



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 28 October 2024 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:27 P.M., 28 October 2024). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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**Notes:**

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

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

## ANSWERS

### ATTORNEY GENERAL

#### ■ Prosecutions

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[10051\]](#)

To ask the Solicitor General, if she will hold discussions with the Crown Prosecution Service on reducing the number of pre-charge cases awaiting decision.

**Sarah Sackman:**

Public confidence in the criminal justice is underpinned by access to swift justice. It is critical that cases progress through the system as quickly as possible, both before and after a charge is made. Improving timeliness and reducing the backlogs of outstanding cases are a priority for me and for this Government.

I will of course be holding discussions about these issues with the Crown Prosecution Service, with a view to making systemic improvements as quickly as possible.

#### ■ Taylor Swift

**Paul Holmes:**

[\[8997\]](#)

To ask the Solicitor General, whether (a) the Attorney General has had and (b) officials in his Department have had discussions with the Metropolitan Police on Special Escort Group policing for (i) Taylor Swift and (ii) her entourage.

**Sarah Sackman:**

It is a long-standing convention that the fact that the Law Officers have advised or have not advised and the content of their advice must not be disclosed outside Government without their authority. This is known as the Law Officers' Convention, is provided for in paragraph 21.27 of Erskine May, and applies to your question.

### BUSINESS AND TRADE

#### ■ Agriculture: India

**Abtisam Mohamed:**

[\[9990\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact that a UPOV91 seed law may have small farmers in India.

**Mr Douglas Alexander:**

UPOV provides a global system of plant variety protection trusted by plant breeders with the aim of encouraging the development of new varieties of plants for the benefit of society. Whether or not a country signs up to UPOV91 is subject to their own policy-making process including impact assessments, so the UK has not assessed impact in India.

## ■ Digital Technology: Taxation

**Kevin Hollinrake:** [\[6314\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether his Department has had recent discussions with (a) YouTube and (b) Google on the levels of Digital Services Tax.

**Gareth Thomas:**

The Department for Business and Trade supports businesses to invest, grow and export, creating jobs and opportunities across the country. To support these outcomes, SoS and DBT representatives regularly meet with a broad spectrum of tech companies representing the global tech eco-system, from SMEs and start-ups to global big tech companies. These discussions cover a range of issues and are often commercially sensitive. Digital Service Tax has not been raised specifically in recent meetings.

## ■ Employment Tribunals Service

**Dr Simon Opher:** [\[10535\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to increase the time limit for access to the Employment Tribunal from three months to six months after an incident of workplace discrimination.

**Justin Madders:**

The Government is committed to increasing employment tribunal time limits from 3-6 months, which is in line with the Law Commission recommendation from 2020. Measures to extend the time limit for bringing claims to Employment Tribunals will be added via amendment during the passage of the Employment Rights Bill.

## ■ Forced Labour

**Sarah Champion:** [\[9924\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 10 October to Question 6252 on Forced Labour, whether he has made an assessment of the effectiveness of potential steps he can take to help prevent goods from entering the UK market where there is evidence of forced labour in particular supply chains.

**Mr Douglas Alexander:**

The Government will continue to assess and monitor the effectiveness of the UK's existing measures, alongside the impacts of other policy tools. As set out in my response of 10 October 2024, this Government is committed to working with businesses and international partners to ensure global supply chains are free from human and labour rights abuses and to understand the impact of measures used to combat forced labour.



## ■ Manufacturing Industries

**Fabian Hamilton:** [\[10048\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if the Prime Minister will create a Minister for Manufacturing post in the Department for Business and Trade.

**Sarah Jones:**

I am responsible for manufacturing as Minister for Industry.

## ■ Products: Labelling

**Alex Mayer:** [\[9980\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing mandatory labelling on (a) furniture and (b) other products that have been tested on animals.

**Justin Madders:**

Animal testing of chemical substances is prohibited in all but a very limited number of circumstances where it is essential for the protection of human and animal health or environmental safety, as prescribed by the REACH Regulations. As a result, there are no plans to make it mandatory for labelling of furniture or other products to indicate whether animal testing has been undertaken in the manufacture of that product.

## ■ Products: Regulation

**Clive Jones:** [\[10258\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of maintaining regulatory alignment with the European Union.

**Mr Douglas Alexander:**

The Government continues to follow EU regulatory developments with interest and engages regularly with the EU on key regulatory developments, including through TCA structures such as the Trade Specialised Committees. I can confirm that my officials will consider the impact of UK regulatory changes through impact assessments or proportionate analysis.

## ■ Trade Agreements

**Chi Onwurah:** [\[10718\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether his Department plans to amend negotiating objectives in active free trade agreement negotiations.

**Mr Douglas Alexander:**

Economic growth is the first priority of this government. To deliver on this, one of our first steps after taking office was to announce that we were resuming Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations with: the Gulf Cooperation Council, India, Israel, South Korea, Switzerland, and Turkey.

Having carefully reviewed our negotiation objectives we have now started talks with some of these key partners. We will not sacrifice quality for speed and will only agree deals that are mutually beneficial.

#### ■ Trade Agreements: China

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[10450\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make it his policy to ensure that the release of Jimmy Lai is a prerequisite to any trade agreement with China.

**Mr Douglas Alexander:**

This Government has no plans to negotiate a Free Trade Agreement with China. This Government will stand firm on issues relating to human rights. My Right Honourable friend the Foreign Secretary raised the case of Jimmy Lai during his recent visit to China from 18-20 October.

#### ■ Trade Agreements: Climate Change

**Clive Jones:** [\[8572\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he plans to make the strengthening of UK climate commitments a priority during the negotiation of free trade agreements.

**Mr Douglas Alexander:**

This Government is committed to being an international leader on environmental issues, including tackling climate change, achieving net zero and delivering growth.

The FTAs with Australia, New Zealand and CPTPP include binding commitments such as non-derogation from their environmental laws, and affirm international environment and climate commitments including the Paris Agreement. The UK is committed to promoting high environmental standards and deepening cooperation with trade partners on climate and environment issues.

### CABINET OFFICE

#### ■ Arden Strategies

**Sir John Hayes:** [\[10673\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether Ministers in his Department have met representatives of Arden Strategies since 5 July 2024.

**Nick Thomas-Symonds:**

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

## ■ Cabinet Office: Freedom of Information

**John Glen:**

[\[10705\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the (a) substantive information requested and (b) decision was for each (i) Freedom of Information Act and (ii) Environmental Information Regulation request received by his Department since the general election; and what exemption was used to (A) refuse and (B) part-refuse each request.

**Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:**

I refer the Rt Hon Member to the answer I gave on 22 October. (UIN 8811)

## ■ Civil Servants: Newcastle upon Tyne

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[10717\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he plans to enable more civil servants to relocate from London to Newcastle upon Tyne.

**Georgia Gould:**

The Civil Service is committed to establishing a strong presence in regions and nations across the United Kingdom, including in cities such as Newcastle upon Tyne. The Civil Service should be connected to and representative of the communities it serves as well as delivering a high quality of service for citizens across the whole of the UK. Further plans will be set out in due course, aligned with the upcoming Spending Review.

## ■ Government Departments: Disclosure of Information

**John Glen:**

[\[10708\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 23 September 2024 to Question 5009 on Government Departments: Disclosure of Information, whether he has issued guidance to Departments on the frequency of publishing (a) core and (b) other transparency data.

**Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:**

Transparency reporting requirements remain in place, with data regularly being published on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk). I refer the Right Honourable Member to the debate in the House on Reporting Ministerial Gifts and Hospitality, debated on Monday 14 October 2024. The Government will set out further details in due course.

## ■ Youth Mobility Scheme: EU Countries

**James MacCleary:**

[\[10197\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of holding discussions with the EU on introducing a UK-EU youth mobility scheme.

**Nick Thomas-Symonds:**

The Prime Minister and the president of the European Commission met in Brussels on 2 October and agreed to strengthen the relationship between the EU and the UK,

putting it on a more solid, stable footing. We are committed to finding constructive ways to work together and deliver for the British people.

We are not going to give a running commentary on negotiations. We will obviously look at EU proposals on a range of issues, but we will not return to freedom of movement.

## CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

### ■ BBC World Service: Finance

**Mr Calvin Bailey:**

[\[9974\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on the resources available to the BBC World Service.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

In a time where the world faces huge challenges, the Government is fully committed to a successful BBC World Service that continues to provide essential, impartial and accurate news coverage and programming reaching millions of people across the globe.

Government funding for the World Service in financial year 25-26 will be determined as part of the upcoming Spending Review.

The Secretary of State regularly engages in conversations with Cabinet colleagues, and recent discussions with relevant colleagues have referenced the resources available to the BBC World Service.

### ■ BBC: Finance

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[10415\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions she has had with the BBC Board on the potential impact of changes to programming resulting from reductions in funding on Britain's soft power.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

The Secretary of State regularly engages with the BBC Chair on a range of issues, including the BBC World Service.

The BBC's public service output is primarily funded through the licence fee. The World Service is also supported by a grant-in-aid from the government. Government funding for the World Service in FY 25-26 will be determined as part of the upcoming Spending Review.

In a time where the world faces huge challenges, the government is fully committed to a successful BBC World Service that continues to provide essential, impartial and accurate news coverage and programming reaching millions of people across the globe. The Government strongly values the BBC World Service as a UK soft power asset.

## ■ BBC: Reviews

**Mr Gregory Campbell:**

[\[10414\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what her planned timetable is for launching the next BBC charter review.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

The next Charter Review has to ensure the BBC doesn't just survive but thrives for decades to come. The existing Charter is due to expire on 31 December 2027.

DCMS is in the early stages of preparation for the upcoming Charter Review, which we expect to launch in 2025.

## ■ Cricket: Finance

**Julia Lopez:**

[\[10462\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department plans to maintain the £35 million investment in grassroots cricket facilities announced on 4 April 2024.

**Julia Lopez:**

[\[10463\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to her Department's press release entitled Prime Minister announces multi-million pound boost for grassroots cricket, published on 4 April 2024, what progress has been made on delivering new cricket domes to host the (a) 2026 Women's T20 World Cup and (b) 2030 Men's T20 World Cup.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

This Government believes that grassroots sports facilities are crucial in supporting people to be more active up and down the country and the power of creating a lasting legacy from events such as the upcoming World Cups.

The funding arrangements for the Future of Cricket Fund will be considered as part of the Spending Review. We continue to engage with the England and Wales Cricket Board on this matter.

## ■ Holiday Accommodation

**James MacCleary:**

[\[10010\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to support people who let short-term furnished holiday properties.

**Chris Bryant:**

We are introducing a registration scheme for short-term lets in England. Our aim is to reap the benefits of a thriving tourist economy whilst protecting the spirit and fabric of communities, including by giving local authorities valuable data on short-term lets in their area to help address housing impacts through the scheme.

The registration scheme will work to create a level playing field across the guest accommodations sector and ensure short-term lets are set to the same standards as more traditional accommodations such as hotels and B&Bs.

The scheme will support operators of short-term lets by boosting the reputation of England's guest accommodation sector and attracting more visitors by giving visible assurance we have a high-quality, safe guest accommodation offer.

## ■ Sports: Finance

**Shivani Raja:** [\[8967\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment her Department has made on the potential impact of reductions in funding for sports on (a) access to physical activity for children and young people and (b) public health.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

The Government's new mission-led objectives puts health and children and young people at the heart of our priorities. The Government aims to provide opportunities for all children to access high-quality sport and physical activity, especially those who are less likely to be active. We must capitalise on the important role that being active can have in preventing, and helping to treat and manage, a wide range of health conditions.

The Government is acting to support more people to get active wherever they live through the delivery of £123 million UK-wide through the Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programme in 2024/25. Further spending decisions will be made at the Spending Review later this month.

**Helen Grant:** [\[9917\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, how much funding has been allocated to (a) football, (b) rugby union, (c) rugby league, (d) cricket, (e) basketball and (f) netball facilities through the Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programme since 2021.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

The Government is acting to support more people in getting onto the pitch wherever they live via the Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programme, which is investing £123 million UK-wide throughout 2024/25. This will ensure that everyone, regardless of background, has access to and benefits from quality sport and physical activity opportunities.

The Programme's aim is to provide a multi-sport benefit with up to 40% of funded projects supporting at least one other sport on a sustainable and regular basis. Our delivery partner for the programme in England, the Football Foundation, works closely with Sport England and the respective National Governing Bodies of other sports to encourage development of multi-sport projects and promote collaboration between clubs at local level. In Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, our delivery partners are the Scottish Football Association, Cymru Football Foundation and Irish

Football Association, who each work with applicants to ensure that there is a multi-sport offering in various projects.

Between 2021 and 2024, Sport England and delivery partners in other parts of the UK invested £204 million into Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities, providing new and upgraded pitches and facilities.

## DEFENCE

### ■ Armed Forces: Death

**Ms Julie Minns:** [\[9818\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many service personnel died within 24 hours of completing their annual fitness test in each year since 2013.

**AI Carns:**

Since 2013, two Army personnel have sadly died whilst undertaking the combat fitness test element of the annual fitness test. No other personnel have died within 24 hours of completing their annual fitness test during this period.

**Ms Julie Minns:** [\[9819\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will list the (a) date and (b) place of every coroner's inquest that established heat as a cause of death for service personnel since 2013.

**AI Carns:**

From 1 January 2013 to 13 October 2024, three UK Armed Forces personnel tragically died from heat related causes confirmed by a Coroner and listed on the death certificates. All three deaths occurred in July 2013. The inquest for all three deaths began on 26 June 2015 at Solihull Council, Civic Suite, Council House, Solihull, West Midlands.

### ■ Armed Forces: Health

**Ms Julie Minns:** [\[9816\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many and what proportion of service personnel failed their annual fitness test in each year since 2013.

**AI Carns:**

The requested information is provided in the following tables:

#### Royal Navy

YEAR AWARDED	FAILED	FAIL RATE
2015	982	4%
2016	1,439	5%

YEAR AWARDED	FAILED	FAIL RATE
2017	1,504	5%
2018	1,682	6%
2019	1,450	5%
2020	1,523	7%
2021	1,412	7%
2022	1,888	8%
2023	1,960	9%
2024	1,083	5%

## Table Notes:

- Data prior to 2015 is incomplete and has been excluded.
- Year awarded represents the year the competence was awarded to the employee.
- Data for 2024 is up to 21 October 2024.

**Army**

YEAR AWARDED	FAILED	FAIL RATE
2013	671	2%
2014	758	2%
2015	1,172	3%
2016	1,227	3%
2017	1,211	3%
2018	1,275	3%
2019	1,269	4%
2020	928	3%
2021	1,070	3%
2022	1,218	3%
2023	1,170	3%
2024	710	2%



Table Notes:

- Year awarded represents the year the competence was awarded to the employee.
- Data for 2024 is up to 18 October 2024.

### Royal Air Force

YEAR AWARDED	FAILED	FAIL RATE
2016	854	3.8%
2017	1,360	5.5%
2018	1,624	6.5%
2019	1,488	6%
2020	900	6.9%
2021	2,266	9%
2022	2,199	8.7%
2023	1,687	6.9%
2024	1,320	6.7%

Table Notes:

- Data prior to 2016 is incomplete and has been excluded.
- Year awarded represents the year the competence was awarded to the employee.
- Data for 2024 is up to 18 October 2024.

**Ms Julie Minns:**

[\[9817\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many annual fitness tests were cancelled due to the safe temperature being exceeded (a) one (b) two and (c) three hours before the start time in each year since 2013.

**Al Carns:**

The Ministry of Defence does not hold any information of annual fitness tests being cancelled due to the safe temperature being exceeded because this information is not recorded.

### ■ Armed Forces: Private Education

**Damian Hinds:**

[\[5993\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what representations he has received on the potential impact of applying VAT to independent school fees on the families of military service personnel.

**AI Carns:**

At the time of writing, the Ministry of Defence has received 45 letters or emails from Members of Parliament and members of the public on this issue. There have been other additional informal approaches which have not been logged centrally.

**Defence: Digital Technology****Chris Evans:**[\[10077\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to use digital technology to improve defence outputs.

**Maria Eagle:**

Defence's goal is to continually evolve a secure, singular, modern Digital Backbone to connect sensors, effectors, and deciders across military and business domains and with partners, driving integration and interoperability across domains and platforms. Through this, we are exploiting digital technology and data to revolutionise warfare and transform defence.

**Defence: Industry****James Cartlidge:**[\[9738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the scope of the defence industrial strategy will be.

**Maria Eagle:**

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

The scope of the Defence Industrial Strategy is being set to explore how to establish a better, more innovative and more resilient defence sector, enabling the UK to innovate at speed to help Ukraine defeat Russia and restock its armed forces; deter its adversaries; seize opportunities presented by the technologies of the future; as well as creating new partnerships and promoting defence exports.

**Defence: Procurement****James Cartlidge:**[\[10749\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to (a) promote and (b) participate in multi-national procurement initiatives through NATO.

**Maria Eagle:**

Since the UK launched the NATO Multinational Procurement Initiatives on missiles and munitions alongside a total of 14 European NATO allies, we have promoted UK-led cooperative procurement opportunities on the Lightweight Multirole Missile (LMM) and the AIM-132 Advanced Short Range Air-to-Air Missile (ASRAAM). We continue to work with partners and allies to promote and participate in MPIs across a range of capabilities. We are engaged with relevant NATO initiatives to ensure coherence.

## ■ Defence: Space Technology

**James Cartlidge:**

[\[10108\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make it his policy to prioritise the UK's capability in the space sector in the forthcoming defence industrial strategy.

**Maria Eagle:**

The Government is committed to the development of the UK's vibrant space sector which is a vital part of the economy. The Government has previously set out its intentions for space capabilities which will continue to be developed as this work evolves and informs our future strategy. Defence is identified as a key growth-driving sector in the recently published Industrial Strategy Green Paper, which is open for consultation on the Government's proposed approach until 24 November.

## ■ Estonia: Challenger Tanks

**Luke Akehurst:**

[\[10556\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he expects Challenger 3 to be deployed to Estonia.

**Luke Pollard:**

As announced by the Secretary of State for Defence, the British Army will deploy Challenger 3 tanks to NATO's eastern border along with armoured vehicles in future years. However, details relating to the fielding plan for Challenger 3 are yet to be confirmed.

## ■ Guided Weapons: Procurement

**Luke Akehurst:**

[\[10553\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what progress has been made on establishing an integrated air and missile defence system for the UK.

**Maria Eagle:**

Air and missile defence is a 24/7, cross-Government and international effort. We take a layered approach to air and missile defence deploying a wide range of advanced capabilities alongside our Allies. Without pre-determining the outcome of the Strategic Defence Review (SDR), threats from missiles and drones are advancing and proliferating, and we will explore options to enhance our preparedness for these threats as part of the SDR.

**Luke Akehurst:**

[\[10555\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much funding has been allocated to the European Long-range Strike Approach programme.

**Maria Eagle:**

The European Long-Range Strike Approach (ELSA) is a multinational framework. Participating nations will consider capability cooperation programmes under the

ELSA framework, to be funded on a case-by-case basis. The outcomes of the Strategic Defence Review will determine the UK's future programme choices.

**Luke Akehurst:** [\[10902\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on integrated air and missile defence in each financial year since 2010.

**Maria Eagle:**

Integrated Air and Missile Defence (IAMD) is cross-government, multi-layered approach, utilising a wide range of advanced capabilities alongside our Allies as an international effort. There has been wide-ranging investment across the full range of IAMD capabilities since 2010, including the Sky Sabre air defence system. However, with this multi-layered, international approach, detailed investment costings for all IAMD capabilities over a fourteen year period are not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

#### ■ Hawk Aircraft: Procurement

**Ben Obese-Jecty:** [\[10263\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the replacement will be for Hawk T1 aircraft in the Royal Air Force.

**Maria Eagle:**

The planned out-of-service date for Hawk T1 aircraft remains 2030, and a decision on a replacement aircraft will not be taken until after the Strategic Defence Review is completed.

#### ■ Joint Expeditionary Force

**James Cartlidge:** [\[10750\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he plans to discuss participation in joint procurement initiatives with other Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) nations at the next JEF summit.

**Maria Eagle:**

The JEF by design is a collaborative effort among 10 like-minded nations, with similar interests and priorities. There are currently no JEF-badged joint procurement initiatives, nor any immediate intention to explore this avenue of co-operation, though we do not rule out the prospect of future work in this area.

#### ■ Military Aircraft: Lasers

**Luke Akehurst:** [\[10552\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much funding his Department has (a) allocated to and (b) spent on the air protection laser self-protection system.

**Maria Eagle:**

Defence is working with several industry partners to generate a UK Defensive Aids Suite in order to provide Air Platform Protection for all three services. Under the

banner of Team Pellonia, working with Thales, Leonardo, and Chemring Countermeasures, Air Command, supported by the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl), is cohering activity to generate and deliver a future suite of air platform protection measures, of which a laser self-protection system is one component. Supported by research funding from various areas within The Ministry of Defence (MOD) and now a Defence Equipment and Supply (DE&S) Programme, successful trials involving scientists from Dstl and Industry Partners on the Air Protection Laser Self-Protection System offer an example of joint working between the MOD and the UK Defence Industry.

Detailed Programme costs cannot be provided in the interests of National Security.

### ■ **Military Exercises: Heatstroke**

**Ms Julie Minns:**

[\[9814\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what improvements have been made to (a) how and (b) what data is reported for heat illness cases following the inquest into the death of Corporal Joshua Hoole in 2019.

**Ms Julie Minns:**

[\[9815\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his Department's response to the Coroner report on the death of Corporal Joshua Hoole, dated 27 January 2020, when the common tri-service suite of reporting and investigation forms was completed; and what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the new processes.

**Al Carns:**

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) has overhauled safety policy beginning in 2020 to provide clear direction that all suspected or confirmed heat illness cases must be reported, and to improve the quality of reporting safety occurrences. The MOD is now moving to a single safety occurrence reporting system known as MySafety.

Individual Defence organisations' safety occurrence reporting procedures instructs their personnel on 'how' to report safety occurrences and the Commanders Guide to Joint Service Publication (JSP) 375 Chapter 41 (Heat Illness Prevention) specifies 'what' minimum data is required for reporting heat illness cases, for example: the time, location, Wet Bulb Globe Thermometer reading, Met Office weather forecast, type of activity being undertaken, and a description of the illness or injury.

The MOD has also developed and implemented heat illness prevention training that must be completed by all military personnel at the earliest opportunity (for example in Phase 1 training for new entrants) to reinforce the heat illness prevention policy, including reporting, that is set out in JSP 375 Chapter 41.

While work was undertaken in 2020 to move to a more common set of reporting and investigation forms, several individual Defence organisations continue to use separate reporting systems to report incidents of suspected or confirmed heat illness including exertional heat illness. The Army and UK Strat Com have already adopted MySafety as a unified reporting system. The remaining Front Line Commands are

expected to follow suit by April 2025. MySafety has already seen an increase in reporting numbers and quality, but the full benefits will not be realised until Full Operating Capability is reached in October 2025.

#### ■ Ministry of Defence: Buildings

**Sir Ashley Fox:** [\[9611\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, 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.

**AI Carns:**

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>

#### ■ Ministry of Defence: Civil Servants

**Sir Ashley Fox:** [\[9610\]](#)

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

**AI Carns:**

The information to answer the hon. Member's question in full could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

However, as of 1 April 2024, there was a total of 4,069 Full Time Equivalent Ministry of Defence (MOD) staff working at Main Building. Full Time Equivalence is a figure that allows part-time workers' hours to be put into the same units as full-time workers. Please note this figure includes all employees in MOD and the four Executive Agencies, alongside Military personnel – it does not include Contractor staff or visitors.

There are 3,802 workplaces for use in MOD Main Building.

#### ■ Ministry of Defence: Health and Safety

**Ms Julie Minns:** [\[9820\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will list every date on which the Health and Safety Executive issued his Department a notification of contravention since 2013.

**AI Carns:**

Health and Safety Notices of Contravention (NOC) can be issued to any organisation within Defence at a local level and this information is not held centrally by the Ministry of Defence (MOD). However, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) publishes

details of NOC it has issued to organisations including the MOD on its website which can be found at this link - [Notices found - Enforcement notices public \(hse.gov.uk\)](#).

Furthermore, it may be helpful to provide a list of Crown Censures which are served on the department by the HSE for a more serious breach of health and safety law if the HSE deems that, but for Crown immunity, there would have been sufficient evidence to provide a realistic prospect of conviction.

The MOD and Reserve Forces and Cadet Associations have received the following Crown Censures since 2013:-

DATE	ORGANISATION
25/01/2013	Army
02/03/2015	Army
31/03/2016	Joint Forces Command
29/09/2016	Army
09/02/2018	Navy
03/03/2017	Defence Equipment & Support
02/09/2020	Navy
28/09/2020	Joint Forces Command
14/12/2020	East Midlands Reserve Forces & Cadets Association
05/05/2022	MOD
11/07/2022	Navy
08/05/2024	Army
03/10/2024	Army

#### ■ Ministry of Defence: Palantir

**James Cartlidge:**

[\[10453\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what contracts his Department holds with Palantir Inc.

**Maria Eagle:**

A search for the information has now been completed within the Ministry of Defence, and I can confirm the Department holds two open contracts with Palantir Inc. The details of one of the contracts can be found below, the second contract is withheld under a UK EYES only security marking.

707017452 – Palantir Enterprise Agreement – Software package and information systems.

### ■ NATO: Guided Weapons

**Luke Akehurst:** [\[10554\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what his (a) planned timetable and (b) key milestones for success are for the DIAMOND initiative.

**Luke Pollard:**

In October the UK signed a letter of intent on DIAMOND (Delivering Integrated Air and Missile Operational Networked Defences) alongside six Allies: France, Germany, Latvia, Norway, Poland and Sweden. We are working with these countries to agree the timetable for actions. A priority for the UK is making greater use of training and exercises opportunities, such as Exercise Formidable Shield in May 2025.

### ■ Nuclear Submarines: Decommissioning

**Graeme Downie:** [\[10650\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the annual cost is of maintaining decommissioned nuclear submarines at (a) Rosyth and (b) Devonport.

**Maria Eagle:**

The annual cost for maintaining decommissioned submarines varies each year depending on the respective maintenance requirements. In financial year 2023-24, £1.711 million was spent at Rosyth and £7.056 million at Devonport.

### ■ Strategic Defence Review

**James Cartlidge:** [\[10454\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 21 October 2024 to Question 9487 on Strategic Defence Review, whether submissions to the Strategic Defence Review will be first read by (a) a human being and (b) an Artificial Intelligence tool.

**Luke Pollard:**

The responsible use of AI is part of how Defence must work in the 21st century. We have been transparent about our ambition to exploit AI for a wide range of defence applications. Human ingenuity is at the heart of this transformative review, AI plays an important supporting role. Humans read submissions and use AI to support them in their analysis.

### ■ Ukraine: Military Aid

**David Taylor:** [\[10905\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department allows the transfer of (a) retired, (b) surplus civilian (i) vehicles and (ii) vehicle fleets from the UK to support military units in Ukraine.



**Luke Pollard:**

The Ministry of Defence has prioritised its support to Ukraine, including establishing processes to ensure equipment that is retiring, or is surplus to UK military requirements, is considered for donation to Ukraine. Similarly, the Ministry of Defence has enabled the transfer of donated equipment e.g. vehicles, to Ukraine from private organisations, or Other Government Departments such as the Home Office.

We will continue to support and enable donations of equipment .

**■ Unmanned Air Vehicles: Procurement****James Cartlidge:**[\[10747\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of whether there is capacity for UK drone production to increase in the near term.

**Maria Eagle:**

Defence has conducted an in depth industry survey following the Ministry of Defence Drone industry day earlier this year. We have generated a considerable range of data on Defence and Supplier coherence, and the UK Supply Chain and Commercial Market which we are analysing alongside a range of inputs to understand where the UK should prioritise production capacity. Defence will continue to prioritise the development of onshore UK drone production to enhance strategic resilience by ensuring onshore production is a key metric when selecting Defence Industry partners for uncrewed system design, development and acquisition. This will be cohered through the newly established Defence Uncrewed Design Authority.

**■ USA: Veterans****Dr Andrew Murrison:**[\[4187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department holds information on British personnel affected by water contamination at US Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune between 1953 and 1987.

**Al Carns:**

The Ministry of Defence does not hold information on British personnel affected by water contamination at US Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune between 1953 and 1987.

While we do not have details of personnel who served at the Camp, we are making every effort to ensure Serving personnel and veterans are aware of their rights moving forward.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**[\[4188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether any British personnel affected by the water contamination at Camp Lejeune received compensation under the War Pension Scheme.

**AI Carns:**

The information requested is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**[\[4189\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of opening another application period for compensation of British personnel affected by the Camp Lejeune water contamination.

**AI Carns:**

Once I was made aware, on 30 July this year, of the Camp Lejeune US compensation scheme which was available from August 2022, direction was sent through the Department to encourage those who think they may have been affected by the contaminated water at Camp Lejeune to reach out for support. I encourage anyone who was based at Camp Lejeune between 1 August 1953 and 31 December 1987 to write to the Ministry of Defence so that we may provide them with advice.

We take the safety of our personnel very seriously and any veteran that may have served at Camp Lejeune during this period and believe that their health was affected can apply for compensation under the War Pension Scheme.

**■ Veterans****Ben Obese-Jecty:**[\[9256\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he plans to publish an updated Veterans' Strategy.

**AI Carns:**

The Government is committed to ensuring veterans are supported in health, housing, employment and other key areas. We are already taking action to strengthen support for our veterans, including delivering on our commitment to approve the Veterans ID card as valid voter ID, and will announce further plans in due course.

**■ Veterans: Identity Cards****Mr Gregory Campbell:**[\[10680\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many HM Armed Forces Veteran Cards have been issued in Northern Ireland since January 2024.

**AI Carns:**

As of 24 October, 4,687 Veteran Cards have been issued to recipients in Northern Ireland since January 2024.

## EDUCATION

### ■ Children in Care

**Gareth Snell:**

[\[10115\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 11 October 2024 to Question 6377 on Children in Care, whether her Department plans to collect data on the number of children removed from a family who have previously had a child removed from their care.

**Janet Daby:**

The department recognises the need to improve the data available about children's social care, including making it more relevant to the experience of children, young people and families. A core part of this work includes understanding the data needs of the children's social care sector as a whole and scoping ways in which data gaps may be addressed over time.

Existing statutory data is captured about the child and does not capture the complex nature of families such as those where siblings do not live in the same family home. Addressing data gaps in children's social care will be a long-term endeavour due to the need to agree data definitions and standards, as well as to redesign local authority and departmental systems before rolling out nationally.

### ■ Children in Care: Costs

**Mike Amesbury:**

[\[10763\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of capping the costs of residential care for looked after children.

**Janet Daby:**

The department recognises that local authorities are facing rising costs to place children in care, with some private providers making excessive profits.

This is unacceptable. The department is taking a range of actions to rebalance the market and eliminate profiteering, including strengthening regulation and working with local government to make sure every child has a safe, loving home.

The department will be bringing forward measures in the Children's Wellbeing Bill to achieve this and to return children's social care to delivering high quality outcomes for looked after children at a sustainable cost to the taxpayer. The department will be announcing further detail in due course.

### ■ Children: Health

**Paul Davies:**

[\[10018\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will implement a national standard measure of children's wellbeing.

**Stephen Morgan:**

This government has set a bold ambition to raise the healthiest generation of children in history, giving mental health the same attention as physical health. We are reforming NHS services and have committed to providing access to mental health professionals in every school, removing barriers to opportunity and helping children to thrive. 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.

The Office for National Statistics publishes a range of children's wellbeing measures and the department maintains an ongoing monitoring of the national data landscape and publications regarding children and young people's mental health and wellbeing to support its policy making.

Schools measuring their pupils' wellbeing to inform their approach to supporting mental health and wellbeing is encouraged by the department, and as many as 63% of leaders reported in June 2023 that they have either partially or fully embedded this practice in their schools. The government has made no commitment to a national standard measure of children's wellbeing. However, this is something that the department welcomes exploring further with the education sector and relevant experts.

**■ First Aid: Education****Noah Law:**[\[10831\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to ensure the implementation of cardiopulmonary resuscitation training in schools.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

All state-funded schools in England are required to teach first aid as part of statutory health education, which is taught as part of relationships, sex and health education (RSHE). This includes basic first aid training and how to deal with common injuries. Pupils in secondary schools are taught further first aid, including, for example, how to administer CPR and the purpose of defibrillators. Schools can teach topics beyond those covered in the statutory guidance and have flexibility to respond to local issues.

The department is currently reviewing the RSHE statutory guidance. My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, has been clear that children's wellbeing must be at the heart of this guidance for schools. As such, the government will look carefully at the consultation responses, discuss with stakeholders and consider the relevant evidence before setting out next steps.

**■ Music and Dance Scheme****Damian Hinds:**[\[10423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many pupils were supported via the Music and Dance Scheme in academic year (a) 2023-24 and (b) 2024-25.

**Damian Hinds:**[\[10424\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many students received funding under the Music and Dance Scheme at each of the (a) eight schools and (b) 20 centres for advanced training in academic year (i) 2023-24 (ii) 2024-25.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

The Music and Dance Scheme (MDS) operates on an academic year basis. Information is available for the number of pupils supported at each provider approximately a year after the end of the academic year, in order to account for in-year starters.

The provisional data for the 2023/24 academic year is below. Provisional data on the number of students supported for the 2024/25 academic year will not be available until 2025.

**Table: Number of MDS pupils for the 2023/24 academic year (provisional)**

EDUCATION PROVIDERS	NUMBER OF STUDENTS
<b>Music schools</b>	
Chetham's School of Music	263
The Purcell School	139
Wells Cathedral School	78
Yehudi Menuhin School	56
<b>Dance schools</b>	
Elmhurst Ballet School	108
The Hammond	56
The Royal Ballet School	130
Tring Park School for the Performing Arts	46
<b>Music Centres for Advanced Training</b>	
Aldeburgh Young Musicians	18
Royal Birmingham Conservatoire (junior department)	45
Centre for Young Musicians	75
Guildhall School of Music and Drama (junior department)	35
Royal Academy of Music (junior department)	31

EDUCATION PROVIDERS	NUMBER OF STUDENTS
Royal College of Music (junior department)	36
Trinity Laban (music - junior department)	36
The Glasshouse	48
Sheffield Music Academy	75
South West Music School	72
Royal Northern College of Music (junior department)	39
Yorkshire Young Musicians	78
<b>Dance Centres for Advanced Training</b>	
FABRIC	61
Dance City	76
DanceEast	67
London Contemporary Dance School	96
The Lowry	43
Swindon Dance	73
Trinity Laban (dance - junior department)	76
Yorkshire Young Dancers (Northern Ballet and Northern School of Contemporary Dance)	88
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,044</b>

### ■ Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education

**Dr Neil Hudson:**

[\[10511\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to publish a response to her Department's review of RSHE statutory guidance launched by the previous Administration in May 2024.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

The public consultation on the Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education statutory guidance was open for eight weeks and received over 14,300 responses.

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, has been clear that children's wellbeing must be at the heart of this guidance for schools. Therefore, the government will look carefully at the consultation responses, discuss with stakeholders and consider the relevant evidence, including the Cass Review which has since been published, before setting out next steps.

## ■ Pre-school Education: York Outer

**Mr Luke Charters:**

[\[10952\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate her Department has made of demand for nursery spaces in York Outer constituency.

**Stephen Morgan:**

The department published management information data on the expansion to early childcare entitlements on 17 October 2024. This includes the number of eligibility codes issued to parents of children aged nine months to two years old for the autumn term 2024, as of 13 October. Data shows that at a local authority level, there were 1,348 new codes issued in York. This data is not available at constituency level.

## ■ Religion: Education

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[9920\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to include a review of the current arrangements for religious education in the planned review of the national curriculum.

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[9921\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to hold discussions with the (a) National Association of Teachers of RE, (b) RE Council and (c) National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on RE on the Curriculum and Assessment Review.

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[9922\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential implications for her policies of the proposal of the Religious Education Council's National Content Standard for Religious Education; and whether she plans to include the National Content Standard for Religious Education in the planned review of the National Curriculum.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

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

Religious education (RE) is an important subject that should provide pupils with an opportunity to learn about a wide range of religious and non-religious beliefs. Religious education should help pupils to better understand the values and traditions of different religious communities, which is why it remains a compulsory subject in all state-funded schools in England for each pupil up to the age of 18.

The government has established an independent Curriculum and Assessment Review, covering ages 5 to 18, which is chaired by Professor Becky Francis CBE. The review will seek to deliver a curriculum that reflects the issues and diversities of our society, ensuring that all children and young people are represented in their learning and have access to a broad range of subjects.

The review group has recently launched a call for evidence, which sets out key questions and themes where it would particularly welcome input.

Anyone can access and respond to the call for evidence or register to join a live event. The review is looking to hear from a range of experts across the sector, in addition to the regular contact departmental officials have with stakeholders on the matter of religious education.

### ■ Special Educational Needs

**Tom Hayes:**

**[10601]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to increase (a) the number of people being trained to be educational psychologists and (b) the number of assessments of children with undiagnosed SEND.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

This government's ambition is that all children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) or in alternative provision receive the right support to succeed in their education and as they move into adult life.

The SEND code of practice is clear that meeting the needs of a child with special educational needs (SEN) does not require a diagnostic label or test. It is the responsibility of teachers to monitor the progress of all pupils and put support in place where needed. This may include arranging diagnostic tests where appropriate. Where a child who has SEN requires more support than the school they are in can usually provide, parents or carers can ask the local authority to carry out an education, health and care (EHC) needs assessment, irrespective of whether their child has a diagnosis or not.

The department recognises the critical role of educational psychologists within the SEND system, including in their statutory contribution to EHC assessments. To support this, 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. As these trainees complete their studies, they will join the workforce to support the capacity of local authority educational psychology services, including in delivering assessments.

**Tom Hayes:**

**[10603]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to (a) improve support for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in



mainstream settings and (b) develop new specialist provision for children with SEND in the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole council area.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

This government's ambition is that all children and young people with special education needs and disabilities (SEND), or who are in alternative provision, receive the right support to succeed in their education and as they move into adult life. This government 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. This government 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. We will listen to and work with families and sector partners to fix this, which includes taking wider opportunities on accountability, the curriculum, workforce and more.

The department will strengthen accountability on mainstream settings to be inclusive, including through Ofsted, support the mainstream workforce to increase their SEND expertise, and encourage schools to set up Resourced Provision or special educational needs (SEN) units to increase capacity in mainstream schools.

Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole are part of the most recent competition to find trusts for 18 additional special schools that was launched by the previous government. The window for trusts to apply has now closed. The department is working through the next steps and will provide an update in due course.

The department also continues to work very closely with the local authority and trust leaders on proposals to establish and expand high quality resource bases and SEN unit provision.

■ **Special Educational Needs: Finance**

**Tom Hayes:**

[\[10600\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if her Department will make an assessment of the adequacy of funding for education health and care plans.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

The department is acutely aware of the financial pressures that local authorities are facing because of the increasing cost of supporting children and young people with education, health and care (EHC) plans. The department is acting as quickly as it can to respond to these cost pressures. In the meantime, local authorities are responsible for securing appropriate support for all children with EHC plans.

Funding for the 2025/26 financial year will be announced following the first stage of the government's spending review, which is due to conclude on 30 October.

**ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO****■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points****Steve Yemm:**[\[10009\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking with Cabinet colleagues to help lower the cost of electric vehicle charging.

**Michael Shanks:**

Electric vehicle owners who have access to private charging facilities can fuel their vehicles for much less than it costs to fuel a combustion engine car. Further savings can be made if owners use smart charging, so that their electric vehicle batteries are charged outside of peak demand periods.

Government is however aware of the cost discrepancies between private and public charging and is working with Ofgem and others to explore measures to bring down the costs of public charging, including in the areas detailed within the Electric Vehicle Smart Charging Action Plan 2023.

**■ Electromagnetic Fields: Health Hazards****Andrew Bowie:**[\[9931\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether his Department holds information on the potential impact of electromagnetic fields from high-voltage electricity pylons on public health.

**Michael Shanks:**

The National Policy Statement for electricity networks notes that all overhead power lines produce electromagnetic fields (EMF), and that Government policy is that exposure of the public to EMF from 275kV and 400kV lines should be limited to low levels in compliance with International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection guidelines (1998). Potential health effects associated with long-term low-level exposure to EMF have been extensively studied over recent decades and detrimental effects have not been found.

**■ Energy: Housing****Sir John Hayes:**[\[9899\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to improve the energy efficiency of homes in South Holland and the Deepings constituency.

**Miatta Fahnbulleh:**

Support for boosting energy efficiency in homes is currently available through the Social Housing Decarbonisation Scheme, Home Upgrade Grant, Energy Company Obligation Scheme and the Great British Insulation scheme. These schemes are available across the country, including to those based in South Holland and the

Deepings constituency. We have also announced a new Warm Homes: Local Grant and the Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund, with delivery expected in 2025.

The Warm Homes Plan will offer grants and low interest loans to support investment in insulation, low carbon heating and other home improvements to cut bills. We will partner with combined authorities and local and devolved governments to roll out this plan.

### ■ Energy: Infrastructure

**Ben Obese-Jecty:**

[\[10835\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that community benefit funds provide adequate compensation to communities affected by nationally significant infrastructure projects.

**Michael Shanks:**

It is the Government's priority to build support for developments by ensuring communities directly benefit, as per the commitment set out in the election manifesto. As such we are reviewing how to most effectively deliver community benefits for communities living near new energy infrastructure.

### ■ Energy: Public Buildings

**Stuart Anderson:**

[\[9944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to increase energy efficiency in (a) hospitals, (b) schools and (c) other public sector buildings.

**Miatta Fahnbulleh:**

The Government continues to improve the energy efficiency of hospitals, schools and other public buildings primarily through the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme, which provides public sector organisations a funding stream to help them install low carbon heating and efficiency measures.

The current application round for funding is open for applications until 25 November 2024. In addition over £80m has been made available through the Low Carbon Skills Fund for owners of public sector buildings to develop their decarbonisation plans.

### ■ Heating: West Dorset

**Edward Morello:**

[\[10206\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to support rural off-grid households to switch to low-carbon heating solutions in West Dorset constituency.

**Miatta Fahnbulleh:**

The Warm Homes Plan will offer grants and low interest loans to support investment in insulation, low carbon heating and other home improvements to cut bills across the

UK, including in West Dorset. We will partner with combined authorities and local and devolved governments to roll out this plan.

The Boiler Upgrade Scheme provides grants to property owners, including to those living off the gas grid, to enable them to transition away from fossil fuel to low carbon heating.

Support for boosting energy efficiency in off-grid homes is also available through the Home Upgrade Grant, Energy Company Obligation and the Great British Insulation scheme. We have also announced a new Warm Homes: Local Grant, with delivery expected in 2025.

### ■ **Seagreen Wind Energy: Health and Safety**

**Grahame Morris:**

[\[10692\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has had discussions with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on safety procedures for workers on the Seagreen offshore wind farm.

**Michael Shanks:**

The Secretary of State continues to have ongoing discussions with Cabinet colleagues concerning Departmental business.

Safety procedures for offshore wind farms is a matter for the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). HSE recently served a prohibition notice to the Seagreen offshore wind farm developer under the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015.

### ■ **Utilities: Standing Charges**

**Rupert Lowe:**

[\[10195\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of reviewing the system of standing charges for utilities.

**Miatta Fahnbulleh:**

The Government has worked constructively with the regulator on the issue of standing charges, and we are committed to lowering the cost of them.

The setting of standing charges is a commercial matter for suppliers. Ofgem's recently published discussion paper sets out the options for how standing charges could be reduced, including by moving supplier operational costs off standing charges onto the unit rate, increasing the variety of tariffs available for consumer in the market, and in the longer term, reviewing how system costs are allocated.

We will continue to support Ofgem in this work and ensure that standing charges are reduced.

## ■ Wind Power: Accidents

**Grahame Morris:**

[\[10691\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has had discussions with (a) Cabinet colleagues, (b) the offshore wind industry and (c) trade unions on the collision between the Wind of Hope vessel and a turbine in the Hornsea 1 offshore wind farm on 20 September 2024.

**Michael Shanks:**

The Secretary of State continues to have ongoing discussions with Cabinet colleagues, the offshore wind industry and trade unions concerning Departmental business.

The collision involving the Wind of Hope vessel was reported to the appropriate authorities. It will be a matter for the Marine Accidents Investigation Branch.

## ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

## ■ African Swine Fever

**Dr Neil Hudson:**

[\[10798\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the level of risk of incursion of African swine fever to the UK.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

Whilst we have never had an outbreak of African swine fever (ASF) in the UK, the overall risk of an incursion of ASF is currently assessed to be MEDIUM (the event occurs regularly) and we continue to prepare for a possible outbreak. The risk of ASF entering Great Britain through non-commercial and illegal imports of pork meat and products of animal origin from ASF affected areas remains of high concern. The risk from these human mediated pathways is assessed as HIGH (event occurs very often), though there is considerable uncertainty around this.

The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) monitors the spread of ASF internationally and regularly publishes assessments of the risk posed to Great Britain. The latest assessments (published in July 2024 for Europe and August 2024 for Asia) can be found as part of APHA's [Animal diseases: international and UK monitoring collection](#) on gov.uk. These assessments are used to review, and strengthen where necessary, measures to prevent ASF reaching the UK.

The practical impacts of a reasonable worst-case scenario outbreak of ASF were assessed in 2023 for the [National Risk Register](#) which is available on GOV.UK

## ■ Disposable Wipes: Plastics

**Daisy Cooper:**

[\[8876\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 10 October to Question 6533 on Disposable Wipes: Plastics, on what date he

plans to bring forward proposals to implement a ban on the sale of wet wipes containing plastic.

**Emma Hardy:**

The Government is working together with the devolved governments to understand the issue, with a view to legislate to ban wet wipes containing plastic across the UK.

■ **Farmers: Tenants**

**Tim Farron:**

[\[10417\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make it his policy to establish a Tenant Farming Commissioner.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

This Government is committed to a resilient and thriving farming sector in which all farmers, including tenant farmers, are supported to deliver our food security and environmental goals. The Government is considering the role of a Commissioner for the Tenant Farming sector and will provide an update in due course.

■ **Farming Recovery Fund**

**Patrick Spencer:**

[\[10566\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the eligibility criteria was for the expanded Farming Recovery Fund.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

Defra is aware of the ongoing challenges farmers have been facing following the winter storms and the wet weather in late 2023 and early 2024. Defra is committed to maintaining food production and supporting thriving farm businesses as well as protecting communities from flooding. All spending commitments will be confirmed in the spending review. This includes the Farming Recovery Fund, more information on the expanded Farming Recovery Fund will be made available soon.

■ **Food: Production**

**Mark Pritchard:**

[\[10059\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to increase domestic production of fruit and vegetables.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

This Government recognises that food security is national security and fruit and vegetables grown in the UK have an important part to play. As part of our mission-driven government and, in partnership with the sector, we are considering several ways to achieve our ambitious, measurable and long-term goals for the sector. We also recognise the importance of ensuring that growers can access the labour they need, and we have recently confirmed the Seasonal Worker visa route for 2025 with a total of 43,000 Seasonal Worker visas available for horticulture.

## ■ Food: Supply Chains

**Mark Pritchard:**

[\[10060\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to his Department's closed consultation entitled The UK fresh produce sector: review of the supply chain, updated on 14 May 2024, whether he plans to introduce new regulations for fresh produce contracts.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

The Government will deliver a resilient and healthy food system, with a new deal that ensures fairness in the supply chain across all sectors, including the fresh produce sector. Farmers should always receive a fair price for their products and the Government is committed to tackling contractual unfairness wherever it exists.

Defra will continue to work closely with stakeholders from the fresh produce sector on the best way to achieve this.

## ■ Food: Waste

**Dan Tomlinson:**

[\[10243\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps to ensure that the new food waste segregation reforms will not prevent community litter picking organisations from continuing; and if he will publish guidance on how these organisations can ensure their efforts are fully compliant.

**Mary Creagh:**

The Government is committed to implementing Simpler Recycling, which will mean that people across England will be able to recycle the same materials, whether at home, work or school, putting an end to the confusion over what can and cannot be recycled in different parts of the country.

The Department understands that most litter picking activities are undertaken by community or volunteer groups, under which circumstances Regulatory Position Statement 212 is in place to ensure that they can dispose of waste at their local household waste recycling centre. Alternatively, the local authority may arrange the collection and disposal of gathered litter. Under both circumstances, this would not fall within the scope of the requirements for segregation. Officials are working to provide further guidance on this in due course.

## ■ Free Movement of People: Northern Ireland

**Alex Easton:**

[\[9872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the Windsor Framework (Non-Commercial Movement of Pet Animals) Regulations 2024 on freedom of movement for people travelling with pets between Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

The Northern Ireland Pet Travel Scheme will significantly reduce the burdens associated with the original Northern Ireland Protocol, and provides a stable and long-term footing for pet travel for those travelling with their pets within the United Kingdom.

**Horses: Animal Welfare****Mr Peter Bedford:**[\[10239\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department plans to bring forward legislative proposals on prohibiting the practice of tethering horses by (a) roadsides and (b) on (i) common and (ii) waste grounds.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

Under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 (the 2006 Act), it is an offence to cause any animal unnecessary suffering or to fail to provide for its welfare. The 2006 Act is backed up by the Code of Practice for the Welfare of Horses, Ponies, Donkeys and Their Hybrids which provides owners with information on how to meet the welfare needs of their equines.

As stated in the code, tethering is not a suitable method of long-term management of an animal. It should only be used as a short-term method. People who do not tether their horses appropriately risk causing their animals distress and suffering.

Local authorities have powers under the 2006 Act to act to intervene where an animal is suspected to be suffering on any land, public or private.

**Incinerators: Cambridgeshire****Ben Obese-Jecty:**[\[10547\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what proportion of (a) current and (b) future planned incineration waste capacity is used in (a) Cambridgeshire and (b) Peterborough.

**Mary Creagh:**

Local authorities consider their waste treatment capacity needs at local level via Waste Local Plans. The Government does not undertake assessments of the national proportion of waste management and treatment facilities at an individual authority level. Before the end of this year, however, we hope to publish an analysis of municipal residual waste treatment infrastructure capacity, including exports, against expected future residual waste arisings in England so we can understand what future capacity may be required following implementation of the packaging reforms. This will include assessment of currently operational and consented capacity at a national level and by planning region. This analysis will support decision making relating to planning for new residual waste treatment infrastructure.

The published Local Authority Collected Waste Management Statistics detail waste collected by local authorities and how this is managed and treated. These statistics are available [here](#).



## ■ Incinerators: Licensing

**Andrew Cooper:**

[\[10631\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what his Department's policy is on approving permit applications for new waste incinerators.

**Mary Creagh:**

The Environment Agency (EA) is responsible for assessing environmental permit applications for new waste incinerators to operate in England and has a duty to assess any application it receives against the requirements of the Environmental Permitting Regulations (EPR) 2016. If it meets those requirements, the EA must issue a permit.

Under EPR 2016, operators of incinerators must use the best available techniques to minimise emissions and meet strict emission limits. The EA will only grant a permit if it is satisfied that these requirements will be met, and that the proposal would not give rise to any significant pollution of the environment or harm to human health.

When the EA receives a permit application for a new incinerator, it carries out a comprehensive impact assessment of emissions from the plant, and it also consults the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) for their views on the application.

## ■ Manure: Storage

**Charlie Dewhirst:**

[\[10282\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what progress his Department has made on (a) applications and (b) approvals for the Slurry Investment Scheme.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

To date, the Rural Payments Agency has received 92 applications. Of these, 37 have been approved, 1 has been rejected due to ineligibility, 55 are still being appraised. The deadline to receive full applications is June 2025.

**Charlie Dewhirst:**

[\[10283\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many slurry stores require updating to meet the previous Government's target of six months of storage for slurry.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

Defra recognises that sufficient storage is fundamental to good slurry management. The Water Resources (Control of Pollution) (Silage, Slurry and Agricultural Fuel Oil) (England) Regulations 2010, also known as SSAFO, set the standards for slurry storage and the Department works closely with the Environment Agency (EA) to ensure these standards are met.

**■ Peas: Allergies****Daisy Cooper:** [\[10146\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has had discussions with the Food Standards Agency on listing pea protein as an allergen.

**Daisy Cooper:** [\[10147\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of the increasing use of pea protein in food products.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

The UK maintains high standards on the information that is provided on food labels so that consumers can have confidence in the food that they buy. The Government continues to work closely with the Food Standards Agency (FSA) to understand the steps that can be taken to ensure people with allergies have access to clear and accurate information.

There are a large number of potential food ingredients that may cause an allergic reaction to sensitised people. The current [14 regulated allergens](#) are recognised as being the most common and potent allergens of public health concern across Europe.

The FSA is aware that pea protein allergy is an emerging area of concern and there are reports of adverse reactions to peas in the scientific literature. However, evidence on this is currently limited. The FSA is currently working with the British Society for Allergy and Clinical Immunology and other stakeholders on gathering information on hidden and emerging food allergens which will help in assessing the need for further research and work in this area. The FSA continues to monitor the situation closely but has no current plans to amend the 14 allergens list.

The FSA continues to work to make it easier for people with food hypersensitivities (allergies, intolerances, and coeliac disease) to have access to clear and accurate information which is a fundamental part of their work. Its research can be found [here](#).

**■ Pesticides: Public Places****Wendy Chamberlain:** [\[10143\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps to phase-out the use of (a) glyphosate and (b) other pesticides in public spaces.

**Emma Hardy:**

It is for each local authority to decide the best way of delivering effective and cost-effective weed control in its operations without harming people or the environment.

We are working with stakeholders in the sector to increase awareness and uptake of Integrated Pest Management to reduce reliance on chemical pesticides.

## ■ Rivers: Sewage

**Tim Farron:**

[\[10064\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take legislative steps to end the practice of operator self-monitoring, in the context of recent trends in the level of river pollution discharges.

**Emma Hardy:**

The Water (Special Measures) Bill will introduce a requirement for water companies to publish information on discharges from emergency overflows in near real-time (within an hour of a discharge occurring). This requirement will be in addition to the duty coming into force for companies to publish discharges from storm overflows in near real-time.

The increased availability of near real-time data will be independently scrutinised by the regulators and will fulfil the Government's commitment to ensure independent monitoring of every outlet.

The Environment Agency (EA) are already recruiting up to 500 additional staff for inspections, enforcement and stronger regulation, increasing compliance checks, and quadrupling the number of water company inspections by March next year. The increase in inspections will allow the EA to conduct more in-depth and independent audits to get to the root-cause of incidents, reducing the reliance on operator self-monitoring.

On 23 October the Government launched an Independent Commission into the water sector regulatory system. The Commission includes specific objectives around ensuring water industry regulators are effective, have a clear purpose, and are empowered to hold water companies to account.

## ■ Sewage and Water Companies

**Tim Farron:**

[\[10067\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many and what proportion of officials in his Department have worked on teams covering (a) water companies and (b) sewage in each of the last five financial years.

**Emma Hardy:**

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

## ■ Sewage: Runnymede and Weybridge

**Dr Ben Spencer:**

[\[9950\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of Thames Water's surface and foul water drainage asset management in the Runnymede and Weybridge constituency.

**Emma Hardy:**

It is important for companies to maintain assets to ensure compliance with legal obligations and continuity of service for customers now and into the future. There are two common performance commitments that Ofwat uses, alongside other information, to monitor the health of wastewater assets. These are treatment works compliance and number of sewer collapses.

**■ Sewage: Waste Disposal****Mr Lee Dillon:**[\[10247\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of replacing Ofwat with a clean water authority on sewage dumping.

**Emma Hardy:**

The Government and regulators work together to drive improvements that benefit both customers and the environment and hold water companies to account where necessary through strong enforcement action. We have set clear expectations of the sector, including regulators, and will not hesitate to take further action if we do not see the necessary action.

The measures that will be implemented through the Water (Special Measures) Bill are a down payment on the comprehensive reforms needed to restore our rivers, lakes, and seas to good health, meet the challenges of the future, and drive economic growth.

The Secretary of State, in conjunction with the Welsh government, has launched an Independent Commission into the water sector and its regulation. The latest step in the Government's programme to transform how our water system works. The Commission will adopt a broad scope. That will include considering the role of the regulators, ensuring they are effective for holding companies accountable, as well as establishing clear outcomes and a long-term vision for the future.

The Commission will report to the Secretary of State for Environment, the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs with recommendations, in Q2 2025. The UK Government and Welsh Government will then respond and consult on proposals, including potential further legislation. The Government does not intend to issue a revised statement until after the outcomes of the independent commission.

**■ Sugar Beet: Neonicotinoids****Adrian Ramsay:**[\[10279\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions his Department has had with (a) British Sugar and (b) the National Farmers Union on emergency authorisation of the thiamethoxam containing neonicotinoid Cruiser SB on sugar beet.

**Emma Hardy:**

Defra regularly meets with both British Sugar and the National Farmers Union to discuss a range of topics such as crop development, harvest, trade and pest and disease pressures and progress in research and stewardship programmes.

All applications for emergency authorisation are assessed according to the legal requirements and on the basis of the evidence.

**■ Trapping****Victoria Collins:**[\[10820\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what his planned timetable is for banning the use of snare traps.

**Mary Creagh:**

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

The Government will introduce the most ambitious programme for animal welfare in a generation. As outlined in our manifesto, we will bring an end to the use of snare traps. We are considering the most effective way to deliver this commitment and will be setting out next steps in due course.

**■ Water Companies: Regulation****Tim Farron:**[\[10065\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will issue a revised strategic policy statement to OFWAT on its regulation of water companies.

**Emma Hardy:**

The Government and regulators work together to drive improvements that benefit both customers and the environment and hold water companies to account where necessary through strong enforcement action. We have set clear expectations of the sector, including regulators, and will not hesitate to take further action if we do not see the necessary action. The measures that will be implemented through the Water (Special Measures) Bill are a down payment on the comprehensive reforms needed to restore our rivers, lakes, and seas to good health, meet the challenges of the future, and drive economic growth

The Secretary of State, in conjunction with the Welsh government, has launched an Independent Commission into the water sector and its regulation. The latest step in the Government's programme to transform how our water system works. The Commission will adopt a broad scope. That will include considering the role of the regulators, ensuring they are effective for holding companies accountable, as well as establishing clear outcomes and a long-term vision for the future. The Commission will report to the Secretary of State for Environment, the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs with recommendations, in Q2 2025. The UK Government and Welsh Government will then respond and consult on

proposals, including potential further legislation. The Government does not intend to issue a revised statement until after the outcomes of the independent commission.

### ■ **Water Supply: Planning**

**Alex Mayer:**

[\[9988\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions his Department has had with stakeholders on catchment-based water systems planning.

**Emma Hardy:**

Since taking office, we have prioritised engagement with our stakeholders to reap the benefit of their expertise through information sharing. The Secretary of State and I have held one-to-one meetings and shared panels with several organisations involved in catchment-based approaches such as the Rivers Trust. Defra is supportive of the Catchment Based Approach (CaBA) and officials regularly meet with local catchment partnerships and nationally through attendance at the CaBA National Support Group.

Wednesday 23 October we announced that the UK and Welsh governments are launching an independent commission, led by a chair and supported by expert advisors, to recommend reforms to reset the water sector regulatory system. One of the objectives of the commission will be to ensure there is a strategic spatial planning approach to the management of water across sectors of the economy, tackling pollution and managing pressures on the water environment and supply at a catchment, regional and national scale. This approach should recognise the cross-border challenges that water can present. The scope of the independent commission will include catchment approaches and Stakeholder engagement will be a key component of the review. The commission will consult experts in areas like the environment, public health, engineering, customers, investors and economics, reporting to the Secretary of State for Environment and Wales' Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs by Q2 2025.

## FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

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

**Peter Lamb:**

[\[10585\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans he has for engagement with the Chagossian community during the transfer of sovereignty of the Chagos Islands to Mauritius.

**Stephen Doughty:**

Ministers and officials will continue to regularly engage with members of the Chagossian community on a range of issues, including on the implementation of the agreement reached between the United Kingdom and Mauritius. We recognise the importance of the islands to Chagossians and have worked to ensure this agreement reflects their interests.

## ■ **British Indian Ocean Territory: Undocumented Migrants**

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[10049\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will publish the agreement with St Helena on future migrants arriving on the British Indian Ocean Territory.

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[9908\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions his Department has had with residents of St Helena on the housing of illegal migrants from the Chagos Islands archipelago.

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[9909\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what consultation his Department has conducted with the resident community on St Helena on the housing of illegal migrants from the Chagos Islands archipelago.

**Stephen Doughty:**

The new Memorandum of Understanding with the St Helena Government has been deposited in the library of both Houses, as communicated by the Minister for the Overseas Territories in a recent letter to the Hon Gentleman. The St Helena Government has also published the Memorandum of Understanding on their website.

The St Helena Government are responsible for any local consultation. FCDO and Home Office Ministers worked closely with St Helena's Chief Minister and her team to conclude this agreement, which was welcomed by the St Helena Government in a public statement after the signing of the agreement.

## ■ **Chelsea Football Club: Sales**

**David Taylor:**

[\[10916\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to unlock the £2.5 billion worth of funds resulting from the Sale of Chelsea football club to be used for humanitarian ends for Ukrainian people effected by conflict in Ukraine.

**Stephen Doughty:**

This government is working hard to ensure the proceeds from the sale of Chelsea FC reach humanitarian causes in Ukraine as quickly as possible, in line with the UK's unilateral declaration. The government is fully committed to that position, as part of our iron-clad support for Ukraine. UK officials continue to hold discussions with Mr Abramovich's representatives, experts and international partners, and we are doubling down on our efforts to reach a resolution.

**■ Iran: Hamas and Hezbollah****Mike Tapp:** [\[10012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps his Department has taken to help disrupt Iran's support for (a) Hamas, (b) Hezbollah and (c) the Houthis.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The Foreign Secretary and Prime Minister made clear to their Iranian counterparts that Iran must cease its support for its proxies and partners during recent calls. We will continue to work alongside international partners to hold Iran to account for its escalatory behaviour through its support for its proxies and partners in the Middle East and its attempts to undermine global security. On 2 September, the UK imposed sanctions against four Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) -Quds Force targets who have a role in supporting Iranian proxy actions. Furthermore, the UK has proscribed Lebanese Hezbollah and Hamas. The IRGC and Houthis are sanctioned in their entirety.

**■ Iran: Lebanon****Alicia Kearns:** [\[10497\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will take diplomatic steps to reduce Iranian influence in Lebanon.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

During recent calls, the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary have made it clear to Iran that it must cease its support for its proxies and partners. We will continue to work alongside international partners to hold Iran to account for its escalatory behaviour through its support for its proxies and partners, including Lebanese Hezbollah, in the Middle East and its attempts to undermine global security. On 2 September, the UK imposed sanctions against four Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corp (IRGC) Quds Force targets who have a role in supporting Iranian proxy actions. Furthermore, the UK has proscribed Lebanese Hezbollah and sanctioned the IRGC in its entirety.

**■ Italy: Surrogacy****Blair McDougall:** [\[10236\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has made representations to the government of Italy on that country's recent ban on couples travelling abroad for surrogacy.

**Stephen Doughty:**

As a key ally, we exchange views frankly and respectfully with Italy including on women's empowerment, gender equality and LGBT+ issues. We do this bilaterally and in multilateral fora. The FCDO will continue to discuss a range of issues with Italian counterparts.



**■ Lithuania: Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps****Mr Richard Holden:**[\[10498\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had recent discussions with his Lithuanian counterpart on the decision of that country to proscribe the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a terrorist organisation.

**Stephen Doughty:**

The Foreign Secretary has not raised the proscription of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) with Lithuania's Minister for Foreign Affairs. We do not comment on whether a specific organisation is or is not being considered for proscription. We have sanctioned the IRGC in its entirety and will continue work to identify further ways to counter it at home and abroad.

**■ Mozambique: Homicide****Mark Ferguson:**[\[10816\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had recent discussions with his (a) French and (b) Mozambique counterpart on the alleged massacre of civilians by Mozambican military personnel at the TotalEnergies plant in 2021.

**Anneliese Dodds:**

Our High Commissioner in Mozambique has raised the alleged massacre of civilians at the TotalEnergies plant in 2021 with representatives of the Government of Mozambique and local counterparts, alongside France and the US. The UK is offering continued support to Mozambique on responding to the ongoing IS-Mozambique insurgency in Cabo Delgado. This support includes programmes aimed at building local resilience to violent extremism, and security and human rights training of Mozambican Armed Forces.

**■ Pakistan: Ahmadiyya****Ruth Jones:**[\[10484\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of recent reports of the destruction of Ahmadiyya Muslim places of worship in the Punjab region of Pakistan.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

We are aware of reports of the desecration of Ahmadi mosques and graves in Pakistan. The UK strongly condemns all instances of hate or violence directed towards Ahmadiyya Muslims and other marginalised religious communities in Pakistan. I underlined the importance of promoting religious tolerance and harmony when I met with Pakistan's Human Rights Minister Azam Tarar on 4 September. Officials at BHC Islamabad regularly raise our concerns surrounding the mistreatment of minorities with the Pakistani authorities, including law enforcement officials. We continue to support projects promoting the rights of religious minorities in Pakistan,

including facilitating interfaith dialogue and protecting marginalised communities from hate speech online.

#### ■ Republic of Ireland: Extradition

**Mr Gregory Campbell:**

[\[10679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will hold discussions with his Irish counterpart on the recent treaties on extradition between the UAE and the Irish Republic to help ensure suspects are unable to use the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic to avoid extradition proceedings.

**Stephen Doughty:**

The UK remains committed to upholding the Common Travel Area and we work closely with Ireland to protect the integrity of it, including with Northern Irish and Irish law enforcement agencies on the question of those seeking to evade justice in either jurisdiction. Legislation is in place to enable extraditions between the UK and Ireland.

#### ■ Sheikh Hasina

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[10483\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of the recent arrest warrant issued against former Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina; and whether he has had discussions with his Indian counterpart on the former Prime Minister's continued presence in India, in the context of the bilateral extradition treaty between Bangladesh and India.

**Catherine West:**

The UK is supporting Bangladesh's Interim Government as it works to restore stability and create a pathway to an inclusive democratic future. We note the arrest warrant issued by Bangladesh; discussions between the Interim Government and India about this are a bilateral matter between them. Any investigation is a matter for the relevant authorities in Bangladesh. The UK and international partners continue to push for progress towards accountability and justice including supporting an impartial and independent fact-finding mission by the United Nations. In August, I spoke to my Indian counterpart and discussed the need for de-escalation of violence in Bangladesh.

#### ■ St Helena: Police

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[10050\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with the St Helena Government on levels of police resources on St Helena.

**Stephen Doughty:**

The UK Government provide funding to support the delivery of public services in St Helena, including policing. In addition, the UK Government has a long-term

programme to increase capacity and capability in the Royal St Helena Police Service. During recent discussions I [Minister for the Overseas Territories] and Home Office Minister Lord Hanson discussed public services resources with the Chief Minister.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

### ■ Ambulance Services: Greater London

**Luke Taylor:**

**[10343]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on the average change in (a) stroke and (b) heart attack ambulance waiting times as a result of the London drop and go ambulance policy.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Department does not hold the information requested. Category 2 ambulance calls are emergency responses, which can include serious time-sensitive incidents such as strokes and heart attacks. The following table shows the national and London Ambulance Service NHS Trust (LAS) Category 2 response times, displayed in minutes and seconds, for September 2024:

	RESPONSE TIME
LAS	42:27
England	36:02

Source: The data is published by NHS England, and is available at the following link: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/ambulance-quality-indicators/>

### ■ Ambulance Services: Standards

**Helen Whately:**

**[9512]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help ensure ambulances are not delayed outside hospitals waiting to hand over patients.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Government has committed to supporting the National Health Service to improve performance and achieve the standards set out in the NHS Constitution, including ambulance response times.

As a first step, my Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care appointed Professor Lord Darzi to lead an independent investigation of the NHS' performance. The investigation's findings were published on 12 September 2024 and will feed into the Government's work on a 10-Year Health Plan to radically reform the NHS and build a health service that is fit for the future.

Ahead of this winter, NHS England has set out the priorities for the NHS to maintain and improve patient safety and experience, including actions to support patient flow and ensure ambulances are released in a timely way. NHS England's winter letter is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/winter-and-h2-priorities/>

### ■ Asylum and Migrants: Disinformation

**Tom Hayes:** [\[10284\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help tackle misinformation on (a) migrant access to NHS services and (b) the accommodation of asylum seekers.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

I refer my Hon. Friend to the answer I gave on 17 October 2024 to Question [8361](#).

### ■ Cancer: Health Services

**Carla Lockhart:** [\[10518\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the total cost to the public purse was of cancer care in each of the last five years.

**Carla Lockhart:** [\[10519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the cost to the public purse was of NHS spending on cancer (a) research and (b) treatment in each of the last five years.

**Karin Smyth:**

The information is not available in the requested format for cancer care in England. The Department allocated £14 billion to NHS England from 2022/23 to 2024/25 specifically for the National Health Service in England to recover elective and cancer care. This comprised of £8 billion of resource funding and £5.9 billion of capital funding, as described in the November 2021 Budget and Spending Review. My Rt Hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer's next budget, on 30 October 2024, will finalise the funding position in 2024/25 and 2025/26.

Lord Darzi's report has set out the scale of the challenges we face in fixing the NHS in England, and the need to improve cancer waiting time performance and cancer survival. The report will inform the Government's 10-Year Health Plan to reform the NHS in England, including further detail on how we will improve outcomes for cancer.

### ■ Care Workers: Qualifications

**Helen Whately:** [\[9507\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help develop a career path for care workers.

**Helen Whately:** [\[9508\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is taking steps to develop new qualifications for care workers.

**Helen Whately:** [\[9510\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to increase the financial support available to care workers who are seeking to gain new qualifications.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

We are committed to supporting a professional, well-supported social care workforce. On 6 September 2024, the Department launched the Adult Social Care Learning and Development Support Scheme, which allows eligible employers to claim for funding for certain training courses and qualifications on behalf of eligible care staff. Over 150 courses and qualifications are eligible for funding from this scheme, including the new Level 2 Adult Social Care Certificate qualification. We will continue to work with the adult social care sector and representative organisations to monitor the impact of the funding under the Adult Social Care Learning and Development Support Scheme.

Furthermore, we are working with care workers and employers to develop the next part of the Care Workforce Pathway, the new national career structure for adult social care, which we will publish in due course.

## ■ Childbirth

**James McMurdock:** [\[9878\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve (a) neonatal care for and (b) support for the parents of premature babies.

**Karin Smyth:**

We are committed to improving neonatal services and supporting parents to be involved in all aspects of their baby's care. NHS England is implementing the Neonatal Critical Care Review Recommendations, investing £45 million in increasing neonatal cot capacity and assigning care coordinators for all Neonatal Operational Delivery Networks to implement care programmes, improving parent and family experiences. NHS England's Three year delivery plan for maternity and neonatal services sets out a programme of work to make maternity and neonatal care safer, more equitable, and more personalised. This plan includes:

- increasing the neonatal workforce;
- implementing an updated Saving Babies Lives Care Bundle of interventions to reduce the number of still births and pre-term births;
- commissioning a Patient Report Experience Measure to understand the experiences of families in neonatal services;
- establishing Maternity and Neonatal Voice Partnerships to champion the voices of parents in decision making; and

- supporting parents' mental health through Maternal Mental Health Services which provide psychological therapy for women experiences mental health difficulties related to maternity experience.

Additionally, NHS England has recently concluded a review of neonatal estates. They are in the process of analysing the findings, which will be used to inform the next steps.

## ■ Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and Long Covid: Research

**John McDonnell:**

[\[9402\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of funding allocated to research into (a) myalgic encephalomyelitis and (b) long covid.

**John McDonnell:**

[\[9403\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of allocating more funding for research into (a) myalgic encephalomyelitis and (b) long covid.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The Department funds research in health and social care through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). The NIHR and the Medical Research Council (MRC) are committed to funding high-quality research to understand the causes, consequences, and treatment of long COVID and myalgic encephalomyelitis, also known as chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS), and are actively exploring next steps for research in these areas. This includes a roundtable I hosted on long COVID on 17 October 2024, which included discussion on how long COVID research is relevant to other post-viral syndromes and how to stimulate the research community to undertake future research.

Over the last five years, the NIHR has invested almost £2.3 million in research programme funding for ME/CFS. In addition, the NIHR and the MRC are also providing £3.2 million of co-funding towards the DecodeME study, which aims to understand if there is a genetic component to the condition, and in doing so increase our understanding of ME/CFS to support the development of diagnostic tests and targeted treatments.

In the same period, the Government, through the NIHR and the MRC, has invested over £57 million in long COVID research, with almost £40 million of this through two specific research calls on long COVID. The NIHR specifically has invested £42.7 million towards research funding for long COVID. The projects funded aim to improve our understanding of the diagnosis and underlying mechanisms of the disease and the effectiveness of both pharmacological and non-pharmacological therapies and interventions, as well as to evaluate clinical care.

The NIHR welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health including ME/CFS and long COVID. These applications are subject to peer

review and judged in open competition, with awards being made on the basis of the importance of the topic to patients and health and care services, value for money, and scientific quality. In all areas, the amount of NIHR funding depends on the volume and quality of scientific activity.

Publishing the consultation response and delivery plan for ME/CFS is a key priority for me.

## ■ Contraceptives

**Sarah Owen:**

[\[10151\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of GP practices are commissioned to fit long-acting reversible contraception for purposes of gynaecological care; and what the (a) fitting fee and (b) cost is of fitting long-acting reversible contraception in primary care.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

Information on the proportion of general practices commissioned to fit long-acting reversible contraception for the purposes of gynaecological care, as well as the fitting fee and cost of fitting in primary care, is not collected centrally.

## ■ Dementia: Health Education

**Nadia Whittome:**

[\[10807\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to (a) promote brain health and (b) implement targeted interventions among those most at risk of dementia from South Asian communities.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

NHS England's Healthcare Inequalities Improvement Programme led the development of resources to raise awareness of the specific dementia care requirements for people from ethnic minority communities to improve access, experience, and outcomes for people living with dementia from these groups.

These were released in May 2023 and include an e-learning module to support clinicians and a refresh of the intercultural dementia care guide, which incorporates considerations around language and communication in the provision of culturally appropriate care. Work to update the guide specifically included focus groups with black African, black Caribbean, and South Asian communities as the largest ethnic minority groups in England.

NHS England's resource Dementia wellbeing in the COVID-19 pandemic accompanies the Dementia Well Pathway. Key priorities and actions for dementia diagnosis and post diagnostic support are included for each step. The resource highlights the Advancing Mental Health Equalities Toolkit to help provide support in identifying and addressing mental health inequalities.



## ■ Dental Services

**Dame Harriett Baldwin:** [9708]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what meetings (a) he and (b) other Ministers in his Department have had with the (i) British Dental Association and (ii) Association of Dental Groups since 5 July 2024.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

Since 5 July 2024, the Government has had two meetings with the British Dental Association (BDA). My Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, met with the BDA in July, and I had a further meeting in August. I also met with the Association of Dental Groups in September 2024.

## ■ Dental Services: Runcorn and Helsby

**Mike Amesbury:** [10469]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of dental provision in Runcorn and Helsby constituency.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

Dental Statistics - England 2023-24, published by NHS Business Services Authority on 22 August 2024, is available at the following link:

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

The data for NHS Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board, which includes the Runcorn and Helsby constituency, shows that 46% of adults were seen by a National Health Service dentist in the previous 24 months, compared to 40% in England; and 62% of children were seen by an NHS dentist in the previous 12 months, compared to 56% in England.

## ■ Department of Health and Social Care: Equality

**Rupert Lowe:** [9844]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what data his Department holds on (a) the number of equality, diversity and inclusion champions and (b) the salary bands of those staff in each NHS trust.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Department does not hold this information centrally. The National Health Service is one of the most diverse organisations in this country and we hugely value the contribution that all staff make to delivering care and supporting patients. We are committed to creating a more inclusive and compassionate culture across the NHS and support the equality, diversity, and inclusion commitments that are in place.

It is the responsibility of NHS organisations to determine the number of equality, diversity, and inclusion roles based on need.



## ■ Department of Health and Social Care: Written Questions

**Sarah Olney:**

[\[10752\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to answer Question 6369 tabled by the hon. Member for Richmond Park on 4 October 2024.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave on 24 October 2024 to Question [6369](#).

## ■ General Practitioners

**Richard Tice:**

[\[10582\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that all patients have access to face-to-face appointments with their GP.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

We know that patients are finding it harder than ever to see a general practitioner (GP). Patients can't get through the front door of the National Health Service, so they aren't getting the timely care they need.

We have pledged to guarantee a face-to-face appointment for all those who want one. We will make sure the future of GPs is sustainable by training thousands more GPs, ensuring increased capacity across the NHS to deliver this commitment and securing a future pipeline of GPs.

## ■ Genito-urinary Medicine: Surgery

**Sarah Owen:**

[\[10152\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many invasive surgical procedures to (a) diagnose and (b) treat a reproductive health condition were not completed because of the level of pain experienced by the patient during that procedure in each of the last five years.

**Karin Smyth:**

The information requested is not held centrally. A range of procedures are used to investigate and treat gynaecological conditions. For example, ultrasound can be used in the diagnosis of fibroids, hysteroscopy can be used to investigate symptoms such as unexplained vaginal bleeding, and laparoscopy can be used to diagnose and treat endometriosis.

The Government recognises that some procedures, such as hysteroscopy, can result in pain, and the level of pain experienced will vary between individual women. It is important that healthcare professionals provide women with information prior to their procedure so that women can make an informed decisions about the procedure and pain relief options, including the option of local or general anaesthetic.

## ■ GP Surgeries

**Mr Lee Dillon:**

**[10250]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of NHS England's review entitled General Practice Premises Policy Review, published on 27 June 2019; and whether his Department plans to ensure that leases for GP practices are assigned to NHS bodies.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

The GP Premises Policy Review suggested the need to simplify the Premises Costs Directions (PCDs). The PCDs were revised and published on 9 May 2024 and came into force on 10 May 2024. They are available at the following link:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/663cd8d2bd01f5ed32793867/nhs\\_general-medical-services-premises-costs\\_directions-2024.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/663cd8d2bd01f5ed32793867/nhs_general-medical-services-premises-costs_directions-2024.pdf)

Whilst NHS England has delegated the power to hold leases to integrated care boards (ICBs), the GP Contract terms ordinarily require the Contractor to hold the premises liability.

To bring ICBs into these leasing arrangements would require capitalisation under the International Financial Accounting Standard IFRS16 and limited National Health Service capital budgets would have to be diverted to offset this commitment, in addition to the payment of rents against the properties.

ICBs do hold the power to step into such operational leases. A more appropriate way of managing the potential issue is for ICBs to exercise its power to step in to leases only where it is an action of last resort, or by exception, to ensure that vital capital allocations are not adversely affected and continue to be directly invested in primary care estate to provide key improvements and expansion to support patient and service growth.

Given where the liabilities lie within contracts and the power held by ICBs to provide exceptional support, NHS England currently only accepts assignment of general practice leases as an action of last resort or by exception.

## ■ Health Services

**Helen Whately:**

**[9746]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure adequate healthcare provision in areas with high (a) housing targets and (b) population growth.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Government is committed to delivering a National Health Service that is fit for the future, and this means we require world class NHS infrastructure across the entire NHS estate. Beyond hospitals, we know we need the right infrastructure in the right place to deliver on our commitment of creating a Neighbourhood Health Service and ensuring that patients receive the care they deserve.

We recognise the challenges facing local areas of rapid housing and population growth, including the challenges such growth can place on health care infrastructure. Whilst the Government has big ambitions to further boost house building, we recognise it must be sensitive to local need.

The Department of Health and Social Care is working closely with the Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government to determine how the local authority and developer contributions from new housing developments can support the vision for health services and infrastructure locally.

The relevant integrated care board is responsible for deciding how the NHS budget for its area is spent, and allocates funding according to local priorities. Any further support for NHS organisations will be set out at the Autumn Spending Review.

### ■ Health Services: Men

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[10101\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to inquiry by the Health and Social Care Select Committee into Men's Health in the last Parliament, what steps he is taking to help ensure that (a) services and (b) the use of digital are targeted at demographics with poor health outcomes.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The Government's mission is getting the National Health Service back on its feet, so it is there for everyone. We are developing a 10-Year Health Plan so that we are better able to meet the needs of the population, including men. We recognise there are areas of care where men or certain groups of men will require particular support and targeted interventions to ensure they are able to live as healthily as possible.

An example where this is currently being delivered is Core20PLUS5, which is focused on improving areas most needing improvement in the poorest 20% of the population, along with other disadvantaged population groups.

### ■ Health Services: Shropshire

**Helen Morgan:**

[\[10529\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that NHS services can meet additional demand in (a) the Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin integrated care board and (b) England in winter 2024-25.

**Karin Smyth:**

NHS England has written to integrated care boards (ICBs), trusts, and primary care networks to set out a national approach to 2024/25 winter planning. This builds on the priorities in the National Health Service's planning guidance, and sets out the key steps to be taken to support the delivery of high-quality care for patients this winter.

The Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin ICB is undertaking an improvement programme that aims to better respond to the pressures of the demand upon the urgent and

emergency care services. This is delivering changes to meet needs now, throughout winter, and sustainably for the future. There is a focus on the following areas:

- providing alternatives for patients rather than attending emergency departments;
- faster progress through emergency departments, improving performance against national waiting time standards;
- improving processes in inpatient wards to reduce delays for patients;
- coordinating and enabling more timely discharge, with more patients able to go home, in conjunction with the area's local authorities; and
- a specific focus upon supporting frail older adults, to keep them well in their place of residence and minimise the time spent in hospital when an admission to hospital is required.

### ■ Health Services: Women

**Sarah Owen:**

[\[10149\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many women's health hubs have been established; and in which integrated care board areas they are located.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Department has invested £25 million over 2023/24 and 2024/25 to support the establishment of at least one pilot women's health hub in every integrated care system. The 2024/25 NHS priorities and operational planning guidance asks integrated care boards (ICBs) to establish and develop at least one women's health hub in every ICB by December 2024, working in partnership with local authorities.

NHS England has asked the ICBs to report regularly on their progress implementing the funding. As of September 2024, 36 of the 42 ICBs had had reported to NHS England that their women's health hub was open. Those ICBs are:

- NHS Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire ICB;
- NHS Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes ICB;
- NHS Birmingham and Solihull ICB;
- NHS Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire ICB;
- NHS Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West ICB;
- NHS Cheshire and Merseyside ICB;
- NHS Cornwall and The Isles Of Scilly ICB;
- NHS Coventry and Warwickshire ICB;
- NHS Derby and Derbyshire ICB;
- NHS Devon ICB;
- NHS Frimley ICB;
- NHS Gloucestershire ICB;

- NHS Greater Manchester ICB;
- NHS Hampshire and Isle of Wight ICB;
- NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire ICB;
- NHS Hertfordshire and West Essex ICB;
- NHS Kent and Medway ICB;
- NHS Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland ICB;
- NHS Lincolnshire ICB;
- NHS Mid and South Essex ICB;
- NHS Norfolk and Waveney ICB;
- NHS North Central London ICB;
- NHS North East and North Cumbria ICB;
- NHS North East London ICB;
- NHS North West London ICB;
- NHS Northamptonshire ICB;
- NHS Nottingham and Nottinghamshire ICB;
- NHS Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin ICB;
- NHS Somerset ICB.
- NHS South East London ICB;
- NHS South Yorkshire ICB;
- NHS Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent ICB;
- NHS Suffolk and North East Essex ICB;
- NHS Surrey Heartlands ICB;
- NHS Sussex ICB; and
- NHS West Yorkshire ICB.

The Birmingham, RAND, and Cambridge Evaluation, published in September 2024, identified 17 women's health hubs in England which were established between 2001 and 2022. The report is available at the following link:

<https://www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk/hsdr/JYFT5036/#/abstract>

The research notes the difficulty in locating models for women's health hubs, meaning the research may not have captured all open women's health hubs, in particular hubs that have opened more recently as locally-led initiatives.

**Joe Robertson:**

**[8584]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many Integrated Care Systems do not have an open Women's Health Hub.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Department has invested £25 million over 2023/24 and 2024/25 to support the establishment of at least one pilot women's health hub in every integrated care system. The National Health Services' Priorities and operational planning guidance 2024/25 asks integrated care boards (ICBs) to establish and develop at least one women's health hub in every ICB by December 2024, working in partnership with local authorities.

NHS England has asked the ICBs to report regularly on their progress in implementing the funding. As of September 2024, six of the 42 ICBs had not provided a recent update or had reported to NHS England that their women's health hub was not yet open.

**Health: Children****Tom Hayes:**[\[10307\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he has taken to improve children's health.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The Government is committed to raising the healthiest generation of children ever. We have already begun work to ensure that every child has a healthy, happy start to life. To tackle obesity, we have committed to implementing a 9:00pm television watershed and a 24-hour ban on paid-for advertising of less healthy food and drink products, coming into force on 1 October 2025.

We will also be introducing the Tobacco and Vapes Bill, to protect future generations from becoming hooked on nicotine. Additionally, to reduce tooth decay in children, we are developing a supervised tooth-brushing scheme for three- to five-year-olds, targeting areas of highest need.

To improve children's mental health, we are working to recruit 8,500 additional staff across children and adult mental health services and introduce a specialist mental health professional in every school.

**Hepatitis: Disease Control****Steve Race:**[\[10275\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to plan for the sustainable maintenance of hepatitis C elimination in England.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) supports and monitors progress towards the World Health Organisation's goal of eliminating the hepatitis C virus (HCV) as a public health threat by 2030. As part of disease surveillance, the UKHSA monitors HCV prevention, testing, diagnoses and treatment, and longer-term outcomes in England.

The UKHSA supports and monitors progress towards ending the transmission of HCV within England by 2030. The UKHSA will continue to publish HCV surveillance and monitoring reports during the maintenance phase. The UKHSA's HCV reports and supporting documents are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hepatitis-c-in-the-uk>

## ■ Hepatitis: Screening

**Steve Race:**

[10274]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to promote awareness of World Hepatitis Testing Week in November 2024.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) will be supporting the World Hepatitis Testing Week's drive to increase testing for hepatitis by promoting the campaign materials through our social and stakeholder channels. This will follow the publication of the latest evaluation of the NHS England funded emergency department opt-out testing programme for bloodborne viruses, and will be accompanied by media activity.

The UKHSA previously published a range of promotional material on awareness of viral hepatitis, including testing for hepatitis C and testing and vaccination for hepatitis B, on World Hepatitis Day in July this year.

## ■ Hospices: Children

**Joe Robertson:**

[9881]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the removal of funding for children's hospices.

**Joe Robertson:**

[9882]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of increasing funding for children's hospices in line with (a) inflationary pressures and (b) operational costs in future financial years.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

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

2023/24 was the final year of the Children's Hospice Grant. In 2024/25, however, NHS England provided an additional £25 million of funding for children and young people's hospices, maintaining the level of grant funding from 2023/24. This funding was distributed, for the first time, via ICBs, in line with National Health Service devolution.

We understand that, financially, times are difficult for many voluntary and charitable organisations, including children's hospices, due to the increased cost of living. We want a society where these costs are manageable for both voluntary organisations, like hospices, and the people whom they serve.

I recently met NHS England, Together for Short Lives, and one of the chairs of the Children Who Need Palliative Care All Party Parliamentary Group to discuss children's palliative and end of life care, and this funding stream was discussed at length at that meeting. NHS England is currently considering the future of this important funding stream beyond 2024/25.

### ■ James Paget University Hospital: Repairs and Maintenance

**Rupert Lowe:** [\[6943\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether a decision has taken on the rebuild of the James Paget Hospital; and if he will meet the hon. Member for Great Yarmouth to discuss the rebuild.

**Karin Smyth:**

We are reviewing the New Hospital Programme (NHP) to put it on a sustainable footing, including a realistic timetable for delivery and clarity on the funding required.

As set out in the Terms of Reference for the review, along with the six other hospitals that were constructed primarily using reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC), the new hospital scheme for James Paget Hospital is out of scope of the review into the NHP. The Terms of Reference are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/new-hospital-programme-review-terms-of-reference/new-hospital-programme-review-terms-of-reference>

Work on this scheme will continue at pace due to the critical need to replace James Paget Hospital to protect patient and staff safety.

We will engage with those hon. Members with RAAC hospital schemes in due course.

### ■ Kettering Hospital

**Rosie Wrighting:** [\[10623\]](#)

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

**Rosie Wrighting:** [\[10624\]](#)

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

**Rosie Wrighting:** [\[10625\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much funding had been allocated by the Treasury for the Kettering General Hospital scheme as of 2 July 2024.



**Rosie Wrighting:**[\[10626\]](#)

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

**Karin Smyth:**

The standard process confirming the total funding amount for major infrastructure projects involves the review and approval of a Full Business Case. All trusts in the programme have previously received indicative funding allocations to support planning, however these are commercially sensitive.

Up to the end of the 2023/24 the total amount received by the Kettering General Hospital NHS Foundation Trust in funding for their new hospital scheme is £9.4 million.

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

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

The trust is currently developing their Strategic Outline Case for the Kettering General Hospital, and are at Royal Institute of British Architects Stage 2.

**■ Lancashire and South Cumbria New Hospitals Programme****Cat Smith:**[\[10090\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the cost of Lancashire and South Cumbria New Hospitals Programme scheme.

**Cat Smith:**[\[10091\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much funding the Lancashire and South Cumbria New Hospitals Programme scheme had received up to the end of the 2023-24 financial year.

**Cat Smith:**[\[10092\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much funding had been allocated by the Treasury for the Lancashire and South Cumbria New Hospitals Programme scheme by 2 July 2024.

**Cat Smith:**[\[10093\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the (a) business case status and (b) RIBA stage is of the Lancashire and South Cumbria New Hospitals Programme scheme.

**Karin Smyth:**

The standard process confirming the total funding amount for major infrastructure projects involves the review and approval of a Full Business Case. All trusts in the programme have previously received indicative funding allocations to support planning, however these are commercially sensitive.

There are two New Hospital Programme schemes in Lancashire and South Cumbria, the scheme for the Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust at Royal Preston Hospital, and the scheme for the University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust at Royal Lancaster Infirmary. Up to the end of the 2023/24, both trusts received £6.7 million each for their new hospital schemes.

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

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

Both schemes are at Pre-Consultation Business Case stage, and are at Royal Institute of British Architects Stage 1.

**Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman****Helen Hayes:****[7490]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help ensure that social care providers make their clients aware of the services provided by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

**Helen Hayes:****[7491]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has had recent discussions with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman on the proportion of cases referred to the Ombudsman from the independent care sector.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

*[Holding answer 10 October 2024]:* The Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulations 2014) requires that anyone who has seen or experienced poor-quality care must have a route available to complain to the organisation that provided or paid for the care.

To meet this requirement, adult social care providers must have an effective and accessible system in place for identifying, receiving, handling and responding to complaints from people using the service, or people acting on their behalf. All complaints must be investigated thoroughly and any necessary action taken where failures have been identified.

This means that although adult social care providers are not required to signpost to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO), there are clear

avenues for individuals to raise concerns or complaints about their care and support. If an individual is not satisfied with the way a provider or local authority has dealt with a complaint, they may escalate it to the LGSCO who can investigate individual concerns.

The LGSCO has recently published its annual report of social care complaints, which provides information on the numbers of complaints received. Departmental officials meet regularly with the LGSCO.

## ■ Mental Health Services

**Tom Hayes:** [\[10289\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his planned timetable is for publishing the Mental Health Bill.

**Tom Hayes:** [\[10331\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to reform the Mental Health Act 1983 to ensure that people have an automatic right to (a) assessment and (b) treatment.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

The Mental Health Bill will deliver the Government's commitment to modernise the Mental Health Act 1983. It will give patients enhanced rights and support, whilst maintaining the right balance to ensure that people get the treatment they need when necessary for their own protection, or that of others.

However, we recognise the long-standing gap between demand and supply for mental health treatment, which is why we will fix the broken system to ensure we give mental health the same attention and focus as physical health and that people can be confident of accessing high quality mental health support when they need it. The Mental Health Bill will be published when Parliamentary time allows.

## ■ Mental Health Services and Musculoskeletal Disorders: Finance

**Tonia Antoniazzi:** [\[9933\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to provide £400 million for (a) employment support and (b) resources for (i) musculoskeletal and (ii) mental health services.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

Long-term sickness continues to be the most common reason for economic inactivity among the working age population, now standing at 2.8 million. The two main causes contributing to sickness absence are mental health and musculoskeletal conditions, with the latter responsible for an estimated 23.4 million days of sickness absence in 2022.

Improving health and good work outcomes for people who live with musculoskeletal and mental health conditions forms a key part of the Government's missions to kickstart economic growth and build a National Health Service fit for the future.

The Government is committed to supporting disabled people and people with health conditions, with a range of support available to enable individuals to get into and remain in work. Measures include joining up health and employment support around the individual through WorkWell, Employment Advisors in NHS Talking Therapies, and Individual Placement and Support in Primary Care, as well as support from Work Coaches, Disability Employment Advisors in Jobcentres, and Access to Work grants.

### ■ **Mental Health Services: Children and Young People**

**Yasmin Qureshi:** [\[9424\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that the Mental Health Bill will (a) protect and (b) enhance the rights of (i) children and (ii) young people who are (A) detained in and (B) admitted informally to mental health hospitals.

**Stuart Andrew:** [\[9443\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that the Mental Health Bill will (a) protect and (b) enhance the rights of (i) children and (ii) young people who are (A) detained in and (B) admitted informally to mental health hospitals.

**Charlotte Nichols:** [\[9673\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that the Mental Health Bill will (a) protect and (b) enhance the rights of (i) children and (ii) young people who are (A) detained in and (B) admitted informally to mental health hospitals.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

The forthcoming Mental Health Bill will strengthen the rights of children and young people, to ensure they are involved in decisions about their care, that they can challenge these decisions and, above all, ensure that they are only detained for treatment in hospital when it is absolutely necessary. NHS England is working to minimise the number of children and young people informally admitted to inpatient mental health care.

Subject to the passage of the Bill through Parliament, it is proposed that children and young people formally detained under the Mental Health Act will have statutory Care and Treatment Plans, the right to choose a 'Nominated Person' to look after their interests and expanded access to Independent Mental Health Advocates. The latter will also apply to voluntary patients who are not detained under the Act.

### ■ **Mental Health Services: Schools**

**Paul Davies:** [\[10017\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of introducing Mental Health Support teams in every school.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

The Department is working across the Government to consider how to deliver on our commitment of a specialist mental health professional in every school. We need to ensure that any support meets the needs of young people, teachers, parents, and carers. This includes considering the role of existing programmes of support with evidence of a positive impact, such as Mental Health Support Teams in schools and colleges.

**Musculoskeletal Disorders****Tonia Antoniazzi:**[\[9934\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to provide £400 million for scaling up musculoskeletal hubs.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

Improving health and good work outcomes for the 20 million people in the United Kingdom who live with musculoskeletal conditions forms a key part of the Government's missions to kickstart economic growth and build a National Health Service fit for the future.

The Government is currently exploring options to support these missions and those who experience musculoskeletal conditions. Decisions on the scaling up of musculoskeletal hubs will be taken as the work of the missions progresses and through the usual Spending Review processes.

**NHS****Robin Swann:**[\[10393\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to his Department's press release entitled Government issues rallying cry to the nation to help fix NHS, published on 21 October 2024, whether he plans to have discussions with the devolved Administrations on the future of the NHS.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

Department officials working on the 10-Year Health Plan have had, and will continue to have, meetings with working level contacts in each of the devolved administrations. These conversations will continue to explore how best to identify potential areas of United Kingdom-wide policy alignment, as the plan is developed.

**NHS: Public Consultation****Saqib Bhatti:**[\[10502\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the procurement process was to award contracts for the Change NHS online portal.

**Karin Smyth:**

A procurement mini competition was launched via the RM6126 CCS Research and Insights framework on 2 August 2024, with bids returned by 19 August 2024.

**Saqib Bhatti:**[\[10503\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Change NHS online portal, what the total cost to the public purse is of contracts issued to (a) Thinks Insight & Strategy, (b) Kaleidoscope Health and Care and (c) The Institute for Public Policy Research to run the public engagement programme; and if he will publish all (i) contracts, (ii) work programmes and (iii) terms of reference connected to the procurement process.

**Karin Smyth:**

The awarded value of this contract was up to £2,961,595.50. The publication of the details of this award and the redacted contract can be found on contracts finder, with the contract number C306779.

**Saqib Bhatti:**[\[10505\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the total budget is for the Change NHS: A health service fit for the future public engagement campaign; and what time period this funding will cover.

**Karin Smyth:**

The awarded value of this contract was up to £2,961,595.50. The publication of the details of this award and the redacted contract can be found on contracts finder, with contract number C306779. The current contract start date is 13 September 2024, with an end date of 31 March 2025, and an option to extend by three months.

## ■ Obesity: Drugs

**Lee Anderson:**[\[10137\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the cost of (a) Wegovy and (b) Mounjaro to tackle obesity.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

Wegovy is recommended for National Health Service use within a specialist weight management service. It launched in the United Kingdom in September 2023. The price for Wegovy is subject to a confidential commercial agreement between Novo Nordisk and NHS England.

Mounjaro is not yet recommended for the management of obesity in the NHS. However, it is under assessment by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. Their recommendation is currently due to be published in December 2024. The current list price for the maximum dosage of Mounjaro is £122 for a month's supply. The maximum annual price of Mounjaro per patient is therefore £1,464 based on 12 months at maximum dosage. This does not include service delivery costs to the NHS.

**Lee Anderson:**[\[10138\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how long patients will be able to use (a) Wegovy and (b) Mounjaro on the NHS; and how long they can safely be used for.

**Lee Anderson:**

[\[10139\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether patients can be re-administered weight loss medication on the NHS if they regain weight following treatment.

**Karin Smyth:**

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is the independent body responsible for developing authoritative, evidence-based recommendations for the National Health Service on whether new medicines represent a clinically and cost-effective use of resources, and for providing guidance for the health and care system on best practice.

The NICE has published guidance on semaglutide (Wegovy) for managing overweight and obesity. It states that it should be used for a maximum of two years. Re-prescribing Wegovy would be at the discretion of local systems following an additional referral. Integrated care boards are responsible for arranging the provision of health services within their area in line with local priorities, considering population need, and taking account of relevant guidance. This includes the commissioning of NHS specialist weight management services.

The NICE has not yet published final guidance on the use of tirzepatide (Mounjaro) for managing overweight and obesity. In its draft guidance, there is no mandatory stopping time, but the NICE does recommend that treatment cessation should be considered if less than 5% of the initial weight has been lost after six months.

Neither Wegovy nor Mounjaro has time limits on their use in their Summary of Products Characteristics documents, which describe the properties and the officially approved conditions of use of a medicine. Information is continuously collected after a medicine is placed on the market, to monitor real-life experience with the product. The Medicine and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency closely monitors this information, to make sure that the benefits of the medicine continue to outweigh the risks. Both Wegovy and Mounjaro contain new active substances and are subject to additional monitoring through the Black Triangle Scheme, though this does not mean that they are unsafe.

**Dr Allison Gardner:**

[\[10351\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to widen bariatric patient access to (a) Wegovy, (b) Mounjaro and (c) other weight management drugs.

**Karin Smyth:**

Obesity medicines can be effective for some patients living with obesity when prescribed alongside diet, physical activity, and behavioural support. Exactly what is most appropriate for an individual is down to health care professionals to advise, in discussion with patients, and considering relevant clinical guidance.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is the independent body responsible for developing authoritative, evidence-based recommendations for the National Health Service on whether new medicines represent a clinically and cost-



effective use of resources, and for providing guidance for the health and care system on best practice.

The NICE has recommended orlistat, liraglutide (Saxenda), and semaglutide (Wegovy) as clinically and cost-effective drugs for weight management in adults in the NHS in England. NICE guidance includes eligibility criteria and, for some products like Saxenda and Wegovy, a restriction that these treatments should be used within specialist weight management services. The NICE is in the process of finalising its guidance on tirzepatide, also known as Mounjaro, and recently consulted on its draft recommendations.

Integrated care boards are responsible for arranging the provision of health services within their area in line with local priorities, considering population need and relevant guidance. This includes the commissioning of NHS specialist weight management services.

#### ■ Palliative Care: Staff

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[9728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the workforce requirements for (a) palliative and (b) end of life care; and if he will develop a workforce plan for such care.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

We will want to assure ourselves that the National Health Service has access to the workforce it needs in the years ahead to ensure patients are cared for by the right professional, when and where they need it. We will need to do this in light of the 10-Year Health Plan.

Palliative and end of life care is wide-ranging, provided by generalist as well as specialist healthcare professionals, and is not disease or diagnosis specific. A large proportion of palliative and end of life care is not provided by palliative care specialists and, therefore, it is difficult to quantify the totality of the NHS workforce providing palliative and end of life care.

#### ■ Palliative Care: Standards

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[9730\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will (a) make an assessment of the adequacy of access to (i) counselling and (ii) psychological support for patients who receive a diagnosis of terminal illness and (b) take steps to ensure that such patients have immediate access to such support.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

We want a society where every person receives high-quality, compassionate care from diagnosis through to the end of life, including counselling and psychological support if they need it.



NHS Talking Therapies Long Term Conditions services provide evidence-based psychological therapies for people with depression and anxiety disorders, who also have a long-term physical health condition, including those with a terminal diagnosis. All integrated care boards are expected to expand services locally by commissioning NHS Talking Therapies services, which are integrated into physical healthcare pathways.

As part of our mission to build a National Health Service that is fit for the future and that is there when people need it, the Government will recruit an additional 8,500 mental health workers to reduce delays and provide faster treatment.

## ■ **Pancreatic Cancer: Health Services**

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[10757\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to improve outcomes for people diagnosed with pancreatic cancer.

**Karin Smyth:**

We will get the National Health Service catching cancer on time, diagnosing it earlier, and treating it faster so more patients survive this horrible set of diseases, and we will improve patients' experience across the system, including for pancreatic cancer.

For pancreatic cancer specifically, NHS England is providing a route into pancreatic cancer surveillance for those at inherited high-risk, to identify lesions before they develop into cancer. NHS England is additionally creating pathways to support faster referral routes for people with non-specific symptoms, and is increasing direct access for general practitioners to diagnostic tests.

NHS England is also funding a new audit into pancreatic cancer, aiming to provide regular and timely evidence to cancer service providers of where patterns of care in England may vary, to increase the consistency of access to treatments and to stimulate improvements in cancer treatment and outcomes for patients.

On 12 September 2024 the National Cancer Audit Collaborating Centre published their State of the Nation Report on Pancreatic Cancer, and the NHS cancer programme is currently considering how to take forward the initial recommendations of that audit.

## ■ **Patients: Homelessness**

**Mike Amesbury:**

[\[10124\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the guidance on Discharging people at risk of or experiencing homelessness, published in collaboration with the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government in January 2024.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

The Department is committed to promoting safe and timely discharge for people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness to appropriate accommodation. Every acute

hospital has access to a care transfer hub to manage discharge for people with more complex needs, who need extra support.

Guidance and supporting materials were published for health and care staff on discharging people at risk of or experiencing homelessness, and are a vital resource for front-line staff, offering the best practice advice informed by expertise to help reduce instances of individuals being discharged to the street. This ensures every health and care interaction with a homeless person acts as an opportunity to provide support and signposting, with the aim of ending rough sleeping. We will periodically review the guidance to ensure it provides appropriate and effective advice for health and care staff. Further information on the guidance and supporting materials is available at the following link:

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

## ■ Plastic Surgery

**Andy MacNae:**

**[10557]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure the (a) safety and (b) regulation of the cosmetic surgery industry.

**Karin Smyth:**

All doctors performing cosmetic surgery in the United Kingdom are required to be registered and licensed to practise by the General Medical Council. The Care Quality Commission regulates cosmetic treatments carried out by healthcare professionals in England that involve surgical procedures.

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

## ■ Polycystic Ovary Syndrome

**Sarah Owen:**

**[10150]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence has made in developing guidelines for polycystic ovary syndrome.

**Karin Smyth:**

Following referral from the Department, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is currently planning the development of a guideline on the assessment and management of polycystic ovary syndrome. The NICE is exploring the possibility of collaboration with a reputable, guidance-producing partner to enhance the speed and efficiency of this work. The NICE's website will be updated at the earliest opportunity, when expected timings are confirmed.

## ■ Respiratory Syncytial Virus: Vaccination

**Laurence Turner:**

[\[10592\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 21 October to Question 9121, on Respiratory Syncytial Virus: Vaccination, when he expects to receive further advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation on the potential merits of extending eligibility for that vaccine to people who turned 80 before 01 September 2024.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

In the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation's (JCVI) statement summarising the advice for the respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) programme, the committee stated that an extension to the initial programme would be considered when there is more certainty about protection provided by the vaccination in the very elderly, and evidence of the real-world impact of the programme in the 75 up to 80-year-old cohort.

The JCVI will continue to keep its advice under review and any potential changes to its advice for the RSV programme, and the timing for it, will be guided by having the necessary scientific evidence with which to do so. The JCVI has continued to review the RSV programme, including at their main meeting on 2 October 2024, but is currently unable to provide an estimate of when suitable evidence will be available to inform future advice. Any potential forthcoming advice on the potential merits of extending eligibility for the RSV programme for older adults will be carefully considered by the Government.

## ■ Sipavibart: Immunosuppression

**Jonathan Davies:**

[\[10928\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether Sipavibart can be provided through the NHS to immunosuppressed people.

**Karin Smyth:**

Decisions on the routine availability of licensed medicines for National Health Service patients in England are made on the basis of recommendations by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE). NICE plays an important role in ensuring that medicines represent a clinically and cost-effective use of NHS resources before they are routinely funded. The NHS is legally required to fund medicines recommended by NICE, normally within three months of final guidance.

NICE aims wherever possible to issue recommendations on new medicines close to the point of licensing and started its appraisal of the medicine sipavibart for preventing COVID-19 ahead of the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency's decision. NICE's appraisal process is however currently suspended as the manufacturer, AstraZeneca, has been unable to provide an evidence submission as planned. NICE is currently awaiting notification from AstraZeneca on when it can make a submission and will update stakeholders in due course.

## ■ Social Services

**Helen Morgan:**

[\[10530\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking with Cabinet colleagues to help ensure that upper tier local authorities can meet additional demand for social care services in (a) Shropshire and (b) England in winter 2024-25.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

On 17 September, I wrote to all local authorities, setting out priorities for improving service resilience across social care this winter. The letter emphasises the importance of close partnership working and joint planning between local authorities, the NHS and community partners. Local authorities are expected to have business continuity plans in place for a range of risks, including for localised disruptions caused by adverse winter weather.

The Department funds Partners in Care and Health, delivered by the Local Government Association, the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services, and the Social Care Institute for Excellence, to provide a support offer that helps local authorities tackle operational challenges, including during winter.

Under the Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund (MSIF), local authorities must submit an adult social care capacity plan that provides assurance that plans are in place to meet estimated local demand for different types of long-term care services, with a focus on winter. These were submitted to the department in June 2024. The member's local authority, Shropshire, submitted their 2024/25 capacity plan which is currently undergoing processing and quality assurance.

MSIF is designed to support increased adult social care capacity, improve market sustainability, and enable local authorities to make improvements to adult social care services. Shropshire has been allocated just over £6 million of MSIF funding in 2024/25 to support these aims.

## ■ Social Services: Lincolnshire

**Sir John Hayes:**

[\[9412\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate he has made of the number of people in (a) South Holland and the Deepings constituency and (b) Lincolnshire who have unmet care needs; and what steps his Department is taking to help ensure those care needs are met.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

Local authorities are responsible for assessing individuals' care and support needs and, where eligible, for meeting those needs. Where individuals do not meet the eligibility threshold, they can get support from their local authorities in making their own arrangements for care services, as set out in the Care Act 2014.

Long-term reform is needed in adult social care. We will work with the sector to build consensus for a National Care Service, based on consistent national standards, to support people to live independent and dignified lives.

In the interim, Care Quality Commission (CQC) local authority assessments consider the performance of the delivery of Care Act duties, including the timeliness of assessing care needs. If the CQC identifies that a local authority has failed or is failing its functions to an acceptable standard, my Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has powers to intervene. The CQC has published its first nine local authority ratings and reports.

### ■ **Trastuzumab Deruxtecan**

**Alistair Strathern:**

[\[10532\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has had on the provision of Enhertu to Her2 low metastatic breast cancer patients.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Department's ministers and officials have had a number of recent meetings at which the issue of the availability of Enhertu for the treatment of HER2 low metastatic breast cancer has been discussed, including with Breast Cancer Now and other campaigners.

The Government wants patients to be able to benefit from access to innovative and effective new treatments such as Enhertu at a price that fairly reflects the benefits that they bring to patients, and does not displace funding for other valuable treatments and services. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence and NHS England have been clear with the companies that the price represents the main barrier to access to Enhertu for patients with HER2 low breast cancer, and we encourage the companies to come forward with an improved commercial offer.

### ■ **Westmorland Hospital: Maternity Services**

**Tim Farron:**

[\[9155\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will have discussions with the management of the University Teaching Hospital of Morecambe Bay Trust on the closure of the Helme Chase maternity unit at the Westmorland General Hospital.

**Karin Smyth:**

The reconfiguration of services is a matter for integrated care boards and the local National Health Service in cases of specialised and national services. All service changes should be based on clear evidence, clinically led, and involve engagement with patients and stakeholders to ensure they will deliver better outcomes for patients.

Whilst birthing services are temporarily suspended, women can continue to access antenatal and postnatal care, as well as outpatient appointments as normal at Helme Chase. The trust also offers safe home birthing and birth services at their other two units. Following a six-month suspension of birthing services, the trust is undertaking a full review of the midwifery led birth provision, and the associated staffing budget. Options have been identified to reinstate birth services at the unit and they are being consulted on with the relevant teams before a decision is made.

**HOME OFFICE****■ Anti-social Behaviour: Stoke-on-Trent South****Dr Allison Gardner:**[\[10352\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to tackle anti-social behaviour in Stoke-on-Trent South constituency.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

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

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

**■ Cars: Theft****Dr Allison Gardner:**[\[10355\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to help tackle car thefts in (a) Stoke-on-Trent South constituency and (b) other constituencies.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

This Government is determined to drive down vehicle crime and we are closely working with the automotive industry and police to ensure our response to vehicle crime is as strong as it can be.

We continue to work with the National Police Chiefs' Council lead for vehicle crime, through the National Vehicle Crime Working Group, to take forward a programme of work to drive down vehicle crime. We are focusing on prevention and deterrence of theft of and from vehicles; this includes training police officers on the methods used to steal vehicles, encouraging vehicle owners to secure their vehicles, and working with industry to address vulnerabilities in vehicles.

The Home Office collects and publishes information on the number of 'Aggravated vehicle taking' and 'Theft or unauthorised taking of motor vehicle' offences recorded by the police in England and Wales on a quarterly basis. This information is available at the Police Force Area and Community Safety Partnership area level including 'Stoke-on-Trent Community Safety Partnership Area'. Information at the constituency level is not held centrally.

Data for year ending March 2024 shows there were 714 'Aggravated vehicle taking' and 'Theft or unauthorised taking of motor vehicle' offences recorded by Stoke-on-Trent Community Partnership Area, a rise of 1% compared with the previous year. There was a small fall (1%) across England and Wales for the same period.

## ■ Deportation and Detainees

**David Davis:**

[\[10678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure that her Department publishes the statistics it collects on detention and returns promptly.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

The Home Office publishes quarterly data on detention and returns in the "[Immigration system statistics release](#)". Data up to the end of June 2024 was published on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2024 following our usual publication cycle. The Home Office pre-announces these statistical releases in the "[Research and statistics calendar](#)", in accordance with its [Statement of compliance with the Code of Practice for Statistics](#).

Publishing timescales for returns and detention statistics are in line with other statistical indicators published in the Immigration system statistics release. For information about our statistics, and our quality assurance processes, please see the [user guide](#).

Official statistics published by the Home Office are kept under review in line with the Code of Practice for Statistics, taking into account a number of factors including user needs, as well as quality and availability of data.

## ■ Domestic Abuse: Victim Support Schemes

**Tom Hayes:**

[\[10610\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of public funding for specialist domestic abuse services.

**Tom Hayes:**

[\[10611\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions she has had with representatives of the domestic abuse sector on the adequacy of public funding for specialist domestic abuse services, in the context of potential considerations to be reflected in the upcoming Budget.

**Jess Phillips:**

We have set out our mission to halve violence against women and girls within a decade. The Government understands the vital role that the domestic abuse sector plays in supporting victims.

The Minister for Safeguarding regularly meets with the sector to discuss the Government's approach to tackling violence against women and girls, including the role of funding and specialist domestic abuse services, most of which does not sit in the Home Office.

All decisions on funding will be made in due course as part of the Spending Review.



**■ Drugs: Internet****Darren Paffey:** [\[10265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to tackle the (a) availability of illegal substances for sale via online platforms and (b) purchase of those substances by young people who subsequently die by suicide.

**Darren Paffey:** [\[10267\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to (a) support families of young people who die by suicide after taking illegal substances bought online and (b) raise awareness in schools and communities of this risk.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

I am grateful for the Hon. Gentleman for raising this important issue, and highlighting the dangers posed by the availability of illegal substances in online marketplaces, and the tragic consequences that can result from their purchase and consumption, both for young people at risk from that threat, and for their families. I would be happy to meet the Hon. Gentlemen to discuss how best we can address these complex issues, and ensure the safety and wellbeing of our young people is protected.

**■ Gender Based Violence: Kent****Sojan Joseph:** [\[10579\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to help tackle street crime against women and girls in (a) Ashford constituency and (b) Kent.

**Sojan Joseph:** [\[10580\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what (a) funding her Department is providing and (b) steps her Department is taking to help prevent crime in (i) Ashford constituency and (ii) Kent.

**Sojan Joseph:** [\[10581\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of levels of neighbourhood policing in (a) Ashford constituency and (b) Kent.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

The 2024-25 police funding settlement provides funding of up to £18.5 billion for the policing system in England and Wales. Kent Police's funding will be up to £431.5m in 2024-25. This is in addition to £4m provided for the 2024-25 pay award which has been allocated outside of the police funding settlement.

Across all rounds of the Safer Streets Fund, and the Safety of Women at Night Fund, the Kent police force area has received just under £3.5 million, supporting 12 projects. This includes just over £760,000 through the latest, fifth round of funding to deliver three projects across various locations, including in Folkestone, Chatham,



Sittingbourne and Sheerness, which have a focus on preventing anti-social behaviour, violence against women and girls and neighbourhood crime.

The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) in Kent has been allocated £1,568,614 to deliver the Hotspot Response programme in 24-25. This programme is a combination of additional, high visibility patrols targeted to the exact locations where they are needed most ('hotspots'), and funding of problem-oriented policing tactics. Problem oriented policing aims to tackle the underlying drivers of crime using a comprehensive menu of policing interventions.

More broadly, this Government will treat tackling violence against women and girls as a national emergency and we will use every tool to target perpetrators and address the root causes of violence.

As part of the Government's Safer Streets mission, the Home Secretary has made a clear commitment to strengthen neighbourhood policing through the introduction of a Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee, which includes getting thousands of neighbourhood police personnel back on the beat, giving local people a names officer who they can turn to when things go wrong, and cracking down on the street crime, shop theft and anti-social behaviour which makes communities feel less safe.

#### ■ **Gender Based Violence: Stoke-on-Trent North**

**David Williams:**

[\[10913\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to tackle violence against women and girls in (a) Stoke-on-Trent North constituency and (b) Kidsgrove.

**Jess Phillips:**

Tackling violence against women and girls is a top priority for this government and we will treat it as a national emergency. Our mission is to halve levels of these crimes within a decade, using every lever available to us. This means reforming the police response to these crimes, strengthening the criminal justice system, and empowering victims by providing access to specialist support when they need it. The Home Office is working closely with other departments and stakeholders in developing plans to deliver this ambition.

In September, we unveiled a series of measures designed to strengthen the police response to domestic abuse, protect victims and hold perpetrators to account. From early 2025, under a new approach named 'Raneem's Law', domestic abuse specialists will be embedded in 999 control rooms to advise on risk assessments, work with officers on the ground and ensure that victims are referred to appropriate support services swiftly. We are also working with the police to develop a national framework utilising data-driven tools and algorithms to track and target high-harm offenders involved in domestic abuse, sexual assault, harassment, and stalking.

## ■ Immigration

**Rupert Lowe:** [\[9999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure that foreign nationals do not stay in the UK beyond their visa expiry date.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

It is the responsibility of foreign nationals to ensure they are compliant with the terms of their visa.

However, we have a range of measures in place to ensure that those who do not comply with their visa conditions are unable to access benefits and services in the UK.

We will enforce the return of foreign nationals who overstay their visa. A person who overstays their permission to stay in the UK is liable to be removed under section 10 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 if they do not depart voluntarily.

## ■ Police: Technology

**Chris Philp:** [\[10452\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Answer of 21 October 2024 to Question 9189 on Police: Technology, and paragraph 5.6 of the Spring Budget 2024, published on 6 March 2024, HC 560, how much and what proportion of the £230 million funding for new police technology she plans to spend in the 2024-25 financial year.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

I refer Hon Gentlemen to the answer I gave him on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2024 (UIN 9189).

## ■ Undocumented Migrants

**Rupert Lowe:** [\[9996\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate her Department has made of the number of irregular migrants in the UK.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

By its very nature, it is not possible to know the exact size of the irregular migrant population. In June 2019, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) published a note on [‘measuring illegal migration’](#).

The Home Office does publish statistics on detected irregular arrivals to the UK as part of the [‘Irregular migration to the UK’](#) quarterly statistics release.

## ■ Visas: Applications

**Darren Paffey:** [\[10270\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to reduce waiting times for visa applications.

**Seema Malhotra:**

We are seeking to ensure visa applications are processed as quickly as possible. Customer service standards exist for all types of visa applications, however the time taken to process a visa application may take longer under certain circumstances such as if the information provided is not accurate or further evidence is required.

If there is a delay, the applicant will be notified of this within the current processing times.

Data relating to the performance against visa service standards for all types of applications are produced as part of the Migration Transparency publication.

These can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/migration-transparency-data#uk-visas-and-immigration> (opens in a new tab).

**■ Visas: Married People****Rupert Lowe:****[9993]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many spousal visas were rejected in each of the last five years by nationality.

**Seema Malhotra:**

The Home Office publishes information on Family-related visas in the [Immigration system statistics quarterly release - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#), direct link to the [Entry clearance \(family-related\) visa data tables](#). The statistics relate to applications and outcomes (grants, refusals, lapsed and withdrawn) of entry clearance visas for family reasons, and can be broken down by nationality.

Information on how many partner visas were rejected in each of the last five years, by nationality is available from Table Vis\_D02, which can be found within the entry clearance visa applications and outcomes detailed dataset. The latest data relates to year ending June 2024 (Q2 2024).

**■ Visas: Migrant Workers****Sir John Hayes:****[9901]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people have been granted visas to work in the United Kingdom in the last three years without passing criminal record checks.

**Seema Malhotra:**

The Home Office undertakes thorough checks to prevent serious criminals from entering the UK.

Overseas Criminal Record checks are conducted on all nationals within the Skilled Worker route along with other security checks to ensure that those entering the UK for the purpose of employment are suitable to do so.

We are unaware of any cases whereby an individual who has not met our requirements for suitability has been granted leave and subsequently entered the UK.

**■ Visas: Overseas Visitors****Chi Onwurah:** [\[10719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the affordability of the visit visa application process for applicants from (a) low and (b) middle income countries.

**Seema Malhotra:**

The Home Office keeps fees for immigration and nationality applications under review. Where we make fee changes in legislation, an Impact Assessment is published.

**Chi Onwurah:** [\[10720\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what system replaced the AI streaming tool used for visit visa applications discontinued in 2020.

**Seema Malhotra:**

The Global Visa Risk Streaming (GVRS) system which was operated by UK Visas and Immigration for streaming visit visa applications was discontinued on 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2020 but did not use Artificial Intelligence (AI).

The current workflow routing solution, Complexity Application Routing Solution (Visits) (CARS(V)), does not use AI and each visit visa application is decided on a case-by-case assessment against the requirements of the Appendix V Immigration Rules.

UK Visas and Immigration have published detailed guidance on the current workflow routing system: [Complexity application routing solution \(visits\) \(CARS\(V\)\) \(accessible\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

**■ Young Futures Hubs****Richard Burgon:** [\[10107\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps he is taking to roll out open access young futures hubs.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

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

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

**HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT****■ Building Safety Fund****Paul Holmes:**[\[9959\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate she has made of the amount that has been reimbursed to the Building Safety Fund from signatories to the Developer Remediation Contract.

**Paul Holmes:**[\[9960\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how much has been paid by (a) Kingspan and (b) all cladding manufacturers towards remediation of eligible buildings under the Developer Remediation Contract where their products have been used on eligible buildings.

**Alex Norris:**

The Developer Remediation Contract requires developers to take responsibility for fixing or paying to fix buildings which they developed. The Ministry will shortly begin issuing payment demands to developers - who are contractually required to pay back monies spent on their buildings by government funds - after which, we expect developers to begin repayments. The value of debt that we will pursue with developers is reported in our Trust Statement, for our latest reported accounts in 2022/23 this is £417 million.

The Developer Remediation Contract is a contract between eligible developers and government. It does not apply to product manufacturers.

Other industry actors will also be held to account for their role in constructing unsafe buildings. We are reviewing the Grenfell Inquiry report and have written to all organisations (including manufacturers) found by the Inquiry to have been part of the failings, as the first step to stopping them being awarded government contracts. The Building Safety Act created avenues for parties to pursue a range of responsible parties for compensation. We will bring forward further reforms to the construction products regime in due course.

**■ Buildings: Insulation****Liam Conlon:**[\[8547\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department is taking to identify buildings with dangerous cladding.

**Alex Norris:**

The Government has been clear that more must be done to accelerate the pace of remediation of unsafe buildings across the country.

After the Grenfell Tower tragedy, the Government prioritised identifying and providing funding for the highest risk buildings with unsafe cladding. Fire and rescue services and local authorities conducted a risk review of high-rise buildings over 18 metres in

height, and building owners were required to register high-rise buildings with the department and apply for government funding to remove dangerous cladding.

The Building Safety Act 2022 establishes a new regulatory regime for high-rise buildings, which requires all residential buildings above 18 metres or seven storeys to be registered with the Building Safety Regulator by October 2023. The regulator has powers to pursue any building owner who fails to comply, including prosecuting for non-compliance.

In 2022, the Cladding Safety Scheme (CSS) was launched, to meet the cost of addressing life safety fire risks associated with cladding in buildings over 11 metres. Eligible building owners can apply for this scheme, and leaseholders can utilise the 'Tell us tool' to self-refer their building: [Tell us about life-safety fire risks on the external wall system of your building - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/tell-us-about-life-safety-fire-risks-on-the-external-wall-system-of-your-building).

The department is working at pace to identify buildings eligible for funding that are not coming forward. We are utilising specialist data sources and knowledge from local regulators to identify buildings eligible for funding.

The Deputy Prime Minister wrote to mayoral authorities on the 13 September to support and empower them to deliver plans, which use their convening powers, relationships and local knowledge to accelerate where buildings are not remediating quickly. The identification of buildings with unsafe cladding falls within the remit of this initiative. The Deputy Prime Minister will set out further steps to increase the pace of remediation this Autumn.

## ■ Compulsory Purchase

**Manuela Perteghella:** [\[10188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make her policy to bring forward legislative proposals for compulsory purchase powers for local authorities so that they are able to compulsory purchase at current use value rather than at hope value.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

The government recently brought into force regulations that provide for the removal of 'hope value' from the assessment of compensation, where there is justification in the public interest. Guidance and a fact sheet on the measures was published on 3 October 2024 and can be found [here](#). Further reform of compulsory purchase compensation rules will be included in the forthcoming Planning and Infrastructure Bill. Announcements on the timing of that Bill will be made in the normal way in due course.

## ■ Energy: Housing

**Ben Obese-Jecty:** [\[10836\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what her planned timetable is for the publication of her Department's response to the consultation on the Future Homes Standard.

**Alex Norris:**

The Future Homes and Buildings Standards consultation was published in December 2023 and closed in March 2024, and a Government response has not yet been issued. The consultation proposed that the new standards would apply to all new domestic and non-domestic buildings.

We fully support the need for low carbon homes and buildings, fit for a net zero future. We are reviewing proposals and feedback from the Future Homes and Buildings Standards consultation and will publish the Government response in due course.

■ **Flags****Ayoub Khan:**[\[10363\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to Section (a), point 7 of Flying flags: a plain English guide, updated on 20 July 2021, what guidance her Department issues on the flying of the Jammu and Kashmir flag for their National Day on 24 October.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

The department does not publish guidance relating to flag flying for specific national days.

■ **Flood Control****Blake Stephenson:**[\[900890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of reforming the planning system to introduce new measures to help reduce flood risk.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

The government recognises the devastating impact which flooding can have on communities, and the role the planning system plays in directing development to areas of lowest possible flood risk. National planning policy is clear that inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided. In the recent consultation on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework, we sought views on how the planning system can be more effective in managing flood risk. The consultation closed on the 24 September and officials in my department are currently analysing responses with a view to publishing a government response before the end of the year.

■ **Homelessness****Grahame Morris:**[\[10425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 21 October 2024 to Question 9158 on Homelessness, what redress is available to a receiving Local Authority when a local authority breaches section 208 of the Housing Act 1996 by failing to notify them of an out-of-area placement.



**Rushanara Ali:**

Homelessness legislation and the Code of Guidance is clear that local authorities should place individuals within their own area, and when this is not possible, they should place the household as near as possible. The Government is clear that local authorities should, as far as possible, avoid placing households out of their borough. However, this is not always possible when there is a limited supply of suitable accommodation.

Under section 208 of the Housing Act 1996, if a local authority places a household into accommodation in another local area, they are required by law to notify the local authority of any placement, to ensure there is no disruption to education or employment. This notification should be happening in every out of area placement.

**Housing Revenue Accounts****Paul Davies:**[\[10194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department is taking to help ensure that the Housing Revenue Account reflects the potential benefits for the council's own tenants.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is a ring-fenced accounting mechanism within the General Fund. The ring-fence ensures that the income from tenants' rents is only spent on the upkeep and management of local authority tenants' homes and protects them from funding services already paid for through Council Tax. The HRA can also contribute toward the building of new council housing.

Councils are responsible for meeting their statutory responsibilities as a landlord within their HRA.

**Housing: Construction****Dr Ben Spencer:**[\[8676\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to take steps to ensure that (a) new homes are not build on high risk flood areas and (b) cumulative development does not increase local flood risk.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

The government recognises the devastating impact which flooding can have on communities, and the role the planning system plays in directing development to areas of lowest possible flood risk. National planning policy is clear that inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided. In the recent consultation on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework, we sought views on how the planning system can be more effective in managing flood risk. The consultation closed on the 24 September and officials in my department are currently analysing responses with a view to publishing a government response before the end of the year.



**Paul Holmes:** [\[9954\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate she has made of the number of additional homes that will be provided by the MADE Partnership.

**Paul Holmes:** [\[9955\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what public procurement process was followed by Homes England when establishing the MADE Partnership.

**Paul Holmes:** [\[9956\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether other lenders and housebuilders will be able to access equity investment from Homes England in similar arrangements to the MADE partnership.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

It is estimated that the MADE Partnership will bring forward in excess of 5650 homes by acting as master developer to unlock large, complex residential sites that have stalled due to lack of market capability, coordination capacity, patient capital and resource.

The Levelling Up Home Building Fund, from which the MADE partnership investment was made, operates based on continuous market engagement and therefore its investments are not subject to procurement.

Homes England is always looking to invest with partners whose ambition and activities align. Homes England encourages interested groups to apply for funding and details of its investment offer and contact details can be found on their website.

## ■ Housing: Kent

**Sojan Joseph:** [\[10613\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent discussions her Department has held with Natural England on the effect of nutrient neutrality rules on new housebuilding projects in the River Stour catchment area in Kent.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

I refer my Hon Friend to the answer given to Question UIN [3644](#) on 9 September 2024.

## ■ Housing: Standards

**Paul Davies:** [\[10014\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department is taking steps to establish a (a) green and (b) decent homes programme.

**Alex Norris:**

The Government recognises the need for low carbon homes, fit for a net zero future. 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 will be future proofed with low carbon heating and high levels of energy efficiency. No further energy efficiency retrofit work will be necessary to enable them to become zero-carbon over time as the electricity grid continues to decarbonise. This will support our ambition that the 1.5 million homes we will build over the course of this parliament will be high quality, well designed and sustainable.

The Government is also clear that everyone deserves a safe and decent home to live in and recently committed to bringing forward a consultation as soon as possible setting out plans for a reformed Decent Homes Standard that will apply to both the social and private rented sectors. We have also committed to consult on EPC C (or equivalent) by 2030 for both rented sectors so that existing homes are warm and can be cheaper to heat.

**Islamophobia****Oliver Ryan:**[\[900886\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to help tackle Islamophobia.

**Angela Rayner:**

Islamophobia, and all forms of religious and racial hatred, have absolutely no place in our society. No one should be targeted because of the colour of their skin, or their faith. This Government is clear that perpetrators of such hate crimes will face the full force of the law.

Up to £29.4 million per year will be made available for protective security at mosques and Muslim faith schools until 2027/28. The Protective Security for Mosques Scheme provides physical protective security measures (such as CCTV, intruder alarms and secure perimeter fencing) to mosques and associated Muslim faith community centres.

British Muslims are a crucial part of Britain's history and British life today. This Government will not tolerate Islamophobia in any form and has committed to a more cohesive and integrated approach to ensure that all forms of hatred are stamped out of our communities. We will keep the House updated on this work to strengthen our communities.

**Leasehold****Ben Coleman:**[\[10027\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she is taking steps to (a) simplify the process and (b) reduce the costs of extending the lease period for existing leaseholders.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

The Government intends to act quickly to provide homeowners with greater rights, powers, and protections over their homes by implementing the provisions of the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024. The Act will introduce an amended valuation scheme that leaseholders must follow to calculate how much they should pay to enfranchise. The method set by the Act for the valuation process removes the requirement for marriage value to be paid, caps the treatment of ground rents in the valuation calculation at 0.1% of the freehold value and allows Government to prescribe the rates used to calculate the enfranchisement premium. Rates will be set by the Secretary of State in secondary legislation.

The Act also includes a new statutory right to a 990-year lease extension for leaseholders of both houses and flats and makes extending a lease cheaper for leaseholders by requiring each side to pay their own process costs, such as valuation and solicitor's fees.

The implementation of the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024 will require an extensive programme of secondary legislation and we will set out the details in due course.

**■ Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024****Dr Allison Gardner:**[\[10615\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when her Department plans to present secondary legislation amending the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

I refer my Hon Friend to the answer I gave to Question UIN [9537](#) on 24 October 2024.

**■ Leasehold: Reform****Dr Allison Gardner:**[\[10616\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether the Leasehold and Commonhold Reform Bill will ban leasehold houses.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

Further to the answer I gave to Question [UIN 8491](#) on the 18 October 2024, the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024 included a ban on the sale of new residential long leases on houses. This will mean that, when this measure is implemented, other than in exceptional circumstances all new houses must be sold on a freehold basis.

**■ Letter Boxes**

**Mike Amesbury:** [\[9939\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of banning low level letter boxes on levels of sick leave in postal workers.

**Mike Amesbury:** [\[9940\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of adopting European Standard EN 13724 on letter boxes.

**Mike Amesbury:** [\[9941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential relationship between the height of letter boxes and back injuries for post men and women.

**Alex Norris:**

I recognise that postal workers may be at risk of repetitive strain injury or inconvenience caused by letterboxes or letterplates that are inappropriately positioned in doors. Guidance on letterplate specifications is already referenced in Approved Document Q (ADQ), but the Government has recently invited the Building Safety Regulator to consider how guidance on letterbox and letterplate positioning might be set out more clearly so that it is easier to understand, has greater prominence and takes into account safety, ergonomics and efficiency for postal workers. People who use ADQ will be directed to *BS EN 13724:2013 Postal services: apertures of private letter boxes and letter plates*, setting out a standard positioning and recommended height.

**■ Local Government Finance: Halton**

**Mike Amesbury:** [\[9538\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the potential implications for her Department's policies of Halton Borough Council's financial position.

**Mike Amesbury:** [\[9539\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of her Department's support for (a) Halton Borough Council and (b) other smaller councils.

**Mike Amesbury:** [\[9540\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the potential implications for her Department's policies of recent trends in levels of deprivation in Halton.

**Jim McMahon:**

This Government will work hand in hand with councils like Halton and ensure the sector gets back on its feet by moving towards multi-year funding settlements, ending competitive bidding processes and reforming the local audit system.

Future local authority funding decisions will be a matter for the next Spending Review and Local Government Finance Settlement in which we are engaged.

The department will work with local government leaders to ensure they are better able to fulfil their statutory duties.

**■ Natural Gas: Storage****Chris Ward:**[\[10402\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of redeveloping former gasworks sites on trends in air pollution levels in the surrounding area.

**Chris Ward:**[\[10567\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department issues guidance on handling hazardous materials when developing former gasworks sites.

**Chris Ward:**[\[10568\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of imposing national restrictions on the development of ex-gasworks sites.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

The handling of hazardous materials is strictly regulated to prevent and limit the consequences of major accidents and to ensure that communities and the environment are protected. Hazardous substances consent is required for the presence of hazardous substances at or above specified limits set out in regulations. Planning Practice Guidance on Hazardous Substances provides advice on this matter. The Health and Safety Executive is a statutory consultee on hazardous substance consent applications and provides expert advice to local planning authorities on any risks to inform their decision making.

There are strong existing protections in national planning policy to safeguard people from unacceptable risks from air pollution and site decontamination. These will be material considerations for a local council when determining a planning application, as will the planning concerns of the local community.

## ■ Recreation Spaces

**Mr Clive Betts:**

[\[900885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to help ensure that people living in new homes have access to well-designed green spaces.

**Rushanara Ali:**

National planning policy and guidance recognise the importance of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity for the health and wellbeing of communities.

Our proposals to release 'grey belt' land for development will depend on meeting golden rules, ensuring that all new developments has accessible green space.

## ■ Retail Trade: South Basildon and East Thurrock

**James McMurdock:**

[\[10028\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she plans to take to help support the high streets in South Basildon and East Thurrock constituency.

**Alex Norris:**

We want to ensure that communities across the country, such as in South Basildon and East Thurrock, have the support they need to revitalise their high street. As part of this, we plan to introduce new powers to help fill vacant properties through High Street Rental Auctions and to empower greater community ownership by introducing a Right to Buy for valued community assets in the English Devolution Bill.

## ■ Social Rented Housing: Construction

**Paul Davies:**

[\[10015\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department is taking to help tackle delays due to financial infeasibility in an increasing number of (a) social and (b) council house building projects.

**Darren Paffey:**

[\[10272\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to help reduce the number of (a) social and (b) council housebuilding projects in Southampton which are delayed due to financial infeasibility.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

The Government has committed to delivering the biggest increase in social and affordable housebuilding in a generation.

On 30 July we announced a number of changes in planning policy designed to support the delivery of affordable homes and also confirmed a range of new flexibilities for councils and housing associations, both within the Affordable Homes Programme and in relation to how councils can use their Right to Buy receipts.

At this week's Budget, the Chancellor will set out details of an immediate one year cash injection of £500 million to top up the existing Affordable Homes Programme which will deliver up to 5,000 new social and affordable homes. This comes ahead of the multi-year Spending Review next spring, where the Government will set out details of new investment to succeed the 2021-26 Affordable Homes Programme.

The Chancellor will also confirm that councils will be able to retain 100% of the receipts generated by Right to Buy sales. In addition, the Government will consult on a new 5-year social housing rent settlement to provide the sector with the certainty it needs to invest in new social housing.

### ■ Temporary Accommodation: Costs

**Antonia Bance:**

[\[9972\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 14 October 2024 to Question 6735 on Temporary Accommodation: Costs, what assessment her Department has made of the potential savings to local government in respect of temporary accommodation costs of (a) the end of section 21 evictions and (b) the wider provisions in the Renters' Rights Bill.

**Rushanara Ali:**

The Renters' Rights Bill will provide more security for vulnerable renters who face potential homelessness due to the service of a section 21 notice. Removing no fault evictions will have an immediate impact on preventing homelessness, as section 21 notices account for 8% of the reasons households became homeless in 2023-24.

The government submitted the Impact Assessment for the Renters' Rights Bill on 16 September 2024 to the Regulatory Policy Committee. The government will publish the Impact Assessment in due course. In line with usual practice, the government will always consider the impact of any policies when taking the legislation through Parliament.

### ■ Towns Fund: Runcorn

**Mike Amesbury:**

[\[10759\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether it is her policy to provide funding through the Towns Fund for projects in Runcorn.

**Alex Norris:**

The Towns Fund is made up of two major funding programmes that were announced under the previous government: Town Deals and the Future High Streets Fund competition. Places were invited to develop Town Deal proposals in September 2019 and final Town Deal allocations had been confirmed by July 2021. The Future High Streets Fund competition opened for EOI submission in December 2018; all successful bidders had been confirmed by May 2021.

In July 2021, Runcorn was awarded a £23.6 million Town Deal to support eight ambitious projects. My officials continue to work closely with Halton Borough Council to ensure the delivery of these projects are progressing well, on time and to budget.

The Towns Deals Programme is due to close in March 2026 with the expectation that all funding recipients will have contractually committed the entirety of their allocation by this date.

Both components of Towns Fund are now fully committed across 170 high streets, town centres and local communities in England. Funding recipients are well progressed into the delivery of their projects and there is no new funding available.

## ■ Unadopted Roads

**Alex Mayer:**

[\[9987\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if her Department will make an estimate of the number of households that are located on estate roads that have not been adopted by their local authority as of 17 October 2024.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

We do not hold comprehensive information on the number of households that are located on estate roads that have not been adopted by their local authority.

The impact assessment for the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act estimated that 1,557,000 households lived on freehold estates. This is based upon data from the English Housing Survey (up to 2021 – 22) about the self-reported circumstances of households. This will include estates with a range of different charges not all of which will have unadopted roads. The impact assessment noted that this was likely to be an underestimate.

It is likely that the number of households living on freehold estates has increased since this estimate was completed. The Competition and Markets Authority estimated that over 80% of properties built in 2021 – 22 by the largest 11 housebuilders, representing around two fifths of all new builds across England Scotland and Wales, were subject to estate management charges.

The Government has published its response the Competition and Market's Authority's housebuilding study. This includes bringing forward a new consumer code for housebuilders and a New Homes Ombudsman service which will empower homeowners to rightly challenge developers for any quality issues they face in their home.

As outlined in the King's Speech, the government is committed to bring the injustice of 'fleecehold' private estates and unfair costs to an end – we will consult on the best way to achieve this. As part of this work, the government will consult with homeowners, developers, local authorities, management companies and others, to gather evidence in support of this commitment. We will also implement new protections for homeowners on private estates in the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024.



## ■ Veterans: Homelessness

**Ben Obese-Jecty:**

[\[10309\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 9 October 2024 to Question 6842 on Veterans: Homelessness, how many homeless veterans will be eligible for social housing following the exemption of veterans from local connection and residency tests.

**Ben Obese-Jecty:**

[\[10837\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 9 October 2024 to Question 6842 on Veterans: Homelessness, how many veterans have been denied allocation of social housing owing to not passing local connection and residency tests for the area in which they require housing.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

The forthcoming changes to social housing allocations regulations will exempt all veterans from local connection and residency tests. Local councils will continue to design and operate allocations policies in a way that best meets the needs of local communities.

The Statutory Homelessness in England statistics for January to March 2024 ([Statutory homelessness in England: January to March 2024 - GOV.UK](#)) shows that between January-March 2024, 650 households owed a homelessness duty in England included a member who reported having served in HM Forces. However, we do not hold data on the number of veterans who may have failed to qualify for social housing due to a lack of a local connection.

## JUSTICE

### ■ Courts: Kent

**Sojan Joseph:**

[\[10583\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps she is taking to reduce the backlog of court cases in Kent.

**Heidi Alexander:**

We have taken your question to mean what steps are being taken to tackle the outstanding caseload across all jurisdictions. We are pursuing a number of measures at a national level that will contribute to the reduction of cases in Kent.

#### **Criminal Courts**

More than 90 per cent of all criminal cases are dealt with at the magistrates' courts, where cases continue to be completed swiftly. The outstanding caseload in the magistrates' court reduced following the pandemic; however the caseload has increased over the last year, as a result of more cases entering the criminal courts. We continue to invest in the recruitment of more magistrates, aiming to recruit

2,000 new and diverse magistrates this year and similar numbers of each of the next couple of years.

The Crown Court outstanding caseload remains one of the biggest challenges facing the Criminal Justice System and we are committed to reducing the caseload and bringing waiting times down. We want to make sure every victim has the swift access to justice they deserve - however, we recognise that some cases currently take longer to conclude. That is why we have committed to fast-tracking rape cases through the courts, ensuring timely and effective justice for victims and will say more on this in due course.

More widely, as part of our efforts to hear more cases, we have increased funding so that 106,500 sitting days can be sat at the Crown Court this year - more than six out of the last seven years - and 500 days more than the 106,000 agreed by the previous government in June. In Kent specifically, they are on track to sit nearly 3,000 sitting days this financial year across Canterbury and Maidstone Crown Court.

Alongside this, we consistently invest in the recruitment of c.1,000 judges and tribunal members across all jurisdictions annually alongside continuing to use 18 Nightingale courtrooms across eight venues to hear more cases.

Most recently, we have announced plans to allow magistrates' courts to hand down custodial sentences of up to 12 months for a single triable either way offence – doubling their current powers – from mid-November. Allowing magistrates to deal with more cases will save up to 2,000 sitting days in the Crown Court.

### **Civil courts**

With regards to civil cases, we are taking action to ensure those that do need to go to trial are dealt with quickly. We have a significant volume of judicial recruitment underway for District and Deputy District Judges, are digitising court processes and holding more remote hearings, and are increasing the use of mediation.

The requirement for small claims in the county court to attend a mediation session with the Small Claims Mediation Service will start this spring and is expected to help parties resolve their dispute swiftly and consensually without the need for a judicial hearing.

The HMCTS Reform Program has introduced technology that delivers simplified and transformed digital ways of working for civil court users and judges such as the online money claims process and the damages claims service, offering accessible and responsive services.

### **Tribunals**

We are working to reduce the outstanding caseload in the First-tier Tribunal and the Upper Tribunal including the Employment Tribunal and Employment Appeal Tribunal. Reducing outstanding caseloads is the key measure to bringing down the waiting times for tribunal hearings.

HMCTS continues to invest in improving tribunal productivity through the recruitment of additional Judges, deployment of Legal Officers to actively manage cases, the development of modern case management systems and the use of remote hearing technology.

Data on Tribunals performance is published by the Ministry of Justice on a quarterly basis. Receipts, disposals and the outstanding caseload for individual Chambers in the First-tier Tribunal and Upper Tribunal, the Employment Tribunal and the Employment Appeal Tribunal can be found at the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/tribunals-statistics>.

### **Family Court**

In the family courts, partners across the system are working together to drive forward a range of measures to improve timeliness of both public and private law cases.

In March 2024, the Family Justice Board agreed a new set of priorities for the family justice system, with a clear focus on closing the longest running cases and increasing the proportion of public law cases concluding within the 26-week statutory timeline. These targets are informing planning and delivery at a national and local level, with partners across the system taking steps to improve performance and share best practice.

The Government recognises the importance of supporting separating families, and where appropriate, helping them resolve their issues quickly and without the need to come to court. The Family Mediation Voucher Scheme continues to provide £500 towards the cost of mediation. To date, over £15 million of vouchers have helped 34,300 separating parents to access mediation.

We are also exploring new ways to address the longest delays in public law cases, by investing £10 million to develop and implement innovative initiatives in local areas.

### ■ **Crown Court: Standards**

**Andrew Rosindell:**

**[10052]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps she is taking to tackle the backlog of cases awaiting Crown Court hearings.

**Heidi Alexander:**

The Crown Court outstanding caseload remains one of the biggest challenges facing the Criminal Justice System and we are committed to reducing the caseload and bringing waiting times down.

We want to make sure every victim has the swift access to justice they deserve - however, we recognise that some cases currently take longer to conclude. This is particularly true for rape victims, who on average wait over a year for their case to go to trial. That is why we have committed to fast-tracking rape cases through the courts, ensuring timely and effective justice for victims of these abhorrent offences.

More widely, as part of our efforts to hear more cases, we have increased funding so that 106,500 sitting days can be sat at the Crown Court this year - more than six out

of the last seven years - and 500 days more than the 106,000 agreed by the previous government in June.

Alongside this, we invest consistently in the recruitment of c.1,000 judges and tribunal members across all jurisdictions annually. Crown Court recruitment has been a particular priority and we have successfully increased the number of Circuit judges and Recorders in recent years. We also continue to use 18 Nightingale courtrooms across eight venues to hear more cases.

Most recently, we have announced plans to allow magistrates' courts to hand down custodial sentences of up to 12 months for a single triable either way offence – doubling their current powers – from mid-November.

Allowing magistrates to deal with more cases will save up to 2,000 sitting days in the Crown Court, so that time can be reserved for the more serious and complex cases, helping address the Crown Court outstanding caseload.

To go further, the Government is considering what can be learned from the Lord Justice Auld's 2001 Review, including looking again at ideas to help increase capacity in the Crown Court.

#### ■ Domestic Abuse: Reoffenders

**Liz Saville Roberts:** [\[10455\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether she plans to establish (a) Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Programme provision and (b) an alternative programme.

**Alex Davies-Jones:**

This Government has set an ambitious mission to halve violence against women and girls in a decade.

We have committed to using every tool available to target perpetrators and address the root causes of abuse. It is essential that we prevent reoffending and ensure there is comprehensive approach to managing perpetrators, from early intervention to targeting the most prolific and repeat offenders.

We acknowledge there is a gap in the family courts' ability to refer perpetrators onto Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Programmes. A cross-sector steering group has been established to address this – including for those cases going through the family courts in Wales.

All decisions on funding remain subject to the Spending Review process.

#### ■ Horizon IT System: Convictions

**Jerome Mayhew:** [\[9943\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of convicted postmasters has her Department contacted to inform them that their conviction has been quashed under the Post Office (Horizon System) Offences Act 2024.

**Heidi Alexander:**

I refer the honourable Member to our GOV.UK page where we now publish monthly management information on the progress of the Post Office Convictions casework team. This page can be found at: [Post Office \(Horizon System\) Offences Act 2024: Quashed convictions management information - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/post-office-convictions-management-information).

As of the end of September, we had assessed 459 individual cases and had written to 335 individuals or their appropriate contacts to inform them that they had one or more convictions quashed by the Post Office (Horizon System) Offences Act 2024. A further update will be published in early November.

We are unable to provide an assessment of what proportion of individuals with convictions this represents, as we may not hold records for all relevant individuals. I would actively encourage anyone who believes they have a conviction in scope of the legislation and has not heard from my Department to register for the Horizon Convictions Redress Scheme on GOV.UK so their case can be considered.

**■ Magistrates' Courts: Media****Max Wilkinson:**[\[10254\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of reduced media coverage of magistrates' courts on (a) democracy and (b) transparency of the justice system.

**Heidi Alexander:**

We are aware of the reduced number of journalists to cover magistrates' proceedings. The Ministry of Justice is committed to open justice and ensuring that the media can report on proceedings effectively. Allowing the public to scrutinise and understand court processes helps to build trust and confidence in the justice system and our democracy. Courts and tribunals are improving how they provide information to the media and the public, ensuring our justice system remains transparent.

**■ Powers of Attorney: Forms****Oliver Ryan:**[\[10558\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will make an assessment of the (a) adequacy of safeguards against the misuse of online application forms for Lasting Power of Attorney and (b) potential merits of only providing forms following discussions with officials who are satisfied that Lasting Power of Attorney would be in the interests of vulnerable people.

**Heidi Alexander:**

Under the current system, the Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA) is a prescribed paper form, which to be used must be made validly and registered by Office of the Public Guardian (OPG). The form can be completed online but must then be printed, signed, and sent to OPG for processing.

LPAs are private agreements between individuals. While the OPG has a role in checking these documents meet the requirements for registration prior to use, and in

investigating any alleged misuse, it cannot prevent an eligible person from making one.

## ■ Prison Accommodation and Rehabilitation

**Richard Tice:**

[\[10336\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps her Department plans to take to (a) increase prison capacity and (b) improve rehabilitation services for offenders.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

On 22 October, the Lord Chancellor announced the further steps the Government will take to manage prison capacity including launching an independent review of sentencing to ensure that we are never again in a position where we have more prisoners than we have space in our prisons.

We are also committed to creating 14,000 additional prison places and will set out a ten-year prison capacity strategy later this year, ensuring we have a sustainable pipeline of prison places over the next decade to allow us to effectively drive down reoffending.

This Government will act to improve rehabilitation services for offenders by giving offenders leaving prison the tools to move away from crime. This will include improving prisoners access to purposeful activity such as education, delivering pre-release plans for all those leaving custody; and ensuring that ex-offenders leave prison with a job and the skills needed to lead law abiding lives.

## ■ Prison Sentences

**Richard Tice:**

[\[10333\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent steps she has taken to ensure that (a) violent and (b) repeat offenders receive longer sentences.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

Sentencing in individual cases is a matter for our independent courts. When deciding what sentence to impose, courts must consider the circumstances of the case, including the culpability of the offender, the harm they caused or intended to cause, and any aggravating and mitigating factors. The courts also have a statutory duty to follow any relevant sentencing guidelines, developed by the independent Sentencing Council for England and Wales.

It is the function of the court to decide the sentence in each case subject to the maximum that Parliament has provided and any guidelines that may be laid down by the Sentencing Council or the Court of Appeal. The sentence imposed on an offender should reflect the crime they have committed and be proportionate to the seriousness of the offence. Custody should only be imposed if the offence is so serious that no other sentence can be justified.

The Government has launched an independent review of sentencing. The Review will be guided by three principles. Firstly, sentences must punish offenders and protect

the public – there must always be space in prison for the most dangerous offenders. Secondly, sentences must encourage offenders to turn their backs on a life of crime, cutting crime by reducing reoffending. Thirdly, we must expand and make greater use of punishment outside of prison. The Review will report in Spring 2025.

## ■ Prisoners' Release

**Edward Argar:**

[\[10449\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, on what date the last of the prisoners who were released in error in September 2024 under the SDS40 early release scheme returned to prison.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

All of the 37 people released in error, because of being incorrectly sentenced for breaching restraining orders under outdated legislation, were returned to custody.

The last of the 37 prisoners was returned to custody on 28 September 2024.

## ■ Prisons: Drugs

**Sir John Hayes:**

[\[10409\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many confiscations of Class A drugs took place in prisons in (a) England and (b) Wales in each of the last three years.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

Data on the number of incidents where Class A drugs were found in prisons in (a) England and (b) Wales in each of the last three years are provided in the attached table.

The availability of drugs in prison is yet another sign of the prisons crisis the new Government inherited. We are bringing the crisis under control and ensuring that a range of physical security countermeasures are used to reduce the conveyance of illicit items into prisons, including X-ray body scanners, airport-style Enhanced Gate Security, X-ray baggage scanners, detection dogs, and drug trace detection equipment.

### Attachments:

1. Table [2024-10-30 PQ 10409 table.xlsx]

## ■ Reoffenders

**Neil O'Brien:**

[\[9772\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prisoners released under Standard Determinate Sentence 40 legislation have been recalled to prison.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

Recall remains, as intended, a tool Probation can use to protect the public.



Data on SDS40 recalls forms a subset of data intended for future publication, but our initial operational insights suggest there has not been a significant change to the use and application of recall since implementation of the SDS change.

## ■ Reoffenders: Veterans

**Mark Pritchard:** [\[10057\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps her Department is taking to reduce reoffending by military veterans who have served custodial sentences.

**Mark Pritchard:** [\[10058\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps her Department is taking to provide rehabilitation to military veterans serving custodial sentences.

### **Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

HMPPS delivers a range of initiatives to support veterans. This includes the Veterans Activity Hubs at HMP Holme House and HMP Risley, which provide safe and supportive spaces for veterans, improving their wellbeing and confidence, and make their transition into the community more likely to succeed.

HMPPS also delivers services via many third sector organisations (including military charities such as SSAFA) who provide a prison in-reach service offering resettlement advice to veterans whilst in custody and guidance in preparation for release.

Across the prison estate, almost all prisons have a Veterans in Custody Support Officer, whose role is to identify prisoners who have served in the armed forces and provide tailored support to them, and many of these officers are veterans themselves.

## ■ Victims: Courts

**Tom Hayes:** [\[10661\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment she has made of the potential implications for her Department's policies of trends in the level of costs for (a) family and (b) close friends of victims of crime for attending (i) trials and (i) sentencing.

**Tom Hayes:** [\[10662\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will make it her policy to reimburse family members of victims with limited means the cost of attending the (a) trial and (b) sentencing.

### **Alex Davies-Jones:**

The Government is committed to ensuring that victims and survivors have the information and support they need. This involves understanding how best to support victims, survivors and witnesses throughout their interactions with the Criminal Justice System, including navigating court processes. The Ministry of Justice commissions a National Witness Service which provides emotional and practical support to both prosecution and defence witnesses to enable them to give their best evidence in court. This support includes providing an explanation of the court process



and updates on the progress of a trial. The support is also available to families bereaved by crime. In 2023/2024, the National Witness Service supported approximately 80,000 witnesses, about 44% of whom were also victims and survivors.

Where witnesses are called to give evidence in prosecutions conducted by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), the CPS is responsible for paying allowances and expenses. The CPS, at their own discretion, may pay allowances and expenses for other people, where it is believed that it would assist the witness in giving best evidence. This should be agreed in advance of attendance. Examples include parents accompanying child witnesses and people accompanying elderly witnesses and survivors.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### ■ Gender Based Violence: Northern Ireland

**Alex Easton:**

[\[10375\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what steps his Department is taking to tackle violence against women in Northern Ireland; and what plans he has to ensure the swift and effective implementation of the Strategy for Ending Violence Against Women and Girls.

**Hilary Benn:**

The UK Government welcomes the launch of the Strategic Framework to End Violence against Women and Girls by The Northern Ireland Executive. This Government is seeking to tackle violence against women and girls across the United Kingdom and will support the NI Executive to implement and deliver this strategic framework fully.

### ■ Transport: Northern Ireland

**Carla Lockhart:**

[\[10517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Transport on steps to improve Northern Ireland's transport connectivity with the rest of the UK.

**Hilary Benn:**

The Government is committed to ensuring greater connectivity and economic integration between Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom.

The Secretary of State for Transport has already met with John O'Dowd MLA, Minister for Infrastructure, to discuss shared transport priorities, given that transport policy is largely devolved. By working together, both governments can encourage economic growth, deliver integrated transport networks, promote social mobility, and tackle regional inequalities by improving connectivity across the whole of the UK.

**■ Windsor Framework****Alex Burghart:** [\[10116\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to the Answer of 21 October 2024 to Question 9532, when the Independent Monitoring Panel will make its first report.

**Hilary Benn:**

The Independent Monitoring Panel will report every six months to the Government on the basis set out in the Safeguarding the Union command paper. The support arrangements for the Panel are in the process of being put in place presently, as set out in my answer to question 9532.

**SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY****■ ICT: Advisory Services****Andrew Griffith:** [\[10811\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to his Department's Commercial Pipeline for October 2024, published on 22 October 2024, what assessment he has made of the value for money of the contract for re-procurement of the Service Desk.

**Andrew Griffith:** [\[10812\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to his Department's Commercial Pipeline for October 2024, published on 22 October 2024, whether he made an assessment of the potential merits of providing the Service Desk contract in-house.

**Andrew Griffith:** [\[10813\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to his Department's Commercial Pipeline for October 2024, published on 22 October 2024, what steps he is taking to ensure adequate technical support during the life of the Service Desk contract.

**Feryal Clark:**

The re-procurement of the Service Desk has been included in the Department's Commercial Pipeline as potential activity. The Department for Science, Innovation and Technology makes no commitment that the requirement will be procured. Activity to assess value for money and merits of providing the service in-house will be carried out through a Delivery Model Assessment, in accordance with Government Sourcing Playbook and Department's Commercial Assurance Process. This activity has recently commenced, and the assessments have not been completed. Any resulting contract would be supported by contractual performance mechanisms to ensure adequate technical support throughout the life of the contract.

**Andrew Griffith:**

[\[10814\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what his Department's budget for technical support services is for this financial year.

**Feryal Clark:**

We have interpreted this as Digital technical support services, which are in the order of £0.8m for DSIT.

## ■ Pornography

**Tracy Gilbert:**

[\[10007\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps his Department is taking to help tackle pornography harms.

**Feryal Clark:**

Under the Online Safety Act, all in-scope services that allow pornography must use highly effective age assurance to prevent children accessing it, including user-to-user services and services which publish pornography. Under the Act, platforms must proactively tackle the most harmful illegal content including extreme pornography.

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

## ■ Pornography: Children

**Tracy Gilbert:**

[\[10008\]](#)

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

**Feryal Clark:**

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

The Act requires that all in scope services that allow pornography use highly effective age assurance to prevent children from accessing it, including services that host user-generated content, and services which publish pornography. Ofcom has robust enforcement powers available against companies who fail to fulfil their duties.

## TRANSPORT

### ■ Buses: Fire Prevention

**Alex Mayer:**

[\[9986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to reduce the number of bus fires.

**Simon Lightwood:**

In July 2023 the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) published a significant review into bus fires and safety: [Investigation into bus fires reported to DVSA from 2020 to 2022 - GOV.UK](#)

DVSA has worked with industry and the Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT) and agreed an approach where all parties can work together in a collaborative forum. This will not only apply the recommendations from the review but create a forum that will allow a continual improvement process to be adopted.

DVSA continues this positive engagement with industry, with the latest working group having taken place last week.

**■ Cycling****Laurence Turner:****[10944]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to her Department's dataset titled Proportion of adults that cycle, by frequency, purpose and local authority: England, published on 28 August 2024, what assessment she has made of the reasons for the estimated decline in the percentage of people who cycle at least once per month between 2016 and 2023.

**Simon Lightwood:**

Data from 2021 and 2022 coincided with COVID-19 lockdown restrictions which severely reduced people's movements and travel patterns, across all transport modes, including cycling across England. This can be seen to have a major impact on the statistics during this period and play a major role in the falls recorded. The Department will consider all active travel data as we continue to shape our long-term vision for cycling and walking across England. Cycling and walking are cheap, green and healthy ways to get around, and we will work alongside local authorities to ensure everyone can access the benefits of active travel routes and travel how they choose.

**■ Cycling: Expenditure****Laurence Turner:****[10937]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the (a) central and (b) total public expenditure was on cycling per head by region in 2023-24.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The Department does not hold data detailing public expenditure on cycling per head by region. Details of Active Travel England expenditure on walking and cycling combined by region for 2023/24 is contained in the table below. This expenditure is in addition to a range of wider funds detailed in the second Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS2) which collectively totals over £3 billion.

REGION	TOTAL 23-24	TOTAL PER HEAD
East Midlands	£6,469,180	£1.33
East of England	£10,023,340	£1.58
North East	£9,695,666	£3.66
North West	£16,117,470	£2.17
South East	£21,228,834	£2.29
South West	£8,005,394	£1.40
West Midlands	£15,332,363	£2.58
Yorkshire and The Humber	£15,860,482	£2.89
Total	£102,732,729	

#### ■ Driving Instruction: Pay

**Freddie van Mierlo:**

[\[10311\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of (a) pay and (b) incentives for driving examiners (a) in Oxfordshire, (b) in other high-cost areas and (c) generally.

**Freddie van Mierlo:**

[\[10313\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of reducing the number of times a driving test can be re-booked, in the context of recent trends in the usage of automated bots to block book driving test dates.

**Freddie van Mierlo:**

[\[10314\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of allowing driving instructors to temporarily work as examiners, in the context of recent trends in the availability of driving tests.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

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

As of 21 October 2024, there were 567,344 car practical driving tests booked, and 84,092 driving tests available within the 24-week booking window.

It is not possible to allow approved driving instructors (ADI's) to temporarily work as driving examiners. The Motor Vehicles (Driving Licences) 1999 regulations require driving test examiners to meet certain criteria and pass an initial qualification and

examination and prohibits a person from being an active ADI and an examiner simultaneously.

As part of measures to ensure its booking system is used correctly, DVSA has reduced the number of times a driving test appointment can be changed. Driving test candidates can change their appointment up to six times. If candidates need to make more changes after that, they will need to cancel their test and rebook it. DVSA currently has no plans to reduce this figure further as it is designed to give candidates sufficient flexibility to manage their car practical driving test appointment.

Driving examiners are Civil Servants so their salary is determined by the Civil Service Pay Remit Guidance. The guidance sets out the financial parameters within which Civil Service departments can determine pay awards for their staff. DVSA cannot act independently from this guidance.

### ■ Driving Tests: Greater London

**Nesil Caliskan:**

[\[10189\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 14 October to Question 8348 on Driving Tests: Greater London, what the average waiting time was at a driving test centre in the wider London area in (a) 2019 and (b) 2015.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

The table below shows the average waiting time for driving test centres in the wider London area, located within the M25, in the financial years (a) 2019/20 and (b) 2015/16.

DRIVING TEST CENTRE (DTC)	2015/16 AVERAGE CAR PRACTICAL DRIVING TEST WAITING TIME (WEEKS)	2019/20 AVERAGE CAR PRACTICAL DRIVING TEST WAITING TIME (WEEKS)
Barking (Tanner Street)	7.7	6.9
Barnet	6.7	6.1
Belvedere	6.3	7.6
Borehamwood	11.0	5.8
Bromley	<sup>1</sup> No data	<sup>2</sup> 4.9
Chingford	6.6	6.9
Enfield (Innova Business Park)	9.7	5.9
Erith	6.1	7.0
Goodmayes	8.3	9.9
Greenford (Horsenden Lane)	9.6	8.6

DRIVING TEST CENTRE (DTC)	2015/16 AVERAGE CAR PRACTICAL DRIVING TEST WAITING TIME (WEEKS)	2019/20 AVERAGE CAR PRACTICAL DRIVING TEST WAITING TIME (WEEKS)
Hither Green	8.7	9.1
Hornchurch	7.4	8.1
Isleworth (Fleming Way)	10.4	8.9
Loughton	6.4	6.9
Mill Hill	7.4	6.6
Mitcham	8.0	7.4
Morden	7.7	7.1
Pinner	8.9	7.1
Sidcup	6.1	7.7
Southall	9.7	7.0
Tolworth	6.1	6.8
Tottenham	<sup>3</sup> No data	9.3
Uxbridge	7.6	7.0
Wanstead	7.4	7.2
Watford	7.5	6.0
West Wickham	12.5	9.6
Wood Green	11.1	8.7
Yeading	<sup>4</sup> No data	7.7
London Area Average (DTCs within the M25)	8.2	7.5

1. No 2015/16 data exists for Bromley DTC as it opened as a new DTC in December 2019.
2. Data for Bromley DTC covers the period December 2019 – March 2020.
3. No 2015/16 data exists for Tottenham DTC as it opened as a new DTC in November 2016.

4. No 2015/16 data exists for Yeading DTC. DVSA did not regularly make car practical driving tests available from this location until the 2020/21 financial year to help it recover from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

### ■ **Motor Insurance: Fees and Charges**

**Helen Whately:**

[\[10111\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the motor insurance taskforce will review postcode insurance pricing.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

This Government committed in its manifesto to tackle the high costs of motor insurance. To deliver on this commitment, the UK Government formed a cross-government Taskforce on motor insurance, co-chaired by the Department for Transport and His Majesty's Treasury, which met for the first time on 16th October.

This Taskforce has a strategic remit to set the direction for UK Government policy, identifying short- and long-term actions for departments that may contribute to stabilising or reducing premiums, while maintaining appropriate levels of cover. The Taskforce is comprised of ministers from relevant government departments and by the Financial Conduct Authority and Competition and Markets Authority. The Taskforce is supported by a separate Stakeholder Panel of industry experts representing the insurance, motor, and consumer sector.

The Taskforce will evaluate the impact of increased insurance costs on consumers and the insurance industry, including how this impacts different demographics, geographies, and communities.

### ■ **Motorways: Safety**

**Rupert Lowe:**

[\[9991\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has made an assessment of the (a) costs and (b) benefits of smart motorways.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

National Highways publish reviews on major road schemes which measure their impact against anticipated benefits.

National Highways also report on safety data annually, with the latest published data showing, overall, all three types of smart motorway are safer than conventional motorways for those safety metrics which consider the most significant impacts, such as deaths or serious injuries. However, we recognise that the risk of a collision between a moving and a stopped vehicle is greater on smart motorways without a permanent hard shoulder. We will not be rolling out any new smart motorways.



## ■ Parking Offences: Fines

**Tom Hayes:**

[\[10599\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her Department is taking steps to review the (a) operation and (b) fines attached to Parking Charge Notices.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

We have no current plans to raise on-street parking penalty charges. It is important to strike the right balance between deterrence and fairness. Organisations representing local authorities have undertaken research into penalty charge levels and shared their findings with the Department. The Department will be reviewing the issue in light of this research.

Local authorities may employ contractors to carry out on-street civil parking enforcement on their behalf, but ultimately, it is the local authority to which parking fines are payable.

## ■ Public Transport

**Alex Mayer:**

[\[9981\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment her Department has made of the relative merits of fixed fleet caps against dynamic fleet caps for micro mobility schemes in the UK.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The Government is still considering next steps for on-street micromobility rental and will use a wide range of evidence and consultation before making any final policy decisions.

## ■ Purfleet Port: Pay

**Grahame Morris:**

[\[10690\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions officials in her Department have had with the owners of Purfleet port on (a) enforcement of and (b) compliance with the Seafarers Wages Act 2024.

**Mike Kane:**

Feedback from industry has been crucial throughout the legislative process and officials have engaged extensively with ports and ferry operators on the regulations and supporting guidance, which set out the responsibilities of the ports and operators under the Act. Officials more recently engaged with the owners of Purfleet Port in workshops during the public consultation period which ran from February to March this year. Officials have also invited them to further engage in upcoming information sessions on the requirements and the application of the legislation in November.

**■ Railways: Safety****Laurence Turner:**[\[10942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many temporary speed restrictions there were on the national rail network on 15 March in each year since 2017.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

Network Rail data in the attached table shows that the following temporary and emergency speed restrictions were in place in Rail Period 13 (March) since 2017.

**Attachments:**

1. Table of Temporary Speed Restrictions - Rail [Table - Temporary Speed Restrictions.docx]

**■ Rapid Transit Systems: Finance****Stuart Anderson:**[\[10771\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she is taking steps to increase funding available for very light rail projects.

**Simon Lightwood:**

We are considering how best to support mass transit long-term as part of the Spending Review and we will work closely with local authorities to understand what is needed to improve and grow their networks by learning from their experiences and building on their successes.

**■ Regional Airports: Air Routes****Mr Gregory Campbell:**[\[10412\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to help support small regional airports to develop new routes in addition to the use of public service obligations.

**Mike Kane:**

Public Service Obligation (PSO) Regulations enable protection of existing domestic routes that are in danger of being lost. DfT currently joint-funds three PSO routes into London from Newquay, Dundee and Derry/Londonderry.

Airports invest in their infrastructure to attract passengers and airlines, while airlines deliver services to their customers by responding to demand for routes. My officials are actively engaging with regional airports to understand their route networks and how Government can support their future ambitions.

**■ Road Traffic Offences: Motor Insurance****Laurence Turner:**[\[10935\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate she has made of the number of uninsured vehicles; and how many vehicles were seized for unpaid insurance in each year since 2015.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

My department has not made an estimate of the number of uninsured vehicles. We also do not hold the numbers of vehicles seized for unpaid insurance.

**Roads: Accidents****Gregory Stafford:**[\[10665\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to require drivers to report cat killings under Section 170 of the Road Traffic Act 1988.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

There are no plans to amend section 170 of the Road Traffic Act to make it mandatory for drivers to report road collisions involving cats.

Although there is no obligation to report all collisions with animals on roads, Rule 286 of The Highway Code advises drivers to report any collisions involving an animal to the police, and if possible, they should make enquiries to ascertain the owner of domestic animals and advise them of the situation.

Since June this year, all cats in England over 20 weeks of age must be microchipped and registered on a compliant database, unless exempt or free-living. This will increase the likelihood that cats can be reunited with their owners.

**Roads: Northern Ireland****Jim Shannon:**[\[10080\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has had discussions with the Northern Ireland Department of Infrastructure on (a) pothole repairs and (b) resurfacing.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

The Secretary of State met her counterpart in the Northern Ireland Department for Infrastructure in her first days of office and the departments regularly discuss matters of mutual interest.

**Roads: Repairs and Maintenance****Laurence Turner:**[\[10947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her Department provided National Highways the proposals for Road Investment Strategy 3 required under clause 2 of Schedule 2 of the Infrastructure Act 2015 before 4 July 2024.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

No.

**Roads: Rural Areas****Richard Tice:**[\[10338\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to (a) reduce congestion in Boston and Skegness constituency and (b) improve road maintenance in rural areas.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

The Government takes the condition of local roads very seriously and is committed to maintaining and renewing the local road network. For England as a whole, the Government has a manifesto commitment to enable local highway authorities to fix up to a million extra potholes a year.

Lincolnshire County Council is the local highway authority for the Boston and Skegness constituency, and it is therefore responsible for the maintenance of its local highway network. Lincolnshire County Council will receive £43.6 million from this Department during 2024/25 to help it carry out its local highway maintenance responsibilities. It is up to the local authority to decide how that funding is used.

Lincolnshire County Council will also receive £3.3 million for small scale transport improvements including reducing congestion through the Integrated Transport Fund.

To help reduce congestion through improving traffic flow, the Department has also provided Lincolnshire County Council with £878,352 for traffic systems since 2021: £250,000 from the Traffic Signal Maintenance Grant in 2021, and £500,000 from the Green Light Fund, and £128,352 from the Traffic Signal Obsolescence Grant in 2024.

**■ Roads: Schools****Dr Allison Gardner:**[\[10620\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to help improve road safety outside schools.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

The safety of our roads is an absolute priority for this Government.

The Highway Code was updated in 2022 to improve road safety for cyclists and pedestrians, by strengthening pedestrian priority on pavements and at crossings and introducing the Hierarchy of Road Users, which places those road users most at risk in the event of a collision, including children, at the top of the hierarchy. The Highway Code makes it clear that those in charge of vehicles that can cause the greatest harm in the event of a collision bear the greatest responsibility to reduce the danger they pose to others, and highlights the need to take care and be particularly aware of young cyclists and pedestrians near schools.

Local authorities have a range of traffic management measures available to them to help improve safety outside schools. These include 20mph speed limits, traffic calming, and introduction of a School Street where appropriate. Local authorities have the power to set speed limits on their roads. Authorities are also enabled to place advisory part-time 20mph speed limits signs in the vicinity of schools without the need for Government approval. It is for local authorities to determine what measures are appropriate in individual cases. They have the local knowledge so are the best placed to do so.

The Gear Change plan for walking and cycling (2020) included a number of steps which will support and increase safety of active travel to school, including increasing

the number of School Streets (a timed restriction of motorised traffic at the start and end of the school day).

### ■ Shipping: Accidents

**Grahame Morris:** [\[10688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has had discussions with (a) Cabinet colleagues and (b) the Maritime and Coastguard Agency on the collision between the Wind of Hope vessel and a turbine in the Hornsea 1 offshore wind farm on 20 September 2024.

**Mike Kane:**

The Marine Accident Investigation Branch was notified of the incident via the usual channels. However, no further action was taken as it occurred outside of UK waters and the vessel is French-flagged.

## TREASURY

### ■ Alcoholic Drinks: Excise Duties

**James McMurdock:** [\[10029\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will support (a) pubs and (b) breweries in South Basildon and East Thurrock constituency through alcohol duty.

**James Murray:**

Pubs and breweries make an enormous contribution to our economy and society, and this is recognised in the tax system.

The current alcohol duty system supports pubs and breweries through Draught Relief, which ensures eligible products served on draught pay less duty.

The Government is closely monitoring the impact of the recent reforms and rates that took effect on 1 August 2023. As with all taxes, the Government keeps the alcohol duty system under review during its Budget process.

**Andrew Bowie:** [\[9926\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make it her policy to not raise alcohol duty.

**Andrew Bowie:** [\[9927\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps she is taking to protect pubs.

**Andrew Bowie:** [\[9929\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of introducing an alcohol duty (a) exemption and (b) reduction for drinks that have a 15% or weaker alcohol by volume on community third places.

**Andrew Bowie:** [\[9930\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the implications for her policies on alcohol duty of the potential impact of having access to a (a) pub and (b) other community third space on mental health.

**James Murray:**

Pubs and breweries make an enormous contribution to our economy and society, and this is recognised in the tax system.

The current alcohol duty system supports pubs and breweries through Draught Relief, which ensures eligible products served on draught pay less duty. Draught Relief helps to level the playing field between pubs and supermarkets, allowing pubs and brewers to price their on-trade products more competitively.

The Government is closely monitoring the impact of the recent reforms and rates that took effect on 1 August 2023. As with all taxes, the Government keeps the alcohol duty system under review during its Budget process.

**Charlotte Nichols:** [\[9952\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will ask the Office for Budget Responsibility to review its (a) price elasticity of demand and (b) other forecasting methodology for alcohol duty revenues.

**James Murray:**

The OBR regularly reviews its forecasting methodology. Its forecast is informed by economic factors including real household consumption and underlying trends in alcohol consumption.

The OBR published updated price elasticities for alcohol in July 2024.

**Charlotte Nichols:** [\[9953\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she plans to end the duty stamps scheme.

**James Murray:**

The government will set out plans for the future of Alcohol Duty Stamps in due course.

**■ Cars: Instalment Credit****Mr Gregory Campbell:** [\[10413\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she has had discussions with the automotive industry on trends in the level of consumer debt accrued through car hire purchase agreements.

**Tulip Siddiq:**

The government engages with a broad range of stakeholders such as the financial regulators, industry, debt advice charities and consumer groups to monitor trends in consumer debt and understand issues affecting consumers.

The Government currently provides a range of debt advice services through the Money and Pensions Service (MaPS) to meet the needs of individuals in problem debt, including national and community-based services offering free-to-client debt advice. In addition, the Government's 'Breathing Space' scheme provides eligible individuals protections from creditor enforcement action for a period of 60 days, giving them the space to work with a professional debt adviser to identify a positive and sustainable solution to their problem debt.

## ■ **Cryptoassets: Regulation**

**Gordon McKee:**

[\[9887\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether her Department plans to bring forward legislative proposals to implement the cryptoasset regulatory framework.

**Tulip Siddiq:**

The Government is committed to fostering a vibrant, competitive, and innovative financial services sector. Last October, the Treasury published detailed proposals for the financial service regulation of cryptoassets and stablecoins. The Government has been reviewing those proposals in detail and will set out details of its policy programme for cryptoassets soon.

## ■ **Financial Conduct Authority and Prudential Regulation Authority**

**Jerome Mayhew:**

[\[10485\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps she is taking to ensure that financial services regulators fulfil their obligations under their secondary objective on international competitiveness and economic growth.

**Jerome Mayhew:**

[\[10486\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what evidence she has seen of financial services regulators adapting their approach as a result of the secondary objective on international competitiveness and economic growth.

**Tulip Siddiq:**

Effective, proportionate regulation is key to a thriving UK economy and delivering the government's mission to drive the inclusive growth and international competitiveness of the UK's financial services sector. The government is working closely with the regulators to deliver the government's vision for the sector, and ministers meet with the FCA and PRA regularly to engage on this.

The government is required to write to the Prudential Regulation Committee and the FCA at least once in each Parliament, making recommendations about aspects of economic policy they should have regard to as they consider the advancement of the PRA's and FCA's objectives and the discharge of their duties. These letters must be laid before Parliament and published.

The FCA and PRA are required to report to the Treasury on how they have advanced their competitiveness and growth objectives. They published the first reports in July,

which set out how they have begun to adapt their approach in light of the new objectives. The reports can be found here:

- <https://www.fca.org.uk/publication/corporate/sicgo-report-2023-24.pdf>
- <https://beta.bankofengland.co.uk/-/media/boe/files/prudential-regulation/report/scgo-report.pdf>

The Chief Executive of the FCA and the Chief Executive of the PRA have recently given speeches setting out more details on how they are implementing the new objectives. These can be found here:

- <https://www.fca.org.uk/news/speeches/growth-mission-possible>
- <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/speech/2024/october/sam-woods-speech-at-annual-city-banquet-at-mansion-house>

The government will continue to work closely with the FCA and PRA to ensure they continue to embed these secondary objectives, in support of the government's wider growth mission.

## ■ Financial Services: Advisory Services

**Becky Gittins:**

**[10605]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps she is taking to ensure that all consumers are given access to financial services advice.

**Tulip Siddiq:**

The Government is committed to ensuring that consumers can access high-quality, affordable and suitable financial advice, as well as free-to-access financial guidance, when they need it.

HM Treasury works closely with the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), the independent regulator of the financial advice market, to ensure that this market works well, competitively and fairly for both firms and consumers.

The Government also sponsors the Money and Pensions Service to provide free, impartial money and pensions guidance directly to consumers online and by telephone.

However, the Government recognises that there are challenges around the cost and availability of financial support.

To address this, the Government and FCA are conducting a joint review of the regulatory boundary between financial advice and guidance, with the objective of improving access to helpful support whilst maintaining strong protections for consumers.



## ■ Mortgages: Government Assistance

**Mike Amesbury:** [\[10472\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of a moratorium on evictions for mortgage prisoners.

**Mike Amesbury:** [\[10473\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will take steps to support mortgage prisoners.

**Tulip Siddiq:**

This Government understands the challenges that mortgage prisoners face and will work with regulators and the industry to ensure that this issue is properly considered.

There are significant measures in place to protect vulnerable mortgage borrowers across the mortgage market, including mortgage prisoners. Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) rules require lenders to engage individually with their customers who are struggling or who are worried about their payments in order to provide tailored support. Closed book lenders must also comply with the FCA's Consumer Duty, which ensures firms prioritise fair treatment and good outcomes for their customers.

The Government also has a number of measures in place to help people to avoid repossession, including Support for Mortgage Interest (SMI) loans for those in receipt of an income-related benefit; the Housing Loss Prevention Advice Service (HLPAS); and protection in the courts through the Pre-Action Protocol, which makes it clear that repossession must always be the last resort for lenders.

## ■ National Insurance Contributions

**Blake Stephenson:** [\[10551\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the implications for her policies on National Insurance Contributions for employees of paragraph 4 of the report by the Office for Budget Responsibility entitled The economic effects of policy measures, published in October 2021.

**James Murray:**

In the October 2021 Economic and Fiscal Outlook the OBR set out "a central forecast to 2026-27 taking account of recent data and Government policies announced up to and including the October 2021 Budget and Spending Review". The Government does not speculate on tax changes outside of fiscal events.

## ■ Private Education: VAT

**Damian Hinds:** [\[10421\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to HMRC's guidance entitled Charging and reclaiming VAT on goods and services related to private school fees, last updated on 22 October 2024, what estimate she has made of the potential cost to the

public purse of independent schools reclaiming the VAT on capital items that are less than 10 years old in each of the next five years.

**Damian Hinds:** [\[10422\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 9 September 2024 to Question 4047 on Private Education: Fees and Charges, whether the Tax Information and Impact Note will include the estimated cost to the public purse of independent schools reclaiming the VAT on capital items that are less than ten years old.

**James Murray:**

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

**Jim Allister:** [\[10664\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the addition of VAT to school fees is compliant with section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

**James Murray:**

VAT is a reserved tax and the VAT changes will apply uniformly across the UK. Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 is not engaged by this policy.

## ■ Property Development: Taxation

**Paul Holmes:** [\[9957\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate she has made of the revenue raised by the Residential Property Developer Tax.

**James Murray:**

The Residential Property Developer Tax (RPDT) is a 4% tax on the most profitable businesses undertaking UK residential property development to help pay for building safety remediation. The tax applies to developers' profits exceeding an annual allowance of £25 million for an accounting period.

The tax forms part of the government's broader programme of work on building safety, which also includes significant capital funding (around £5.1bn) to remediate unsafe cladding on high-risk buildings.

According to HMRC's latest Corporation Tax statistics, the tax raised £157 million in 2022-23 and £103 million in 2023-24.

## ■ Roads: Freight

**Sarah Edwards:** [\[9971\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether her Department plans to support the road haulage industry to meet government net zero targets through the National Wealth Fund.

**James Murray:**

The National Wealth Fund will invest in pursuit of the government's growth and clean energy priorities to support the delivery of the Industrial Strategy and Britain's acceleration to net zero. The National Wealth Fund will continue to invest in the UK Infrastructure Bank's previous priority sectors, which include transport and clean energy.

Individual investments will be considered on a case-by-case basis in line with the NWF's mandate and strategic priorities, which can be found on [www.uknwf.org.uk](http://www.uknwf.org.uk).

**■ Taxation: International Cooperation****Richard Burgon:**[\[10106\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions she has had with her international counterparts on the potential merits of a UN Tax Convention.

**James Murray:**

The UK is committed to working with all stakeholders to ensure inclusive and effective international tax cooperation, and has been actively engaging with developing and developed countries in negotiations at the UN over a future Tax Framework Convention.

The UK believes that a UN Tax Framework Convention has the potential to further advance international tax cooperation, but to be successful, it needs to be clear in its aims, avoid duplicating existing initiatives, and seek to secure the broad support and participation of members.

The UK was disappointed that these principles were not fully reflected in the Terms of Reference agreed by the UN Ad Hoc Committee in August, but will continue to engage constructively in support of key principles for strengthening international tax cooperation.

**WOMEN AND EQUALITIES****■ Pay: Equality****Mr Gregory Campbell:**[\[10411\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what the Government's planned timetable is for ending the gender pay gap.

**Anneliese Dodds:**

This Government is committed to transforming the lives of working women, and that includes going further and faster to close the gender pay gap.

The landmark Employment Rights Bill includes measures to change our workplaces to better support women, including improving access to flexible working; strengthening protections for pregnant workers and those returning from maternity leave; and giving employees basic rights from their first day in a new job.

The Bill also includes a requirement for large employers to publish action plans outlining the steps they are taking to tackle the gender pay gap in their own organisations.

## ■ Religious Freedom

**Sir John Hayes:** [\[9902\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, if she will amend the Equality Act 2010 to protect the right of people to silently pray in the United Kingdom.

**Anneliese Dodds:**

Anyone should be able to privately pray when at work or accessing services and the religion or belief protections in the Equality Act 2010 (the Act) already ensure this. The Act does not take precedence over other civil or criminal law. Accordingly, amendment of the Act in this regard would not be appropriate.

## WORK AND PENSIONS

### ■ Carer's Allowance: Earnings Rules

**Yasmin Qureshi:** [\[10418\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of linking the Carer's Allowance earning limit to increase in the national living wage.

**Sir Stephen Timms:**

The Government recognises the challenges unpaid carers are facing and is determined to provide them with the help and support they need and deserve. It is looking closely at how the benefit system currently does this. The Carer's Allowance earnings limit for 2025/26 will be announced in due course.

### ■ Department for Work and Pensions: Translation Services

**Rupert Lowe:** [\[10317\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how much has been spent on (a) translation and (b) interpretation for individuals contacting her Department in each of the last five years.

**Alison McGovern:**

	TRANSLATION COST	INTERPRETATION COSTS
2019/20	£ 472,539	£ 2,219,613
2020/21	£ 398,270	£ 3,537,872
2021/22	£ 518,927	£ 6,823,140

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	TRANSLATION COST	INTERPRETATION COSTS
2022/23	£ 641,747	£ 5,668,822
2023/24	£ 677,614	£ 6,195,053

### ■ Disability: Costs

**Abtissam Mohamed:**

[\[11098\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the report entitled Disability Price Tag 2024, published by Scope in September 2024, what steps her Department takes to support disabled households with the extra costs they face.

**Sir Stephen Timms:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 14 October 2024 to Question [UIN 5883](#).

### ■ Employment: Advisory Services

**Sorcha Eastwood:**

[\[10219\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, which organisations she consulted on the proposal of having job coaches visit mental health patients in hospital.

**Alison McGovern:**

The Secretary of State has made no announcement regarding having job coaches visit mental health patients in hospital and therefore did not consult any organisations. She was referring to her experience visiting a severe mental illness Individual Placement and Support programme.

The Individual Placement and Support (IPS) employment model is internationally recognised as one of the most effective way to support people with mental health problems to gain and keep paid employment. Individual Placement and Support services offer intensive, individually tailored support to help people to choose and find the right job, with ongoing support for the employer and employee to help ensure the person sustain their employment.

In August, 38,704 people had accessed Individual Placement and Support services in the previous 12 months, meaning we are above our trajectory to meet the end of year target of 40,500 people accessing these services.

### ■ Housing Benefit: Supported Housing

**Mike Reader:**

[\[10324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the financial impact of reducing the housing benefit taper rate for people in supported housing.

**Sir Stephen Timms:**

The income taper in Housing Benefit ensures people in work are better off than someone wholly reliant on benefits. In addition to any financial advantage, there are important non-financial benefits of working. These benefits include learning new skills, improved confidence and independence as well as a positive effect on an individual's mental and physical health.

Notwithstanding these positive outcomes from work, the Department acknowledges there is a challenge presented by the interaction between Universal Credit and Housing Benefit for those residing in Supported Housing and Temporary Accommodation and receiving their housing support through Housing Benefit. The department will consider the issue carefully in partnership with stakeholders.

**■ Pension Credit****Neil Duncan-Jordan:** [\[10321\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many additional staff recruited to process additional Pension Credit claims have been appointed.

**Emma Reynolds:**

Since the announcement to means test Winter Fuel payments, to date we have increased the resource in Pension Credit claims by approximately 500 staff through a combination of internal redeployments, use of external providers and external recruitment. This is in line with the overall resourcing plan for Pension Credit claims and Winter Fuel payments.

**Dame Caroline Dinenege:** [\[10433\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 15 October 2024 to Question 6049 on Pension Credit: Gosport, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of expanding the survey sample sizes for entitled non-recipients of Pension Credit.

**Emma Reynolds:**

The [take-up statistics](#) which include the estimated number of entitled non-recipients for Pension Credit, are based on survey data from the Family Resources Survey. The Family Resources Survey is designed to produce robust regional estimates and does not include all local authorities each year so is not suitable for analysis at, or below, the Local Authority level [PQ 74999, Emma Lewell-Buck]. There is not currently an intention to increase the achieved sample size.

Further detail on the upcoming sample size of the Family Resources Survey can be found here: [Family Resources Survey: release strategy - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

**Sarah Olney:** [\[8185\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people are waiting to be assessed for pension credit.

**Emma Reynolds:**

The total outstanding Pension Credit claims as at the end of week commencing 30<sup>th</sup> September 2024 is 77,703. This includes 8,245 advanced claims where the application can be started up to 4 months before reaching State Pension age.

The Department is significantly increasing the resource on Pension Credit to ensure it processes claims as quickly as possible, with over 500 additional staff to support the increase in applications generated from the successful Pension Credit take-up campaign.

If a claim is made by 21 December, Pension Credit can be backdated for three months if the entitlement conditions have been met throughout that period, and if the claimant was eligible they would also receive a Winter Fuel Payment.

**■ Pension Credit and Winter Fuel Payment****Patrick Spencer:**[\[9892\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 12 September 2024 to question 4377 on Pension Credit, what progress her Department has made contacting pensioner households that are in receipt of Housing Benefit; and if she will make an estimate of the number of pensioners her Department expects to apply for the Winter Fuel Payment in the next 12 months.

**Emma Reynolds:**

We will be writing shortly to the approximately 120,000 pensioners we have identified who are in receipt of Housing Benefit and who may also be eligible for, but not currently claiming, Pension Credit.

As a result of the Winter Fuel Payment changes announced on 29 July, we estimate the take-up rate of Pension Credit to increase by 5 percentage points. This is the equivalent of around an additional 100,000 successful claims to Pension Credit by 21 December 2024 (allowing for a maximum of 3 months backdating to ensure entitlement to a Winter Fuel Payment for 2024/25).

In the long term, the Government will bring together the administration of Pension Credit and Housing Benefit, so that pensioner households receiving Housing Benefit also receive any Pension Credit that they are entitled to, which was pushed back by the previous Government .

**■ Personal Independence Payment****Abtisam Mohamed:**[\[11100\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the report entitled Disability Price Tag 2024, published by Scope in September 2024, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of Personal Independence Payments at supporting disabled people with the extra costs of disability.

**Sir Stephen Timms:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 21 October 2024 to Question [UIN 8747](#)

**Manuela Perteghella:****[8982]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make it her policy to reduce the frequency of PIP Reviews.

**Sir Stephen Timms:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to her previous Question [6897](#) on 14 October.

We continue to keep under review awards, their durations and award review periods.

**Manuela Perteghella:****[8983]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has made an assessment of the adequacy of specialist input in PIP Reviews.

**Sir Stephen Timms:**

I have interpreted your question to refer to the adequacy of the input provided by the assessment supplier (AS) health professional (HP) during a PIP review. All decisions on entitlement to PIP, whether at initial claim or review, are made by DWP case managers (CM).

CMs, whilst not medically qualified, do receive extensive training to enable them to evaluate a claim and assess the individual's needs. They have access to expert advice from HPs, if required, and can make requests for supplementary advice at any stage in the decision-making process. Advice should be clear, succinct, justified and in accordance with the consensus of medical opinion. Where a CM is then still unable to make a decision on the PIP review, the case will be referred to the AS for an assessment.

During the assessment stage the HP is able to source additional evidence from professionals such as the individual's GP, occupational therapist, community psychiatric nurse and/or any other health professionals involved in the individual's care. They have access to guidance and support (such as Condition Insight Reports and Continuous Professional Development modules) on how certain conditions present and how they might affect function. The APs also have access to Mental Function Champions (MFC) who can provide advice and support to HPs on health conditions and disabilities affecting mental, cognitive, intellectual, and behavioural function.

The quality of any advice provided by the HP, whether via supplementary advice or the assessment report is a priority for all AS's and the department. The department works extensively with ASs to make improvements to guidance, training, and audit procedures to ensure a quality service, supported by an independent audit function that continually monitors performance and provides feedback to its ASs.



## ■ Poverty: Northern Ireland

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[10083\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has had discussions with the Department of Communities in Northern Ireland on support for families in relative poverty.

**Alison McGovern:**

Delivering our manifesto commitment to tackle child poverty is an urgent priority for this Government, and the Ministerial Taskforce is working to publish the child poverty strategy in the Spring.

Officials have already held discussions with the Department of Communities. The Taskforce Co-Chairs have written to First Ministers to set out their aspirations for partnership working across our four nations and there will be regular engagement as the Strategy takes shape.

In developing the UK-wide Child Poverty Strategy, we will draw on both reserved and devolved policy levers and work closely with Devolved Governments, recognising the progress that has been made on their poverty strategies and policies.

## ■ Unemployment: Young People

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[10084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking with the Secretary of State for Education to encourage young people not in education, employment or training into (a) further education and (b) employment.

**Alison McGovern:**

Under our plan to get Britain Working, we are working closely with the Department for Education to develop the new Youth Guarantee that will ensure that all young people aged 18-21 in England can access quality training opportunities, an apprenticeship or help to find work. This will sit alongside; a new national jobs and careers service to help get more people into work, work health and skills plans for the economically inactive, and the launch of Skills England to open new opportunities for young people. We will set out further detail in the upcoming 'Get Britain Working' White Paper.

Currently through the Youth Offer, we provide labour market support to young people aged 16-24 claiming Universal Credit through a range of tailored interventions to help reduce the barriers young people may face, bringing them closer to employment or appropriate training opportunities.

## ■ Universal Credit: Armed Forces

**Lucy Rigby:**

[\[10904\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many Universal Credit claimants were identified as (a) serving and (b) having served in the armed forces in each assessment period between July 2022 and June 2024.

**Sir Stephen Timms:**

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) started collecting data on the Armed Forces status of Universal Credit (UC) claimants in Great Britain (GB) in April 2021. At first only new claimants were asked about their Armed Forces status. From June 2021 onwards, other UC claimants reporting changes in their work and earnings have also been able to report their status. From July 2021 onwards, UC agents have also been able to record claimants' Armed Forces status if they are told about this via other means such as journal messages, face-to-face meetings or by telephone.

Data coverage continues to improve over time and by June 2024 data was held on the armed forces status of approximately 75% of the GB UC caseload (see table below). It should be noted that Armed forces status is self-reported by claimants and is not verified by the Ministry of Defence or Office for Veterans' Affairs. A claimant's status can be recorded as "currently serving", "served in the past", "not served" or "prefer not to say". Data is not collected on the specific branch of the Armed Forces that claimants are serving in or have served in in the past.

Data is not held on the total number of UC claimants who are currently serving in the Armed Forces or who have served in the past, but data is held on those who have identified themselves so far.

The way the data is collected means the claimants for whom an Armed Forces status is recorded may not be representative of the UC caseload as a whole. This means it is not yet possible to produce reliable estimates of the overall number or proportion of UC claimants who are currently serving in the Armed Forces or who have served in the past.

Increases in the numbers of claimants with a recorded status of "currently serving" or "served in the past" do not necessarily mean the overall numbers of claimants who are currently serving or have served in the past have increased and may reflect increases in the number of claimants for whom data is held as data coverage improves over time.

The table below shows how the proportion of the GB UC caseload with a recorded Armed Forces status has changed over time. It also shows how many claimants on the caseload had a recorded status of each type.

UC CASELOAD MONTH	PROPORTION OF CASELOAD WITH A					PREFER NOT TO SAY	NO RECORDED STATUS
	RECORDED STATUS	CURRENTLY SERVING	SERVED IN THE PAST	NOT SERVED			
July 2022	51%	3,000	39,000	2,800,000		21,000	2,800,000
August	53%	3,200	40,000	2,900,000		22,000	2,700,000

<b>UC CASELOAD MONTH</b>	<b>PROPORTION OF CASELOAD WITH A RECORDED STATUS</b>	<b>CURRENTLY SERVING</b>	<b>SERVED IN THE PAST</b>	<b>NOT SERVED</b>	<b>PREFER NOT TO SAY</b>	<b>No RECORDED STATUS</b>
2022						
September 2022	54%	3,200	41,000	3,000,000	22,000	2,600,000
October 2022	56%	3,300	43,000	3,100,000	23,000	2,500,000
November 2022	57%	3,300	44,000	3,200,000	24,000	2,500,000
December 2022	58%	3,400	45,000	3,300,000	25,000	2,400,000
January 2023	59%	3,500	46,000	3,400,000	25,000	2,300,000
February 2023	61%	3,500	48,000	3,500,000	26,000	2,300,000
March 2023	62%	3,600	48,000	3,500,000	27,000	2,200,000
April 2023	63%	3,700	50,000	3,600,000	28,000	2,200,000
May 2023	64%	3,800	50,000	3,700,000	28,000	2,100,000
June 2023	65%	3,900	51,000	3,800,000	29,000	2,100,000
July 2023	66%	4,000	52,000	3,900,000	30,000	2,100,000
August 2023	66%	4,000	53,000	3,900,000	30,000	2,000,000
September 2023	67%	4,000	54,000	4,000,000	30,000	2,000,000
October 2023	68%	3,900	54,000	4,100,000	30,000	2,000,000
November 2023	69%	3,900	55,000	4,200,000	31,000	1,900,000

UC CASELOAD MONTH	PROPORTION OF CASELOAD WITH A RECORDED STATUS	CURRENTLY SERVING	SERVED IN THE PAST	NOT SERVED	PREFER NOT TO SAY	NO RECORDED STATUS
December 2023	70%	3,900	57,000	4,300,000	31,000	1,900,000
January 2024	71%	3,900	58,000	4,400,000	32,000	1,900,000
February 2024	72%	4,000	59,000	4,500,000	32,000	1,800,000
March 2024	73%	4,200	62,000	4,700,000	33,000	1,800,000
April 2024	73%	4,200	63,000	4,800,000	34,000	1,800,000
May 2024	74%	4,300	64,000	4,900,000	34,000	1,800,000
June 2024	75%	4,500	65,000	5,000,000	35,000	1,700,000

**Notes:**

1. Figures are for Great Britain. Data is not collected on the Armed Forces status of UC claimants in Northern Ireland.
2. Figures in the table have been rounded to either the nearest hundred, thousand or hundred thousand in line with Department's Official Statistics rounding policy.
3. Further information on the caseload definition used for the UC official statistics can be found on Stat-Xplore: <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/>

■ **Universal Credit: Children**

**Victoria Collins:****[10821]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent discussions her Department has had with stakeholders on the future of the two child limit.

**Sir Stephen Timms:**

Ministers meet regularly with stakeholders to discuss a broad range of topics relating to Universal Credit. Delivering our manifesto commitment to tackle child poverty is an urgent priority for this Government, and the Ministerial Taskforce is working to publish the child poverty strategy in the Spring. As set out in 'Tackling Child Poverty: Developing our Strategy', published on 23 October, the Taskforce will be harnessing all available levers across four key themes, including increasing incomes, to deliver a

reduction in child poverty this Parliament. As part of this work, the Taskforce will hear directly from experts on each of the Strategy's themes including children and families living in poverty and work with leading organisations, charities, and campaigners.

## ■ Winter Fuel Payment

**Neil Duncan-Jordan:** [\[10323\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of passporting pensioners in receipt of Housing Benefit onto the Winter Fuel Payment for this year, ahead of planned alignment changes.

**Emma Reynolds:**

We will shortly be directly contacting approximately 120,000 pensioners who are in receipt of Housing Benefit and who may be eligible for, but not currently claiming, Pension Credit. We will be inviting these pensioners to claim Pension Credit ahead of 21st December so that they may also be entitled to this year's Winter Fuel Payment.

In the longer term, the Government will bring together the administration of Pension Credit and Housing Benefit, so that pensioner households receiving Housing Benefit also receive any Pension Credit that they are entitled to, which was pushed back by the previous government.

**Mel Stride:** [\[10686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the correspondence from the Chair of the Social Security Advisory Committee entitled The Social Fund Winter Fuel Payments Regulations 2024: letter to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, published on 17 October 2024, whether she plans to publish an updated impact assessment of the Social Fund Winter Fuel Payments Regulations 2024.

**Emma Reynolds:**

In line with the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty, an equality analysis was produced as part of the ministerial decision-making process. The Department will continue to monitor and review the impact of the policy, using this to inform any future decisions.

## ■ Winter Fuel Payment: Cost Benefit Analysis

**Lee Anderson:** [\[10136\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, why was no cost benefit analysis done for the change to the Winter Fuel Allowance entitlement.

**Emma Reynolds:**

There is no requirement to carry out a cost benefit analysis for all policy changes. A policy costing will be published as standard following the Autumn Budget 2024. An equality analysis was produced as part of Ministerial decision making in line with the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty.

**■ Winter Fuel Payment: Pensioners****Jim Shannon:**[\[10728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits extending the eligibility for the winter fuel payment to pensioners in receipt of Attendance Allowance who suffer with medical conditions.

**Emma Reynolds:**

Winter Fuel Payments will continue to be paid to pensioner households with someone receiving Pension Credit or certain other income-related benefits. They will continue to be worth £200 for eligible households, or £300 for eligible households with someone aged 80 and over.

Entitlement to Attendance Allowance is based on the on-going need for frequent personal care and attention, or supervision to ensure personal safety, rather than on the individual's medical condition. It is paid out of general taxation and is a tax-free, non-contributory, and non-means-tested benefit so is not affected by other income or savings.

Pensioners in receipt of Attendance Allowance and on a low-income may qualify for Pension Credit if all other eligibility criteria are met. Moreover, pensioners on low incomes and in receipt of Attendance Allowance can qualify for an additional amount in Pension Credit, providing they meet the other eligibility criteria.

## WRITTEN STATEMENTS

### ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

#### ■ **Contracts for Difference (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2024**

**Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Minister for Energy) (Michael Shanks):**  
[\[HCWS168\]](#)

I would like to advise the House that today I am laying draft regulations to implement two amendments to the Contract for Difference (CfD) scheme in time for the next allocation round; supporting the government's clean energy superpower mission to deliver clean power by 2030 and accelerate to net zero.

The CfD scheme is the government's main mechanism for supporting new low-carbon electricity generation projects in Great Britain. Awarded through regular, competitive allocation rounds, it guarantees a set price per MWh of electricity for 15 years, indexed to inflation. The income stabilisation that it provides for the generator, makes projects that have high up-front costs but long lifetimes and low running costs attractive to investors and lenders, reducing cost of capital and overall project cost. It also protects consumers when electricity prices are high.

The latest allocation round, AR6, was a great success, securing a record-breaking 131 projects and 9.6 GW of renewable electricity capacity. But we must continually evolve the CfD scheme to drive progress towards the 2030 clean power target and ensure it reflects the global challenges and opportunities faced by the renewables sector.

These amendments to legislation will extend the option to phase projects under the CfD to floating offshore wind and enable repowered onshore wind projects to apply for a CfD provided they meet certain criteria.

This Government has committed to radically increasing the UK's offshore wind capacity. Floating offshore wind is an emerging technology which allows us to access wind resource in deeper waters, which tend to be further from shore with higher, more consistent wind speeds. CfD phasing policy allows offshore wind projects with a maximum capacity of 1,500MW to be built in up to three stages. Previously this only applied to fixed bottom offshore wind. The extension of phasing to floating offshore wind will benefit this emerging sector, de-risking the construction process and helping developers and the supply chain to work with more certainty. This, in turn, will reduce investment risk and enable the construction of larger floating windfarms, as investors gain confidence in successful project completion.

The other amendment concerns onshore wind. From the late 2020s onwards, it is likely that a significant proportion of current onshore wind sites will reach the end of their operational life. When a project comes to the end of its operating life, the generator can choose to decommission permanently, extend its life, or repower. Repowering would require decommissioning and recommissioning of the existing site, incurring similarly high upfront capital costs to that of a new build. Allowing projects to apply for a CfD to

repower, in contrast to retiring, could make a significant contribution to the 2030 clean power goal. This amendment offers revenue certainty for onshore wind projects that may otherwise struggle to repower. Without it, we may lose the opportunity to retain and increase this renewable capacity and the societal and economic benefits this confers.

This draft legislation laid today is another important step forward in delivering clean power, shielding families from volatile gas prices, and establishing the UK as a clean energy superpower.

## FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

### ■ Sea-level rise and maritime zones

**Minister of State for Development (Anneliese Dodds):**

[\[HCWS171\]](#)

The UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) sets out the legal framework for all activities in the ocean and seas. Upholding UNCLOS is central to the UK government's approach to ocean issues as an essential enabler of global security, growth and a healthy planet.

UNCLOS sets out the legal basis on which States can establish the baselines along their coasts, or joining points on their coasts, from which they are entitled to generate maritime zones, including their territorial sea and exclusive economic zone.

When UNCLOS was drafted significant sea-level rise and changes in coastlines as a result of the climate crisis were not contemplated by the drafters, and no provision was made for this. However, with sea-level rise, coastlines are likely to regress, and some features may be completely inundated and lost.

The International Law Commission (ILC) is the UN body of international law experts responsible for studying and making recommendations to encourage the progressive development and codification of international law. ILC work on the topic of sea-level rise in international law has been ongoing since 2019, and the UK has responded to ILC requests for information on State practice. On 6 August 2021 the Pacific Island Forum made a Declaration to the effect that: (1) having, in accordance with UNCLOS, established and notified their maritime zones to the UN Secretary-General, Pacific Island Forum Members intend to maintain these zones without reduction, notwithstanding climate change-related sea-level rise; and (2) they will not review or update the baselines or outer limits of their maritime zones as a consequence of climate change-related sea-level rise. The Association of Small Island States made a similar statement in their Leaders' Declaration in September 2021.

Having considered the work of the ILC to date on the issue of maritime boundaries, and the views of our partners, I can confirm that the UK Government takes the view that UNCLOS imposes no express or affirmative obligation on States to keep their baselines or the outer limits of maritime zones derived from them under review, or to update them once they have been established in accordance with UNCLOS. UNCLOS provides that baselines and outer limits of the maritime zones are as shown on the relevant chart or specified by co-ordinates. It does not expressly require Coastal States to update those



charts or co-ordinates. This position is consistent with the object and purpose of UNCLOS as a regime for securing a stable division of maritime space. Once a State has established its maritime zones in accordance with UNCLOS, it is permitted to maintain those maritime zones, and the rights and entitlements that flow from them, notwithstanding changes to coastlines and physical features that result from sea-level rise caused by the climate crisis. This does not prejudice the UK Government's position on other international law questions raised by sea-level rise that the ILC is also considering.

The UK Government's position is that this analysis can only apply to baselines or outer limits which are initially established in accordance with UNCLOS. It remains the UK Government's position that UNCLOS provides the complete and definitive rules on the drawing of baselines from which maritime zones are measured.

Whilst the UK Government recognises that UNCLOS does not require States to update the relevant charts or coordinates designated by States as depicting the baselines and outer limits of their maritime zones, the UK Government considers it important that necessary hydrographic surveying takes place and navigational charts and other information continue to be updated as frequently as necessary for the purposes of navigational safety.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

### ■ Supply of Radioisotopes

**Minister of State for Health (Secondary Care) (Karin Smyth):**

[\[HCWS170\]](#)

I am today updating the House on the severe shortage of radioisotopes that the UK is facing. The affected radioisotopes are mainly used for diagnosing cancers, including prostate and breast cancer. It is also used for imaging of organ function in scans, including for the heart. Despite efforts by my Department and NHS England to limit the negative impacts of this shortage, there will be delays to patient access to services relying on the impacted radioisotopes, including cancellations.

This shortage is due to a temporary reduction in the production of molybdenum-99 which is used to generate technetium-99m. The radioisotope technetium-99m is used safely for diagnostics in the NHS. This issue is impacting not only the UK, but countries across Europe, and worldwide.

The shortage of molybdenum-99 is caused by a sudden global disruption of manufacturing capacity, with a number of the nuclear reactors used to produce these elements being out of service. There are six trusted research reactors globally for the supply of molybdenum-99, none of which are in the UK. Some of these reactors are currently out of service to allow for critical repair work; this is essential work necessary for the safe running of the research reactors. Two of the impacted reactors are expected to restart production during the second week of November, with deliveries from these reactors expected to resume in mid-November. My Department, together with relevant

experts, is working closely with suppliers to support the process to restart the affected reactors as soon as possible.

There will remain a significantly constrained supply of these radioisotopes to the UK from the remaining reactors. Radioisotopes give off radiation and undergo a process of decay, which means they cannot be stored or kept in reserve. Our priority is to minimise the impact on patients as much as possible. Therefore, my Department is working closely with suppliers, clinical experts, NHS England and Devolved Governments to support the allocation of deliveries and ensure there is equitable and fair access across the UK to the constrained supply of stock that is available. NHS England is supporting Trusts and hospitals to share available supply and ensure that critical patients are given priority. Guidance is being issued to ensure that patients with the most critical need are prioritised. If any patient is concerned about their treatment, they should discuss this with their clinician at the earliest opportunity.

I know how difficult this will be for affected patients while we face this supply issue. This issue is different in nature to normal supply chain problems due to the unique challenges radioisotope shortages present. My Department is working closely with suppliers and relevant experts to resolve the supply issue as soon as possible. I will continue to keep Parliament updated on our progress to resolve this severe shortage.

## HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### ■ Social and Affordable Housing: Next Steps

**Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (Angela Rayner):** [\[HCWS169\]](#)

This week's Budget will set out how the Government will deliver more affordable housing and ensure social housing is available for those who need it most.

This will include an immediate one year cash injection of £500 million to top up the existing Affordable Homes Programme which will deliver up to 5000 new social and affordable homes, bringing total investment in housing supply in 2025/2026 to over £5 billion. This comes ahead of the multi-year Spending Review next spring, where the Government will set out details of new investment to succeed the 2021-26 Affordable Homes Programme. This new investment will deliver a mix of homes for sub-market rent and home-ownership, with a particular focus on delivering homes for Social Rent.

The Government will also consult on a new 5-year social housing rent settlement, which caps the rents social housing providers can charge their tenants, to provide the sector with the certainty it needs to invest in new social housing. The intention would be for this to increase with Consumer Price Index inflation figures and an additional 1%. The consultation will also seek views on other potential options to give greater certainty, such as providing a 10-year settlement.

These measures to increase affordable housing come alongside changes to the Right to Buy scheme. England's existing social housing supply is depleted every year by the scheme while also disincentivising councils to build new social housing. To address this,

the Chancellor will confirm at Budget that councils will be able to retain 100% of the receipts generated by Right to Buy sales. This will enable councils to scale-up delivery of much needed social homes whilst still enabling longstanding tenants to buy their own homes. The Chancellor will also set out how Right to Buy discounts will be reduced to protect existing social housing stock to meet housing need, whilst ensuring long-term tenants can still benefit. This will deliver a fairer and more sustainable scheme that also presents better value for money for Councils.

The Chancellor will also confirm at the Budget £128 million of funding to support the delivery of new housing projects, comprising of:

- Confirmation of a £56 million investment at Liverpool Central Docks which is expected to deliver 2,000 homes in North Liverpool, along with office, retail, leisure, and hotel facilities. This will transform Liverpool's former dockland into a thriving waterfront neighbourhood.
- A £25 million investment in a joint venture to establish a new fund with Muse Places Limited and Pension Insurance Corporation to deliver 3,000 energy-efficient new homes across the country, with a target of 100% of these being affordable.
- The confirmation of £47 million to local authorities to support the delivery of up to 28,000 homes that would otherwise be stalled due to 'nutrient neutrality' requirements. This funding will not only unlock much needed new housing but also clean up our rivers in the process.