashley Fox:** [\[9824\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, 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.

Hilary Benn:

Since the dissolution of the last Parliament on 30 May 2024, one three-seater office sofa for the Ministerial Office was purchased at a cost of £811.14.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY**■ 4G: Aerials****Andrew Griffith:** [\[10178\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how many 4G masts funded by his Department have been constructed since 5 July 2024.

Chris Bryant:

As part of the publicly funded element of the Shared Rural Network (SRN) we can confirm that 11 masts have been built or upgraded for the programme since 5 July 2024. These masts have already been activated and are delivering reliable 4G coverage, enabling rural businesses and communities to thrive.

■ Data Protection: Business**Saqib Bhatti:** [\[10167\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he plans to bring forward legislative proposals to require businesses to carry out data protection impact assessments.

Chris Bryant:

Article 35 of the UK GDPR already requires organisations to carry out a data protection impact assessment if the type of processing they are doing is likely to result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals.

■ Data Protection: UK Relations with EU**Saqib Bhatti:** [\[10171\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he has had discussions with the European Union on the future of EU Adequacy on data protection.

Chris Bryant:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave on 18 October 2024 to Question 8500.

■ Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Departmental Responsibilities

Andrew Griffith: [\[10181\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether the Minister of State for Data Protection and Telecoms's ministerial portfolio is supported by other Ministers in his Department.

Chris Bryant:

All ministers in the department work as a team and support one another because we achieve far more by our common endeavour than we do by going it alone.

■ Digital Technology: Disadvantaged

Sir John Whittingdale: [\[10035\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, pursuant to the Answer of 15 October 2024 to Question 8498 on Digital Technology: Disadvantaged, what steps he is taking to tackle digital exclusion.

Chris Bryant:

Unlike the previous government, this government takes tackling digital exclusion as a priority. That is why we are working to develop our approach with a view to taking coherent and consistent action across government. We expect to make further announcements soon.

■ Digital Technology: Schools

Saqib Bhatti: [\[10168\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he has had discussions with the Secretary of State for Education on supporting digital inclusion in schools.

Chris Bryant:

I met with the Minister of State for School Standards last week to discuss digital inclusion in schools as a shared priority across our Departments.

■ Emergency Calls: Voice over Internet Protocol

Sir John Whittingdale: [\[10032\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he has had discussions with the Secretary of State for the Home Office on the potential impact of the planned switch from the Public Switched Telephone Network on emergency services.

Chris Bryant:

Yes, the Department engages regularly with the Home Office to identify and mitigate risks associated with the Public Switched Telephone Network switchover, including risks posed to the emergency services. Mostly recently, on 17 September the Department chaired a cross-Government engagement group that the Home Office attended, which included a discussion of the impact on emergency services.

The Department also supports the 999 / 112 Liaison Committee chaired by the emergency services, which coordinates and manages all risks and issues related to 999 and ensures efficient handling of emergency calls between the public, call handling agents, and emergency authorities.

■ Government Departments: Telecommunications

Sir John Whittingdale:

[\[10033\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, pursuant to the Answer of 18 October 2024 to Question 8503 on Government Departments: Telecommunications, whether he plans to meet with Cabinet colleagues to discuss the use of ISDN telephone lines across Government.

Chris Bryant:

The Department chairs a quarterly cross-government group on this issue, to which all government departments are invited. The group allows for discussion around plans and progress, and the opportunity to raise any concerns around the retirement of these legacy networks. Where dependencies have been identified, the Department is actively monitoring the progress of mitigation plans and engaging with industry on removing obstacles to migrating off legacy networks.

Andrew Griffith:

[\[10180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of the implementation of AI technology for Government telecoms data.

Chris Bryant:

Artificial Intelligence is at the heart of the UK Government's plan to kickstart an era of economic growth, transform how we deliver public services, and boost living standards for working people across the country.

The Secretary of State for the Department of Science, Innovation, and Technology, tasked Matt Clifford with developing an action plan to identify how AI can drive economic growth and deliver better outcomes for people across the country.

The government is supporting research on advanced communications via the £70m Future Telecoms Technology Missions Fund, delivered by UKRI. This includes research into AI for telecoms.

■ Huawei: 5G

Saqib Bhatti:

[\[10170\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what progress he has made on removing Huawei from 5G networks by the end of 2027.

Chris Bryant:

As he will know, the Designated Vendor Direction issued in October 2022 set out twelve requirements on the removal of Huawei equipment and services that telecoms providers have a legal obligation to meet. We are working closely with providers who

received a direction to monitor and ensure compliance. There are two remaining deadlines for the end of 2025 and 2027 which providers must meet.

■ Information Commissioner's Office

Sir John Whittingdale:

[\[10036\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, pursuant to the Answer of 18 October 2024 to Question 8499 on Information Commission, what implications for the Digital Information and Smart Data Bill were discussed with the Information Commissioner's Office.

Chris Bryant:

The Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology has worked with John Edwards, the Information Commissioner (IC) on the development of the upcoming Data (Use and Access) Bill.

When they met on 30 July, DSIT SoS thanked the IC for his and ICO's officials' ongoing support in the development of Bill, and they discussed the plans to give the ICO new, stronger powers and a more modern structure.

The IC supports the aims of the Bill and is a vital stakeholder in the Bill's success. DSIT's engagement with the IC also fulfils the Government's statutory duty to consult with the ICO when developing policy proposals relating to the processing of personal data.

■ Internet: Data Protection

Saqib Bhatti:

[\[10169\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of using the Digital Information and Smart Data Bill to extend the list of cookie exemptions to include (a) advertising performance and (b) audience measurement cookies.

Chris Bryant:

There is a balance to strike between driving growth and innovation whilst ensuring people retain appropriate choice and control about how their personal data captured by cookies is used. While we have not added this exemption to the face of the Data (Use and Access) Bill, we have taken power in new regulation 6A to extend or modify the list of exemptions.

We have already begun talking to industry and others about the possible use of this power and will continue to do so. This change would require careful consideration and consultation.

■ NHS: Digital Technology**Alison Griffiths:**[\[10382\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he has had discussions with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on steps to improve digital inclusion in the NHS.

Chris Bryant:

Digital inclusion is a priority for me and for Government. It means ensuring everyone has the access, skills and confidence to participate in a modern digital society, whatever their circumstances. We are working to develop our approach on digital inclusion, including with other government departments to ensure it is joined-up. To support this, I am, and will continue, engaging with my counterparts in other departments on this important issue.

■ Research: Publishing**Fabian Hamilton:**[\[9904\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if he will hold discussions with universities on the value for money of their contracts with academic publishers for (a) journal subscriptions and (b) open-access publishing.

Feryal Clark:

Jisc is an independent nonprofit company that supports universities with the transition to open access. It does this through negotiating a range of transitional open access agreements and institutional access to journal publications. These agreements enable UK research output to be published open access in accordance with UK funder policies.

Jisc will negotiate new agreements with publishers on behalf of the sector in 2025. This will focus on pace of change to open access models, the financial sustainability of agreements, and equity to enable a wider audience to benefit including researchers, small specialist institutions and public health organisations.

■ Space Technology: Cornwall**Alison Griffiths:**[\[10380\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps the UK Space Agency plans to take to support the growth of the space cluster in Cornwall.

Chris Bryant:

During the current spending period, the Government has invested a total of £4.2 million to support the Cornwall region to develop its local space capabilities, enabling Spaceport Cornwall to conduct the first ever orbital launch attempt from UK soil and supporting Goonhilly Earth Station Ltd to deliver deep space commercial services. The cluster is also being supported to attract investment from international space companies, and progress Cornwall's strategic ambitions to become a global leader in

satellite operations and communications and the testing and development of spaceflight systems.

■ **Spaceflight: Training**

Alison Griffiths: [\[10381\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how many British citizens are undertaking training for future manned space flights.

Chris Bryant:

Two astronauts are undertaking training for future crewed space flights, and a third is undertaking similar training in January.

■ **UK Space Agency**

Alison Griffiths: [\[10379\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether the UK Space Agency plans to establish a publicly owned deep space communication service provider.

Chris Bryant:

No.

■ **UK Space Agency: Goonhilly Earth Station**

Alison Griffiths: [\[10378\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how long the contract is between the UK Space Agency and Goonhilly Earth Station Ltd to provide deep space communications services.

Chris Bryant:

The current framework agreement between the UK Space Agency and Goonhilly Earth Station Ltd runs until March 2025. Any further agreements will need to be considered in light of the upcoming spending review.

■ **UK Space Agency: Scotland**

Andrew Griffith: [\[10176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if he will visit the UK Space Agency's office in Scotland.

Chris Bryant:

The Secretary of State for the Department of Science, Innovation and Technology will consider visiting the UK Space Agency's Scotland office as and when his diary allows, and is committed to supporting the growth of the Scottish space sector. My Ministerial colleague, Lord Patrick Vallance, visited the UKSA's office in Scotland this week (Wednesday 23 October).

SCOTLAND**■ Scotland Office: Buildings**

Sir Ashley Fox: [\[9829\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, how many and what proportion of desks were occupied in each of his 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.

Ian Murray:

For the 4-week period from 2 September 2024 to 27 September 2024, the Scotland Office's London Office had an average of 17 staff attend per day and an average of 56% of desks occupied. Please note that part of this reporting period included recess when we are more likely to have leave, visits and stakeholder engagement. We are not required to collect this data for our Edinburgh Office.

■ Scotland Office: Civil Servants

Sir Ashley Fox: [\[9828\]](#)

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

Ian Murray:

The Scotland Office currently has 39 civil servants assigned to its London Office and 46 assigned to its Edinburgh Office. There are 30 desks available in the London Office and 26 desks in the Edinburgh Office.

TRANSPORT**■ Bus Services: Concessions**

Graham Stuart: [\[10054\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make it her policy to continue to fund the universal bus pass for those of pension age.

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. The government recognises the importance of the scheme, which supports local bus travel, assists with access to essential local services and helps those who use it to stay active and avoid isolation. The government has absolutely no plans to withdraw the concessionary bus pass scheme.

■ Bus Services: Franchises

Laurence Turner: [\[10225\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what support she is providing to mayoral combined authorities for bus franchising schemes.

Simon Lightwood:

The Government have committed to giving mayoral combined authorities long term devolved funding settlements.

We recognise that success in delivering franchising will be dependent on the delivery capacity and capability of local authorities. The Department is working with mayoral combined authorities who are in the process of franchising their bus networks to understand how the process could be improved and to provide a tailored programme of support that reflects their needs and priorities.

Mark Swards: [\[9890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress her Department has made on the roll out of bus franchising.

Simon Lightwood:

On 9 September 2024, the government laid a Statutory Instrument to open up bus franchising to all local transport authorities (LTAs) in England. It also published a consultation on proposed updates to bus franchising guidance, which closed on 7 October 2024. These measures will speed up and lower the cost of franchising for LTAs. The government's response will be published in due course.

The government will also bring forward a Buses Bill later in this parliamentary session which will build on this progress by increasing powers available to local leaders to choose the model that works best in their area, including franchising or local authority ownership.

■ Bus Services: Wakefield

Mark Swards: [\[9889\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking with Wakefield Council to improve bus services in Wakefield, in the context of the recent closure of the Wakefield bus depot.

Mark Swards: [\[9891\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if her Department will commission a review into the adequacy of the bus services provided by Arriva.

Lilian Greenwood:

At present, decisions such as where to run bus services in England outside London are predominantly a matter for the relevant bus operator. In response to this, the government has set out a plan to improve bus services based on giving local leaders the tools they require to ensure bus services reflect the needs of the communities they serve.

Government intends to bring forward a Buses Bill later in this parliamentary session and government has also committed to increasing accountability by providing safeguards over local networks across the country and empowering local transport authorities through reforms to bus funding.

The Department for Transport is already engaging with local leaders and bus operators, including in West Yorkshire, to provide the tools they need to deliver the services that best meet local needs.

■ High Speed 2 Line: Costs

Laurence Turner:

[\[10229\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to her Department's press release entitled PM redirects HS2 funding to revolutionise transport across the North and Midlands, published on 04 October 2023, what is the estimated cost to the public purse of cancelling Phase 2 of HS2 by (a) year and (b) heading.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Department is currently assessing the cost of cancelling Phase 2 of the HS2 project, working with HS2 Ltd and its supply chain to inform this assessment. As at the end of March 2024, £2.3bn had been spent on Phase 2.

■ High Speed 2 Line: Euston Station

Luke Taylor:

[\[10326\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she plans to extend the HS2 terminus from Old Oak Common to London Euston.

Lilian Greenwood:

The government is reviewing the position it has inherited on HS2 and will set out detailed plans in due course.

■ Rail Delivery Group: Disclosure of Information

Laurence Turner:

[\[10228\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the Rail Delivery Group plans to publish board minutes for the period between March 2021 and March 2024.

Simon Lightwood:

The Rail Delivery Group (RDG) is a private organisation that brings together passenger and freight train operators, as well as Network Rail. As such, it is for the RDG to decide whether to publicly publish its board minutes for the period between March 2021 and March 2024.

■ Railway Stations: Access

Laurence Turner:

[\[10227\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many planned station upgrades under Network Rail's Access for All scheme were (a) cancelled and (b) deferred during Control Period 6 in each region.

Simon Lightwood:

Under the previous government, changes were made to the Control Period 6 Access for All (AfA) programme at the following stations:

- Queens Park (London) and Battersea Park (London) - AfA funding was withdrawn
- Peckham Rye (London) - scope was incorporated into a wider station enhancement project
- Shotton (Wales) – project deferred to Control Period 7 with the agreement of Transport for Wales

■ Railway Stations: Disability

Laurence Turner:

[\[10226\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much was spent on improving the accessibility of railway stations for disabled people under Network Rail's Access for All scheme in each region in each year of Control Period (a) 5 and (b) 6.

Simon Lightwood:

During Control Period 5 (CP5, 2014/15 to 2018/19), the total spend under the Access for All programme across Great Britain was £88.762 million.

During Control Period 6 (CP6, 2019/20 to 2023/24), the total spend under the Access for All programme across Great Britain was £291.246 million.

Annex A (attached) will provide the Honourable Member with spend for each specific year of Control Period 5 and Control Period 6.

Attachments:

1. Accessibility of railway stations [WPQ-00025007 Annex A.docx]

TREASURY

■ Agriculture: Tax Allowances

Robin Swann:

[\[R\] \[10240\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much has agricultural property relief been worth in Northern Ireland in each of the last three years.

James Murray:

HMRC holds the information of those estates which make claims for Agricultural Property Relief (APR) within its digital administrative systems if the estate was taxpaying, or could be taxpaying after compliance checks have been performed.

It does not hold readily available information about the geographical location of the assets qualifying for the relief – it only holds the value of the assets qualifying for the relief, and the amount of relief given against those assets, in a format available for further analysis.

As such, it is not possible to provide this information within current cost limits.

■ Cancer

Robin Swann: [\[10281\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she plans to bring forward proposals to counter financial discrimination against cancer survivors.

Tulip Siddiq:

The Government recognises the importance of access to useful and appropriate financial products. We work closely with the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), the independent regulator of the UK's financial services sector, to ensure that customers are treated fairly by firms.

While the pricing and availability of financial services and products is a commercial decision for firms, FCA rules require the price a consumer pays for a product or service be reasonable compared to the overall benefits they can expect to receive. The FCA also expects that customers get the right support with their financial products, particularly where their personal circumstances, including health conditions, may make them more susceptible to harm.

The Government is committed to improving financial inclusion and will continue to work with regulators, firms, and the third sector to this end.

■ Credit: Northern Ireland

Robin Swann: [\[10280\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the Consumer Credit Directive, which came into force in Northern Ireland on 23 November 2023, on cancer patients and their families.

Tulip Siddiq:

The European Union's Consumer Credit Directive 2008 was implemented into UK law in 2010. In November 2023, the EU passed a new Consumer Credit Directive that will replace the previous Directive and which Member States must transpose into domestic law by November 2025. As the UK has left the European Union, this Directive will not apply in the UK, including Northern Ireland.

■ Electronic Commerce: Money Laundering

Phil Brickell: [\[9979\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether her Department has made an assessment of the (a) potential risk of the use of e-payment platforms for money

laundering and (b) likelihood that those platforms are used to launder criminal money originating from Russia.

Tulip Siddiq:

This government is committed to supporting safe innovation within our financial technology sectors. The UK's 2020 National Risk Assessment for money laundering and terrorist financing judged that payment and e-money services were at medium risk of money laundering. Reflecting this risk, payment service providers and electric money institutions offering e-payment platforms in the UK are required to be authorised by the FCA, and supervised to ensure they meet the anti-money laundering requirements set out in the Money Laundering Regulations. The government is continuing to monitor this risk, and intends to publish an updated National Risk Assessment next year.

■ **Pension Funds: British National (Overseas)**

Sarah Hall:

[\[9326\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the denial of access to the Mandatory Provident Fund by people from Hong Kong who are living in the UK on a British National (Overseas) visa on the financial wellbeing of those people; and if she will make an estimate of the amount of retirement savings held in the Mandatory Provident Fund by people from Hong Kong living in the UK.

Tulip Siddiq:

This government is deeply committed to supporting members of the Hong Kong community who have relocated to the UK. We are aware that individuals who have chosen to take up the British National (Overseas) route are having difficulties accessing their Mandatory Provident Fund from Hong Kong.

Whilst documentary requirements for withdrawing funds are a matter for the Hong Kong authorities, officials have raised this issue directly with the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government and the Hong Kong MPF Schemes Authority. We have urged them to facilitate early draw down of funds as is the case for other Hong Kong residents who move overseas permanently and have made clear such discrimination of BN(O)s is unacceptable.

■ **UK Infrastructure Bank: Northern Ireland**

Claire Hanna:

[\[9961\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many applications for funding from the UK Infrastructure Bank for schemes in Northern Ireland were (a) awarded and (b) rejected.

James Murray:

The National Wealth Fund (NWF), formerly the UK Infrastructure Bank, has committed funding to three transactions that have benefited Northern Ireland (NI) with a total of £71m invested to date. Two of these deals are debt investments in the

digital sector, supporting Fibrus and Netomnia, and the other is a guarantee deal for retrofitting social housing with Barclays.

Due to commercial confidentiality, the NWF does not disclose details of deals that were not completed. However, it has a robust process in place to assess the suitability of deal enquires in line with its strategy.

Further details on how NWF assess deals and additionality can be found in their [Strategic Plan](#), and details on deals signed can be found in their [Factsheets](#).

■ Wines: Excise Duties

Ian Sollom: [\[10360\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make the temporary duty easement for wines permanent from 1 February 2025.

James Murray:

In August 2023 the Government introduced reforms to alcohol duty so that products are taxed in proportion to their alcoholic strength, not volume. The reforms aimed to modernise and simplify the system, to prioritise public health and incentivise consumption of lower strength products.

To help the wine industry adapt to the new duty system, the current, temporary duty easement was introduced as a transitional measure, which was intended to allow time for wine producers to adapt to calculating duty based on alcohol by volume.

The current temporary duty easement for wine is due to end on 31st January 2025.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Child Maintenance Service: Standards

Amanda Hack: [\[9311\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what data her Department holds on average response times to queries from users of the Child Maintenance Service since 2019.

Andrew Western:

The Child Maintenance Service (CMS) are committed to delivering the best possible service to all customers. Customers can contact the CMS in a number of different ways.

This could be via the telephone, by post or through the CMS online service. Depending on what the query is and how it was made, response times can vary.

Whilst the DWP does not collate data on average response times for all queries across different CMS channels, we are working to improve the efficiency of our customer interactions. We will continue to review, evaluate, and enhance our service lines to meet demand and deliver a quality customer service.

■ Disability Living Allowance

Sarah Olney:

[\[9516\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many children are waiting for over the 50 working day target for their disability living allowance claim to be processed in the latest period for which data is available.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) does not have a target timeframe, but we aim to process Disability Living Allowance (DLA) claims for children within 40 working days, not 50. As published in the DWP Annual Report and Accounts 2023 to 2024, which covers April 2023 to March 2024, of the 186,200 claims DLA claims for children processed over that period, 6,500 (3.5%) met the planned processing timescales.

DWP has seen a substantial increase in claims since Covid-19, and this upward trajectory continues. This has resulted in increased pressures on early years services for children with additional needs and neurodiverse conditions, with gathering evidence from educational institutions and the NHS taking longer. We are maximising our resources wherever possible and have ongoing recruitment efforts to mitigate these challenges.

For further details, please refer to the [DWP annual report and accounts 2023 to 2024 \(HTML\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) available on the GOV.UK website.

■ Disability Living Allowance: Standards

Sarah Olney:

[\[9515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, for what reason the rate of disability living allowance claims processed dropped between (a) 2019-20 and (b) 2023-24.

Sir Stephen Timms:

DWP has seen a substantial increase in claims for Disability Living Allowance (Children) since Covid-19, and this upward trajectory continues. This has resulted in increased pressures on early years services for children with additional needs and neurodiverse conditions, with gathering evidence from educational institutions and the NHS taking longer. We are maximising our resources wherever possible and have ongoing recruitment efforts to mitigate these challenges.

■ Employment: Mental Illness

Tom Hayes:

[\[10294\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department has taken to help people with mental health conditions to (a) enter employment and (b) increase their hours.

Alison McGovern:

Appropriate work is generally good for health and wellbeing, so we want everyone to get work and get on in work, whoever they are and wherever they live. We want people to avoid poverty, and for this to happen we must ensure that disabled people and people with health conditions have the opportunity to work and save for as long as they wish and are able to.

Disabled people and people with health conditions are a diverse group so access to the right work and health support, in the right place, at the right time, is key. We therefore have a range of specialist initiatives to support individuals, including people with mental health conditions, to stay in work and get back into work, including those that join up employment and health systems. Measures include support from Work Coaches and Disability Employment Advisers in Jobcentres, Access to Work grants and the Work and Health Programme, as well as joining up health and employment support around the individual through Employment Advisors in NHS Talking Therapies and Individual Placement and Support in Primary Care.

Employers play a key role in increasing employment opportunities and supporting disabled people and people with health conditions, to thrive as part of the workforce. Our support to employers includes increasing access to Occupational Health, [a digital information service for employers](#) and the Disability Confident scheme.

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

People on low, or no income or earnings who have a health condition or disability which restricts the amount of work they can do, can claim UC and are referred for a work capability assessment (WCA). The WCA is a functional assessment which assesses what a customer can do as well as what they cannot do.

A healthcare professional provides the outcome of the assessment to a DWP Decision Maker, who, using the evidence available, determines if the customer:

- has limited capability for work (LCW), or
- has limited capability for work- and work-related activity (LCWRA), or
- does not have LCW – meaning the customer is fit for work.

Where it has been decided that customers have LCW or LCWRA, they will be entitled to a work allowance, and in couple claims where one is working, access to help with childcare costs. Those customers that have been determined to have LCWRA may be entitled to the award of an additional amount of benefit – the LCWRA addition – which is £416.19 per month (2024-25 rates).

Universal Credit provides incentives for workless households to take up jobs, including at a low number of hours per week. Part-time jobs could be important in helping individuals who have spent long periods in unemployment take steps into the labour market. To strengthen incentives to move into work and progress in work, UC

withdraws support at a steady rate allowing customers to see their income increase and their Universal Credit award is reduced by less than they are earning. Although their Universal Credit award reduces, they will still benefit from their income.

■ **Hearing Impairment: Children**

Steve Darling: [\[9634\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she is will hold discussions with Auditory Verbal UK on tackling barriers to opportunities for deaf children.

Catherine Fookes: [\[9884\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will meet with Auditory Verbal UK to discuss (a) barriers to opportunities and (b) improved outcomes for deaf children.

Sir Stephen Timms:

There are no current plans to meet. However, I note that my colleague the Minister for Early Education has met with and visited Auditory Verbal UK to understand the work they are doing to improve the lives of deaf children.

■ **Pension Credit**

Sarah Olney: [\[9517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many pension credit applications made between 29 July and 9 August 2024 are waiting to be processed.

Emma Reynolds:

Data on how many pension credit applications have been made between 29 July and 9 August 2024 was recently published on gov.uk, [Weekly Pension Credit claims received from 1 April 2024 to 22 September 2024 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Because of how we capture our operational data, information on how many claims we received over that period which are still outstanding is not available and to provide it would incur disproportionate costs. However, we are actively seeking to develop the data sets to provide that level of information.

■ **Pension Credit: Applications**

Sarah Olney: [\[9518\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, for what reason the average number of pension credit applications processed within 50 working days dropped between (a) 2019-20 and (b) 2022-23.

Emma Reynolds:

The department supports customers to claim Pension Credit through a range of take up campaigns. In June 2019, the BBC announced its intention to limit free TV licenses to people 75+ and in receipt of Pension Credit from June 2020. The subsequent mass mailing to existing free licence holders contributed to a significant spike in calls to the Pension Service, and in 2022-23, the department continued to provide vital financial support to pensioners on a low income through Pension Credit.

DWP launched a comprehensive communications campaign to raise awareness of Pension Credit and encourage pensioners to apply for it. The campaign included advertising in national and regional newspapers and on broadcast radio and television as well as promotion of Pension Credit via internet search engines and on social media. This, together with success of the Help for Household campaign, led to more than double the level in Pension Credit applications compared to the previous year.

■ Pension Credit: Park Homes

Dr Ben Spencer:

[\[9949\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on the impact of excluding pitch fees from pension credit applications on park home residents.

Emma Reynolds:

No such discussions have taken place.

Pitch fees can usually be met through Housing Benefit. In cases where there is a tenancy of over 21 years, then the pitch fees are not eligible for Housing Benefit but instead may be met by the housing cost element in Pension Credit, subject to the usual Pension Credit eligibility rules.

■ Poverty: Children

Sojan Joseph:

[\[10256\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to help reduce levels of child poverty in Ashford constituency.

Alison McGovern:

Delivering our manifesto commitment to tackle child poverty is an urgent priority for this Government, and the Ministerial Taskforce is working to publish the child poverty strategy in the Spring.

Our publication on 23 October 'Tackling Child Poverty: Developing our Strategy' sets out how we will develop the Strategy, harnessing all available levers to deliver a reduction in child poverty this Parliament.

The Strategy will look at levers across four key themes of increasing incomes, reducing essential costs, increasing financial resilience; and better local support especially in the early years. This will build on the reform plans underway across government and work underway in Devolved Governments.

The 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.

To support struggling families, we have already boosted the Household Support Fund by a further £421 million in England. The vital work of the Taskforce comes alongside our commitments to roll out free breakfast clubs at all primary schools, create 3,000

additional nurseries, as well as deliver our plan to make work pay to turn the minimum wage into a real living wage.

■ **State Retirement Pensions: British Nationals Abroad**

Dr Ben Spencer:

[9782]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with which countries she is negotiating a reciprocal agreement on uprating state pensions.

Emma Reynolds:

My department is not negotiating any reciprocal social security agreements.

■ **State Retirement Pensions: Women**

Steve Darling:

[8689]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman's report into women's State Pension age changes, published on 21 March 2024, what recent discussions she has had with the Leader of the House on making parliamentary time available for a debate on financial redress before 19 December 2024.

Emma Reynolds:

In the course of conducting the business of her Department, the Secretary of State has many discussions with Cabinet colleagues.

As stated on 07 October (Women's State Pension Age: Compensation - Hansard - UK Parliament.) I am the first Minister in eight years to meet WASPI campaigners to hear their experiences directly.

The Ombudsman's report took around five years to complete and deserves serious consideration. This Government respects the work of the Ombudsman and we are currently working through all aspects of the Ombudsman's final report along with the evidence provided during the investigation.

Stuart Anderson:

[9218]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions she has had with the (a) Chancellor of the Exchequer and (b) Minister for the Cabinet Office on establishing a compensation scheme for women affected by changes to the state pension age.

Emma Reynolds:

In the course of conducting the business of her Department, the Secretary of State has many discussions with Cabinet colleagues.

As stated on 07 October ([Women's State Pension Age: Compensation - Hansard - UK Parliament](#)), I am the first Minister in eight years to meet WASPI campaigners to hear their experiences directly.

The Ombudsman's report took five years to complete and deserves serious consideration. This Government respects the work of the Ombudsman and we are

currently working through all aspects of the Ombudsman's final report along with the evidence provided during the investigation.

■ Unemployment: Young People

Sojan Joseph: [\[10255\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions she has had with local authorities on tackling youth unemployment in Ashford 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.

Ashford Jobcentre has had several meetings with Ashford Borough Council with the Welfare team and the Economic Development Manager where they have been discussing the developments in Ashford and changes in the labour market and how the youth cohort can find employment.

Recent examples of positive collaboration in Ashford include strong support for Southeastern rail apprenticeships to close the skill gaps in that sector, and the Jobcentre is also looking for solutions with the local authority around transportation links.

■ Universal Credit: Domestic Abuse

Matthew Patrick: [\[10242\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to (a) ensure victim-survivors of domestic abuse can access split payments for Universal Credit and (b) minimise the risk that applying for a split payments could alert perpetrators to a victim-survivors concerns.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Split payments are considered in exceptional circumstances to provide support to vulnerable families and children from facing financial issues that could arise from a range of circumstances, particularly where one partner in the relationship may have substance abuse issues which increase risks to other members of the family unit. Whilst this can include domestic abuse, we do not believe they are particularly well-suited to such circumstances as a matter of course, but they may be used with the consent of customers.

Where split payments are being considered, risks are mitigated to the fullest extent possible to allow the Alternative Payment Arrangement to be implemented.

■ Winter Fuel Payment

Ann Davies: [\[9597\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending eligibility for the Winter Fuel Payment to older people in

receipt of (a) Housing Benefit, (b) Council Tax support, (c) Attendance Allowance, (d) Disability Living Allowance, (e) Personal Independence Payment and (f) Carer's Allowance.

Ann Davies:

[\[9598\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of extending eligibility for the Winter Fuel Payment to older people in receipt of (a) Housing Benefit, (b) Council Tax support, (c) Attendance Allowance, (d) Disability Living Allowance, (e) Personal Independence Payment and (f) Carer's Allowance on the number of pensioners living in poverty.

Emma Reynolds:

This Government is committed to pensioners. Everyone in our society, no matter their working history or savings deserves a comfortable and dignified retirement. We will do this through protecting the triple lock, keeping energy bills low through our Warm Homes Plan, and bringing real stability to people's lives.

However, given the substantial pressures faced by the public finances this year and next, the Government has had to make hard choices to bring the public finances back under control.

Winter Fuel Payments will continue to be paid to pensioner households with someone receiving Pension Credit or certain other income-related benefits. They will continue to be worth £200 for eligible households, or £300 for eligible households with someone aged 80 and over.

In November we will also be writing to approximately 120,000 pensioners who are in receipt of Housing Benefit and who may also be eligible for, but not currently claiming, Pension Credit. We will be inviting these pensioners to claim Pension Credit by the 21 December, which is the latest date for making a successful backdated Pension Credit claim and still qualify for a Winter Fuel Payment.

For those with long-term health conditions or disabilities, the "extra costs" disability benefits, including those provided for by the Scottish Government, provide a tax free, non-income-related contribution towards the extra costs people with a long-term health condition can face, such as additional heating costs. They are paid in addition to any other benefits received

For example, Attendance Allowance can be worth around £5,600 a year. Further, receipt of AA can provide a passport to additional amounts in means-tested benefits for those on low incomes providing they meet the other eligibility criteria.

These benefits also give rise to a disability addition in Pension Credit, meaning that disabled pensioners are more likely to be entitled to Pension Credit, and at a higher amount, than those without disabilities.

Carers over State Pension age on low incomes can claim income-related benefits, such as Pension Credit. This can be paid to carers at a higher rate than those without caring responsibilities through the additional amount for carers. The additional

amount for carers in Pension Credit is £45.60 a week, around £2,400 a year, and around 125,000 carers receive it as a part of their Pension Credit award.

We know there are low-income pensioners who aren't claiming Pension Credit, and we urge those people to apply. This will passport them to receive Winter Fuel Payment alongside other benefits – hundreds of pounds that could really help them.

■ Winter Fuel Payment: Kent

Helen Whately:

[9514]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an estimate of the number of households that will be affected by the proposed change to the eligibility criteria for Winter Fuel Payments in (a) Faversham and Mid Kent constituency and (b) Kent.

Emma Reynolds:

It is estimated that around 12,400 households in Faversham and Mid Kent Constituency (2024 boundaries) and around 218,500 households in Kent (comprised of the following constituencies, 2024 boundaries: Ashford, Canterbury, Chatham and Aylesford, Dartford, Dover and Deal, East Thanet, Faversham and Mid Kent, Folkestone and Hythe, Gillingham and Rainham, Gravesham, Herne Bay and Sandwich, Maidstone and Malling, Rochester and Strood, Sevenoaks, Sittingbourne and Sheppey, Tonbridge, Tunbridge Wells, Weald of Kent) will be affected by the decision to amend the eligibility criteria for the Winter Fuel Payment. This is based on February 2024 Pension Credit statistics which are available via [DWP Stat-Xplore](#) and the [Winter Fuel Payment statistics for winter 2023 to 2024 - GOV.UK](#) (www.gov.uk).

This estimation is calculated by subtracting the number of people claiming Pension Credit in each respective constituency from the number of Winter Fuel Payment recipients in the same constituency. It is possible to use the Pension Credit statistics, to give a minimum estimate of the number who may be eligible for Winter Fuel Payments. Therefore, the above estimation is essentially the number of Winter Fuel Payment recipients who are not claiming Pension Credit pre-policy change, as an estimate of those who will no longer receive the Winter Fuel Payment.

Please note that the above estimation would not take into account any potential increase in Pension Credit take-up that we might see as a result of the Government's Pension Credit Awareness Campaign. We do not have data on those additional Pension Credit claims by Parliamentary constituencies.

The published Pension Credit figures refer to households, so the number of individuals in respect of whom Pension Credit is paid will be higher (i.e. taking account of households where a claimant has a partner and / or dependents).

In addition, while Pension Credit claimants constitute the majority of those that will be eligible for the Winter Fuel Payment, pensioners who claim other qualifying means-tested benefits will also be eligible for the Winter Fuel Payment. It is not, however, possible to include those on other qualifying means-tested benefits in these figures.

■ Working Conditions: Temperature**Alex Mayer:**[\[9984\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 18 July 2024 to Question 728 on Working Conditions: Temperature, when her Department plans to bring forward proposals for consultation on workplace temperatures.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The government remains committed to modernising health and safety guidance, including addressing workplace temperatures. In 'Next steps to Make Work Pay' published on 10 October the government acknowledged that some reforms will take longer to undertake and implement. We have committed to bring forward this review in due course.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

CABINET OFFICE

■ Progress to Implement the UK Biological Security Strategy

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Pat McFadden):

[\[HCWS161\]](#)

I want to update the House on the implementation of the 2023 UK Biological Security Strategy. The Strategy's ambition is to ensure that by 2030, the UK is resilient to a spectrum of biological threats and a world leader in responsible innovation.

In adopting the Strategy, this Government has reaffirmed the UK's commitment to improving our preparedness for future pandemics and infectious disease outbreaks, countering proliferation of biological weapons and mitigating the risks of biological accidents and incidents, prioritising a holistic approach to developing national capabilities to shore up our defences, and learning and applying lessons from COVID-19.

Over the past year, the Strategy has delivered impact across short, medium and longer term commitments, including:

- Delivering system-wide leadership across the UK including by establishing a lead Minister, Senior Responsible Owner and a dedicated team in the Cabinet Office;
- Enhancing the UK's early warning capabilities, including a prototype Biothreats Radar and pilots for a new National Biosurveillance Network;
- A new UK Biosecurity Leadership Council, bringing government together with business and academic leaders, developing responsible innovation practices and policies with the biotech sector;
- Publishing voluntary screening guidance for providers and users of synthetic nucleic acid to guide use for legitimate purposes, whilst also mitigating risks of malicious or accidental misuse;
- A new UK-wide Microbial Forensics Consortium to develop new tools and capabilities to attribute biological incidents and deter the use of biological weapons;
- Funding for the International Biosecurity Programme which supports international projects to enhance global biosafety and biosecurity, reducing deliberate and naturally occurring biological risks to the UK;
- Building new standing capabilities to carry out sensitive testing of biological risks in AI models;
- Establishing a Chief Scientific Advisers group dedicated to Chemical, Biological and Radiological Security to provide holistic, expert advice to underpin policy development and delivery;
- Launching the US-UK Strategic Dialogue on Biological Security, reflecting our shared ambition and approach to protect against a growing and diverse spectrum of biological threats.

To get ahead of future threats, we need to continue to innovate to understand, prevent, detect and respond to biological threats. We will ensure that we have the capabilities we need to protect the public from a spectrum of biological threats, no matter how they occur and no matter who or what they affect.

■ **Update on Interim Compensation Payments for Victims of Infected Blood**

Pay Master General and Minister for the Cabinet Office (Nick Thomas-Symonds):
[\[HCWS164\]](#)

In May, the Infected Blood Inquiry produced its final report and the country heard the full extent to which thousands of men, women, and children had their lives overturned by the use of infected blood and blood products in the NHS. The infected blood scandal is a shameful mark on our national history. I would like to pay tribute to the courage and determination of every single person that has suffered because of the use of infected blood and to those who have taken tireless action to ensure their community is heard. Every death that results from the infected blood scandal is a tragedy, and this Government is committed to acting on the findings of the Infected Blood Inquiry to ensure swift resolution for all of those impacted.

The principal recommendation from the Infected Blood Inquiry was that the Government compensation scheme for victims of infected blood should be established 'now'. The Infected Blood Compensation Scheme was legally established for people who are infected and claiming compensation through the Core Route in regulations laid on 23 August. We expect the Infected Blood Compensation Authority to begin making payments to people who are infected by the end of this year, and last week the Infected Blood Compensation Authority reached out to the very first claimants under the Scheme. However there is still more to do. Subject to Parliamentary approval, the Government is aiming for a second set of regulations to be in force by 31 March 2025. This will support our shared aim to begin payments to people who are affected in 2025.

The Government also recognises that people have waited far too long for compensation payments. That's why interim payments are crucial for supporting people until the Infected Blood Compensation Authority is up and running. In October 2022, interim payments of £100,000 were made to living infected beneficiaries or bereaved partners registered with the Infected Blood Support Schemes. In June this year, further interim payments of £210,000 were made to living infected victims of infected blood. Through these interim payments, over £1 billion has been paid to people who are infected or their bereaved partners.

The Victims and Prisoners Act 2024 placed a statutory duty on the Government to deliver interim payments of £100,000 to estates for deaths not yet recognised through financial compensation. This followed the recommendation in Sir Robert Francis' Compensation Framework Study that interim payments should be made to "to recognise the deaths of people to date unrecognised and thereby alleviate immediate suffering" and achieves the spirit of recommendation 12 of the Infected Blood Inquiry's Second Interim Report in the most practicable way.

On 26 July, I informed the House that the applications for interim payments due to be made to estates of deceased infected persons were scheduled to open in October, and that further details were to follow. Today, I can announce that the process under which estates can apply for interim compensation payments has now opened. For many people, this is the first substantial compensation payment they will benefit from to recognise the lives of people they have lost as a result of the use of infected blood and blood products.

This is a £100,000 interim payment, and as with any compensation payment related to infected blood, it will be exempt from income tax, capital gains tax and inheritance tax and disregarded from means tested benefit assessments.

As with the previous interim payments, these payments will be delivered through the existing Infected Blood Support Schemes. These payments are to be made to the estates of deceased infected persons, where interim payments have not already been received, in those cases where the deceased infected person was registered with an existing or predecessor scheme on or before 17 April 2024.

Those who were not registered with an existing or predecessor scheme on or before this date may still be eligible for compensation. For these cases, estate representatives will need to apply to claim compensation with the Infected Blood Compensation Authority, once applications open. I will provide a further update on this in due course.

Where an interim compensation payment has already been made directly to the infected person, to their bereaved partner, or their estate, an estate will be ineligible for this interim payment.

Only the personal representative of the estate is able to make the application. Applicants will need a grant of probate, letters of administration, or a grant of confirmation (specific to Scotland) to evidence entitlement to claim interim compensation on behalf of the estate. To assist the legal process of obtaining this evidence as quickly as possible (for those that do not already have it), applicants can claim back their exact legal costs up to £1,500.

The application form is available to download online at gov.uk, together with full guidance on how to apply. Applicants may request a hard copy of the application form from the UK Infected Blood Support Scheme operating in the nation of the UK where the deceased infected person was infected. The completed form and supporting documents should be sent to the relevant Infected Blood Support Scheme.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ The Internet Television Equipment Regulations 2024

Minister for Sport, Media, Civil Society and Youth (Stephanie Peacock):
[\[HCWS166\]](#)

The Media Act 2024 - which received royal assent on 24 May 2024 - introduces a new online prominence regime. This regime will require particular TV platforms (referred to in

the Act as “regulated television selection services”) to give prominence to designated PSB services (referred to as “designated internet programme services”).

Today the Government has laid the first statutory instrument which will start the implementation process of this new regime.

In particular, these regulations specify which categories of TV devices are to be considered as “internet television equipment” for the purposes of this new prominence framework. This is the first step required to start the designation process.

The next step is for a further set of regulations to be developed, following advice from Ofcom, and establishing which television selection services – used in conjunction with internet television equipment – should be regulated under the new prominence regime.

The purpose of this approach is to ensure regulation is both targeted and proportionate, and, in particular, that only those devices used by a significant number of UK viewers as a main way of accessing TV will be captured.

The regulations laid today specify smart TVs and streaming devices, including set-top boxes and streaming sticks, as internet television equipment.

However, the Government recognises that, as viewing habits change and new technology emerges, the devices considered internet television equipment may change in the future. Therefore, we will review the list a year after implementation to ensure it remains fit-for-purpose.

[The Internet Television Equipment Regulations 2024](#) have been published on legislation.gov.uk and an [accompanying policy statement](#) has been published on GOV.UK.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Sudan

Minister for Development (Anneliese Dodds):

[\[HCWS165\]](#)

I would like to update on the situation in Sudan since the outbreak of conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in April last year. 18 months on, this senseless war has triggered a humanitarian catastrophe and led to the world’s largest displacement crisis.

More than 24 million people, over half of Sudan’s population are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance. In August, a determination was made that famine existed in Zamzam Camp for Internally Displaced People, where 500,000 people live, it is also likely to exist elsewhere across Sudan. This is just the third time such a determination has been made in the 21st century. The situation has been exacerbated by deliberate efforts by the warring parties to obstruct aid reaching those who need it the most. Health systems have been decimated, and disease outbreaks continue to spread unchecked.

On 6 September 2024, the UN-mandated Fact Finding Mission in Sudan released its inaugural report, highlighting the unprecedented scale of atrocities committed by the warring

parties against civilians, in particular in Darfur. Women and girls are subject to rape and sexual violence. Houses are being burnt to the ground. People's livelihoods are being destroyed.

Over 10 million people have been forced to flee their homes, with many seeking refuge in neighbouring countries facing their own crises, such as Chad and South Sudan.

In August I visited South Sudan, where I saw first-hand the harrowing consequences of the conflict. I spoke to many of the refugees and returnees who had fled violence in Sudan and heard how the UK can work to better respond to the obvious regional implications of the conflict.

The UK continues to work relentlessly to ensure that the international community does not turn its back on Sudan,

On 9 September 2024, in our role as one of the co-leaders of the UN Human Rights Council Core Group on Sudan, the UK led the adoption of a resolution to extend the work of the independent Fact-Finding Mission on Sudan. This mission is critical to documenting, reporting and investigating evidence of human rights abuses and war crimes by all parties, and ensuring that those responsible for unimaginable suffering are held accountable.

In collaboration with our international partners, the UK was able to successfully extend the vote margin in favour of this critical mission. It is notable that a greater number of African states supported the extension of the mission this year. This underlines the growing global consensus that the situation in Sudan requires sustained international attention. We are committed to ensuring that the Fact-Finding Mission gains the access it needs to Sudan to investigate properly, and continues to provide the evidence needed to bring justice to the victims of this brutal conflict.

On 26 September 2024, as world leaders gathered in New York for the UN General Assembly, the Minister for Africa hosted an event with his Dutch and Swiss counterparts to discuss the alarming rates of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) in Sudan and the inadequacy of current responses. This event spotlighted the situation for women and girls on the ground, ensured a platform for Sudanese civil society figures, explored the gaps in the ongoing response to CRSV in detail, considered the role of the international community in supporting and facilitating local and women-led efforts and highlighted the urgent need for accountability.

In response to the obstruction of aid by the warring parties, the UK has convened international partners to build pressure on the warring parties to increase aid routes both into Sudan and across lines of conflict. At the UN General Assembly, I made the UK's position clear: starvation as a method of warfare is a war crime. On 18 October 2024, the UK led a joint statement with 10 other donors to condemn the obstruction of humanitarian efforts and call upon the warring parties to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law.

The UK remains a committed donor to Sudan and has spent £113.5 million this financial year in response to the conflict in Sudan and the resultant regional refugee crisis. This

includes our bilateral Official Development Assistance (ODA) to Sudan, which stands at £97 million, together with our support to Sudanese refugees in neighbouring countries in Chad, South Sudan and Libya.

Looking ahead, the UK will assume the Presidency of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in November 2024. During our presidency, we will convene UNSC members for a debate on Sudan. This will focus on translating the United Nations Secretary-General's recommendations on protecting civilians, as requested in UNSC Resolution 2736, into tangible action.

As the Prime Minister noted in his UNGA remarks, the situation in Sudan remains one of the world's most pressing humanitarian emergencies.

The UK's response remains robust, and unwavering. We will continue to work through the United Nations, the Human Rights Council, and other international forums to push for peace, accountability, and humanitarian relief. The people of Sudan deserve a future free from violence and oppression, and we are committed to supporting them in their pursuit of peace, dignity and justice.

HOME OFFICE

■ Windrush

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Yvette Cooper): [\[HCWS167\]](#)

The Windrush scandal saw Windrush and Commonwealth communities who have the right to live in this country victimised because they were unable to prove that right through no fault of their own. However, the justice and change victims deserved has not been delivered and there are some still waiting for the compensation they are due.

I want to update the House on the Government's progress in fulfilling our Manifesto commitment to the Windrush Generation, ensuring they receive the support they deserve quickly and efficiently. Additionally, we are reigniting the vital transformation work from the Wendy Williams Windrush Lessons Learned Review to embed lasting changes in how the Department serves all communities.

We are establishing a Windrush Commissioner; an independent advocate for all those affected. This role will oversee the compensation scheme's delivery, the implementation of the Windrush Lessons Learned Review, and act as a trusted voice for families and communities, driving improvements and promoting lasting change.

As promised, we have re-established a Windrush Unit in the Home Office reporting to the Departmental Ethics Adviser and dedicated to driving forward the action needed to ensure that what happened to the Windrush generation can never happen again to any part of our society. The new unit stands ready to support the Windrush Commissioner when appointed.

This renewed work and the recruitment of a dedicated Windrush Commissioner must drive enduring change that matters to the Windrush community and has wider impact across the whole department and across Government.

Regarding the Windrush Compensation Scheme, during the lead-up to the general election, we frequently heard from the community and stakeholders that the application process is too complicated, and the available support for making a claim is inadequate. This is discouraging some people from seeking the compensation they deserve. To address this, we are injecting a £1.5m spend into a program of grant funding for organisations to provide essential advocacy and support for applicants who need additional help with the application process, ensuring claimants feel supported. For many, filing a claim is intimidating and requires them to revisit past traumas. By sharing their experiences with impartial community members, we want to make this process as supportive as possible. This assistance will be offered alongside but separate from existing claims support, giving claimants flexibility and choice regarding the type of help they want and where they can access it.

We are also rapidly reviewing the issue of private and occupational pensions losses which has caused real frustration and concern.

Finally, this government is determined to hear first-hand and to learn from the Windrush generation and their families. We know for some the hurt and trauma is too much. But, as we look to turn the page and embark on the reset we promised in opposition, we want those who want and are able to tell their story to be heard.

Only by hearing and reflecting on the impact that policy making had and continues to have on theirs and their families' lives, can government ensure that we never let such an injustice happen again.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

■ Transfer of regulatory responsibility and staff from the Phone-paid Services Authority to Ofcom

Minister of State for Data Protection and Telecoms (Chris Bryant): [\[HCWS163\]](#)

Premium rate services will be familiar to anyone who watches prime time Saturday night television, enters competitions on the radio or donates to charity via their phone.

Premium rate services are provided where goods or services are charged to one's telephone bill and include premium rate phone calls, for example, to directory enquiries.

Premium rate services are used by millions of people, but the ability to simply text or make a call and be charged a potentially significant sum for such a small act makes these services prone to abuse, and therefore requires proportionate regulation.

The Phone-paid Services Authority (PSA), under different names including the Independent Committee for the Supervision of Standards of the Telephone Information Services (ICSTIS) and Phonepay Plus, has been the regulator of the premium rate services sector since 1986. It has been largely successful in discharging its duties and establishing a compliant and productive market. However – like much of the telecoms landscape – the premium rate services sector and the role of the regulator has changed since the mid-1980s.

Where once the PSA's focus was largely on setting standards for the providers of premium rate services, such as information lines and chat lines, the scope of the regulator's remit has grown significantly. Consumers are now also able to pay for subscription streaming services, purchase apps and give money to charity via text message with the charges being added to their phone bills. The sector has evolved and continues to evolve, and so must its regulation if consumers are to remain protected into the future.

The government will be laying *The Regulation of Premium Rate Services Order 2024 (SI 2024/1046)* a statutory instrument to confer the regulatory functions of the kind exercised until now by the PSA on Ofcom. This decision reflects the continued commitment to streamline regulatory oversight, enhance consumer protections and ensure the efficiency and coherence of our regulatory framework.

The transfer of regulatory responsibility will lead to the closure of the PSA, which is a private company, and Ofcom's assumption of direct day-to-day regulatory oversight of the premium rate services sector. To ensure consistency, the *Regulation of Premium Rate Services Order 2024* largely replicates the existing Code of Practice '(currently on its fifteenth version)' which governs the sector. However, the Order makes a number of minor changes including extending requirements to all PRS providers to take steps to identify and mitigate risks posed by their services to those who are vulnerable.

To ensure that the specialist and dedicated staff of the PSA are retained and able to continue in their work, the Government will be laying *The Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) (Transfer of Staff to the Office of Communications) Regulations 2024 (SI 2024/1047)*, a statutory instrument to ensure that the employment of the staff continues, and they are not disadvantaged by the transfer. PSA employees have been consulted about the transfer.

We recognise the significant contributions made by the PSA in safeguarding consumers to date. However, the time has come for a more integrated approach, and we believe this consolidation is the right step to ensure the regulatory framework is fit for purpose in the digital age.

I will provide further updates to the House as we progress with this transition. We remain committed to ensuring a smooth handover and maintaining the highest standards for consumer protection throughout the process.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) Annual Report and Accounts 2023-2024

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Transformation) (Andrew Western):

[\[HCWS162\]](#)

Later today I will lay before this House the Office for Nuclear Regulation Annual Report and Accounts 2023-2024. This document will also be published on the ONR website.

I can confirm, in accordance with Schedule 7, Section 25(3) of the Energy Act 2013, that there have been no exclusions to the published document on the grounds of national security.