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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

ATTORNEY GENERAL

■ Attorney General: Buildings

Sir Ashley Fox:

[9603]

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

Sarah Sackman:

Heads of Department have agreed that 60% minimum office attendance for most staff continues to be the best balance of working for the Civil Service. Office occupancy data for the period July - September has been published, with further publications to now happen on a quarterly basis. The data is published here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-service-hq-occupancy-data>.

■ Insolvency: Assets

Torsten Bell:

[9653]

To ask the Solicitor General, how many registered freehold titles in England and Wales are vested in the Crown as bona vacantia as a consequence of companies being dissolved through (a) striking off by the Registrar of Companies and (b) a formal liquidation process.

Sarah Sackman:

The Bona Vacantia Division ("the Division") of the Government Legal Department acts on behalf of the Treasury Solicitor (the Crown's Nominee for bona vacantia).

The Division is currently dealing with 380 freehold titles which appear to have vested as bona vacantia following dissolution via striking off by the Registrar of Companies or formal liquidation.

Freehold titles from companies dissolved following liquidation are less likely to vest as bona vacantia as they are normally disposed of prior to dissolution by the Insolvency Practitioner.

BUSINESS AND TRADE

■ Foreign Investment in UK: Northern Ireland

Sorcha Eastwood:

[9563]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the press release entitled Record-breaking International Investment Summit secures £63 billion and nearly 38,000 jobs for the UK, published on 14 October 2024, whether she has made an

assessment with Cabinet colleagues of the proportion of (a) that investment that will be disbursed in and (b) those jobs that will be created in Northern Ireland.

Sarah Jones:

The International Investment Summit on the 14th October sought to drive investment across the entirety of the UK. The announcement on 8th of October by bus operator Go Ahead, saw £500 million investment, supporting up to 500 UK manufacturing jobs, to decarbonise its fleet, including creating a new dedicated manufacturing line and partnership with Northern Ireland based bus manufacturer Wrightbus.

Furthermore, this investment will accelerate the transition to greener buses across the country including in Plymouth, Gloucestershire, East Yorkshire, London and the Isle of Wight.

■ **Hospitality Industry: Environment Protection**

Paul Davies:

[\[10019\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether his Department is taking steps to increase green investment in the hospitality industry.

Gareth Thomas:

The Department is working with the hospitality sector through the Hospitality Sector Council to help businesses become more environmentally sustainable. This includes producing energy saving guidance for small businesses, helping small operators understand how to reach net zero, and creating a toolkit to improve the sector's biodiversity footprint.

We are also working closely with Defra and DESNZ on how to increase green investment in the industry.

■ **Post Offices**

David Mundell:

[\[8783\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how many and what proportion of branches within the Post Office network are provided by mobile services.

Gareth Thomas:

There are over 11,500 post office branches in the UK. The Government-set Access Criteria ensures that however the network changes, services remain within local reach of all citizens.

Due to lack of premises or retailers within particular areas, permanent solutions are however not always possible. In these communities, outreach branches ensure customers are not left behind and can continue to access Post Office services. Post Office's 2023 Annual Network Report shows that 16.5% (1,924) of the total 11,684 branches are outreach branches.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Arts and Community Centres: West Dorset**

Edward Morello: [\[9637\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to support rural (a) arts venues and (b) community centres in West Dorset constituency.

Edward Morello: [\[9639\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will increase funding for arts centres in West Dorset constituency to help ensure their financial stability.

Chris Bryant:

This government is committed to supporting culture, and making sure that arts and cultural activities will no longer be the preserve of a privileged few. We are working with Arts Council England and others to understand what the challenges and opportunities are for our sectors.

The government supports the arts predominantly through Arts Council England (ACE) funding. They play a hugely important role in developing the arts in England and are also responsible for funding and promoting the arts. ACE's open funding programme, National Lottery Project Grants, is currently accessible to organisations and individuals across the country, including those in West Dorset. This programme provides over £100 million of support annually to individuals and organisations.

In addition, Local Authorities remain one of the largest funders of arts and culture in England, and DCMS will continue to advocate and help local decision-makers understand and recognise the benefits that the arts can bring.

■ Public Libraries: Finance

Andrew Rosindell: [\[8767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to help local authorities fund public libraries.

Chris Bryant:

Public libraries are funded by local authorities and each local authority is responsible for assessing the needs of their local communities and designing a library service to meet those needs within available resources.

I will work with my colleagues in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to get local government back on its feet after fourteen years of savage and drastic underfunding. We will do the basics right, providing councils with more stability through multi-year funding settlements and ending unnecessarily expensive competitive bidding for tiny pots of money.

■ Tickets: Touting**Helen Grant:**[\[9432\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, when she plans to launch her consultation on secondary ticketing and dynamic pricing.

Chris Bryant:

This autumn.

■ Tourism: Taxation**John Lamont:**[\[9749\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will commission an impact study on the potential impact of visitor levies on levels of inbound tourism.

Chris Bryant:

The Chancellor continually keeps the tax system under review.

DEFENCE**■ Future Combat Air System****James Cartlidge:**[\[9486\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 15 October 2024 to Question 7503 on Future Combat Air System, if he will set out the details of the capability and other expenditure areas accounted for in the £160m figure stated.

Maria Eagle:

The reduced in year expenditure is not a result of changes to the military capability being developed by the FCAS/GCAP programme. It is a combination of an accounting treatment change, work on the combat aircraft demonstrator project that was carried out ahead of schedule in the previous financial year and revised plans for the delivery of infrastructure and other programme enablers.

■ Germany: Armed Forces**John McDonnell:**[\[9405\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Ministry of Defence personnel were based in Germany on 16 October 2024, broken down by location.

John McDonnell:[\[9406\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Ministry of Defence personnel were based in Germany in each year since 2000.

Luke Pollard:

The number of Ministry of Defence (MOD) Personnel, by location, as at 1 July 2024 can be found below.

TOTAL MOD PERSONNEL	1,230
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by region:

North Rheine - Westphalia	410
Bavaria	70
Elsewhere/Unspecified	750

1. MOD Personnel includes UK Armed Forces Regulars, MOD Civil Servants and Locally Engaged Civilians.
2. The figures are based on service personnel's stationed location and not their location of residence. Personnel deployed on operations to an area away from their stationed location are shown against their most recent stationed location. The Royal Navy/Royal Marines personnel on sea service are included against the country containing the home port of their ship.
3. Figures by location can only be provided as at 1 July 2024, rather than 16 October 2024, in line with published statistics.
4. Elsewhere/ Unspecified includes all regions where there are a small number of personnel to prevent inadvertent disclosure and personnel where their exact location is unspecified. This also includes Locally Engaged Civilians, as location data below country level is not available for this cohort.

The numbers of MOD Personnel stationed in Germany, 1 April 2007 - 1 April 2024 can be found below.

DATE	MOD PERSONNEL
01 April 2007	30,380
01 April 2008	29,490
01 April 2009	26,550
01 April 2010	26,130
01 April 2011	24,710
01 April 2012	22,790
01 April 2013	20,140
01 April 2014	17,200
01 April 2015	12,870
01 April 2016	7,240

DATE	MOD PERSONNEL
01 April 2017	5,580
01 April 2018	5,240
01 April 2019	4,410
01 April 2020	1,250
01 April 2021	1,130
01 April 2022	1,150
01 April 2023	1,180
01 April 2024	1,200

Notes/caveats

1. MOD Personnel includes UK Armed Forces Regulars, MOD Civil Servants and Locally Engaged Civilians.
2. The figures are based on service personnel's stationed location and not their location of residence. Personnel deployed on operations to an area away from their stationed location are shown against their most recent stationed location. The Royal Navy/Royal Marines personnel on sea service are included against the country containing the home port of their ship.
3. Data prior to 1 April 2007 is not held.

■ Strategic Defence Review

James Cartlidge: [\[9502\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, on how many occasions he has met with Lord Robertson of Port Ellen to discuss the Chagos Islands in the context of the Strategic Defence Review since 5 July 2024.

Luke Pollard:

The Defence Secretary meets Lord Robertson of Port Ellen regularly to discuss matters relevant to, and receive updates on, the Strategic Defence Review.

EDUCATION

■ Academies: Special Educational Needs

Jodie Gosling: [\[R\] \[9804\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of (a) ensuring that academy schools publish full SEND information reports and (b) sanctioning schools that do not.

Catherine McKinnell:

Maintained and Academy schools are required to publish special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) information reports according to the Children and Families Act 2014, s69. The specific information required is set out in the SEND regulations 2014 and the SEND code of practice, which can be found here:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/6/part/3> and here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25>.

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

■ Apprentices and Vocational Education**James McMurdock:****[9599]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to promote technical courses and apprenticeships.

Janet Daby:

In September 2024, the department launched a new phase of its 'It all starts with skills' campaign. The campaign aims to motivate and equip young people, adults and businesses to make informed choices about skills and technical education opportunities.

Inspiring action, the campaign promotes a range of skills and technical education programmes, including apprenticeships, T Levels, Skills Bootcamps, Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs), Free Courses for Jobs, Multiply, essential skills (English, mathematics and digital) and support and advice from the National Careers Service.

The department has strengthened provider access legislation to require schools to give students at least six opportunities during years 8 to 13 to meet providers of apprenticeships or technical education. The department funds the Apprenticeships Support and Knowledge (ASK) programme to actively promote apprenticeships, T Levels and higher technical qualifications to year 10 to 13 students, parents, teachers and careers advisers. Over the last eight years the ASK programme has reached over 3 million students, over 230,000 parents and 100,000 teachers.

The government is also committed to supporting the continued roll-out of T Levels to ensure young people have a choice of high quality options post-16. The department's T Level ambassador network continues to champion the T Level programme with members sharing their experiences and passion for technical education. The network now stands at over 700 members including employers, providers, students and other organisations.

■ Educational Institutions: Mental Health Services

Yasmin Qureshi: [\[9423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to embed a Whole Education Approach to mental health and wellbeing in all education settings.

Stuart Andrew: [\[9442\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to embed a Whole Education Approach to mental health and wellbeing in all education settings.

Charlotte Nichols: [\[9671\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to embed a Whole Education Approach to mental health and wellbeing in all education settings.

Stephen Morgan:

The government is committed to improving mental health outcomes for all children and young people, as this is critical to breaking down barriers to opportunity and learning.

The department, along with the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, provides guidance to schools and colleges on a whole school or college approach to promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing, which can be found here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/614cc965d3bf7f718518029c/Promoting_children_and_young_people_s_mental_health_and_wellbeing.pdf. The department has also provided a free to access resource hub for mental health leads, which can be found here: <https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/whole-school-or-college-resources/>.

Over 70% of all schools and colleges have accessed grants from the department to train a senior mental health lead, who develops their knowledge and skills to embed a whole school or college approach to mental health and wellbeing. Information is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/senior-mental-health-lead-training>. In addition, as of April 2024, Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs) cover 44% (4.2 million) of pupils in schools and learners in further education (FE) in England. Coverage of MHSTs is expected to cover at least 50% by the end of March 2025.

A key part of our approach is ensuring the right support is available to every young person that needs it, which is why we have committed to provide access to specialist mental health professionals in every school. The government will also be putting in place new Young Futures hubs, including access to mental health support workers, and will recruit an additional 8,500 new mental health staff to treat children and adults.

For early years settings, the early years foundation stage (EYFS) statutory framework sets the standards and requirements that all early years providers must meet to ensure that children have the best start in life and are kept healthy and safe. The EYFS statutory framework can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework-2>.

The department works closely with the FE sector to support providers to develop and implement a whole college approach to mental health and wellbeing. This is supported by the Association of Colleges refreshed Mental Health and Wellbeing Charter, which was published in March 2024.

To raise standards in the higher education sector, the Office for Students has provided £400,000 of funding to the student mental health charity, Student Minds. This has enabled significant expansion of the University Mental Health Charter Programme, with 113 universities now signed up. The programme helps universities to adopt a whole institution approach to mental health.

■ Educational Psychology: Labour Turnover and Recruitment

Dr Ben Spencer:

[9783]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to (a) train, (b) recruit and (c) retain educational psychologists.

Catherine McKinnell:

Educational psychologists play a critical role in the support available to children and young people, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). However, the department knows that current workforce shortages are a barrier to delivering its ambition for an inclusive mainstream education system.

Whilst it is the responsibility of local authorities, as employers, to recruit to their educational psychology services, the department is taking measures to support these services by investing in building the training pipeline.

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

Following graduation, trainees who have had their training funded by the department are required to remain in local authority employment for a minimum period. To support local authority services to recruit and retain their educational psychology workforce, this requirement will increase to three years for those trainees beginning their course this year. This will allow local authority services to benefit from the public investment in training and will support their delivery of statutory assessments and wider work.

■ Further Education: Rural Areas

Stuart Anderson:

[9626]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of resources to support the further education sector in (a) South Shropshire and (b) other rural areas.

Janet Daby:

Further education (FE) plays a critical role in delivering the government's missions and ensuring that everyone has access to the opportunities they need, breaking down the barriers to their success and boosting economic growth.

FE funding, including the adequacy of resources across the country including South Shropshire and other rural areas, will be considered as part of the Spending Review.

Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023**Damian Hinds:**[\[9426\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to her Written Statement of 26 July 2024 on Higher Education Regulation Update, HCWS26, when she plans to confirm her long term plans for the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023.

Janet Daby:

This government took the decision to pause the implementation of further parts of the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act to ensure that it is workable in practice and that the impacts of the Act on providers, staff, students' unions and minority groups are fully considered.

The department is continuing to meet with a full range of stakeholders, including groups of academics supporting provisions of the Act, minority groups and unions representing staff and students. This will feed into decision making on the future of the Act and this government's longer-term policy on protecting freedom of speech across the higher education (HE) sector.

The department will confirm, as soon as possible, plans for the Act and long-term plans for continuing to secure freedom of speech in HE.

Literacy and Numeracy: Standards**Helen Whately:**[\[9745\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to help improve (a) (i) basic and (ii) general literacy and (b) (A) times tables and (B) general numeracy rates.

Catherine McKinnell:

High and rising school standards, with excellent foundations in reading, writing and mathematics, are at the heart of the government's mission to break down barriers to opportunity and give every child the best start in life. The government knows that increases in mathematics and English skills also benefit family life, children's development and education, civic participation, and have a positive impact on relationships between employees and employers.

The government has established an independent Curriculum and Assessment Review, covering ages 5 to 18. This is chaired by Professor Becky Francis CBE, an expert in education policy, including curriculum and social inequality. The review will look closely at the key challenges to attainment for young people, and the barriers

which hold children back from the opportunities and life chances they deserve. In particular, children who are socioeconomically disadvantaged, or with special educational needs or disabilities.

To support basic literacy from the early years, we are investing over £20 million in the Nuffield Early Language Intervention programme. This programme targets reception aged children needing extra support with their speech and language development and is proven to help them make four months of additional progress, and seven months of additional progress for those eligible for free school meals.

Additionally, programmes such as the English Hubs and Maths Hubs aim to improve the teaching of literacy and mathematics, as the department knows that the quality of teaching is the biggest educational factor in determining children's outcomes. All eligible year 4 pupils in England are required to take the multiplication table check which is an on-screen assessment testing pupils' ability to fluently recall their knowledge of multiplication tables up to 12 x 12. 29% of eligible children scored full marks in 2023 and the average attainment score was 20.2 marks out of 25.

The department's 'essential skills' legal entitlements funded through the adult skills fund provide the opportunity for fully funded study for eligible adults who do not have essential literacy and numeracy skills, up to and including Level 2.

■ Pupil Referral Units

Kim Johnson:

[9795]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answers of 14 October 2024 to Question 7569 on Special Educational Needs and Question 7570 on Pupil Referral Units, how many and what proportion of children who had been excluded from school were then registered at Pupil Referral Units by (a) sex, (b) ethnicity, (c) free school meals status and (d) region in each of the last 10 years.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department does not currently hold statistics showing how many children who had been excluded from school were then registered at Pupil Referral Units.

However, there are legal duties on schools and local authorities to provide suitable full-time education from the sixth day of a suspension or permanent exclusion.

The duties on schools and local authorities to provide alternative provision, and the standards that this should meet, are also set out in statutory guidance. This guidance can be accessed here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/alternative-provision>.

■ Pupils: Autism

Jo Platt:

[9547]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to ensure that mainstream schools are (a) inclusive and (b) supportive of autistic pupils.

Catherine McKinnell:

For too long the education and care system has not met the needs of all children, particularly those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), with parents struggling to get their children the support they need and deserve. This government's ambition is that all children and young people with SEND or in alternative provision receive the right support to succeed in their education and as they move into adult life.

The department wants to drive a consistent and inclusive approach to supporting children and young people with SEND through early identification, effective support, high quality teaching and effective allocation of resources, regardless of whether they have a diagnosis. The department is strengthening the evidence base of what works to improve inclusive practice in mainstream settings and have recently commissioned evidence reviews from Newcastle University and University College London on this point.

In November 2023, the department announced the Partnerships for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS) programme. PINS brings together Integrated Care Boards, local authorities and schools, working in partnership with parents and carers, to support schools to better meet the needs of neurodiverse children and their families and enable an inclusive school environment. PINS deploys specialists from both health and education workforces into 10% of mainstream primary school settings (around 1680 schools). PINS will build teacher and staff capacity to identify and meet the needs of neurodiverse children, including those with speech and language needs, through whole-school interventions. The programme is being evaluated and the learning will inform future policy development around how schools support neurodiverse children.

The department also holds and funds the Universal SEND Services contract, which brings together SEND-specific continued professional development and offers support for the school and further education workforce. The programme aims to improve outcomes for children and young people, including those with autism. As part of the contract, the Autism Education Trust (AET) provides a range of training and support for staff on autism. Since the contract began in May 2022, over 185,000 professionals have received training from AET training partners.

■ Schools: Finance**Uma Kumaran:**[\[9857\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment she has made of the potential impact of falling pupil rolls on school budgets.

Catherine McKinnell:

The majority of school funding is driven by pupil numbers. As such, the department understands that falling rolls can have a significant impact on schools' budgets.

The lagged funding system, where schools are funded on the basis of their pupil numbers in the previous October census, helps to give schools more certainty over

funding levels to aid their planning and is particularly important in giving schools that see year-on-year reductions in their pupil numbers time to reorganise their costs before seeing the funding impact.

In addition, the department allocates falling rolls funding on the basis of the reduction in pupil numbers that local authorities experience each year. Local authorities can choose to operate a falling rolls fund to support schools which see a short-term fall in the number of pupils on roll.

The department will continue to keep the national funding formula under review, including the impact it has on schools with falling rolls.

■ Schools: Rural Areas

Helen Whately:

[\[9744\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that there are sufficient school places to meet demand in new housing developments in the countryside; and whether she is taking steps with the Secretary of State for Transport to ensure that there are sufficient buses to enable children in rural areas to travel to school.

Catherine McKinnell:

Local authorities are responsible for providing enough school places for children in their area. The department engages with local authorities on a regular basis to review their plans for creating additional primary and pre-16 secondary school places, and to consider alternatives where necessary. When local authorities are experiencing difficulties, the department offers support and advice.

The department provides capital funding through the Basic Need grant to support local authorities to provide school places, based on their own pupil forecasts and school capacity data. Nearly £1.5 billion of allocations have been confirmed to support local authorities to create school places needed over the current and next two academic years, up to and including the academic year starting in September 2026.

Developer contributions are also an important way of helping to meet demand for new school places when housing developments are increasing pupil numbers. It is for the Local Planning Authority (LPA) to secure developer contributions through section 106 agreements or through the Community Infrastructure Levy, and to decide on the local infrastructure needs that this contribution should support. The department would encourage LPAs to secure significant contributions for new school places and to work closely with colleagues planning school places in their area, including county councils when the local authority responsible for education is not the LPA.

Good local bus services are an essential part of prosperous and sustainable communities and provide access to schools and other services. This government has set out an action plan to deliver better bus services and drive opportunity across the country-served regions. The government will introduce the Buses Bill to put the power

over local bus services in the hands of local leaders to ensure networks can meet the needs of the communities who rely on them.

■ Schools: Uniforms

Satvir Kaur:

[\[10365\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of trends in the levels of cost of school uniforms for (a) primary and (b) high school children.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department recently published its latest research on the cost of school uniforms, surveying parents and carers of children aged 4 to 16 attending state-funded schools in England. The research report assessed the relative changes to the cost of school uniforms since the department's previous report in 2015. It is published at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cost-of-school-uniforms-survey-2023>.

The research found that the average total expenditure on school uniform, based on the items required in the 2023/24 academic year, was £249.58 compared with £279.51 for a similar period and adjusted for inflation in 2014/15. It was less expensive for parents or carers of children in primary schools (£217.65 for boys and £246.80 for girls) than for those with children in secondary schools (£266.14 for boys and £289.04 for girls).

Too many families still tell the department that the cost of school uniform remains a financial burden. That is why as part of the King's Speech we have 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:

[\[9579\]](#)

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 national standards for speech and language services.

Catherine McKinnell:

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

The department is committed to improving inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools, as well as ensuring special schools cater to those with the most complex needs, restoring parents' trust that their child will get the support they need. Whilst the department recognises the urgency and need to drive improvements, we are conscious that there are no quick fixes and want to take a considered approach to deliver sustainable education reform, including in relation to the introduction of national standards for speech and language services.

Supporting children's early language development is one of the department's key priorities. The department is funding continued support for the 11,100 schools

registered for the Nuffield Early Language Intervention programme during the 2024/25 academic year. In partnership with NHS England, the department is funding the Early Language and Support For Every Child (ELSEC) to trial new ways of working to earlier identify and support children with Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) in early years and primary schools, utilising therapy support assistants.

In further partnership with NHS England and the Department for Health and Social Care, this department is funding the Partnerships for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS) programme. PINS will build teacher and staff capacity to identify and meet the needs of neurodiverse children, including those with SLCN, through whole school interventions.

Finally, the department is funding evidence reviews from Newcastle University and University College London to highlight what the best available evidence suggests are the most effective tools and approaches to identify and support children and young people, age 0 to 25, with different types of needs including SLCN.

■ Students: Ukraine

Mohammad Yasin:

[9520]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of supporting further education institutions to offer (a) apprenticeship and (b) course placements to students on a Homes for Ukraine visa that may expire before the course conclusion.

Janet Daby:

In determining student eligibility for 16 to 19 funding, including for Ukrainians aged 16 to 19 living in the UK under the Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme (Homes for Ukraine), institutions must satisfy themselves that there is a reasonable likelihood that the student will be able to complete their study programme before seeking funding for the student. However, when a student applies for a study programme where their current legal permission to remain in the UK expires six months or more after they start, then institutions may allow them to enrol. The department considers it sufficient for institutions to rely on confirmation from the student, and/or family, that they intend to apply for the necessary extension to their permission to remain for the duration of their study programme.

The situation is similar for adult learners. Providers should only fund a learner if their visa has enough time for the learner to complete their course. However, where the learner's visa will expire before the end of the course, the provider can use their discretion to fund the learner where they have a high degree of certainty that the learner intends to renew their visa. The department would expect that individuals who are not yet eligible to apply for the Ukraine Permission Extension scheme, but intend to apply for it, would be eligible for funding under this rule.

The department's apprenticeship funding rules state that an individual must be able to complete the apprenticeship within the time they have available. Where the

learner's residency permit does not extend to the entire length of the apprenticeship, they are not eligible for funding. The department must be mindful when spending taxpayers' funds on training and it wants learners to be able to complete their apprenticeships within the time they have available. The department will keep this under review as it does with all of its rules.

■ Turing Scheme

Alex Burghart:

[9534]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will publish the most up-to-date figures for the (a) number of applications, (b) number of placements and (c) location of placements for the Turing Scheme.

Janet Daby:

The figures for the number of Turing Scheme applications and placements were recently published on GOV.UK and can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/turing-scheme-funding-and-assessment-outcomes-2024-to-2025>.

For the 2024/25 academic year, education providers and other eligible organisations from across the UK have been allocated over £105 million to send more than 43,000 students on study and work placements across the globe. Around 23,000 (53%) of these opportunities will be for participants from disadvantaged backgrounds.

More applications were successful this year than ever before, with significantly higher interest in the scheme from colleges and schools and more competitive, high quality applications overall.

The Turing Scheme received 755 applications, compared with 619 last year. 642 applications were successful, including 118 more schools than last year and 44 more further education providers, with participants expected to travel to over 160 destinations around the world.

With regard to the location of Turing Scheme placements, providers are currently in the process of replanning their placements following the announcement of finalised funding allocations. As such, the department is unable to currently confirm these details. However, it will publish further information on destinations in due course.

■ Universities: Scotland

Chris Kane:

[9649]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has had discussions with the university sector in Scotland on promoting Scottish universities internationally.

Janet Daby:

The new government is mission-led and will break down the barriers to opportunity to help make Britain the international home of opportunity. The UK government's International Education Champion Professor Sir Steve Smith regularly liaises with the university sector, including in Scotland, to promote education export growth for UK

universities. Representatives from Scottish universities have also joined several of his trade missions. Most recently, the University of Dundee and the University of Glasgow joined Professor Sir Steve on a higher education transnational education mission to Brazil. Professor Sir Steve's tenure as the UK government's International Education Champion has been extended to 1 October 2025 by this government.

Chris Kane:

[\[9664\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions she has had with her Scottish counterpart on supporting the university sector in Scotland to develop international operations.

Janet Daby:

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education has had initial engagement with her Scottish counterpart and looks forward to further collaboration with education Ministers from across the UK including at the UK Education Ministers Council next month in Belfast. This government supports the university sector in Scotland and the development of their international operations through the overseas engagements of the UK government's International Education Champion Professor Sir Steve Smith. Most recently, Professor Sir Steve led a higher education transnational education mission to Brazil with two Scottish universities in attendance, the University of Dundee and the University of Glasgow.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

■ Carbon Capture and Storage: Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Caroline Voaden:

[\[9873\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to his oral contribution in response to the hon. Member for South Devon during the Oral Statement of 7 October 2024 on Carbon Capture, Usage and Storage, Official Report, column 79, whether reviews of full-lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions for carbon capture and storage scheme projects will be completed before final investment decisions are taken on such projects.

Sarah Jones:

The Value for Money assessments already undertaken by the Department follow HMT guidelines in the appraisal of carbon abatement, comparing the emissions of the capture projects with and without CCUS technology. Hydrogen projects seeking support from Government are assessed in respect of their compliance with the Low Carbon Hydrogen Standard, developed to ensure hydrogen production contributes to our greenhouse gas emission reduction targets under the Climate Change Act.

■ Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: Buildings

Sir Ashley Fox: [\[9614\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, 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.

Michael Shanks:

There are 571 desks in 55 Whitehall and 3-8 Whitehall Place. The average daily building attendance between week commencing 16 September through to week commencing 7 October was 900. The average number of daily building attendees exceeds the number of desks due to usage of meeting rooms and other parts of the building.

Figures are provided for the Department's main London occupation at 55 Whitehall and 3-8 Whitehall Place only, which are two adjacent conjoined buildings, and the only office location where attendance figures enabling desk occupancy to be calculated are available, and which is occupied solely by the Department's staff.

■ Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: Civil Servants

Sir Ashley Fox: [\[9613\]](#)

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

Michael Shanks:

The number of civil servants assigned to the Department's office locations, and how many desks are available in each office location, are shown below:

LOCATION	HEADCOUNT	DESKS
Overall	4569	1688
Aberdeen, Crimon Place	101	62
Belfast, Erskine House	4	8
Birmingham, Victoria Square House	239	78
Bristol, Rivergate House	6	35
Cambridge, Eastbrook	1	1
Cardiff, Companies House	223	56
Darlington, Feethams House	124	43

LOCATION	HEADCOUNT	DESKS
Edinburgh, Queen Elizabeth House	176	86
Leeds, Wellington Place	2	3
London, 22-26 Whitehall	227	439
London, 55 Whitehall and 3-8 Whitehall Place	2969	571
London, Caxton House	41	30
London, Old Admiralty Building	28	35
Newcastle, Citygate	5	5
Nottingham, Apex Court	3	3
Salford, Trinity Bridge House	420	233

Notes:

In all locations except 55 Whitehall and 3-8 Whitehall Place, London and Old Admiralty Building, London, the Department's staff are located in shared spaces with the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology. The desk figures shown are for both Government departments.

■ **Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: Ministers' Private Offices**

Sir Ashley Fox:

[\[9615\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, 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.

Michael Shanks:

The Department is a customer of the Government Property Agency (GPA) at all its office locations. The office where the Department's ministers are located is a GPA Hub building, where GPA is the landlord and building manager and the Department is a tenant. GPA is responsible for the fit out, furnishing and refurbishment of all office spaces, which includes ministerial offices.

■ **Sizewell C Power Station: Finance**

Wera Hobhouse:

[\[9522\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, pursuant to the Answer of 14 October 2024 to Question 6413 on Sizewell C Power Station: Finance, for what

reason disclosure of the proportions of capital allocated by Sizewell C Ltd is considered commercially sensitive; and whether his Department holds that information.

Michael Shanks:

Sizewell C's spending plans are agreed by shareholders, including Government. The public disclosure of detailed spending plans whilst the project is engaged in live commercial negotiations could have a negative impact on the project's negotiating position and undermine the project's value for money.

Sizewell C Ltd publishes an annual report and accounts, which are available to view at Companies House. This sets out expenditure and income for each financial year.

The Department also includes information about amounts invested into the project via its annual report and accounts, which are published and laid before Parliament.

■ **Tidal Power**

Esther McVey:

[\[9447\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he plans to produce a feasibility study on tidal power.

Michael Shanks:

The UK possesses tremendous tidal resource and could play a role in balancing the intermittency of wind and solar generation as we transition towards clean power.

The UK remains the world leader in tidal stream generation technologies, with around half of the world's operational deployment of this situated in UK waters. On 3rd September 2024, the Government announced that six tidal stream contracts were secured with a joint capacity of 28MW in Contracts for Difference Allocation Round 6. The UK is on track to have over 130 MW of tidal stream capacity deployed by 2029.

The Government is also open to considering well-developed proposals for harnessing the tidal range energy in the bays and estuaries around our coastlines, including barrage schemes and other alternatives.

■ **Tidal Power: Investment**

Esther McVey:

[\[9446\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what plans he has to invest in tidal power.

Michael Shanks:

The UK possesses tremendous tidal resource and could play a role in balancing the intermittency of wind and solar generation as we transition towards a carbon-neutral power sector.

The UK remains the world leader in tidal stream generation technologies, with around half of the world's operational deployment of this situated in UK waters. On 3rd September 2024, the Government announced that six tidal stream contracts were

secured with a joint capacity of 28MW in Contracts for Difference Allocation Round 6. The UK is on track to have over 130 MW of tidal stream capacity deployed by 2029.

The Government is also open to considering well-developed proposals for harnessing the tidal range energy in the bays and estuaries around our coastlines, including barrage schemes and other alternatives.

■ Titanium Dioxide: Carbon Emissions

Melanie Onn:

[\[9482\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will take steps to provide support to (a) Tronox in Stallingborough and (b) other titanium dioxide pigment manufacturers on decarbonising their production processes.

Sarah Jones:

The Industrial Energy Transformation Fund (IETF) is a £500m grant fund programme which supports industrial sites with high energy use to transition to a low carbon future. The Government has encouraged applications to the IETF from the chemicals sector and chemicals sites have received support from the IETF. The outcomes of applications to Phase 3.1 of the IETF are waiting on the autumn fiscal event, so that they can be finalised and applicants can be informed.

■ Wind Power: Northern Ireland

Jim Shannon:

[\[9458\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what discussions he has had with large energy companies in Northern Ireland on funding for onshore wind farms in (a) Strangford and (b) rural areas.

Michael Shanks:

Energy policy is devolved to Northern Ireland but our ambition for onshore wind covers the UK and Northern Ireland will hopefully be a major contributor, already hosting a tenth of UK onshore wind capacity.

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

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**■ Agriculture: Government Assistance****Richard Tice:**[\[10340\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support farmers and the agricultural industry with (a) challenges related to fluctuating market prices, (b) improving access to modern technology and (c) ensuring the long-term sustainability of the sector.

Daniel Zeichner:

The UK agricultural sector is both robust and adaptable and operates in an open market with the value of commodities established by those in the supply chain. We have seen evidence of this particularly in recent years following global events such as the Covid-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine.

Recognising that farmers should always receive a fair price for their products, the Government is committed to tackling contractual unfairness wherever it exists.

Innovation is key in supporting our efforts to improve agricultural sustainability. The Government wants the UK to be a great place for technology innovators to start and grow their businesses, and access both domestic and international market adoption opportunities. We have already announced our intention to bring forward the secondary legislation needed to implement the Precision Breeding Act.

The Government is also fully committed to Environmental Land Management schemes and will optimise them so they produce the right outcomes for all farmers, while delivering food security and nature recovery in a just and equitable way.

Defra will continue to work closely with stakeholders from all farming sectors on the best way to support farmers and the agricultural industry over the long-term, designing our policies in partnership.

■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Departmental Responsibilities**Rupert Lowe:**[\[9995\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will arrange a meeting between the hon. Member for Great Yarmouth and the Minister of State for Food Security and Rural Affairs.

Daniel Zeichner:

My Defra private office handles all meeting requests. Please contact them directly to request a meeting.

■ Floods

Dr Ben Spencer:

[\[10155\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of Thames Water's operational response to flooding during Storm Henk (a) nationally and (b) in Surrey.

Emma Hardy:

Storm Henk was the eighth named storm of the 2023/24 flood season, with flood warnings across the country from 02 to 09 January. River flooding impacts were due to heavy rainfall falling on saturated catchments.

On 4 January, the impact from flooding in the Rive Mole, Surrey, resulted in Thames Water's Horley Wastewater Treatment Works discharging effluent into the surrounding area as the storm tanks overflowed.

The Government expects water and sewerage companies to take all possible measures to avoid pollution incidents and to mitigate environmental impact if they occur. If a water company is found to have breached their permit conditions, the Environment Agency will not hesitate to take action, in line with their enforcement and sanctions policy.

Looking ahead, Surrey County Council are in the process of preparing their reports for the Winter 2024 flooding, which will include a review of Thames Water's recent performance together with recommendations.

■ Food: Public Sector

Mary Kelly Foy:

[\[9660\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to publish a response to the consultation in 2022 on public sector food and catering policy.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Government is reviewing the policy. Our ambition, set out in our election manifesto, is for half of all food supplied into the public sector to be from local British producers, or certified to higher environmental standards whilst being in line with World Trade Organisation and domestic procurement obligations.

■ Water Companies: Climate Change

Clive Lewis:

[\[9485\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of requiring Ofwat to monitor climate adaptation and mitigation requirements for water companies.

Emma Hardy:

Under section 2 of The Water Industry Act 1991, Ofwat must carry out their statutory duties to further their resilience objectives: to secure the long-term resilience of water

companies' water supply and wastewater systems; and to secure that they take steps to enable them, in the long-term, to meet the need for water supplies and wastewater services.

Published on 11 July, Ofwat's draft determinations on water company investment from 2025-30 included a total expenditure of £88bn across the sector, including £6bn for climate adaptation measures such as securing water supplies, progressing 9 new reservoirs and developing 7 large-scale water transfer schemes.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Development Aid

Alex Easton: [\[9583\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will publish the amount of overseas aid allocated to each recipient country for the most recent financial year available.

Anneliese Dodds:

Annex A of the FCDO's Annual Report and Accounts 2023-2024 sets out the FCDO's Official Development Assistance (ODA) programming outturn for financial year 2023-24, including by country.

Ministers are currently reviewing the FCDO's ODA budget and will publish planned ODA allocations for 2024-25 in due course.

Rupert Lowe: [\[9843\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will commission a review of the (a) effectiveness of development aid and (b) proportion of such aid that does not reach its intended destination.

Anneliese Dodds:

This Government is committed to development effectiveness, transparency and scrutiny. Across the FCDO, robust systems and frameworks help ensure we achieve value for money, spend British taxpayers' money well, and that development assistance reaches its intended recipients.

The FCDO's high standards of programme delivery and risk management requires investigating any possible fraud, bribery and corruption, maintaining financial oversight of aid programmes, and formally reviewing aid programmes. The FCDO ensures our delivery partners have robust fraud policies in place and our due diligence assessments cover their ability to manage downstream partners.

The Development Review will propose how to maximise the impact of the FCDO's integrated development and diplomacy model and how we can improve assurance over our delivery of development aid.

■ International Law

Ellie Chowns: [\[7173\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of implications for his policies of the points of action in the statement entitled Experts warn international order on a knife's edge, urge States to comply with ICJ Advisory Opinion, published by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on 18 September 2024.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

We note the statement by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on 18 September. The UK is fully committed to the international order, international law and the international rules based order. We continue to consider the ICJ's Advisory Opinion carefully. We are of the clear view that Israel should bring an end to its presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territories as rapidly as possible - but we are clear that every effort must be made to create the conditions for negotiations towards the two-state solution. Our commitment to a two-state solution is unwavering. The UK abstained on the UN General Assembly resolution in September because it did not provide sufficient clarity to advance a negotiated two-state solution.

■ Myanmar: Humanitarian Aid

Luke Akehurst: [\[9645\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help increase levels of humanitarian aid into Myanmar.

Catherine West:

Since the coup in February 2021, the UK has provided more than £150 million for life-saving humanitarian assistance, healthcare, education and support for civil society and local communities in Myanmar. Most recently, the UK Government provided £1.3 million to help address the impact of the severe flooding in September.

The UK takes a multi-pronged approach to improving humanitarian aid and access: i) we work through channels including the UN Security Council and ASEAN to call for funding and unrestricted humanitarian access in Myanmar; and ii) the UK directs funding to local civil society organisations, overcoming humanitarian access restrictions to support the most vulnerable and hard to reach communities.

■ Sudan: Humanitarian Aid

Sarah Owen: [\[9641\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what (a) medical relief and (b) humanitarian aid his Department has provided to Sudan in the context of recent trends in the number of Cholera related deaths.

Anneliese Dodds:

The Sudan conflict has created the worst humanitarian crisis in the world with 24.8 million people in need of assistance. The UK is extremely concerned about the

increasing cases of cholera in Sudan with death rates from the outbreak surging up to three times the global average. The UK is responding through our humanitarian programmes in Sudan. The UK has spent £113.5 million this year in response to the conflict in Sudan and the resulting regional refugee crisis. As part of this funding, we support the Sudan Humanitarian Fund which provides flexible, multi-sector support to NGOs, including medical relief for the cholera outbreak.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ **Breast Cancer: Screening**

Paul Davies:

[\[10016\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to improve breast cancer screening in Colne Valley constituency.

Andrew Gwynne:

NHS England has developed a national plan in collaboration with key stakeholders, including Cancer Alliances, to improve uptake within the breast screening programme. The plan sets out the priorities and interventions, as well as the required monitoring of the impacts and outcomes to be achieved, to improve uptake through expanding access, data, analytics, contracting, communication, and IT developments, while reducing inequalities.

On a local level, the Kirklees Health and Care Partnership has worked with local public health services to collaborate with homes and neighbourhood housing, to identify areas of low uptake of breast, bowel, and cervical screening, and areas of deprivation combined with areas of council housing. This has resulted in homes and neighbourhood staff actively delivering a pilot focused on promoting the benefits and importance of screening. Working with tenants to understand their level of understanding of screening, their challenges, and the barriers to attendance, and working to overcome these barriers.

Local public health services have also recently launched a breast screening campaign titled Don't let it be you, which aims to encourage people eligible for breast screening to go for their screening, and not ignore their letter.

■ **Chickenpox: Vaccination**

Susan Murray:

[\[10391\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation statement on a childhood varicella (chickenpox) vaccination programme, published on 14 November 2023, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of adding varicella vaccinations to the childhood immunisation programme.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) recommended a universal varicella, also known as chickenpox, vaccination programme be introduced as part of the routine childhood schedule. This recommendation was based on an assessment of the estimated programme cost-effectiveness as well as cases of severe varicella that could be prevented. The JCVI's statement is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childhood-varicella-vaccination-programme-jcvi-advice-14-november-2023/jcvi-statement-on-a-childhood-varicella-chickenpox-vaccination-programme>

Ministers have accepted the JCVI's recommendation, and the Department is in discussions with NHS England and the UK Health Security Agency on the potential implementation of the recommendation.

■ Electronic Cigarettes and Tobacco**Sorcha Eastwood:****[10217]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to introduce the Tobacco and Vapes Bill.

Andrew Gwynne:

In the King's Speech on 17 July 2024, we committed to introducing the Tobacco and Vapes Bill in this parliamentary session. The bill will create the first smoke-free generation, gradually ending the sale of tobacco products as well as stopping vapes and other nicotine products from being branded and advertised to appeal to children. The bill will be the biggest public health intervention in a generation and pave the way for a smoke-free United Kingdom. It will be introduced to Parliament in due course.

■ Health Services: Women**Helen Grant:****[9435]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of women's health provision.

Karin Smyth:

The Women's Health Strategy call for evidence in 2021 received nearly 100,000 responses from individuals, and over 400 written submissions from expert groups and researchers. It identified a range of issues including women not feeling listened to by healthcare professionals, damaging taboos and stigmas in women's health that can prevent women from seeking help and that can reinforce beliefs that debilitating symptoms are normal, healthcare services not considering women's needs by default, and under-representation of women in research.

We are considering how to take forward the Women's Health Strategy for England. The Government is committed to prioritising women's health as we reform the National Health Service, and we will put women's equality at the heart of our missions.

■ Ovarian Cancer: Health Education

Rebecca Paul:

[\[10621\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to launch a campaign to raise public awareness of the symptoms of ovarian cancer.

Rebecca Paul:

[\[10622\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to ensure all women across England with ovarian cancer get access to the best possible treatment.

Karin Smyth:

NHS England runs the Help Us Help You campaigns to raise public awareness, increase knowledge of cancer symptoms, and address barriers to acting on them to encourage people to come forward as soon as possible to see their general practitioner. Previous phases of the campaigns have focused on abdominal symptoms which, among other abdominal cancers, can be indicative of ovarian cancer. The Department continues to work with NHS England to identify which tumour types future campaigns should focus on.

NHS England and other National Health Service organisations, nationally and locally, also publish information on the signs and symptoms of many different types of cancer, including ovarian cancer. This information can be found at various sources, including the NHS website.

To ensure women have access to the best treatment for ovarian cancer, NHS England commissioned an audit on ovarian cancer. The aim of the audit is to provide timely evidence for cancer service providers of where patterns of care in England may vary to increase consistency of access to treatments, and help stimulate improvements in cancer treatment and outcomes for patients.

The Department also invests in health research through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). The NIHR has funded six research projects into screening for ovarian cancer since 2018, with a combined total funding value of £3.8 million, including looking at the impact and effectiveness of different kinds of testing and screening, and the effectiveness of treatment options.

■ Pancreatic Enzyme Replacement Therapy: Shortages

Paul Davies:

[\[10329\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to introduce a national plan to tackle shortages of pancreatic enzyme replacement therapy.

Karin Smyth:

The Department has been working with suppliers to address current supply issues with Creon, which is a brand of pancreatic enzyme replacement therapy (PERT) used by patients with conditions such as cystic fibrosis and certain cancers including pancreatic cancer. The supply issues with Creon are impacting countries throughout Europe and have been caused by limited availability of raw ingredients and

manufacturing capacity constraints to produce volumes needed to meet demand. These issues have resulted in knock-on supply disruptions of alternative PERT medications. The Department is continuing to work with all suppliers of PERT to help resolve the supply issues in the short and longer term. This includes asking that they expedite deliveries, source stock from other markets, and increase production.

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

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

■ Shingles: Vaccination

Sojan Joseph:

[\[10273\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of ensuring that people aged between 65 and 70 who turned 65 before 1 September 2023 can access the shingles vaccine as soon as possible.

Andrew Gwynne:

[Holding answer 24 October 2024]: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave on 26 July 2024 to Question 1397.

HOME OFFICE

■ British Nationality: Ilois

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[9419\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people of Chagossian descent have taken British nationality since 2022.

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[9420\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people of Chagossian descent have applied for (a) British overseas territories and (b) British citizenship in the last five years for which data is available, broken down by the country in which each applicant lived at the time of application.

Seema Malhotra:

We are unable to provide this data as we do not record data relating to an individual's ancestry.

Whilst the BIOT (British Indian Oceans Territory) citizenship registration route was introduced in November 2022, there may be people of Chagossian descent who have applied outside of this route within the requested period and we would not be able to identify such cases.

■ Brook House Immigration Removal Centre

Neil O'Brien: [\[9768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her Department's timetable is for making a decision on whether to grant Brooke House College Market Harborough a student sponsor licence.

Seema Malhotra:

Institutions applying to join the Register of Student Sponsors usually receive a decision on their application within 8 weeks. UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) are not currently in receipt of such an application from Brooke House College at this time, and there is no decision outstanding in respect of Brooke House College's sponsor licence status.

■ Hare Coursing: Organised Crime

Jim Shannon: [\[9457\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent estimate she has made of the number of gangs that are involved in hare coursing.

Dame Diana Johnson:

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

The National Wildlife Crime Unit (NWCU), which the Government provides funding to, oversees the police national response to wildlife crime, including hare coursing. It provides bespoke analytics each year to the 32 forces that are signed up to Operation Galileo, which has resulted in a 40% reduction in hare coursing, and have been successful in disrupting and prosecuting organised crime groups.

The National Police Chiefs' Council's Wildlife and Rural Crime Strategy aims to target hare coursing through better preventative action, improved intelligence and enforcement.

Policing in Northern Ireland is a devolved matter.

■ Immigration Controls: Offenders

Richard Tice: [\[9675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure the adequacy of border checks in the context of criminality rules for applications

for entry clearance; and what recent assessment she has made of the effectiveness of border security measures.

Seema Malhotra:

Arriving passengers are examined by Border Force and checked against Home Office systems before being allowed into the UK. The system is used by Home Office staff for the purposes of national security and the detection and prevention of crime. It is longstanding policy not to discuss either the specific data held; the source of the data, nor how it is used, as to do so would be counterproductive and not in the public interest.

We have been clear that we will strengthen our border security. Resources are being redeployed to go after the organised criminal gangs who undermine our border security and put lives at risk in small boats. Our new Border Security Command will strengthen our global partnerships and enhance our efforts to investigate, arrest, and prosecute those who are facilitating the small boat crossings. The threats we face span geographic boundaries, and we will work closer with international partners, further developing the positive relationships already built by this Government.

■ **Offshore Industry: Migrant Workers**

Claire Hanna:

[\[9569\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to her Department's guidance entitled Offshore well boat workers: Immigration Rules concession 2022, updated on 24 January 2024, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of extending that concession to other business sectors.

Seema Malhotra:

Concessionary arrangements outside of the immigration rules are put in place where exceptional circumstances are demonstrated. They are always time limited and reviewed regularly. There are no plans to extend the existing concession beyond its original parameters.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ **Buildings: Safety**

Sir Oliver Dowden:

[\[9476\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that members of the Responsible Actors Scheme for developers are complying with their contractual obligations.

Alex Norris:

The department publishes quarterly updates on how each developer is performing, meets developers regularly and acts where performance falls short. Developers face significant consequences if they fail to comply with their contractual obligations.

■ High Rise Flats: Insulation

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[8200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the answer of 29 July 2024 to Question 815 on High Rise Flats: Insulation, what steps she plans to take to empower (a) regulators and (b) local authorities to act.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[8201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Pursuant to the answer of 29 July 2024 to Question 815 on High Rise Flats: Insulation, what steps her Department has taken to increase the pace of remediation programmes.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[8202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the answer of 29 July 2024 to Question 815, on High Rise Flats: Insulation, what enforcement actions her Department plans to take against uncooperative parties.

Alex Norris:

The pace of remediation has been unacceptably slow. Work is underway through existing programmes to bring together local actors, enforcers and partners to drive efficiencies in the current operation. In parallel, we are developing a comprehensive action plan that will tackle the root causes of the problem, and we will be announcing these in the autumn.

The government's Recovery Strategy Unit continues to take action against the most egregious actors to force them to fix their buildings and hold them to account for the cost of remediation. To date, the Unit has successfully obtained 10 remediation orders against Grey GR, a subsidiary of Railpen, and Wallace Estates Ltd ensuring 900 homes will be safer. The Unit is now seeking to recover c£72 million of taxpayer and leaseholder funding through remediation contribution orders from Yianis Group, Hollybrook Homes and Urban Splash. Further action will follow.

Buildings in remediation programmes that require additional action are escalated by the department to regulators, as additional pressure from local regulators can help to unblock buildings. Local authorities, fire and rescue services, and the Building Safety Regulator have a range of tools to compel building owners to fix their unsafe building. Regulators have long-standing powers under the Housing Act 2004 and Fire Safety Order 2005. The Building Safety Act 2022 bolstered these powers by introducing remediation orders and remediation contribution orders.

We provide funding to local authorities directly, to support their enforcement action, with more than £14 million in funding given to local authorities since November 2022. We also fund the Joint Inspection Team, a specialist team of building safety experts who support councils on building safety inspections.

The Deputy Prime Minister wrote to mayoral authorities on 13 September to support and empower them to deliver local remediation acceleration plans, using their convening powers, relationships and local knowledge. I will convene roundtables to

bring together metro mayors with the Building Safety Regulator, National Fire Chiefs Council, Local Government Association, and other key partners, to support and drive forward this critical work.

Sir Oliver Dowden:

[9475]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 29 July 2024 to Question 815 on High Rise Flats: Insulation, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to increase the pace of cladding remediation.

Alex Norris:

I refer the Right Hon Member to the response provided to Question UIN [8200](#) on 25 October 2024.

■ Housing: Construction

Mike Amesbury:

[9543]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of requiring all new build developments to include (a) solar panels, (b) heat pumps and (c) sufficient insulation.

Alex Norris:

Future standards next year will set our new homes and buildings on a path that moves away from relying on volatile fossil fuels and ensures they are fit for a net zero future. These homes and buildings will be future proofed with low carbon heating, such as heat pumps, and high levels of energy efficiency. We will take the opportunity, where appropriate, to encourage the fitting of solar panels on new homes and buildings.

■ Planning Permission: Parish and Town Councils

Richard Tice:

[9666]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that parish meetings are (a) included and (b) consulted in the Planning Inspectorate's decision-making process; and whether she plans to undertake a review of consultation practices.

Matthew Pennycook:

Parish Councils are engaged already in the Planning Inspectorate's decision-making processes.

In the case of planning appeals, any submissions that a Parish Council, being a statutory consultee, made in relation to an appealed planning application will be available for a Planning Inspector's consideration. In addition, Parish Councils may make direct representations on planning appeals. Representatives of Parish Council appear regularly at public hearings and inquiries, where they are afforded time to speak in front of the Planning Inspector. They may also ask to have so-called "Rule

6” status, which entitles them to appear as a formal party to a public inquiry and to cross-examine witnesses.

In the case of Local Plans, Parish Councils can submit representations on drafts of plans. Their representatives can request to take part in round table sessions on issues of concern to them. It is very common for Parish Council representatives to take part in discussions, and to provide evidence, in this way. Parish Councils can, of course, produce Neighbourhood Plans, of which Planning Inspectors will take account when reaching decisions on planning appeals.

In the case of Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects, Parish Councils, as statutory consultees, are engaged in the process from the start. Representatives can also register to have their say at the pre-examination stage, setting out full details of the issues that they wish the examining authority to consider. They may also register to “have their say” at the public examination before the examining authority.

The Planning Inspectorate has no immediate plans to review its practices.

JUSTICE

■ Immigration: Appeals

Neil O'Brien: [\[9766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 16 October 2024 to Question 8672 on Immigration: Appeals, for what reason she has no plans to legislate to change the current arrangements on publication of decisions of the First-tier Tribunal Immigration and Asylum Chamber.

Heidi Alexander:

I am satisfied that the question of whether, and in what form, to publish judgments is properly a judicial function. The judge is best placed to determine these matters in individual cases.

■ Offenders: Foreign Nationals

Neil O'Brien: [\[9762\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 14 October 2024 to Question 6948 on Offenders: Foreign Nationals, if she will publish a breakdown of foreign national offenders by detailed offence type.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

We recently provided information on the offence group of foreign national offenders (FNOs) in prison on 30 June 2024, in answer to PQ 6948. This can be found in the attached table.

The Department currently has no plans to publish a breakdown of foreign national offenders by detailed offence type.

The removal of FNOs is an important priority of this Government. FNOs who commit crime should be in no doubt that the law will be enforced and, where appropriate, we will work with the Home Office to pursue their deportation. We are exploring the ways that we can accelerate that further, including working with the Home Office to make the early removal scheme for foreign offenders more effective.

Attachments:

1. Table [2024-10-25 PQ 9762 table.xlsx]

■ Prisoners on Remand: Pregnancy

Apsana Begum:

[9951]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of pregnant women held in prison between 2023 and 2024 were on remand.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The HMPPS Annual Digest 2023/2024 reports a total number of 229 self-declared pregnant prisoners recorded between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024.

Custody type data were available for 91% of these prisoners, 71 (34%) of which were found to be on remand when their pregnancy was declared to HMPPS.[1][2]

There are now dedicated Pregnancy and Mother and Baby Liaison Officers in all women's prisons as well as mandated multidisciplinary care planning for pregnant women.

The Lord Chancellor announced the creation of a Women's Justice Board to address the distinct needs of women in the criminal justice system. The Board will have the goal of fewer women in prison and more supported in the community. It will initially focus on early intervention; community solutions including residential alternatives to custody; and improving outcomes for young adult women, and pregnant women and mothers of young children.

Whilst there will always be some, including those who are pregnant, who need to be in custody, we must ensure they are given the best chance possible to tackle the drivers of their offending and to contribute meaningfully to society.

Notes:

[1] Due to different data collection methods we have considered a matching record to be the closest remand record within 7 days of the first pregnancy declaration date.

[2] The figures in this table have been drawn from administrative IT systems which, as with any large scale recording system, are subject to possible errors with data entry and processing.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY**■ Broadband: Maidstone and Malling****Helen Grant:**[\[9429\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps his Department is taking to enhance broadband speed in Maidstone and Malling constituency.

Chris Bryant:

According to the independent website ThinkBroadband.com, over 98% of premises in the Maidstone and Malling constituency can already access superfast broadband speeds (≥ 30 Mbps) and over 88% have access to a gigabit-capable (>1000 Mbps) connection.

The information that broadband suppliers share with Building Digital UK (BDUK) indicates that there is significant further commercial rollout planned in the area. Remaining premises that are unlikely to be reached by suppliers' commercial plans will be considered for support through Project Gigabit.

■ Broadband: Rural Areas**Stuart Anderson:**[\[9557\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps his Department is taking to help improve gigabit broadband connectivity in (a) South Shropshire constituency and (b) other rural areas.

Chris Bryant:

According to the independent website ThinkBroadband.com, 99% of premises in the South Shropshire constituency have access to superfast broadband speeds (≥ 30 Mbps) and 48% can access a gigabit-capable (>1000 Mbps) connection.

Remaining premises that are not expected to receive a gigabit-capable connection through suppliers' commercial rollout are being considered for support through Project Gigabit. This includes approximately 3,400 premises in the constituency that are currently in scope of Project Gigabit contracts across Shropshire.

Overall, 36 Project Gigabit contracts, with a total value of over £1.9 billion, have been signed to date, to bring gigabit-capable broadband to over 1 million rural and hard-to-reach homes and businesses.

■ Building Digital UK**Rebecca Smith:**[\[9863\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if he will take steps to ensure that BDUK provide maps at a parish level for their local plans.

Chris Bryant:

Building Digital UK (BDUK) is currently considering the most appropriate options for publishing more detailed information about the delivery of Project Gigabit at a local level, noting that this is subject to change throughout the lifetime of the programme.

Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Buildings**Sir Ashley Fox:****[9826]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, 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.

Feryal Clark:

Heads of Department have agreed that 60% minimum office attendance for most staff continues to be the best balance of working for the Civil Service. Office occupancy data for the period July - September has been published, with further publications to now happen on a quarterly basis. The data is published here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-service-hq-occupancy-data>

Electromagnetic Fields: Health Hazards**Dr Beccy Cooper:****[9633]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if he will take steps with technology and communications companies to mitigate harm to people with electromagnetic hypersensitivity.

Chris Bryant:

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has published advice on exposure to electromagnetic fields in the everyday environment, including electrical appliances in the home and mobile phones. You can find this information and the relevant fact sheets on the government website here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/electromagnetic-fields>.

A robust regulatory framework exists to ensure that exposure to electromagnetic fields remains well within safe levels. In the UK, the control of exposures occurs through product safety legislation, health and safety legislation and planning policy.

The ongoing transition from analogue to digital landlines ("the PSTN migration") will not change the regulatory obligations on telecommunications companies to keep their users safe. We expect telecoms companies to follow guidance on product safety in relation to radio waves, as set out by the UKHSA.

■ Funerals: Fraud

Sorcha Eastwood:

[\[9591\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps his Department is taking to shut down online scams related to funeral homes.

Feryal Clark:

Fraud offences are designated as priority under the Online Safety Act, which means that user-to-user and search services in scope of the Act must implement measures to prevent users encountering scams and frauds via their services.

Additional duties to have systems and process in place to prevent users from encountering paid-for fraudulent advertising will also apply to Category 1 and 2A services (user-to-user and search services over designated thresholds).

These measures are designed to prevent a range of online frauds, including social media scams.

■ Mobile Phones: Maidstone and Malling

Helen Grant:

[\[9430\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps his Department is taking to enhance mobile phone reception in Maidstone and Malling constituency.

Chris Bryant:

Government wants all areas of the UK to benefit from mobile connectivity.

Ofcom's reporting shows that 92% of the pre-boundary change constituency area has 4G geographic coverage from all four mobile operators, and that basic (non-standalone) 5G is available from at least one mobile operator outside 99% of premises.

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

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

■ Project Gigabit

Helen Grant:

[\[9431\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of Project Gigabit.

Chris Bryant:

According to the independent website Thinkbroadband.com, over 85% of UK premises are now able to access a gigabit-capable broadband connection.

As of February 2024, over 1 million premises had been upgraded to gigabit-capable broadband through government-funded programmes. In total, 36 Project Gigabit contracts have now been signed, to bring fast, reliable broadband to over 1 million more homes and businesses, with more contracts to be awarded in the coming months.

■ Voice over Internet Protocol

Richard Foord:

[\[9577\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he plans to take to ensure that the planned switch from the Public Switched Telephone Network to Voice over Internet Protocol does not compromise (a) national security and (b) critical communications during emergencies.

Chris Bryant:

Since the general election I have worked with other departments and industry in an effort to ensure that the industry's necessary retirement of the Public Switched Telephone Network does not compromise national security, and that vulnerable people and others retain connectivity during emergencies. The Department holds quarterly cross-Government engagement groups to discuss switchover risks, to which all Government departments and Devolved Administrations are invited. I intend to hold a further meeting soon with all operators and stakeholders to ensure risks are minimised.

Ofcom ensures that companies identify, prepare for, and reduce the risk of anything that compromises the availability, performance, or functionality of their network or service, including during emergencies, as required by the Communications Act 2003 and the Telecommunications (Security) Act 2021.

TRANSPORT

■ Aviation: Fuels

Harriet Cross:

[\[9644\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the policy paper entitled Jet Zero strategy: one year on, published on 20 July 2023, whether it is his policy to have five commercial-scale Sustainable Aviation Fuel plants under construction in the UK by 2025.

Mike Kane:

The Labour Party Manifesto included a commitment to promote Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF). Since July we have already brought in a SAF mandate and committed to legislating for a revenue certainty mechanism to support UK SAF producers. The Advanced Fuels Fund supports a range of SAF projects across the UK, and the Department closely monitors progress towards commercial-scale production to ensure there is sufficient supply of SAF to meet the SAF mandate.

■ M25: Noise**Rebecca Paul:****[R] [9587]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 8 October 2024 to Question 5795 on M25: Noise, how much Next Generation Concrete Surfacing is expected to reduce noise levels by.

Lilian Greenwood:

Trials conducted on the M1 suggest that Next Generation Concrete Surfacing (NGCS) could yield a reduction of between 3.4 and 3.7 dB(A) in the noise generated between the vehicle tyre and the concrete road surface.

■ Motor Vehicles: Anti-social Behaviour**Daisy Cooper:****[10145]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she plans to allow local councils to roll out noise cameras to monitor illegal vehicle modifications.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Department for Transport conducted roadside trials of noise camera technology between October 2022 and February 2023. Reports of these trials, including detailed assessment of the technology's performance and potential merits, were published on 17 March 2024. Overall, the trials demonstrated that noise cameras currently have the potential to be used for enforcement, but only when accompanied by human review of the recorded evidence, which is likely to lower the cost effectiveness of deploying the technology in many circumstances.

It is ultimately for local authorities and the police to consider what the most appropriate enforcement routes may be for addressing issues with excessive vehicle noise within their area. The use of noise camera technology has already been taken forward by some local authorities.

■ Radlett Station: Access**Sir Oliver Dowden:****[9480]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans her Department has to improve accessibility at Radlett Station.

Simon Lightwood:

We are not yet able to comment on next steps regarding Access for All projects at specific stations including at Radlett station. However, please be assured that we are committed to improving the accessibility of the railway and recognise the social and economic benefits this brings to communities.

■ Railway Stations: Access**Sir Oliver Dowden:**[\[9479\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 3 September 2024 to Question 2362 on Railway Stations: Access, what progress she has made on considering the best approach to the Access for All programme.

Lilian Greenwood:

Further to my answer of 3 September 2024, we are not yet able to comment on next steps regarding Access for All. This Government is committed to improving the accessibility of the railway and recognises the social and economic benefits this brings to communities.

■ Railway Stations: Essex**James McMurdock:**[\[9601\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to extend contactless payments to additional train stations in Essex.

Simon Lightwood:

We have committed to expanding Pay As You Go (PAYG) contactless ticketing to further stations in the South East, with six stations on the Chiltern railways line having already gone live in June. This expansion will include the entire c2c network and the 19 stations operated by Greater Anglia in Essex, where passengers will benefit from a better ticketing offer.

Unfortunately, this expansion has been delayed due to the cyber-attack at Transport for London (TfL). TfL are delivering necessary security measures, and the rail industry is working at pace to reschedule the launch, an update will be provided in due course.

■ Railways: Conditions of Employment**Josh Simons:**[\[9608\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has made an assessment of the potential impact of the contractual regime for Sunday working for train conductors in the North West; and what steps she plans to take to ensure that Sunday services are adequately staffed.

Simon Lightwood:

Sundays currently fall outside of the working week for 95 per cent of Northern's conductors in the North-West, making the service reliant on staff volunteering to work their days off.

This is a key contributing factor to the unacceptably high levels of cancellations passengers are suffering on a Sunday. The Secretary of State and Rail Minister have both met Northern, and great efforts are going into solving the long-standing industrial relations issues and disputes that we been left with by the previous government, which are at the root of the problems with Sunday train services in the North-West.

■ Railways: Passengers

Grahame Morris:

[\[9427\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an estimate of future rail passenger demand by 2050.

Simon Lightwood:

In line with our published guidance, the Department has developed and maintains a number of possible rail demand forecasts in both the medium and long term which we update at regular intervals. Our long-term forecasting framework extends to (and beyond) 2050. As part of this, the Department considers and includes a wide range of evidence.

■ Railways: Repairs and Maintenance

Grahame Morris:

[\[9428\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of Network Rail's (a) maintenance and (b) renewal work since the start of Control Period 7 on 1 April 2024.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Department for Transport monitors Network Rail's delivery of its work on a continuing basis and the independent rail safety and economic regulator, the Office of Rail and Road (ORR), holds Network Rail to account for its delivery of its maintenance and renewal work.

The ORR determines Network Rail's success against its regulatory targets, set as part of the Periodic Review, and sets out its view of Network Rail's performance periodically, including in its Annual Assessment.

■ Road Traffic

Rupert Lowe:

[\[10193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of (a) mass immigration and (b) population increase on the road system.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Department for Transport published the latest [National Road Traffic Projections](#) in 2022. These are projections of road traffic, congestion and emissions for England and Wales. These include outputs for the Common Analytical Scenarios, a set of seven standardised, off-the-shelf, cross-modal scenarios exploring national level uncertainties for use in transport forecasting and appraisal. A full description of the scenarios can be found in the [DfT Uncertainty Toolkit](#).

■ Roads: Runcorn and Helsby**Mike Amesbury:**[\[10468\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress she has made on supporting the repair of potholes in Runcorn and Helsby constituency.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Government takes the condition of local roads very seriously and is committed to maintaining and renewing the local highway network. This Government has a manifesto commitment to enable local highway authorities to fix up to a million extra potholes a year, and it will say more on this in due course after the forthcoming Budget and Spending Review.

Cheshire West and Chester Council and Halton Council are the local highway authorities for different parts of the Runcorn and Helsby constituency, and they are therefore responsible for the condition and maintenance of their local road networks.

Cheshire West and Chester Council will receive £11.1 million from this Department during 2024/25 to help them carry out their local highway maintenance responsibilities, and it is their responsibility to decide how that funding is used, based on local needs and priorities.

Halton Council is a member of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA). LCRCA will receive £142.9 million from this Department during 2024/25 for investment in local transport networks in the Liverpool City Region as outlined in their programme business case and delivery plan. It is for LCRCA to decide how much of that funding is used for highway maintenance in Halton and its other five member authorities.

TREASURY**■ Fuels: Excise Duties****Rebecca Smith:**[\[9871\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will freeze fuel duty for heavy goods vehicles and coaches.

James Murray:

Revenue from motoring taxes and associated VAT ensures that the Government can continue to fund the vital public services and infrastructure that people and families across the UK expect.

Following the spending audit, the Chancellor has been clear that difficult decisions lie ahead on spending, welfare and tax to fix the foundations of our economy and address the £22 billion hole the government has inherited. Decisions on how to do that will be taken at the Budget in the round; the Chancellor makes decisions on tax policy at fiscal events.

■ Heat Batteries

Wera Hobhouse:

[\[9523\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if her Department will add heat batteries for a central heating system to the list of energy saving materials that are zero-rated.

James Murray:

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

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

The Government currently has no plans to add further technologies to this VAT relief. Nevertheless, the Government keeps all taxes under review as part of the policy making process. Changes to the tax system are announced at fiscal events in the usual way.

■ Private Education: VAT

Claire Hanna:

[\[9582\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she has made a comparative assessment of (a) boarding departments in state schools in England and (b) grant aided schools in Northern Ireland, in the context of the introduction of VAT on independent schools.

James Murray:

On 29 July, the Government announced that, as of 1 January 2025, all education services and vocational training provided by a private school in the UK for a charge will be subject to VAT at the standard rate of 20 per cent. This will also apply to boarding services provided by private schools.

Boarding at state schools is provided to parents at cost and is closely related to the supply of state education. The government therefore believes it is right that state boarding should continue to be exempt.

To ensure consistency in the VAT treatment of schools across the UK, as set out in the draft legislation published in July, where a school charges for the full-time education of children of compulsory school age and/or full-time education suitable for the requirements of 16-19 year olds, it will be within scope of this policy. All education, vocational training and boarding services provided by schools within scope of this policy will be subject to 20% VAT from January 2025. This is in line with the principles set out in the technical note published in July. The draft legislation and technical note can be found online here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/vat-on-private-school-fees-removing-the-charitable-rates-relief-for-private-schools>

HM Treasury have been engaging closely with the Northern Ireland Executive to understand how different schools in Northern Ireland will be impacted by this policy.

■ Public Expenditure: Northern Ireland

Carla Lockhart: [\[10515\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the long-term sustainability of the financial settlement provided to Northern Ireland under the Barnett formula.

Darren Jones:

The independent Northern Ireland Fiscal Council calculated that the relative need in Northern Ireland is 24% more per head than the rest of the UK for equivalent spending.

As part of the 2024 restoration of the Northern Ireland Executive (NIE) the UK Government and Northern Ireland Executive agreed to add a 24% needs-based factor into the Barnett Formula from 2024-25. This is part of a financial package worth over £3.3 billion.

Including this additional funding, the Northern Ireland Executive is being funded above its relative need in 2024-25. The UK Government will continue to work with the Northern Ireland Executive to agree a final Fiscal Framework.

■ Sports: Finance

Shivani Raja: [\[9975\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on the levels of funding for grassroots sports.

Darren Jones:

Government funding is being considered in the usual way as part of the Spending Review. The outcome of this review will be communicated in due course.

■ Tax Avoidance

Stuart Andrew: [\[9707\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the potential implications for her policies of the recommendations in Loan Charge Resolution's letter to the Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury, dated 7th August 2024.

James Murray:

I know that the loan charge is an extremely important issue for many members and their constituents.

I have met with campaigners to discuss the loan charge, and the Chancellor and I continue to consider this matter. We will provide an update in due course.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Personal Independence Payment

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[9647\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what progress her Department has made on reviewing the fairness of PIP assessments.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The Department is not currently undertaking a review of the fairness of Personal Independence Payment (PIP) assessments.

PIP is designed to treat all claimants fairly, focusing on the needs arising from a long-term health condition or disability, rather than the condition itself. Individuals can be impacted by their health conditions in different ways, so the PIP assessment considers the needs of each individual claimant against the assessment criteria set out in legislation, regardless of whether those needs relate to a physical or non-physical impairment.

DWP has set standards for the quality of assessments and closely monitors all aspects of the process including the performance of the assessment suppliers. Our audit process considers the initial review, evidence collection, further evidence provided, and the advice within the assessment report completed by a health professional (HP). The check is completed against a set of guidelines to ensure a consistent approach is taken. This ensures that assessment reports are fit for purpose, clinically justified and sound, and provide sufficient information for the department to make an informed decision on entitlement to benefit.

All assessment suppliers work with the department on plans to continuously improve assessment quality through a range of measures including audit procedures, clinical observations, tailored training and development plans, providing feedback and in the support available to HPs.

All claimants have the right to request a Mandatory Reconsideration (MR) if they disagree with their PIP decision. If they disagree with the outcome of their MR, they are able to appeal to an independent tribunal.

We are exploring potential changes to modernise the PIP service to improve claimants' experience and trust in our services and decisions. We will set out the detail of any changes in due course.

Mel Stride:

[\[9704\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 14 October 2024 to Question 6515 on Social Security Benefits: Disability, what steps she plans to take to reform Personal Independence Payments; and what assessment she has made of the factors driving the rising (a) caseloads and (b) expenditure on that benefit.

Sir Stephen Timms:

We will be considering our own response to social security in due course, informed by a range of evidence. This Government is committed to championing the rights of

disabled people and to the principle of working with them, so that their views and voices will be at the heart of all that we do.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Palliative Care: Health Professions

Luke Taylor:

[\[6882\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish independently-verified projections of future demand for the palliative and end of life care workforce at least every two years; and if he will take steps to ensure a properly resourced plan is in place for meeting this demand.

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

Stephen Kinnock:

At this time, there are no plans to publish independently verified projections of future demand for the palliative and end of life care workforce. **We will want to assure ourselves, and the National Health Service, that the current plan will deliver the reform needed. We will need to do this in light of the 10-Year Health Plan,** as the current NHS Long Term Plan will deliver the reform needed.

HOME OFFICE

■ Members: Correspondence

Nick Timothy:

[\[9811\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the letter of 1 September 2024 from the hon. Member for West Suffolk.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 22 October 2024. The correct answer should have been:

Seema Malhotra:

~~The Home Office has no record of receiving the Hon. Member's letter, and has contacted his office on 18 October 2024 for a copy of the letter. Once received, the Home Office will reply within its 20 working day service standard.~~

The Home Office did receive the letter dated 1 September 2024, however, it was not recorded on the usual correspondence systems.

A response will be issued to the original letter in due course.