



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 5 November 2024 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:46 P.M., 05 November 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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Questions marked thus **[R]** indicate that a relevant interest has been declared.

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

ANSWERS

ATTORNEY GENERAL

■ Attorney General: Official Cars

Charlie Dewhirst: [\[11766\]](#)

To ask the Solicitor General, pursuant to the Answer of 14 October 2024 to Question 7035 on Attorney General: Official Cars, if she will name which specific senior officials have access to a Government car; and whether these senior officials had access to a Government car before the 2024 general election.

Charlie Dewhirst: [\[11767\]](#)

To ask the Solicitor General, pursuant to the Answer of 14 October 2024 to Question 7035 on Attorney General: Official Cars, whether either of the two vehicles are electric cars.

Sarah Sackman:

For security reasons specific details of allocations including make and model of vehicles are not issued.

The arrangements relating to the usage of vehicles in the Government Car Service are set out in the Civil Service Management Code.

BUSINESS AND TRADE

■ Animal Welfare: Fireworks

Laurence Turner: [\[11985\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 24 October 2024 to Question 10062 on Animal Welfare: Fireworks, what the Government's planned timetable is for reviewing the existing policy.

Justin Madders:

To inform any future decisions on fireworks policy I intend to engage with businesses, consumer groups and charities shortly after the fireworks season to gather evidence on the issues and impacts with fireworks. Officials regularly meet and correspond with charities to listen to and understand their views.

The Government has recently launched an awareness campaign on the Gov.uk and are working closely with some animal and veteran charities to help amplify their campaign messages.

Laurence Turner: [\[11987\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 24 October 2024 to Question 10062 on Animal Welfare: Fireworks, what form of

engagement the Government plans to undertake with charities on its review of existing policy.

Justin Madders:

To inform any future decisions on fireworks policy I intend to engage with businesses, consumer groups and charities shortly after the fireworks season to gather evidence on the issues and impacts with fireworks. Officials regularly meet and correspond with charities to listen to and understand their views.

The Government has recently launched an awareness campaign on the Gov.uk and are working closely with some animal and veteran charities to help amplify their campaign messages.

■ **Business**

Kevin Hollinrake:

[10737]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how many businesses there are per constituency based on new boundaries.

Gareth Thomas:

Numbers of VAT and/or PAYE registered businesses in new [parliamentary constituencies \(2024\) broken down by broad industry group, employment and turnover size-bands](#) were published by ONS on 3rd October 2024, at the request of DBT.

■ **Business: Essex**

James McMurdock:

[11813]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what support his Department is providing to businesses in Essex to increase the levels of exports of (a) goods and (b) services.

Gareth Thomas:

UK businesses, including those in Essex, can access DBT's wealth of export support via Great.gov.uk. This comprises online support and our wider network of support, including Export Champions, the Export Academy, our International Markets network, and UK Export Finance. Alongside this, our international trade advisers use their extensive experience of exporting and knowledge of the needs of SMEs in their sectors and regions to provide one-to-one tailored support to businesses across the UK.

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

■ **Business: Hamilton**

Imogen Walker:

[7959]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to support local businesses in Hamilton town centre.

Gareth Thomas:

The Government will bring forward a Small Business Strategy Command Paper next year, setting out the Government's vision for small businesses, including those in Hamilton Town Centre, from boosting scale-ups to growing the co-operative economy, creating thriving high streets, and addressing access to finance and late payments.

The government will commit to funding key growth programmes in 2025-26 including Help to Grow: Management across the UK, which helps businesses and entrepreneurs unlock their potential through bespoke support and resources.

■ Business: Training**Kevin Hollinrake:**[\[11921\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps he is taking to help raise awareness of the impact of mentoring on the business community.

Gareth Thomas:

Small businesses are the beating heart of our high streets, our communities, and essential to our economic success.

Professional mentoring can have a positive impact on business growth. Opportunities to access a mentor are actively signposted through the Help to Grow campaign site at <https://helptogrow.campaign.gov.uk/>.

The Autumn Budget 2024 confirmed continued funding for Help to Grow: Management, which provides dedicated mentoring support, and to local Growth Hubs, many of which provide access to business mentors.

The Government will bring forward a Small Business Strategy Command Paper in 2025, setting out the Government's detailed vision for supporting small businesses.

■ Department for Business and Trade: Deputy Prime Minister**Kevin Hollinrake:**[\[11291\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how many times he has had a meeting with the Deputy Prime Minister since 5 July 2024.

Justin Madders:

The Secretary of State works closely with all his cabinet colleagues, including the Deputy Prime Minister as part of the normal operation of Government. For example, the Secretary of State and the Deputy Prime Minister have jointly met with businesses and trade unions on several occasions.

■ Department for Business and Trade: Santander Group**Kevin Hollinrake:**[\[10738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the press notice entitled Flagship Government export initiative to be sponsored by Santander UK,

published on 22 October 2024, what the total value is of the three year sponsorship agreement between his Department and Santander.

Gareth Thomas:

The Department for Business and Trade was delighted to announce Santander UK's three-year commitment to sponsor a package of trade related events on 22 October. This involves sponsorship rights at International Trade Week, a series of UK Export Academy webinars, and a number of tradeshow over the period. Specific events may vary over the term of the agreement. Santander UK is investing £750,000 over three years and is also hosting additional events at its own cost.

Kevin Hollinrake:

[\[10739\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the press notice entitled Flagship Government export initiative to be sponsored by Santander UK, published on 22 October 2024, what the terms of the agreement are with Santander.

Gareth Thomas:

The Department for Business and Trade was delighted to announce Santander UK's three-year commitment to sponsor a package of trade related events on 22 October. This involves sponsorship rights at International Trade Week, a series of UK Export Academy webinars, and a number of tradeshow over the period. Specific events may vary over the term of the agreement. Santander UK is investing £750,000 over three years and is also hosting additional events at its own cost.

Kevin Hollinrake:

[\[11293\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how many meetings he has had with representatives of Santander since 5 July 2024.

Gareth Thomas:

The Secretary of State has met once with representatives of Santander since 5 July 2024.

■ **Department for Business and Trade: Trade Promotion**

John Glen:

[\[11269\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will list his Department's trade envoys.

Gareth Thomas:

We are carefully considering the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy programme in the context of the new Government's trade objectives. We will update the house in due course on the programme's future.

■ **Employment: Surveys**

Laurence Turner:

[\[11720\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the report by the former Department for Business, Innovation and Skills entitled Workplace Employment

Relations Study, published on 23 January 2013, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of commissioning a new workplace employment relations study.

Justin Madders:

There are currently no plans to undertake a new Workplace Employee Relations Study (WERS). The survey methodology is challenging to replicate as it relies on sampling via the employer which is harder to obtain due to increased privacy concerns in recent years.

WERS was co-sponsored by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, Acas, the Economic and Social Research Council, the UK Commission for Employment and Skills and the National Institute of Economic and Social Research.

The Department undertook the Management and Wellbeing Practices Survey in 2018/19 which provides evidence on employment relations and management practices in British workplaces.

■ **Financial Services: Liechtenstein**

Andrew Rosindell:

[12046]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 14 October 2024 to Question 5919 on Financial Services: Liechtenstein, whether he has had any meetings with his Liechtenstein counterpart.

Gareth Thomas:

The Secretary of State for Business and Trade has not met with his Liechtenstein counterpart.

■ **Foreign Investment in UK: Buckinghamshire**

Callum Anderson:

[11744]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how many jobs were created in (a) Milton Keynes and (b) Buckinghamshire as a result of foreign direct investment in the last year.

Sarah Jones:

Official Statistics at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/dbt-inward-investment-results-2023-to-2024> show 13 Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) projects landed in Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) in 2023-24. This includes single site and multiple site projects. It was not possible to publish the number of new jobs created due to confidentiality issues. Statistics are not published at Local Authority level due to confidentiality concerns, but Milton Keynes is within South East Midlands LEP where 38 FDI projects landed and 3,010 jobs were created in 2023-24. The estimated economic impact of FDI projects is only published at a UK level.

Callum Anderson:

[11745]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what the estimated economic impact of foreign direct investment projects in (a) Milton Keynes and (b) Buckinghamshire has been in the last five years.

Sarah Jones:

Official Statistics at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/dbt-inward-investment-results-2023-to-2024> show 13 Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) projects landed in Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) in 2023-24. This includes single site and multiple site projects. It was not possible to publish the number of new jobs created due to confidentiality issues. Statistics are not published at Local Authority level due to confidentiality concerns, but Milton Keynes is within South East Midlands LEP where 38 FDI projects landed and 3,010 jobs were created in 2023-24. The estimated economic impact of FDI projects is only published at a UK level.

■ Groceries Code Adjudicator: Finance**Josh Newbury:****[11619]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of lowering the turnover threshold of £1 billion for businesses that are required to fund the Groceries Code Adjudicator.

Justin Madders:

The Groceries Code Adjudicator (GCA) is currently funded by an annual levy on the 14 large retailers that are designated under the Code by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA). The CMA assesses annually whether retailers which have a turnover exceeding £1bn of grocery sales in the UK should be designated under the Code. The £1bn threshold is set out in the Groceries (Supply Chain Practices) Market Investigation Order 2009 which is the responsibility of the CMA.

■ Horizon IT System**Jerome Mayhew:****[10488]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the response to issues arising from the failures of the Horizon IT System on his Department's capacity to deal with other issues.

Gareth Thomas:

No such assessment has been made, however tackling the legacy of the Horizon scandal is a major priority for the Department.

■ Horizon IT system: Compensation**Jerome Mayhew:****[6472]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how many civil servants are working only on compensation for postmasters.

Gareth Thomas:

On the 30th of June, there were 45 FTE civil servants working within the Department for Business and Trade, as of the 30th of September, there are 56 full-time equivalent (FTE) civil servants working only on redress for postmasters, an increase of 11 FTE since July. The total excludes a further 15 roles for which recruitment is under way. This figure also excludes the expert cases assessment teams which are contracted

by DBT and are not civil servants. Further recruitments will follow as the Department implements plans to create an appeals mechanism for the Horizon Shortfall Scheme, as announced in September.

■ Horizon IT System: Costs

Jerome Mayhew: [\[10489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what estimate he has made of the cost of replacing the Post Office Horizon IT system.

Gareth Thomas:

As part of the Spending Review 2021 Government provided Post Office with a total of £185m of funding to support investment activities, which included the ongoing maintenance and replacement of the Horizon IT system. In 2023 Government provided a further £103m to support with the costs of Horizon maintenance and replacement. Post Office is currently assessing the future costs of replacing the Horizon IT system. Further funding is to be allocated subject to the Spending Review process.

■ Hospitality Industry: Colne Valley

Paul Davies: [\[10020\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what further steps he plans to take to support the hospitality sector in the Colne Valley constituency.

Gareth Thomas:

Hospitality businesses, including those in Colne Valley, are at the heart of our communities and vital for economic growth. That is why the Government is creating a fairer business rate system by introducing permanently lower tax rates for retail, hospitality, and leisure businesses from 2026-27 and extending the current relief for 1 year at 40%.

The government is also reducing alcohol duty on qualifying draught products, representing an overall reduction in duty bills of over £85m a year.

We will transform the apprenticeship levy into a more flexible growth and skills levy to better support business and boost opportunity.

Through the Hospitality Sector Council, we are addressing strategic issues for the sector related to high street regeneration, skills, sustainability, and productivity.

The department also provides support through the Business Support Service and network of Growth Hubs – including the [West Yorkshire Business Support Service](#).

■ INEOS: Belgium

Brian Leishman: [\[11498\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, for what reason the Government issued a guarantee to commercial lenders for the INEOS Belgium project.

Gareth Thomas:

UK Export Finance's (UKEF's) support for the INEOS Project One plant secures new export opportunities for the UK by enabling an overseas buyer to finance the purchase of goods, services and/or intangibles from UK suppliers.

As the UK's export credit agency, UKEF's mission is to advance prosperity by ensuring no viable UK export fails for lack of finance or insurance, doing that sustainably and at no net cost to the taxpayer.

Investment**Callum Anderson:**[\[11746\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how the Office for Investment plans to engage with local authorities and combined authorities to (a) identify and (b) promote investment opportunities.

Sarah Jones:

We work with local and combined authorities to promote the most significant investment opportunities, by providing compelling products for use by the department's UK and international teams.

With the expanded Office for Investment, we will build further on this approach, working in partnership, to turn the Industrial Strategy and regional growth plans into a clear, commercially attractive pipeline of investment opportunities. We are piloting an enhanced way of supporting transformational local projects, connecting them with specialist support or expertise from across government to develop opportunities at scale and with commercial credibility to pull in large scale investment.

Living Wage**Mr Gregory Campbell:**[\[11832\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what estimate he has made of how many people will be paid the increased national living wage in April 2025.

Justin Madders:

We estimate that over 3 million workers will receive a pay rise due to the increase in the National Living Wage in April 2025. The number of workers paid at the National Living Wage in April 2025 is expected to be lower as some of these workers will receive a further indirect pay rise as employers decide to pay above the minimum.

We will publish an Impact Assessment alongside the legislation that implements the increase to the National Living Wage.

Public Houses**Bradley Thomas:**[\[9111\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps he is taking to support the long-term viability of pubs (a) in Bromsgrove constituency and (b) nationally.

Gareth Thomas:

Pubs, including those in Bromsgrove, are at the heart of our communities and vital for economic growth. That is why the Government is creating a fairer business rate system by introducing permanently lower tax rates for retail, hospitality, and leisure businesses from 2026-27 and extending the current relief for 1 year at 40%.

The government is also reducing alcohol duty on qualifying draught products, representing an overall reduction in duty bills of over £85m a year.

We will transform the apprenticeship levy into a more flexible growth and skills levy to better support business and boost opportunity for people to work in Pubs.

Through the Hospitality Sector Council, we are addressing strategic issues for the sector related to high street regeneration, skills, sustainability, and productivity.

Public Houses: Ashfield**Lee Anderson:**[\[11044\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to help support pubs in Ashfield constituency.

Gareth Thomas:

Pubs, including those in Ashfield, are at the heart of our communities and vital for economic growth. That is why the Government is creating a fairer business rate system by introducing permanently lower tax rates for retail, hospitality, and leisure businesses from 2026-27 and extending the current relief for 1 year at 40%.

The government is also reducing alcohol duty on qualifying draught products, representing an overall reduction in duty bills of over £85m a year.

We will transform the apprenticeship levy into a more flexible growth and skills levy to better support business and boost opportunity for people to work in Pubs.

Through the Hospitality Sector Council, we are addressing strategic issues for the sector related to high street regeneration, skills, sustainability, and productivity.

Public Houses: Government Assistance**Nigel Farage:**[\[8698\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to support pubs in (a) Clacton and (b) nationally.

Gareth Thomas:

Pubs, including in Clacton, are at the heart of our communities and play a vital role in supporting economic growth across the UK. We will restore consumer confidence through measures such as the plan to Make Work Pay, which sets out an ambitious agenda to ensure employment rights are fit for a modern economy, empower working people and contribute to economic growth. Furthermore, through the English Devolution Bill we will introduce a new 'right to buy' for valued community assets,

empowering communities to reclaim empty premises including pubs, to stimulate local growth.

We have also established Skills England, a new partnership which will transform the existing Apprenticeship Levy into a more flexible Growth and Skills Levy to better support business and boost opportunity for people to work in pubs. This will address one of the key asks of the Hospitality Sector that the Levy should include shorter courses that would be more suitable to this sector.

■ **Public Houses: Reigate**

Rebecca Paul:

[\[9352\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps he is taking to support pubs in Reigate constituency.

Gareth Thomas:

Pubs, including those in Reigate, are at the heart of our communities and vital for economic growth. That is why the Government is creating a fairer business rate system by introducing permanently lower tax rates for retail, hospitality, and leisure businesses from 2026-27 and extending the current relief for 1 year at 40%.

The government is also reducing alcohol duty on qualifying draught products, representing an overall reduction in duty bills of over £85m a year.

We will transform the apprenticeship levy into a more flexible growth and skills levy to better support business and boost opportunity for people to work in Pubs.

Through the Hospitality Sector Council, we are addressing strategic issues for the sector related to high street regeneration, skills, sustainability, and productivity.

■ **Retail Trade: Epping Forest**

Dr Neil Hudson:

[\[11650\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps he is taking to help support high street businesses in Epping Forest.

Gareth Thomas:

At Budget the Chancellor announced a number of measures to support high street businesses, ideally in Epping Forest's regeneration including permanently lowering tax rates for retail, hospitality and leisure properties from 2026/27, extending RHL relief and the Small Business Multiplier for another year and additional funding to tackle retail crime through additional training for police and retailers and programmes cracking down on organised gangs.

The Government also announced its intention to bring forward a Small Business Strategy Command Paper in 2025. This will set out the Government's vision for supporting high street businesses including measures that will address access to finance, investment opportunities from overseas and domestic markets and building business capabilities.

This will complement the Government's work to give local leaders and communities greater powers over empty properties and powers to revitalise their high streets.

■ **Small Businesses: Interest Rates**

Jim Shannon: [\[8139\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of trends in the level of interest rates on SMEs.

Gareth Thomas:

For SMEs that pay interest at a variable rate, or those contemplating new borrowing, lower interest rates are clearly beneficial.

■ **Small Businesses: Payments**

Liam Conlon: [\[11440\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps he is taking to help tackle late payments to small and medium-sized businesses.

Gareth Thomas:

Last month we announced a package of new measures to tackle late payments and long payment terms for small businesses and the self-employed.

We will legislate in this parliamentary session to require that large companies include payment performance in their annual reports, driving up transparency on how they pay their suppliers.

We will also be consulting on potential primary legislation measures and launching a new Fair Payment Code that rewards companies who pay their suppliers quickly and fairly.

■ **TGI Fridays: Closures**

Charlotte Nichols: [\[9233\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he has had discussions with D&D London on the closure of 35 TGI Fridays branches.

Gareth Thomas:

We understand that this will be a concerning time for workers at TGI Fridays, and we stand ready to support those impacted. Affected employees will be able to access Government support, including Universal Credit and Job Centre Plus to help them find new jobs, through its Rapid Response Service. DBT officials are monitoring developments and are in touch with administrators.

Ayoub Khan: [\[9354\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he has had discussions with D&D London on the closure of 35 TGI Fridays branches.

Gareth Thomas:

We understand that this will be a concerning time for workers at TGI Fridays, and we stand ready to support those impacted. Affected employees will be able to access Government support, including Universal Credit and Job Centre Plus to help them find new jobs, through its Rapid Response Service. DBT officials are monitoring developments and are in touch with administrators.

TGI Fridays: Closures and Redundancy**Ian Lavery:**[\[9176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he has had recent discussions with D&D London on its announcement of closures and redundancies at its TGI Fridays stores.

Gareth Thomas:

We understand that this will be a concerning time for workers at TGI Fridays, and we stand ready to support those impacted. Affected employees will be able to access Government support, including Universal Credit and Job Centre Plus to help them find new jobs, through its Rapid Response Service. DBT officials are monitoring developments and are in touch with administrators.

Trade Agreements**Adam Jodge:**[\[6963\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of the implementation of existing free trade agreements.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

The UK Government continually assesses the implementation of free trade agreements in order to maximise their benefit for business and support economic growth. We exploit opportunities to protect and secure further access to these markets, and will align our implementation approach with the upcoming Trade Strategy that will consider how to use every lever available to drive growth, including FTAs.

CABINET OFFICE**Cabinet Office: Official Cars****Charlie Dewhirst:**[\[11964\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 15 October 2024 to Question 6998 on Cabinet Office: Official Cars, how many of those vehicles are electric.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

For security reasons specific details of allocations including make and model of vehicles are not issued.

The arrangements relating to the usage of vehicles in the Government Car Service are set out in the Civil Service Management Code.

Charlie Dewhirst:

[\[11965\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 14 October 2024 to Question 6999 on Cabinet Office: Official Cars, if he will publish a list of senior officials in his Department with access to a government car.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

For security reasons specific details of car allocations including make and model of vehicles are not issued.

The arrangements relating to the usage of vehicles in the Government Car Service are set out in the Civil Service Management Code.

■ **Emergencies: Voluntary Organisations**

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[11342\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the report by the UK Covid Inquiry entitled Module 1 report: The resilience and preparedness of the United Kingdom, published on 18 July 2024, HC 18, what steps his Department is taking to help support the voluntary sector to participate in (a) local resilience forums and (b) emergency response exercises.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

The Cabinet Office recognises the valuable role that the voluntary and community sector can play in all aspects of resilience. The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 requires those responders most likely to be involved in emergencies (Category 1 responders) 'to have regard' to the activities of voluntary organisations in the course of carrying out their duties. This is further reinforced in guidance and standards highlighting the benefits which the voluntary and community sector can bring to local partners and Local Resilience Forums.

The voluntary sector is also being included in the reinvigorated National Exercising Programme (NEP) to test our readiness to respond to risks set out in the National Security Risk Assessment (NSRA) through the participation of Local Resilience Forums. This programme complements existing emergency response exercises being led by and involving Government Departments, Local Government, the Devolved Administrations and industry organisations.

To further develop and support engagement, the Head of Resilience in the Cabinet Office chairs the Voluntary and Community Sector Strategic Discussion Forum every six months, with key voluntary sector organisations. Cabinet Office will continue to explore opportunities to further strengthen voluntary sector engagement to build national resilience.

■ Foreign Investment in UK: National Security

John Glen:

[\[12261\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to his Department's publication entitled National Security and Investment Act 2021: Annual Report 2023-24, published on 10 September 2024, for what reason there was the reduction in the average time taken to issue a final order under the National Security and Investment Act from 81 statutory working days to 34 statutory working days.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

The time taken to issue a final order for each called in acquisition will depend on the facts of the case. Given the small number of final orders (five) issued in this reporting period (1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024), no conclusions should be drawn about any trends in the time taken between calling in an acquisition and issuing a final order.

It is worth noting that with only two years' worth of data, and each acquisition assessed on its own merits, the Government expects to see some variation in the majority of statistics from year to year.

■ Honours: Northern Ireland

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[11561\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will (a) make it his policy to (i) update the statutes of the Most Illustrious Order of Saint Patrick and (ii) make the Order available to residents of the whole island of Ireland and (b) make an assessment of the potential impact of that policy on the state of the Union.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

The Most Illustrious Order of Saint Patrick is in the personal gift of The Sovereign. The UK Government is not considering the restoration of The Order of St Patrick.

Nominations for existing honours are open to all citizens within the four nations of the United Kingdom.

■ National Security and Investment Act 2021

Callum Anderson:

[\[11404\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps his Department is taking to review the effectiveness of the National Security and Investment Act 2021.

Callum Anderson:

[\[11405\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of (a) adding and (b) removing sectors from the scope of the National Security and Investment Act 2021.

Callum Anderson:

[\[11406\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he has taken to increase the effectiveness of processing notifications under the National Security and Investment Act 2021.

Callum Anderson: [\[11407\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps his Department has taken to ensure that small and medium-sized businesses are aware of their obligations under the National Security and Investment Act 2021.

Callum Anderson: [\[11408\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the impact of the National Security and Investment Act 2021 on foreign direct investment since 1 April 2023.

Callum Anderson: [\[11409\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what discussions he has held with his international counterparts on the implementation of the National Security and Investment Act 2021.

Callum Anderson: [\[11410\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what consultation has been undertaken with industry stakeholders on the effectiveness of the National Security and Investment Act 2021.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

The National Security and Investment (NSI) Act 2021 gives the Government power to scrutinise and intervene in acquisitions that may pose threats to national security, whilst also supporting secure and resilient growth. All sectors are within scope of the NSI Act, with acquisitions of entities related to 17 sensitive areas of the economy having to notify and receive approval from the Government before the acquisition can be completed.

The Government is taking a number of steps to ensure the continued effectiveness of the NSI Act.

- The previous Government published a Call for Evidence in November 2023 and a response in April 2024. The Call for Evidence sought feedback from a wide range of stakeholders on the scope of the regime, the notification process and Government guidance and comms. The Government is currently considering its next steps, drawing on responses received.
- The Government will review and produce a report on the mandatory notification areas under the NSI Act, as required by section 4 of the Notifiable Acquisitions Regulations 2021, before January 2025.
- The Government will complete a Post-Implementation Review, as committed to in the NSI Act Impact Assessment, evaluating the effectiveness of the NSI Act. This is expected to be published in 2026.
- The Government regularly engages with stakeholders on the NSI Act, including speaking events, meetings and feedback exercises.

The Government has published extensive guidance for businesses and investors. [The NSI Act Market Guidance](#) sets out what businesses and investors, including small and medium-sized businesses, need to be aware of and is available on [GOV.UK](#). The guidance is kept under review to ensure it remains up to date.

The “National Security & Investment Act 2021: Annual Report 2023-2024” published in September shows that the NSI system is continuing to run well and as intended. It demonstrates that we have the powers to protect sensitive sectors whilst continuing to support investment. Analysis to date has not found evidence of the Act affecting the total volume of investment into the UK.

The UK’s approach to investment screening is in line with many other countries, including our close allies. We continue to work closely with international partners to draw on global best practice.

■ **National Security Council: Special Advisers**

John Glen: [\[11271\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, which special advisers (a) are members of and (b) attend as observers of the National Security Council.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

Membership of the National Security Council is restricted to Ministers. A list of members can be found on [Gov.uk](#). To protect cabinet collective responsibility, observer attendance is strictly controlled.

■ **Prime Minister: Senior Civil Servants**

John Glen: [\[7438\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the appointment of the Principal Private Secretary to the Prime Minister was by open and fair competition.

Georgia Gould:

The Cabinet Secretary recommended a range of candidates and the Prime Minister interviewed a number of them before selecting his Principle Private Secretary.

■ **Public Sector: Northern Ireland**

Sorcha Eastwood: [\[10936\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will have discussions with the Northern Ireland Executive on the potential impact of the proposed Hillsborough Law on public services in Northern Ireland.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

As the Prime Minister announced recently, the Hillsborough Law is a priority for this Government. Discussions have already begun between officials in the Cabinet Office and those in the devolved governments. I will continue to ensure that Ministerial colleagues in the devolved governments are engaged on this policy.

■ Special Advisers: Industrial Disputes**John Glen:**[\[11270\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether (a) the Prime Minister's Chief of Staff and (b) the Cabinet Office have developed contingency plans for (i) a strike and (ii) a work to rule by special advisers.

Georgia Gould:

I refer the Right Honourable Member to the answer given on 25th July 2024.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Arts: East Midlands****Samantha Niblett:**[\[11777\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what estimate she has made of the recent economic contribution of the art and cultural industries to (a) the East Midlands and (b) Derbyshire.

Chris Bryant:

Derbyshire is a very important part of our cultural and artistic heritage, and this Government is committed to supporting these industries to thrive so they continue to bring good jobs and boost growth in all parts of the country.

DCMS publishes official statistics (DCMS Sectors Economic Estimates) including data on Gross Value Added, employment and business demographics, which are available at regional levels. DCMS Economic Estimates categorises the arts as a subsector of the cultural sector. Data can be found on the DCMS website here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/dcms-sectors-economic-estimates>

Data from DCMS Official Statistics for the economic contribution of the arts and cultural sector in the East Midlands is listed below:

Cultural Sector

Employment: There were 17,000 filled jobs in the Cultural Sector in the East Midlands in 2023.

GVA: The cultural sector generated £701 million of GVA in East Midlands in 2022.

Business Demographics: There were 2,925 business sites in the cultural sector based in East Midlands in 2023

Arts Sector

Employment: There were 6,000 filled jobs in the Arts subsector, in the East Midlands in 2023

GVA: The arts sub sector generated £246 million of GVA in East Midlands in 2022

Business Demographics: The Arts sector had 1,050 business sites based in the East Midlands in 2023

DCMS does not currently publish economic estimates down to a county or local authority level, so we cannot provide an assessment of the level of economic activity in the Arts and Cultural Sector in Derbyshire

■ Cultural Heritage: Essex

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[11246\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to promote the heritage of county Essex.

Chris Bryant:

His Majesty's Government is committed to promoting local heritage for the benefit of present and future generations.

Historic England (HE), the government's expert advisor on heritage, works closely with heritage organisations in Essex, such as the Thomas Plume Library and Maldon Town Council. HE has provided funding of £67,962 towards the grade I listed library in Maldon's town centre for the removal and replacement of the ceiling, as well as repairs to the external masonry and windows. This work was completed in 2021.

The National Lottery Heritage Fund has awarded significant grant funding to support heritage organisations in Essex, such as The Pioneering Sailing Trust in Brightlingsea, which was awarded £2.3 million this April (2024) to restore historic vessels and create an apprenticeship scheme.

■ Edward Jenner

Dr Simon Opher:

[\[12188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions she has had with UNESCO on the proposed application for Dr Edward Jenner's house in Berkeley to receive world heritage statue.

Chris Bryant:

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport is responsible for nominating sites across the United Kingdom to UNESCO for World Heritage status. The Department last updated the [Tentative List](#) of prospective World Heritage nominations in 2022/23 and it is not due to be updated until at least 2033.

Following the conclusion of this exercise, guidance was published on [GOV.UK](#), which sets out the process for sites seeking World Heritage status and emphasises that the UK is looking to reduce the amount of World Heritage nominations that we submit to UNESCO.

Recognising the important contribution that Dr Edward Jenner's house makes to our country's heritage, Historic England, as the body in England responsible for designating heritage assets, is best placed in the first instance, to advise on and explore the range of potentially suitable heritage designations.

■ Football: Women**Samantha Niblett:** [11781]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 22 October 2024 to Question 9331 on Football: Women, when the implementation group will next meet; and if she will publish (a) minutes and (b) action points from previous meetings.

Stephanie Peacock:

Minutes from previous meetings of the Implementation Group are publicly available on gov.uk at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/womens-football-review-implementation-group>

I met Karen Carney to discuss the next phase of implementation of her recommendations.

I am clear that action is needed to drive all of the recommendations outlined in the Review.

■ Gaming Machines: Excise Duties**Gareth Bacon:** [10779]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of increasing gambling taxes on employment in (a) high street bookmakers, (b) high street adult gaming centres and (c) bingo halls.

Gareth Bacon: [10780]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what modelling her Department has done to assess the potential impact of an increase in machine gaming duty on bingo halls.

Gareth Bacon: [10781]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has made an assessment of the potential impact of changes in the level of machine gaming duty on high streets.

Stephanie Peacock:

The government will consult next year on proposals to bring remote gambling (meaning gambling offered over the internet, telephone, TV and radio) into a single tax, rather than taxing it through a three-tax structure. This will aim to simplify, future-proof and close loopholes in the system.

Stuart Andrew: [9437]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of increasing gambling taxes on employment in (a) high street bookmakers, (b) high street adult gaming centres and (c) bingo halls.

Stuart Andrew: [\[9438\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of an increase in machine gaming duty on bingo halls.

Stuart Andrew: [\[9439\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of increases in machine gaming duty on high streets.

Stephanie Peacock:

The government will consult next year on proposals to bring remote gambling (meaning gambling offered over the internet, telephone, TV and radio) into a single tax, rather than taxing it through a three-tax structure. This will aim to simplify, future-proof and close loopholes in the system.

■ Tommy Robinson

Neil Coyle: [\[11625\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will take steps to remove the documentary Silenced from online distribution.

Chris Bryant:

The removal of online content is not within my department's powers.

I can confirm that this film has not been classified by the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC).

It is for the courts to determine whether this content is in contempt of court and for the online sites hosting the content to remove content where it breaches their own standards or where instructed.

A person may be liable for contempt of court where they know of an injunction and do anything to help or permit the person to whom it applies to breach its terms. It is for the Attorney General to consider each particular case and determine the appropriate course of action. Bringing proceedings for contempt of court is a Law Officer function which is exercised independently of the government.

DEFENCE

■ Ammunition: Procurement

James Cartlidge: [\[12123\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will provide a breakdown of the additional money he will release for munitions procurement as part of the £2.9bn defence spending announced in the Autumn Budget 2024, HC 295, published on 30 October 2024.

Maria Eagle:

Future prioritisation will be determined in the usual way and in line with the findings of the Strategic Defence Review.

■ Armed Forces: Pay**James Cartlidge:** [\[12121\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an estimate of the potential cost of funding pay rises for armed forces personnel in each of the next three financial years.

AI Carns:

The cost of funding pay rises for Armed Forces personnel in future years will be subject to the recommendations of the Armed Forces Pay Review Board.

■ Armed Forces: Private Education**James Cartlidge:** [\[12122\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the additional funding for Continuity of Education Allowance to compensate for introducing VAT on private school fees will come from the Ministry of Defence budget.

AI Carns:

In line with how the Continuity of Education Allowance normally operates, the Ministry of Defence will continue to pay up to 90% of private school fees following the VAT changes on 1 January.

■ Army**Mr Mark Francois:** [\[12029\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the keynote recording of the Chief of the General Staff at the RUSI Land Warfare Conference 2024, published on 23 June 2024, whether his Department has taken recent steps to double the lethality of the British Army by 2027 and treble it by 2030.

Luke Pollard:

The Chief of the General Staff is working hard to fulfil the ambition outlined at the RUSI Land Warfare conference. The British Army continues to work to these goals, in tandem with the ongoing Strategic Defence Review.

■ AUKUS**Sir Bernard Jenkin:** [\[12024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the fire in a submarine construction facility in Barrow-in-Furness on delivery of the AUKUS submarine programme.

Maria Eagle:

I refer the right hon. Member to the written statement I laid in the House on 30 October 2024 on this issue. The UK remains committed to delivering the SSN-AUKUS Optimal Pathway announced by the three leaders of the AUKUS nations in March 2023. The UK's continued commitment to AUKUS was recently demonstrated by the Defence Secretary hosting his Australian and US counterparts at the Old Royal Naval College in London to drive forward progress on AUKUS.

Attachments:

1. [BAE Systems Barrow Incident](#) [HCWS 176.docx]

■ Defence**Andrew Bowie:**[\[11642\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what definition his Department uses of Sovereign Capability.

Maria Eagle:

This Government is committed to bringing forward a Defence Industrial Strategy which ensures the imperatives of national security and a high-growth economy are aligned. As part of the strategy it is expected the categorisation of sovereign production capacity will be considered, working closely with industry.

■ F-35 Aircraft**Melanie Ward:**[\[11702\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what proportion of F-35 components produced by UK companies are wear-sensitive parts.

Maria Eagle:

The F-35 inventory is owned by the US Department of Defence and is managed by Lockheed Martin Aeronautics and Pratt and Whitney. The details on the proportion of F35 components produced by UK companies are not known.

The F35 Programme does not classify components as wear-sensitive. Components are either "repairable" or "consumable".

Melanie Ward:[\[11704\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether UK components supplied to the F-35 programme are coded using the NATO codification system.

Maria Eagle:

F-35 Components are owned by the US Department of Defence and managed in a Global Spares Pool. The F-35 components within the Global Spares Pool are not subject to NATO Codification.

■ Gaza: War Graves**Richard Baker:**[\[11512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he is taking steps with his international counterparts to help ensure that Commonwealth War Graves are protected in Gaza.

Al Carns:

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) is aware that both Gaza and Deir el Belah War Cemeteries have been damaged, but the full extent is not yet clear. A more detailed assessment cannot be carried out until the current situation subsides.

The CWGC will, however, restore those sites to a befitting standard as and when circumstances allow.

■ **Military Strategic Headquarters**

James Cartlidge: [\[12124\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the cost of the Military Strategic Headquarters.

Maria Eagle:

While the design and organisational structure of the future Military Strategic Head Quarters (MSHQ) is still in the development stage, it is expected that the creation of the MSHQ will be cost neutral and contained within the overall Defence budget.

■ **Ministry of Defence: Cybersecurity**

Nick Timothy: [\[11211\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many times (a) his Department and (b) each agency sponsored by his Department has experienced a cyber attack in each year since 2010; what the cost to the public purse was of each cyber attack; and who the perpetrator was of each cyber attack.

Luke Pollard:

The hon. Member will understand that it is not possible for me to reveal all details of cyber incidents for reasons of volume and security. For the same reason, it is usual practice not to reveal costs of cyber attacks as this is valuable information that our adversaries can use to determine weaknesses in our systems. The Ministry of Defence is the target of interest for the full range of malign cyber actors and has invested heavily in its defensive capabilities.

■ **VJ Day: Anniversaries**

Chris Vince: [\[11533\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans he has to recognise the 80th anniversary of VJ Day in 2025.

Al Carns:

The 80th anniversary of Victory Over Japan (VJ) Day in August 2025 will be an important opportunity to commemorate the service and sacrifice of those who finally brought the Second World War to a close.

As the Chancellor announced in the Budget, the Government will provide funding to the Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) to commemorate the 80th anniversary of Victory in Europe (VE) and VJ day, to remember those who gave their lives and honour those who served at home and abroad. DCMS is leading on the Government plans for what those national commemorations will look like, and the Ministry of Defence will play a significant supporting role.

EDUCATION

■ Adult Education: Finance

Jo White:

[\[11394\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the total underspends for the non-devolved adult education budget were in England in each year since 2018-19.

Janet Daby:

The budget and the actual spending of the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) element of the Adult Education Budget from 2018/19 to 2023/24 financial year is set out in the table below. Funding to providers is allocated on an academic year and underspends are based on a financial year basis; therefore, underspends in a financial year predominantly reflect provider delivery in the preceding academic year (i.e. 2018/19 academic year is reflected in 2019/20 financial year).

The ESFA allocates grant funding to providers. Providers who underdeliver on their allocations by more than 3% will have their funding recovered through a reconciliation process (allowing providers who can over deliver to grow their allocation by up to 10%).

	BUDGET	UNDERSPEND
2018/2019	£1,347,300,000	£3,125,005
2019/2020	£904,829,000	-£2,710,548
2020/2021	£742,706,000	£56,090,670
2021/2022	£701,527,000	£115,118,943
2022/2023	£633,659,000	£80,083,526
2023/2024	£572,004,000	£43,192,844

■ Apprentices and Work Experience: Rural Areas

Andrew Bowie:

[\[11329\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she is taking steps with Cabinet colleagues to support collaboration between local businesses and schools on work experience and apprenticeship placements in rural areas.

Janet Daby:

The department wants to support all young people to access education and training opportunities, to break down the barriers to opportunity and support economic growth.

That is why young people in rural areas can benefit from the high quality training that apprenticeships offer. Apprentices in England can choose from apprenticeships in a wide range of sectors including agriculture, environmental and animal care, engineering and manufacturing, and business and administration. The department is introducing new foundation apprenticeships, a pre-apprenticeship training offer, that will give more young people a foot in the door and support clear pathways into work-based training and employment.

The department is also taking steps towards introducing two weeks' worth of high quality work experience to all young people, irrespective of their background. This will open doors to a wider range of employers and businesses and give young people a greater insight into the labour market.

The department recognises that young people need support to capitalise on these workplace experiences, reflect on what they have learned and set future career goals. The department will therefore train 1,000 new careers advisers so that young people can get the expert advice they need.

■ Armed Forces: Cadets**Neil O'Brien:**[\[11294\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment the Government has made of the potential impact of the ending of support payments on the provision of combined cadet forces in state schools.

Catherine McKinnell:

The government, through the Ministry of Defence, provides in the region of £180 million to support cadets schemes. The Department for Education has contributed up to £1.1 million annually since the academic year 2021/22. This has provided some additional funding to support cadet expansion in the form of the school staff instructor (SSI) grant. This has been distributed to 230 state schools.

Due to the current challenging fiscal context the government is having to take difficult decisions to ensure the stability of the economy and, while the importance of cadets is being recognised by continued support for cadet units through core funding provided by the Ministry of Defence, the department has had to take the difficult decision to not extend the additional SSI grant into this academic year. All schools in receipt of the SSI grant have been informed.

The cadet expansion programme will continue to be delivered and receive £3.6 million in government funding for this academic year. This £3.6 million per year funding is within the Ministry of Defence's annual budget cycle settlement showing a profile out to financial year 2033/2034. This funding goes to the single Service (Royal

Navy, Army and Royal Air Force) cadet organisations to provide funding for cadet expansion in schools.

■ Children and Young People: Pastoral Care

Tom Hayes:

[11707]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to increase the availability of pastoral support for (a) children and (b) young people.

Stephen Morgan:

Schools and colleges are best placed to decide what pastoral support to put in place to meet the needs of their pupils. Pastoral support should promote good mental wellbeing and respond to emerging issues. There is a range of support available to schools, including a government-commissioned mental wellbeing toolkit, which is available here: <https://mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/targeted-support/>.

This practical guide and tool were designed to help schools and colleges identify and embed the most effective targeted support options for their setting.

To ensure the right support is available to every young person that needs it, the department has committed to provide access to specialist mental health professionals in every school. As of April 2024, Mental Health Support Teams cover 44% (4.2 million) of pupils in schools and learners in further education (FE) in England and are expected to cover at least 50% by the end of March 2025. 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.

Pastoral support is also available to children and young people in other education settings.

The department continues to work closely with the FE sector to promote and support providers to develop and implement a whole college approach to mental health and wellbeing. This is supported by the Association of Colleges refreshed Mental Health and Wellbeing Charter, published in March 2024. The department encourages colleges to sign up to effectively integrate a whole-college approach.

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

For early years, the early years foundation stage (EYFS) statutory framework sets the standards and requirements all early years providers must meet to ensure that children have the best start in life and are kept healthy and safe. It sets out the importance of strong, warm and responsive relationships between staff and children.

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

The EYFS also states that each child must be assigned a key person. Their role is to help ensure that every child's care is tailored to meet their individual needs to help the child become familiar with the setting, offer a settled relationship for the child and build a relationship with their parents and/or carers.

■ Children in Care

Sir Alec Shelbrooke:

[11253]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, on how many occasions in the last 12 months has a local authority in England provided Section 20 accommodation for a child under the age of 16 without the consent of an individual with parental responsibility.

Janet Daby:

The information requested is not held centrally. While the department collects data on the number of children accommodated by local authorities under Section 20, we do not collect data on parental consent given as part of that arrangement.

The latest figures show that there were 5,460 children aged under 16 who were looked after in care at 31 March 2023 under a Section 20 voluntary agreement.

Figures on the overall number of children looked after placed in care under a voluntary agreement were published in the statistical release 'Children looked after in England including adoptions: 2023'. This can be accessed here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/fast-track/7e318fb5-8949-47d1-9f84-08dba4b954ad>. Figures showing numbers at 31 March 2024 will be published on 14 November 2024.

■ Children: Neurodiversity

Richard Foord:

[11349]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of publishing a mental health absence code for children with (a) autism and (b) other neurodivergent conditions who are unable to attend school due to mental health crises; and what steps her Department is taking to help support these pupils.

Stephen Morgan:

Tackling absence is at the heart of the department's mission to break down the barriers to opportunity. Poor mental health and inadequate access to support are real challenges facing children today and have a detrimental impact on their school attendance, reinforcing barriers to opportunity.

The 'Working together to improve school attendance' statutory guidance promotes a 'support first' approach, encouraging schools, trusts and local authorities to work with families to address attendance barriers. This guidance can be accessed here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66bf300da44f1c4c23e5bd1b/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance_-_August_2024.pdf.

The department is committed to providing access to a specialist mental health professional in every school so every young person has access to early support to address problems before they escalate. We will also deliver Young Futures Hubs, providing every community with an open-access hub for children and young people. In addition, we are conducting an expert-led Curriculum and Assessment Review to ensure that every child has access to a curriculum that is rich and broad, inclusive and innovative and supports their future life and work.

Illness, both physical and mental health related, is marked using the I code in the register. The department does not think that requiring schools to determine whether illness is mental or physical would be practically workable, given that schools cannot and should not diagnose a pupil's illness.

■ **Classroom Assistants: Labour Turnover and Recruitment**

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[11907\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of trends in the level of retention of teaching assistants; and what steps her Department is taking to support recruitment of teaching assistants.

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[11909\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of (a) increasing levels of pay and (b) reviewing conditions for teaching assistants.

Catherine McKinnell:

School support staff play a vital role in children's education and the smooth running of schools. They are crucial to ensuring children are given the best possible life chances.

In the survey 'Use of teaching assistants in schools', carried out by the department in 2023, 75% of school leaders reported they found it either 'fairly' or 'extremely' difficult to recruit teaching assistants. The survey found that retention was difficult for 29% of leaders.

The department values and recognises the professionalism of the entire school workforce and will address recruitment and retention challenges by reinstating the School Support Staff Negotiating Body (SSSNB).

The SSSNB will be tasked with establishing a national terms and conditions handbook, training, career progression routes and fair pay rates for support staff. This reform will ensure that schools can recruit and retain the staff needed to deliver high quality, inclusive education and drive high and rising standards, so that every child has the best life chances.

■ Eating Disorders: Girls

Jim Shannon:

[\[11256\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to support young girls with eating disorders in schools.

Stephen Morgan:

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

The government is committed to improving mental health outcomes for all children and young people, including young girls with eating disorders. Having an eating disorder can often be devastating for young people suffering with the condition, as well as for those around them, which is why the department wants to ensure they have access to the support they need.

The department's statutory health education curriculum, which should be taught in all schools from primary, includes a strong focus on mental health. This includes teaching pupils how to identify the early signs of mental wellbeing concerns and where and how to seek support if they are worried about their own or someone else's mental health. As part of the secondary health curriculum, schools can teach pupils how to be safe and healthy and manage their lives in a positive way, seeking support when needed. They can also teach about eating disorders, drawing on qualified support or advice as needed for this specialist area. A consultation on proposed changes to the statutory guidance closed in July. It is vitally important that teachers have clear guidance, which is why we will be looking carefully at the consultation responses, talking to stakeholders and considering the relevant evidence, before setting out next steps on relationships, sex education and health education.

Early intervention is key when a child or young person is experiencing a mental health issue, including problems with eating. To ensure that every young person has access to early support to address problems before they escalate, we will provide access to specialist mental health professionals in every school. As of April 2024, Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs) cover 44% (4.2 million) of pupils in schools and learners in further education in England and are expected to cover at least 50% by the end of March 2025. 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 department also supports schools to embed whole school approaches to mental health and wellbeing, which often includes training staff to recognise early signs of eating disorders and promoting a culture of openness and support. More than 8 in 10 state-funded secondary schools have accessed grants from my department to train a senior mental health lead, developing their knowledge and skills to embed a whole school or college approach to mental health and wellbeing. Information is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/senior-mental-health-lead-training>.

■ Education: Childbirth

Amanda Hack:

[11397]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to help ensure that children born prematurely are not disadvantaged in education.

Stephen Morgan:

The government is determined to break down barriers to opportunity and ensure the best start in life for every child, including those who are born prematurely.

The early years foundation stage (EYFS) framework sets the standards and requirements that all early years providers must follow. The EYFS is clear that every child is unique and that they develop and learn at different rates. It also describes the importance of responding to children's individual interests and needs. Being born prematurely is not classified as a special educational need or a disability, however, when a premature child does need special educational needs and disability support, schools and early years settings are encouraged to identify and support them early as possible.

The investment announced at Budget to rebuild school buildings, alongside funding for children's social care, breakfast clubs and early years, reflects the government's commitment to putting education back at the forefront of national life.

■ Financial Services: Education

Jo White:

[11429]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to ensure all schools teach financial literacy.

Catherine McKinnell:

I refer my hon. Friend, the Member for Basstettlaw to the answer of 14 October 2024 to question [7255](#).

■ First Aid: Curriculum

Charlotte Nichols:

[11341]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of including first aid training in the national curriculum.

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). It includes basic first aid and dealing with common injuries. Pupils in secondary schools are taught further first aid, for example how to administer CPR and the purpose of defibrillators.

■ Holiday Activities and Food Programme**Nadia Whittome:** [11915]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans she has for the holiday activities and food programme.

Stephen Morgan:

The future of the Holiday Activities and Food programme beyond 31 March 2025 is subject to decisions flowing from this autumn's government Spending Review. The outcome of this process will be communicated in due course.

■ Ofsted: Complaints**Connor Naismith:** [11752]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of Ofsted's complaints procedure; and what her Department's policy is on its future.

Catherine McKinnell:

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

■ Physiotherapy: Apprentices**Andrew Pakes:** [11505]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many physiotherapy apprentices there are at each level of study in England.

Janet Daby:

The information requested can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/2241facc-8e02-44c3-7d16-08dcf4c39769>.

These figures are published in the Apprenticeships statistics publication, which can be accessed at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/apprenticeships>.

For further information on the apprenticeship standard 'physiotherapist', please see the Institute for Apprenticeships website which is available here: <https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/physiotherapist-v1-2>.

■ Pre-school Education: Finance**Mr Lee Dillon:** [11692]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she plans to take to financially support the early years sector to deliver the expanded 30-hour offer.

Stephen Morgan:

The new childcare entitlements for eligible working parents of children aged from nine months will increase from 15 hours to 30 hours from September 2025, helping hundreds of thousands of families with the cost of childcare and supporting parents to work.

The Autumn Budget confirmed £1.8 billion in the 2025/26 financial year to support the expansion with a further £15 million of capital funding to expand school-based nurseries. This £1.8 billion will mean the budget for childcare entitlements next year will be over £8 billion, reflecting the additional money needed for the 30 hour expansion and ensuring funding for the entitlements reflect forecasts of average earnings and inflation next year.

■ Pupils: Absenteeism**Sir John Hayes:**[\[11221\]](#)

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

Stephen Morgan:

The government recognises school absence as a key barrier to learning. If children are not in school, it does not matter how effective or well-supported teaching and learning is, they will not benefit. Thanks to the sector's efforts, more students are attending school this year compared to last. However, 1.6 million children remain persistently absent, missing 10% or more of lessons.

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

The 'Working together to improve school attendance' statutory guidance promotes a support first approach, encouraging schools, trusts and local authorities to work with families to address attendance barriers. Every state school in England should now be sharing their daily attendance registers with the department, local authorities and trusts. Schools, trusts and councils are able to access this data via an interactive secure data dashboard maintained by the department.

For all schools it is vital that there are opportunities to share best practice on how to improve attendance. Across the nation there is a network of 31 attendance hubs, working with 2000 schools to share their strategies and resources for improving attendance.

■ Pupils: Health**Dr Ben Spencer:**[\[11896\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will review the statutory guidance on Section 100 of the Children and Families Act 2014 regarding individual healthcare plans in schools.

Dr Ben Spencer: [11897]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions she has had with school leaders on the effectiveness of individual healthcare plans in schools for children with (a) epilepsy, (b) asthma, (c) a history of anaphylaxis, (d) severe allergies and (e) type 1 diabetes.

Mr Richard Holden: [12150]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will take steps to issue revised guidance to schools on requirements for developing individual health care plans for pupils with epilepsy.

Catherine McKinnell:

Statutory guidance, 'Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions', recommends the use of individual healthcare plans as good practice. They can help schools support pupils with medical conditions, providing clarity about what needs to be done, when and by whom. The school, healthcare professionals and parents should agree, based on evidence, when a healthcare plan would be appropriate. 'Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions' can be found here: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5ce6a72e40f0b620a103bd53/supporting-pupils-at-school-with-medical-conditions.pdf>.

The department will keep the statutory guidance under review as we take forward the commitment to delivering an inclusive mainstream system.

The department engages closely with school leaders and their representative organisations on a wide range of issues, including supporting pupils with medical conditions.

■ Schools: Havering

Andrew Rosindell: [11568]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much funding she plans to provide for school infrastructure in the London Borough of Havering in each of the next three financial years.

Stephen Morgan:

Making sure the education estate is fit for purpose is a key part of the government's mission to break down barriers to opportunity and give every child the best start in life.

The government has just announced £2.1 billion for the 2025/26 financial year to improve the condition of the school estate, part of a broader capital package totalling £6.7 billion in 2025/26. The department will aim to set out the details of school condition allocations to local authorities and other responsible bodies, as well as outcomes of the condition improvement fund for 2025/26, in spring 2025.

In addition, the government has committed to £1.4 billion in 2025/26 to continue the school rebuilding programme, which includes projects at Parklands Primary School and The Coopers' Company and Coburn School in Havering. Furthermore, the

department will continue to engage with trusts and local authorities in relation to free school projects with approved applications within Havering.

The department will additionally provide support for school infrastructure through providing capital funding to create mainstream and high-needs school places. The basic need grant supports local authorities to provide mainstream school places based on their own pupil forecasts and school capacity data. Havering has been allocated £19.6 million in 2025/26 for places needed by September 2026. Other funding for place creation in the next three financial years will be confirmed in due course.

Funding for future years post-2025/26 will be confirmed following the second phase of the spending review, concluding in late spring 2025.

■ Schools: Transport

Darren Paffey:

[\[11738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she is taking steps to reduce the cost to local authorities of home-to-school transport.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department's home-to-school travel policy aims to make sure no child is prevented from accessing education by a lack of transport. Local authorities must arrange free home-to-school travel for children of compulsory school age who attend their nearest school and would not be able to walk there because of the distance, their special educational needs, disability or mobility problem, or because the route is unsafe. There are extended rights to free home-to-school travel for children from low-income families, aimed at helping them exercise school choice.

The department knows that local authorities' spending on home-to-school travel has increased sharply in recent years, particularly for children with special educational needs and disabilities. This is largely due to increases in the number of children with education, health and care plans and the number of those children who have to travel long distances to a school that can meet their needs.

The department is committed to improving inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools so fewer children need to travel long distances to a school that can meet their needs. This will reduce home-to-school travel costs for local authorities over time.

■ Schools: Uniforms

Sarah Hall:

[\[11465\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of the cost of (a) badges and (b) piping for school uniforms on household expenditure.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department has not assessed the impact of the cost of specific designs for school uniforms on household expenditure. However, the department recently published its latest research on the cost of school uniforms, which is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cost-of-school-uniforms-survey-2023>.

This research surveyed parents and carers of children aged 4 to 16 attending state-funded schools in England and found that average uniform expenditure decreased as the range of outlets from which parents/carers were allowed to purchase items increased. The average spend on items was significantly lower where all could be purchased from anywhere (£227.29), than where all had to be purchased from a designated shop or from a school (£283.90).

That is why as part of the King's Speech, the department has committed to legislate to limit the number of expensive branded items of uniform and PE kit that schools can require.

■ Shipping: Apprentices**Grahame Morris:****[11234]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many seafarer apprentices were in training in 2023-24.

Janet Daby:

Latest figures for the 2023/24 academic year show that there have been 50 starts on the Level 2 Seafarer (deck rating) apprenticeship standard.

■ Social Workers: Medical Examinations**Cat Smith:****[11610]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to mitigate the impact of delays to fitness to practice final hearings on (a) the public and (b) social workers.

Janet Daby:

To mitigate the impact of delays to fitness to practice final hearings on the public and social workers, the department and Social Work England have made changes to legislation for operational efficiencies. In addition, the department has provided additional funds of £7.1 million to Social Work England to clear the backlog of legacy cases inherited from the previous regulator.

The department and Social Work England continue to work together to reduce delays to fitness to hearings through increasing the number of hearings held wherever possible.

■ Special Educational Needs

Mr Lee Dillon: [\[11688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department plans to reform the SEND system.

Mr Lee Dillon: [\[11690\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to take steps to make the education, health and care plan application process more efficient.

Catherine McKinnell:

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

This government's ambition is for all children and young people with SEND, or in alternative provision, to receive the right support to succeed in their education and as they move into adult life. The department is committed to improving inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools, as well as ensuring special schools cater to those with the most complex needs, restoring parents' trust that their child will get the support they need.

The department wants to drive a consistent and inclusive approach to supporting children and young people with SEND through early identification, effective support, high quality teaching and effective allocation of resources.

Our approach will support families, breaking down the barriers to opportunity for their children.

The department wants to ensure that, where required, education, health and care (EHC) assessments are progressed promptly and, if needed, EHC plans are issued as quickly as possible. We will work with children, young people, parents, local authorities, schools and colleges and their partners to deliver improvements, so that children and young people can access the support they need.

■ Special Educational Needs: Derbyshire

Samantha Niblett: [\[11657\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of educational provision for children with Special Educational Needs in Derbyshire.

Catherine McKinnell:

Derbyshire were inspected by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission in September 2024 and are awaiting their inspection outcome, due to be published mid-November 2024.

The department has appointed a special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) adviser to work collaboratively with an NHS England Adviser to challenge, support and work alongside the local area partnership to improve its services. The regional

team will put in place systems to track progress against all improvements identified in the published report.

This government's ambition is that all children and young people with SEND or in alternative provision receive the right support to succeed in their education and as they move into adult life. The department is committed to taking a community-wide approach in collaboration with local area partnerships to improve inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools, as well as ensuring special schools cater to those with the most complex needs.

■ **Special Educational Needs: Stoke-on-Trent South**

Dr Allison Gardner:

[\[11536\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what support her Department plans to give parents of children with SEN to access transport to school in Stoke-on-Trent South constituency.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department's home to school travel policy aims to make sure that no child is prevented from accessing education by a lack of transport. Local authorities must arrange free home to school travel for children of compulsory school age, 5 to 16, who attend their nearest school and would not be able to walk there because of the distance, their special educational needs, disability or mobility problem, or because the nature of the route means it would be unsafe for them to do so. There are extended rights to free travel for children from low-income families.

The department is aware that challenges within the wider special educational needs and disabilities system are creating pressure on home to school travel. The government is committed to improving inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools, with specialist provision supporting children with the most complex needs, so fewer children need to travel long distances to a school that can meet their needs. This will reduce the pressure on home to school travel. I am keen to understand how well home to school transport supports children to access educational opportunity and will be working with departmental officials on this.

■ **STEM Subjects: Further Education and Employment**

Jim Shannon:

[\[11305\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she has taken to help ensure regional opportunities for young people in STEM (a) further education and (b) careers.

Janet Daby:

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

Developing the skills of young people, especially in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) is a critical enabler for the government's missions to break down barriers to opportunity and drive economic growth.

That is why the department is setting up Skills England, a new body, to bring together central and local government, businesses, training providers and unions, to help meet the skills needs of the next decade, aligned to the government's Industrial Strategy.

This will be underpinned by Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs), that support our aim to make technical education and training more responsive to local labour market and employer needs. A £165 million Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF) has been made available across all areas of the country to support providers to respond collaboratively to the skills needs identified in the LSIPs.

The department will continue to support learners who wish to have a career in STEM through our technical education offer with a range of high quality qualifications and apprenticeship opportunities at all levels.

Access to future employers should never be dependent on who you know, or where you live. Our ambition is to offer a guarantee of two weeks' worth of high quality work experience to all young people, irrespective of their background. This will open doors to a wider range of employers and businesses and give young people a greater insight into the labour market.

To support young people with careers information, advice and guidance, the Careers and Enterprise Company, back by £30 million of government funding in 2024/25, coordinates a national network of Careers Hubs which now includes 93% of secondary schools and colleges. The network includes 400 leading employers and around 4,000 business volunteers, including many representing STEM occupations. Our careers framework, the Gatsby Benchmarks, includes a clear expectation that all 11 to 18-year-olds should have at least one meaningful interaction with employers per year. This should include an encounter with a STEM employer or workplace, or a careers event focused on STEM, before year 11.

■ Tiverton High School

Rachel Gilmour:

[\[11672\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will hold discussions with the hon. Member for Tiverton and Minehead on the (a) condition of Tiverton High School and (b) school community.

Stephen Morgan:

Ensuring schools have the resources and buildings they need is a key part of our mission to break down barriers to opportunity and give every child the best start in life.

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education is unable to meet at present due to constraints on her diary. However, departmental officials will be in touch with you shortly to arrange a meeting with the honourable member who are best placed to provide detail on the condition of the school.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO**■ Electricity: Carbon Emissions**

Liam Conlon: [\[11437\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what recent progress he has made on meeting his target to have a zero carbon electricity system by 2030.

Michael Shanks:

Since July the Government has taken rapid action towards meeting our mission for clean power by 2030. We've ended the onshore wind ban, approved enough solar to power hundreds of thousands of homes, secured a record-breaking 131 renewables projects and set up Great British Energy in Aberdeen.

The Government recently commissioned the National Energy System Operator (NESO) to provide practical advice on achieving a zero-carbon electricity system by 2030. The Government received NESO's advice on 5 November, which will inform the 2030 Clean Power Action Plan, due for publication by the end of the year.

■ Energy Supply: Sustainable Development

Mark Garnier: [\[11259\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether his Department has made an assessment of the risk of legal challenge associated with the National Energy System Operator's proposals to prioritise energy projects in the queue that are both ready and aligned with Clean Power 2030.

Michael Shanks:

The National Electricity System Operator is developing proposals for reform of electricity networks in consultation with stakeholders, before final proposals are submitted to Ofgem for decision. As part of its decision-making process, Ofgem will assess legal aspects of the proposals. The Department will support this analysis, where appropriate.

■ Energy: Billing

Tonia Antoniazzi: [\[11309\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure vulnerable people are able to access financial support with energy bills.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government is committed to ensuring energy bills are affordable for all consumers, especially the most vulnerable. The Government is continuing to deliver the Warm Home Discount which provides a £150 rebate off energy bills to eligible low-income households.

I recently met with suppliers and encouraged them to build on the Voluntary Debt Commitment from last year and go further in supporting vulnerable customers this winter.

The Government has also extended the Household Support Fund for an additional six months until 31 March 2025 with an extra £500 million in funding, and I encourage any vulnerable individual who is struggling to pay their bills contacts their local authority to see if they are eligible for this support.

■ **Great British Nuclear: Recruitment**

Wera Hobhouse:

[\[11298\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, pursuant to the Answer of 18 September 2024 to Question 5089 on Great British Nuclear: Recruitment, for what reason his Department is unable to provide a list of (a) the 16 organisations from which personnel have been seconded to Great British Nuclear and (b) the number of personnel supplied by each organisation.

Michael Shanks:

The Department is unable to share information potentially sensitive to individuals working within GBN. GBN has grown rapidly as an organisation with permanent recruitment underway.

■ **Nuclear Power**

Mark Garnier:

[\[11275\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to ensure that plans to achieve a net zero power grid by 2030 include the development of technologies such as nuclear power requiring (a) longer lead times and (b) significant investment.

Michael Shanks:

The Government is committed to ensuring that new nuclear power stations, such as Sizewell C and small modular reactors (SMRs), play an important role in helping achieve energy security and clean power while securing thousands of good, skilled jobs. On 23 August, the Government commissioned the National Energy System Operator (NESO) to provide practical advice on achieving a clean power system by 2030. The Government received NESO's advice on 5 November, which will inform the 2030 Clean Power Action Plan and included details on the role of nuclear power. The Government's action plan is due for publication by the end of the year.

■ **Radioactive Waste**

Mark Garnier:

[\[11592\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of the use of deep boreholes as an alternative to the Geological Disposal Facility for nuclear waste.

Michael Shanks:

Deep borehole technology is at a developmental stage of technical maturity and has not yet been implemented anywhere in the world. It is possible the technology could play a complementary role in managing some radioactive hazardous waste in the future. However, it would not be suitable for the entire UK radioactive waste inventory for which a geological disposal facility will always be required. Nuclear Waste Services, the developer of the geological disposal facility, continues to review radioactive waste management emerging technologies. It will publish its most recent review in the coming months.

■ **Refineries: Grangemouth**

Brian Leishman: [\[11495\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what discussions he has had with representatives of the Grangemouth oil refinery on operational difficulties.

Michael Shanks:

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

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

Brian Leishman: [\[11497\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what information his Department holds on the potential amount of funding required to keep the Grangemouth oil refinery in operation for the next 12 months.

Michael Shanks:

Grangemouth refinery is a private business owned by Petroineos. Petroineos stated that its shareholders have invested more than \$1.2bn since 2011 to maintain the refinery's safe operation, recording losses in excess of \$775m during the same period. The company made clear that there was no viable commercial future for the refinery operation at Grangemouth.

Brian Leishman: [\[11499\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the impact of the closure of the Grangemouth oil refinery on consumers.

Michael Shanks:

It is deeply disappointing to learn that Petroineos has confirmed its previous decision to close the oil refining operation at Grangemouth. All of my thoughts are with the workers and their families and the wider Grangemouth community.

The Grangemouth site will now convert to an import terminal. Imports are already part of the UK's diverse and resilient energy mix. Since 2013, the UK has been a net importer of refined products, with imports accounting for 51% of UK demand for all petroleum products in 2023. Grangemouth refinery already imported almost all of its

crude oil supply: it only received 13% of its crude oil supply from the North Sea via the Forties Pipeline in 2022.

Scotland already imports fuel via other sites, which is sold at competitive prices, so we do not expect imports via the Grangemouth site to impact road fuel prices in Scotland nor across the UK.

■ Renewable Energy: Rural Areas

Edward Morello:

[\[11476\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to support people in rural communities to (a) transition to renewable energy sources and (b) maintain local environmental protections.

Michael Shanks:

Great British Energy's Local Power Plan will support both rural and urban communities to roll out small and medium scale renewable energy projects, providing commercial, technical and project-planning assistance, increasing their capability and capacity to build a pipeline of successful projects in their local areas.

Renewable projects are subject to planning controls to protect local communities and the environment.

■ Warm Home Discount Scheme

Tonia Antoniazzi:

[\[11308\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of availability of the Warm Home Discount to named account holders only.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Warm Home Discount is a rebate on energy bills received by over 3m households where an eligible individual, their partner or their legal representative is named on the energy account. To provide support on this scale, it is paid directly into energy accounts in the majority of cases. Those who are not eligible for the Warm Home Discount may be eligible for support from other government schemes or the wider support offered through the Warm Home Discount.

Tonia Antoniazzi:

[\[11310\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what support is available for vulnerable people who meet the financial threshold for the Warm Home Discount but are not the named bill payer.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Warm Home Discount is a rebate on energy bills, usually paid into the bill payer's account. Where an individual is not named on the bill, the rebate may still be paid if their partner or legal representative is named. The scheme also funds wider support, including a grant scheme for occupiers of park homes and programmes providing energy efficiency advice and measures. Those not benefiting from the rebate may be

eligible for other government programmes, current schemes include the Energy Company Obligation, the Great British Insulation Scheme, the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, and the Home Upgrade Grant.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Agriculture: Standards

Ellie Chowns:

[\[12153\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether data collected through his Department's farm practices survey informs the assessment of progress on meeting legally binding targets set out in the Environment Act 2021.

Daniel Zeichner:

Reporting against statutory targets is being developed primarily through data on activities that farmers have volunteered to do as part of schemes. Defra uses survey data, including the results from the farm practices survey, to build assumptions and understand more about land that has not been entered into schemes.

■ Agriculture: West Dorset

Edward Morello:

[\[12349\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what (a) funding and (b) other support his Department is providing to farmers to transition to more sustainable agricultural practices in West Dorset constituency.

Daniel Zeichner:

Defra's farming budget will be £2.4 billion in 2025/26. This will include the largest ever budget directed at sustainable food production and nature's recovery in our country's history: £1.8 billion for environmental land management schemes. This funding will deliver improvements to food security, biodiversity, carbon emissions, water quality, air quality and flood resilience.

Environmental Land Management schemes will remain at the centre of our offer for farmers, with the Sustainable Farming Incentive, Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier and Landscape Recovery all continuing. These offer funding streams for farmers to make their businesses more sustainable and resilient, including those who have been often ignored such as small, grassland, upland and tenant farmers.

We will work with the sector to continue to roll out, improve and evolve these schemes, to make them work for farming and nature.

■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Official Cars

Charlie Dewhirst:

[\[11768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 18 October 2024 to Question 7017 on Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Official Cars, if he will name which specific senior officials have access to a

Government car; and whether those senior officials had access to a Government car before the 2024 general election.

Charlie Dewhirst:

[\[11769\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 22 October 2024 to Question 7016 on Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Official Cars, whether either of the two vehicles are electric cars.

Daniel Zeichner:

For security reasons specific details of allocations including make and model of vehicles are not issued.

The arrangements relating to the usage of vehicles in the Government Car Service are set out in the Civil Service Management Code.

■ Eggs: Imports

Clive Jones:

[\[11983\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to legislate to ensure that imported egg products meet welfare standards equivalent to the UK.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Government recognises farmers' concerns about imports produced using methods not permitted in the UK. We have been clear that we will use our Trade Strategy to promote the highest food production standards.

■ Farmers: Tiverton and Minehead

Rachel Gilmour:

[\[11673\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will hold discussions with the hon. Member for Tiverton and Minehead on the (a) Exmoor Farmers' Network and (b) farming community in Tiverton and Minehead constituency.

Daniel Zeichner:

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

■ Fishing Catches

Laurence Turner:

[\[12017\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science's report entitled Assessing the sustainability of fisheries catch limits negotiated by the UK for 2024, published 10 April 2024.

Daniel Zeichner:

As an independent coastal State, the UK sets total allowable catches (TACs) each year for many fish stocks through negotiations with other coastal States. UK positions in those negotiations are informed by the best available scientific advice, including advice from the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) on achieving the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) for many stocks. The Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas) conducts annually a robust assessment of the sustainability outcomes of our negotiations, including the number of TACs which have been set in line with the scientific advice.

In those negotiations, the UK seeks to balance the fisheries objectives set out in the Fisheries Act 2020 and the Joint Fisheries Statement. We strive for outcomes that achieve greater environmental sustainability, including aiming to increase over the medium term the total number of stocks fished at MSY.

Defra will publish in early 2025 the Cefas assessment of the sustainability outcomes of the TACs negotiated by the UK this autumn.

Laurence Turner:[\[12018\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to address the issue of overfishing.

Daniel Zeichner:

Sustainability is at the heart of the UK's approach to fisheries management. Through negotiations with other coastal States, we ensure that catch limits are set sustainably, consistent with the best scientific advice. This Government is also pleased to restart the Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) programme and is grateful for the support of the fishing sector and wider stakeholders in helping to shape these plans to secure the long-term sustainability of UK fish stocks in line with obligations under the Fisheries Act 2020 and the Joint Fisheries Statement. We are now consulting on the next 5 FMPs, these cover cockles, sprat, queen scallop, skates, rays and various other demersal species in different waters around England.

■ Floods: Insurance**Steff Aquarone:**[\[12237\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of (a) progress towards risk-reflective pricing for insurance in areas of high flood risk and (b) market readiness for the scheduled exit of Flood Re in 2039.

Emma Hardy:

Flood Re have a statutory purpose to manage the transition to risk-reflective pricing of flood insurance for household premises between 2016 and 2039. Flood Re published their most recent Transition Plan in July 2023, outlining its progress and action on moving to affordable risk-reflective pricing by 2039. Flood Re's next Transition plan (Transition Plan 4) will be published in summer 2028.

■ Food Supply

Rupert Lowe:

[\[11996\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate his Department has made of the percentage of food consumed in the UK that is produced domestically.

Daniel Zeichner:

In 2023, 58% of domestic consumption came from UK production (based on unprocessed value at farmgate), 24% from the European Union and the remaining 18% from the rest of the world. Data for 2024 will be published in Defra's 'Agriculture in the United Kingdom' report in mid-2025.

■ Greyhound Racing

Neil Duncan-Jordan:

[\[12021\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of banning greyhound racing in England.

Daniel Zeichner:

I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Eastleigh, Liz Jarvis, on 18 September 2024, [PQ 5214](#).

■ Horticulture: Compensation

Helen Morgan:

[\[11661\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending agricultural compensation schemes to horticultural businesses impacted by forestry diseases such as Ash dieback.

Daniel Zeichner:

Our policy is not to pay compensation for plant health measures. We believe that resources are best directed at detection of pests and diseases, risk management and proactive assessment of emerging threats. We also invest in research programmes that enhance our understanding of plant health issues and provide evidence to inform contingency plans and management responses.

Protecting plant health is not an issue for government alone. Many plant importers, nurseries and landowners already play a major role in minimising the risk and spread of pests through practising good biosecurity, including sourcing clean stock and identifying outbreaks on their sites. The current arrangements ensure that everyone (the Government and its agencies, industry, non-governmental organisations, landowners, and the public) shares a common understanding of biosecurity and their role and responsibilities. The UK Government provides other forms of financial and non-financial support to assist with essential management of some of the most devastating tree diseases, including ash dieback.

■ Horticulture: Imports**Helen Morgan:**[\[11660\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has had discussions with the Secretary of State for Business and Trade on steps to ensure horticultural imports are produced to the same environmental standards as domestic products.

Daniel Zeichner:

The UK has high environmental standards that underpin the production of fresh fruit and vegetables. As set out in the manifesto, the Government is committed to using our Trade Strategy to promote the highest standards of food production.

■ Import Controls: Port of Dover**Dr Neil Hudson:**[\[11902\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the capability to do random physical (a) animal and (b) plant checks on site in the Port of Dover.

Daniel Zeichner:

Defra will continue to monitor and review the impact of the new controls. We will work closely with industry, trade partners and enforcement agencies to minimise disruption and costs to trade, while continuing to protect our biosecurity.

The Port of Dover has a Border Control Post (BCP) designation for HRFFNAO only. All physical checks on plants take place at Sevington BCP.

There are currently no checks on animals at BCPs, these are continuing at destination.

■ Inland Border Facilities: Ashford**Dr Neil Hudson:**[\[11900\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the compliance of (a) people and (b) vehicles told to go to the Border Control Post at Sevington for checks.

Daniel Zeichner:

Due to the intelligence led and dynamic nature of our biosecurity controls and to ensure operations are not impacted, we are unable to share data on Sanitary and phytosanitary checks.

Consignments called to Sevington for an inspection will have completed the necessary customs declarations and pre-notifications. These goods will not be legally cleared for sale or use within the UK until they have attended and been cleared at the Border Control Post (BCP).

Where the BCP has concerns, for example due to non-attendance, there are existing robust provisions for contacting the person responsible for the load, if it is then not

possible for the goods to proceed to the BCP then the goods to be referred for inland controls by the local authority, enforceable through the data collected through those customs declarations and pre-notification.

Dr Neil Hudson:

[\[11901\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure vehicles sent to the Border Control Post at Sevington (a) go there directly and (b) do not unload their contents en route.

Daniel Zeichner:

The risk of legitimate commercial loads not attending Sevington is mitigated by robust, data-backed enforcement options.

Consignments called to Sevington for an inspection will have completed the necessary customs declarations and pre-notifications. These goods will not be legally cleared for sale or use within the UK until they have attended and been cleared at the Border Control Post (BCP).

Where the BCP has concerns, for example due to non-attendance, there are existing robust provisions for contacting the person responsible for the load, if it is then not possible for the goods to proceed to the BCP then the goods to be referred for inland controls by the local authority, enforceable through the data collected through those customs declarations and pre-notification.

Meanwhile, vehicles suspected to be carrying illegal imports (e.g. those for which customs declarations and pre-notification have not been made or suspected to have been made in bad faith) will continue to be stopped and dealt with by Border Force at the point of entry to the UK, not sent to the BCP.

■ **Plastics: Treaties**

Alex Sobel:

[\[11628\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether a Minister from his Department will attend the fifth round of negotiations on the Global Plastics Treaty in Busan, Korea.

Emma Hardy:

The fifth round of negotiations on the global plastic pollution treaty (INC-5), beginning on 25 November 2024 does not include a formal Ministerial segment. The UK will continue to be appropriately represented, and we will keep the need for Defra ministerial attendance at INC-5 under review

■ **Public Footpaths: River Thames**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[12049\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending the Thames Path to Essex along the Thames Estuary.

Emma Hardy:

There are no plans to extend the Thames Path National Trail to Essex along the Thames Estuary at this time.

■ Shipping: Exhaust Emissions**Siân Berry:**[\[11681\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the impact of emissions of nitrogen dioxide from ships at English ports on the annual mean concentration limits set out in the Air Quality Standards Regulations 2010.

Emma Hardy:

Domestic shipping contributed 11% to total UK nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) emissions in 2022. The Air Quality Plan for NO₂ addresses the primary cause of exceedances of the concentration limits set by the Air Quality Standards Regulations 2010 (AQSR): emissions from road transport.

The UK has been at the forefront of international action to reduce NO₂ emissions from shipping through work at the International Maritime Organization, and from 2021 the UK gained additional protection as additional restrictions on NO_x emissions came into force in the North Sea Emission Control Area.

■ Sustainable Farming Incentive**Josh Newbury:**[\[11617\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to reduce response times for applications to the Sustainable Farming Incentive.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Sustainable Farming Incentive has been expanded to now include Countryside Stewardship Mid-Tier actions, with around a further 80 new actions now available for customers to select. The scheme is in the late stages of the controlled rollout, something always normally undertaken when new schemes are implemented to make sure that everything is working as expected for everyone. This allows the Rural Payments Agency to monitor all aspects closely, covering not only the technical elements of the application process but also including customer guidance and support. carrying out additional checks on all applications before issuing agreements. These checks are being scaled back as we move through this initial controlled period, and the number of agreements being offered has increased since the start of October.

■ Water Abstraction

Mark Garnier:

[\[11262\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with Severn Water on reviewing the condition of the aquifers it abstracts water from.

Emma Hardy:

The Environment Agency works closely with Severn Trent Water on the current condition of aquifers and the action needed to achieve a sustainable level of abstraction.

Some aquifers in the Severn Trent Water supply area are over-abstracted and it is a challenge to get the right balance between protecting the environment while maintaining security of supply. To meet this challenge Severn Trent Water has one of the largest investment plans in the water industry to manage abstraction licences and groundwater quality.

A detailed assessment on the condition of the aquifers that Severn Trent abstracts may be found in the [Severn river basin district river basin management plan: updated 2022 - GOV.UK](#).

■ Wetlands: Worcester

Mark Garnier:

[\[11263\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department plans to take to restore the condition of groundwater-dependent wetlands to achieve Local Nature Recovery Targets in Worcester.

Mary Creagh:

Recovering nature is a key priority for this Government and wetland habitats are an important component of that.

Under the Restoring Sustainable Abstraction Programme, the impact of Public Water Supply groundwater abstraction on river flows and wetlands has been investigated in a number of areas across Worcestershire. Through this programme the Environment Agency have worked with Severn Trent Water to look at their impact on water levels and flow and have taken steps to address this. Natural England are also working closely with the Environment Agency and Severn Trent on the Water Industry National Environment Programme to deliver improvements to protected sites across Worcestershire.

Identifying priorities for nature is a key objective of Local Nature Recovery Strategies. Defra looks forward to seeing the finished Worcestershire Local Nature Recovery Strategy which is being prepared by Worcestershire County Council as the responsible authority.

■ Woburn Safari Park: Antelope**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[11245\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to visit Woburn Safari Park to see the new-born Eastern Mountain Bongo.

Mary Creagh:

Defra ministers have no plans to visit Woburn Safari Park but we congratulate Woburn Safari Park on the birth of one of the most critically endangered animals on the planet, an Eastern Mountain bongo calf and the work they are doing to protect this beautiful species.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ Brazil: Religious Freedom****Jim Shannon:**[\[11255\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps he is taking to help protect the religious freedom of adherents of African-influenced religions in Rio de Janeiro; and what discussions he has had with his Brazilian counterpart on religious intolerance in that region.

Catherine West:

The UK is committed to protecting freedom of religion or belief, as guaranteed under international human rights law. In July, alongside the Brazilian Minister for Racial Equality Anielle Franco, International Development Minister Dodds visited a 'Quilombo' in Rio de Janeiro home to a community targeted with violence driven by intolerance towards Afro-Brazilian religions. In October, the UK Gender and Equalities Envoy spoke to Minister Franco to further raise awareness of discrimination against marginalised Brazilian communities. The UK and Brazil have also committed to establishing an Open Societies and Human Rights Dialogue, which will deepen collaboration on this issue.

■ British National (Overseas): Children**Sir Iain Duncan Smith:**[\[11223\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to (a) ensure that children of British National (Overseas) passport holders (i) born in the UK and (ii) of Hong Kong descent will not be regarded as Chinese nationals by the People's Republic of China and (b) guarantee their protection under UK law.

Catherine West:

If you're a British national (overseas), your child is a British citizen if both: they were born in the UK, and you were a British citizen or settled in the UK (had 'indefinite leave to remain') when they were born. The FCDO provides consular assistance to British nationals abroad. In some cases, British Nationals of Hong Kong or Chinese

descent may be considered Chinese by the Chinese authorities meaning the consular assistance we can provide may be limited. As per our nationality guidance, we advise seeking legal advice where appropriate for individual cases.

■ **British National (Overseas): Mandatory Provident Fund**

Blair McDougall: [\[11085\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will issue guidance to (a) HSBC and (b) Standard Chartered on ensuring that British National (Overseas) passports are valid documents for Hong Kongers to use to secure early withdrawals of their Mandatory Provident Fund savings after permanently leaving Hong Kong.

Catherine West:

We are aware of the concerning reports that individuals who have chosen to take up the BN(O) visa route are having difficulties in the early drawing down of their Hong Kong MPF savings. We deeply value the UK's growing Hong Kong community and will address their concerns where we can. Whilst documentary requirements for withdrawing funds are a matter for the Hong Kong authorities, officials continue to raise this issue directly with the Hong Kong Government to encourage a pragmatic solution, and UK officials and Ministers continue to discuss the matter with the banks.

■ **British Overseas Territories: Companies**

Anna Dixon: [\[10641\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to Section 51 of the Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2018, what steps his Department has taken to help British Overseas Territories establish a publicly accessible register of the beneficial ownership of companies registered in their jurisdiction.

Stephen Doughty:

The FCDO has funded an expert NGO, Open Ownership, to provide technical assistance to Overseas Territory governments to establish publicly accessible registers of beneficial ownership (PARBO). The UK Government has also provided legal drafting assistance to some OTs and funding to Montserrat for costs associated with implementing their publicly accessible register. I have written to all OT Leaders and Governors including in person meetings over the last few days with the Governments in Anguilla and BVI, setting out my expectations of urgent progress. I was delighted Montserrat launched their PARBO on 11 October.

Since 2023, the UK has held several technical workshops on beneficial ownership with Overseas Territories. The most recent on 31 October 2024, following discussions between officials at the 'UK-OT Illicit Finance Dialogue' held on 07-09 October.

I look forward to further discussions at the Joint Ministerial Council in late November, where this will feature on the agenda.

■ China and Russia: Politicians**Mr Gregory Campbell:** [\[11552\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what information his Department holds on how many UK Parliamentarians are subject to sanctions by (a) Russia and (b) China.

Stephen Doughty:

There are currently six (previously seven) UK Parliamentarians who are sanctioned by China. Russia does not always publicly or privately inform HMG of those sanctioned. However, HMG is aware of over 460 UK Parliamentarians having been sanctioned by Russia since 2022 - the vast majority have been named publicly, while a small number have been sanctioned and informed privately.

■ China: Christianity**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[11243\]](#)

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

Catherine West:

The environment for freedom of religion or belief across China is restrictive, which includes the persecution of Christians.

This Government stands firm on human rights, including the right to freedom of religion or belief. The Foreign Secretary has raised human rights in every meeting with his Chinese counterpart, Foreign Minister Wang Yi, including during his recent visit to China on 18 October.

More broadly, this Government will champion freedom of religion or belief for all abroad. We will work to uphold the right to freedom of religion or belief through our position at the UN, G7 and other multilateral fora, and through bilateral engagement.

■ China: Religious Freedom**Jim Shannon:** [\[11254\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Chinese counterpart on the right to freedom of religion or belief.

Catherine West:

This Government stands firm on human rights, including the right to freedom of religion or belief. The Foreign Secretary has raised human rights with his Chinese counterpart Foreign Minister Wang Yi, including during his recent visit to China on 18 October.

■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Cultural Heritage

Nick Timothy:

[\[11648\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to decolonise the artwork or heritage assets in (a) his Department, (b) its Embassies and High Commissions overseas and (c) each of its Arm's Length Bodies.

Catherine West:

The FCDO continues to look at how best to engage with the historic artwork in its Grade One listed joint headquarters in King Charles Street, a process started under previous Foreign Secretaries. Works of art from the Government Art Collection are also selected for display in representational areas of UK and international Government buildings by Ministers, Diplomats and other Senior Civil Servants in consultation with Government Art Collection staff. This ensures that high-profile visitors experience British art that showcases the culture, creativity and values of contemporary Britain.

Artwork in Embassies, High Commissions and Residences overseas is the responsibility of our Ambassadors and High Commissioners who work closely with the Government Art Collection to best reflect the United Kingdom overseas. Similarly, the artwork in arms-length bodies of the FCDO is the responsibility of the chief executives of those organisations.

■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Official Cars

Charlie Dewhirst:

[\[11970\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 16 October 2024 to Question 7002 on Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Official Cars, how many journeys in cars provided by the London Car Service every day were undertaken by Ministers in his Department in the latest month for which data is available, broken down by week; and what proportion of those journeys were by electric car.

Charlie Dewhirst:

[\[11971\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answers of 16 October 2024 to Questions 7002 and 7003 on Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Official Cars, if he publish a list of senior officials with access to a government car; and whether those officials had access to a government car before the general election.

Catherine West:

For security reasons specific details of usage patterns and allocations including make and model of vehicles are not issued.

The arrangements relating to the usage of vehicles are set out in the Civil Service Management Code.

■ Gaza: Humanitarian Situation**Laurence Turner:**[\[11524\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the humanitarian situation in the north of Gaza.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The humanitarian situation in Gaza is unacceptable. The Foreign Secretary's statement to Parliament underlined our serious concern about northern Gaza. On 16th October I visited Al-Arish and saw the scale of humanitarian aid denied entry into Gaza, Israel can and must do more to ensure aid flows freely into Gaza. Very little aid is being allowed in, and civilians, medical personnel, hospitals and healthcare centres are coming under fire at an unacceptable rate. Israel must do much more to protect civilians, including the medics northern Gaza desperately needs, and let more aid in now. The Prime Minister met with President Biden, Chancellor Scholz, and President Macron in Berlin on 18 October to discuss the situation in northern Gaza and the Middle East more broadly. He made our position clear: "the world will not tolerate any more excuses on humanitarian assistance. Civilians in northern Gaza need food, now." We continue, alongside our partners, to press Israel to take action - Israel must show the world it is protecting civilians in compliance with international humanitarian law.

■ Gaza: Israel**Melanie Ward:**[\[11959\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps he is taking to support a cessation of military action in the north of Gaza.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The Foreign Secretary spoke to his Israeli counterpart most recently on 27 October, and reiterated that Israel must do much more to bring about an end to hostilities and get aid into Gaza. A political resolution has been a priority of this Government since day one. We have continued to use all diplomatic avenues to push for an immediate ceasefire, the release of all hostages, the upholding of international humanitarian law, protection of civilians including a rapid increase of aid into Gaza, respect for the UN mandate in Gaza, greater stability across the West Bank and a pathway to a two-state solution. We welcome news of the resumption of hostage talks in Doha, and we support the efforts of the US, Egyptian and Qatari negotiators.

■ Israel: F-35 Aircraft**Andy McDonald:**[\[11601\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had recent discussions with his (a) US counterpart and (b) the F-35 Joint Programme Office on the (i) management of the global supply chain and (ii) sale of (A) F-35s and (B) UK-made F-35 components to Israel.

Andy McDonald: [\[11602\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had discussions with (a) his US counterparts and (b) the F-35 Joint Programme Office on the steps necessary to limit the availability of UK component parts in the F-35 Global Supply Chain to exclude Israel without impacting other partner nations.

Andy McDonald: [\[11603\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had discussions with F-35 Global Supply Chain partner nations on the (a) management of the Global Supply Chain and (b) sale of F-35s and UK-made F-35 components to Israel.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

We have regular discussions with our international counterparts, including the US, on a range of issues relating to the ongoing conflict in the Middle East. Our licensing decisions are based on our own processes. As the Foreign Secretary made clear in his statement on 2 September to Parliament, exports to the F-35 Programme are excluded from this suspension.

■ Israel: Palestinians

Abtisam Mohamed: [\[10864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of alleged reports of (a) sexual and (b) gender-based violence against Palestinian women and girls by Israeli Defence Forces.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

We are deeply concerned by allegations of sexual and gender-based violence against Palestinians and the disproportionate impact of the conflict on women, children and vulnerable populations. The UK unequivocally condemns any alleged violations and abuses, including sexual violence, and calls for all reports to be fully investigated to ensure justice for victims and survivors. A member of the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI) Team of Experts will support with a gender-responsive and survivor-centred response to reports of sexual violence in both Israel and the OPTs. Following our decision to suspend some arms exports to Israel on 2 September, the Foreign Secretary has raised and continues to raise our concerns around International Humanitarian Law compliance with the Israeli government.

■ Lebanon: British Nationals Abroad

Samantha Niblett: [\[11779\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help support the relatives of British citizens residing in Lebanon.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The safety of British nationals is our number one priority. Our consular teams continue to work in support of British nationals. We have well-rehearsed plans in place, drawing on military and civilian resources across government ready to aid consular efforts if the situation deteriorates further. We chartered a limited number of flights from Lebanon to support British nationals to leave the country in response to the deteriorating security situation recently. The latest UK charter flight left on 6 October but availability on commercial options remain. We continue to encourage British nationals who remain in Lebanon to leave while these commercial options remain available. FCDO continues to advise against all travel to Lebanon.

■ Pakistan: Religious Freedom**Ruth Jones:**[\[12113\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what his assessment he has made of the adequacy of the international community's response to (a) attacks on and (b) threats against (i) Shia Muslims, (ii) Christians, (iii) Ahmadis, (iv) Hindus, (v) Sikhs and (vi) other religious minorities in Pakistan.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK strongly condemns all instances of hate or violence directed towards minority religious communities in Pakistan, including Shia Muslims, Ahmadis, Christians, Hindus and Sikhs. We work alongside the wider international community, including foreign governments and civil society organisations, to promote human rights in partnership with 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. Alongside our diplomatic engagement, we continue to support projects promoting the rights of religious minorities in Pakistan, including facilitating interfaith dialogue and protecting marginalised communities from online hate speech.

Ruth Jones:[\[12114\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary's meeting with Pakistani Human Rights Minister on 4 September 2024 on violations of freedom of religion or belief in that country; and when the Parliamentary Under-Secretary next plans to meet (a) that Minister and (b) his Pakistani counterpart.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

I underlined the importance of promoting religious tolerance and harmony in a productive conversation with Pakistan's Human Rights Minister, Azam Tarar, on 4 September. I regularly meet with my counterparts in the Pakistani Government, including the Human Rights and Law Minister, Interior Minister and Foreign Minister. On 28 October, the British High Commissioner to Pakistan raised concerns around threats of violence directed towards Ahmadiyya Muslims in Pakistan with the Chief

Minister of Punjab, Maryam Nawaz Sharif. We will continue raise freedom of religion or belief in future engagements with the Government of Pakistan.

■ **Palestinians: Disability**

Abtisam Mohamed:

[\[10863\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on creating a medical corridor to enable disabled Palestinians in Gaza to be treated in (a) East Jerusalem and (b) the Occupied West Bank.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

As the Prime Minister said in his statement on 28 October, the humanitarian situation in Gaza is unacceptable. We remain gravely concerned about deteriorating health provision, particularly in northern Gaza. We have pressed Israel at senior levels to urgently establish sustained, safe and timely passage for patients who need medical or surgical interventions not available in Gaza. Most recently, the Foreign Secretary's Representative for Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territories raised the issue of medical evacuations for injured Palestinians with the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs. During my visit to Al Arish, Egypt on 16 October, where I announced £1 million of UK assistance for Egypt's support to medically evacuated Gazans, I saw that many tonnes of lifesaving aid continue to be denied entry into Gaza by Israel. The UK is supporting the provision of essential healthcare to Palestinian civilians, including through field hospitals operated by UK-Med in Gaza, and through support to the Egyptian health ministry to care for medically evacuated Palestinians.

■ **Red Sea: Shipping**

Dr Neil Hudson:

[\[11385\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps he is taking to help ensure access to shipping routes in the Red Sea.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK and our partners have collectively sent an unambiguous message: the Houthis' attacks on shipping are illegal, dangerous, and destabilising, and we are determined to put a stop to them.

The Foreign Secretary and I continue to work closely with regional and international partners to increase pressure on the Houthis. We remain supportive of US action to degrade Houthi capability and welcome the continued operation of the EU's Operation ASPIDES.

We will always defend the principle of freedom of navigation and British lives at sea.

■ Spain: Floods**Alicia Kearns:**[\[12092\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has made an estimate of the number of UK nationals affected by the floods in Spain.

Stephen Doughty:

We have passed on our sincere condolences to the Spanish government following the devastating floods that have hit the country. We are in contact with the local authorities in Spain to offer our support and determine the number of British Nationals impacted by the catastrophe. The FCDO is providing consular support to a number of British nationals who have been affected by the floods and we encourage anyone seeking our assistance to contact us on 020 7008 5000 from the UK or +34 917 146 300 from Spain.

Alicia Kearns:[\[12167\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has (a) offered assistance to the Spanish Government following the recent flooding and (b) held discussions with his Spanish counterpart on the floods.

Stephen Doughty:

The Foreign Secretary and I were shocked and saddened to see the devastating scenes in Spain, and by the deaths and damage caused by heavy flooding. The Foreign Secretary has been in touch with the Foreign Minister of Spain to express the UK's condolences and offer our support, the Prime Minister and I have also contacted our counterparts. Our thoughts are with all those who have been affected. The British Embassy in Madrid and Consulates in affected areas are providing consular support to affected British Nationals.

■ UK Special Representative for Climate Change**John Glen:**[\[11266\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the new Special Representative for Climate is a direct ministerial appointment; what the terms of reference were for this appointment; and whether she has made any declaration of interest.

Catherine West:

The Special Representative for Climate is a Direct Ministerial Appointment.

The Special Representative's Terms of Reference are available on gov.uk.

The Special Representative has made a declaration of interest.

■ UNRWA: Finance

Ben Lake:

[\[12137\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 14 October 2024 to Question 7336 on Israel: Palestinians, what criteria his Department uses to assess the UK's funding for UNRWA following the resumption of funding in July 2024.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

As the Minister for Development reiterated in the House on 29 October, we expect UNRWA to uphold the highest standards of neutrality. We are providing £1 million of the UK's funding support for UNRWA to implement the recommendations of Catherine Colonna's Independent Review of Mechanisms and Procedures to Ensure Adherence by UNRWA to the Humanitarian Principle of Neutrality. Separately, a Memorandum of Understanding governs UK financial support to UNRWA. We continue to monitor UNRWA's activity through due diligence and annual assessments.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Autism: Diagnosis

Alex Mayer:

[\[11374\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of variations in levels of positive autism diagnoses at NHS foundation trusts.

Stephen Kinnock:

It is the responsibility of integrated care boards (ICBs) to make available appropriate provision to meet the health and care needs of their local population, including autism assessments and diagnoses, in line with relevant National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines.

NHS England is aware of the variation between services that provide autism assessments in terms of the proportion of assessments which result in a diagnosis of autism. On 5 April 2023, NHS England published a national framework and operational guidance to help ICBs and the National Health Service to deliver improved outcomes for children, young people, and adults referred to an autism assessment service. In 2024/25, £4.3 million is available nationally to improve services for autistic children and young people, including autism assessment services.

■ Bowel Cancer

Tom Gordon:

[\[11454\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce waiting times for the (a) diagnosis and (b) treatment of bowel cancer.

Karin Smyth:

Lord Darzi's report has set out the scale of the challenges we face in fixing the National Health Service, and the need to improve cancer waiting time performance and cancer survival. In particular, he has highlighted the need to improve the number of patients starting their treatment within 62 days of referral, and increase the number of patients diagnosed at an earlier stage.

The NHS will maximise the pace of the roll-out of additional diagnostic capacity, delivering the final year of the three-year investment plan for establishing Community Diagnostic Centres (CDCs) and ensuring timely implementation of the new CDC locations, and upgrades to existing CDCs, with capacity prioritised for cancer diagnostics.

We are committed to transforming diagnostic services, and will support the NHS to increase capacity to meet the demand for diagnostic services through investment in new capacity, including magnetic resonance imaging and computed tomography scanners. Furthermore, in 2024/25, we will continue to extend the NHS Bowel Cancer Screening Programme to additional cohorts, specifically to 50 to 52-year olds.

■ Brain: Injuries**Josh Babarinde:**[\[11350\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has taken recent steps to implement an advanced brain injury strategy.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Government wants a society where every person, including those with a long-term condition such as an acquired brain injury (ABI), receives high-quality, compassionate continuity of care, with their families and carers supported.

We will change the National Health Service so that it becomes not just a sickness service, but a service that is able to prevent ill health in the first place. This will help us be better prepared for the change in the nature of disease, and allow our services to focus more on the management of chronic, long-term conditions, like ABIs, including rehabilitation where appropriate. A decision on the next steps on ABI at the national level will be taken in the coming months.

■ Brain: Tumours**Chris Bloore:**[\[11387\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to introduce a National Brain Tumour Strategy.

Dr Ben Spencer:[\[11652\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to publish a brain tumour strategy.

Dr Ben Spencer:

[\[11653\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what meetings he has had with (a) NHS clinical teams specialising in the care and treatment of brain tumours, (b) researchers, (c) patients and (d) patient group representatives on brain tumours.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 4 November 2024]: Ministers regularly meet with a wide range of cancer partners, including brain cancer charities and patient groups. Ministers also regularly meet with teams from the National Health Service, including clinical specialists where this is appropriate. These meetings are valuable opportunities to discuss raising awareness, screening, treatments, innovation, and the care experiences of people living with cancer.

The Department, NHS England, and the National Institute for Health Care and Research (NIHR) are taking several steps to help improve outcomes for brain tumour patients. NHS England is committed to ensuring that all cancer patients are offered Holistic Needs Assessment and Personalised Care and Support Planning, ensuring care is focused on what matters most to each person. As well as this, all patients, including those with secondary cancers, will have access to the right expertise and support, including a Clinical Nurse Specialist or other support worker.

Further to this, in September 2024, the NIHR announced new research funding opportunities for brain cancer research, spanning both adult and paediatric populations. This includes a national NIHR Brain Tumour Research Consortium, to ensure the most promising research opportunities are made available to adult and child patients, and a new funding call to generate high quality evidence in brain tumour care, support, and rehabilitation. We will get the NHS diagnosing cancer, including brain tumours, 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.

■ Defibrillators: Registration

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[11335\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether automated external defibrillators installed on Government buildings are registered onto The Circuit national defibrillator network.

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[11336\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is taking steps to encourage community organisations in (a) Warrington and (b) the rest of England to register their automated external defibrillators onto The Circuit national defibrillator network.

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[11337\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department requires recipients of the Community Automated External Defibrillator Fund to register their automated external defibrillators onto The Circuit national defibrillator network.

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[11339\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department plans to take to (a) help increase survival rates from out-of-hospital cardiac arrests and (b) increase the availability of defibrillators in Warrington.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Department does not hold data on automated external defibrillators (AEDs) installed on Government buildings, or whether those AEDs are registered on the Circuit. The Circuit is a national defibrillator and ambulance service database, operated independently by the British Heart Foundation in collaboration with the National Health Service.

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

Once installed, these AEDS are required to be registered on the Circuit. Upon registration, contact details are provided for the nominated AED guardian, or guardians, who are local to the defibrillator's location and conduct checks when required. The registered guardian receives an automatic email or text notification if the defibrillator has potentially been used, therefore prompting the guardian to conduct a check on the AED.

■ Dementia

Chris Bloore:

[\[11380\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many integrated care boards had strategies in place to meet the needs of local populations affected by dementia (a) as of 28 October 2024, (b) in 2023 and (c) in 2022.

Stephen Kinnock:

NHS England is committed to improving diagnosis rates and recovering them to the national ambition for two thirds of people with dementia to have a formal diagnosis. This commitment is included in the operational planning guidance for 2024/25, giving clear direction for integrated care boards (ICBs) to prioritise dementia.

Local authorities are required to provide or arrange services that meet the social care needs of the local population, including carers, under the Care Act 2014. It is the responsibility of ICBs to work with the third sector in their geographical area to offer

services that meet the needs of their population. NHS England would expect ICBs to take account of the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's guidelines when commissioning services for their local population.

■ Dementia: Nurses

Chris Bloore: [\[11381\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many Primary Care Networks have used the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme to fund enhanced practice nurse roles to deliver specialist dementia nursing support in primary care.

Stephen Kinnock:

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

The Additional Role Reimbursement Scheme aims to grow and diversify the general practice workforce. The scheme provides funding for additional roles in primary care networks, to help create bespoke multi-disciplinary teams.

Chris Bloore: [\[11382\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of specialist dementia nurses working in Acute Trusts.

Stephen Kinnock:

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

■ Dental Services: Buckinghamshire

Callum Anderson: [\[11426\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS dentists are available to residents in (a) north Buckinghamshire and (b) Milton Keynes.

Stephen Kinnock:

The responsibility for commissioning primary care services, including National Health Service dentistry, to meet the needs of the local population has been delegated to integrated care boards (ICBs) across England. For North Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes this is the NHS Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes ICB.

In the years 2023/24, the number of dentists who performed NHS work in the NHS Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes ICB was 481, which is equivalent to 47.4 dentists per 100,000 population. The average number of dentists per 100,000 at an ICB level in the same period was 49.8 dentists per 100,000 population. This data is published on NHS Business Services Authority, and is available at the following link:

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

■ Fertility

Rupert Lowe: [11432]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he is taking steps to tackle changes in the level of fertility rates.

Karin Smyth:

No specific steps are being taken to make changes in the level of fertility rates.

However, the Government will be receiving advice on the provision of National Health Service funded fertility services, and will be considering future policy options shortly.

■ First Aid

Charlotte Nichols: [11338]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will take steps under the NHS 10-Year Plan to improve public access to first aid (a) training and (b) equipment to help (i) increase the out-of-hospital cardiac arrest survival rate and (ii) reduce health inequalities.

Andrew Gwynne:

The 10-Year Health Plan will consider the change needed to meet the three health mission goals of; a fairer system where everyone lives well for longer: a National Health Service that is there when people need it; and fewer lives lost to the biggest killers. Meeting these goals will ensure a better health service for everyone, regardless of condition or service area.

We will carefully be considering policies with input from the public, patients, health staff, and our stakeholders as we develop the plan.

■ Fractures: Health Services

Jim Shannon: [11860]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress his Department has made on providing universal access to fracture liaison services by 2030.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Government and NHS England support the clinical case for services which help to prevent fragility fractures and to support patients who sustain them. Fracture Liaison Services are a globally recognised care model and can reduce the risk of refracture for people at risk of osteoporosis by up to 40%, depending on the fracture type and population considered.

That is why expansion of Fracture Liaison Services is a key priority for the Department and officials are working closely with NHS England to consider a range of options exploring the most effective ways to ensure access to these important preventative services across the country.

■ Glioblastoma: Research

Manuela Perteghella:

[\[11366\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will commit funding for research into glioblastoma brain tumours.

Andrew Gwynne:

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

In the five years between 2018/19 and 2022/23, the NIHR spent over £11.3 million on research projects focussed on brain tumours. In addition, our wider investments in NIHR research infrastructure, including facilities, services, and the research workforce, further allows us to leverage research funding from other donors and organisations. These investments are estimated to be £31.5 million, between 2018/19 and 2022/23, and have enabled 227 brain cancer research studies to take place in the same period.

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

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

We are committed to furthering our investment and support for high-quality brain tumour research, ensuring that the funding is used in the most meaningful and impactful way.

■ Health Services: Standards

Helen Morgan:

[\[12175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve public health services focusing on (a) smoking cessation, (b) drug and alcohol and (c) children's health.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Government is committed to improving public health as part of delivering a shift from sickness to prevention. As part of this, the Public Health Grant funds a range of preventative interventions across the country, including local authority-led stop smoking services, local authority-led alcohol and drug treatment services, and

services which promote and support children's health. The National Health Service's 10-Year Health Plan will ensure that children and their families are cared for by the right professional, when and where they need it.

The Government is also delivering additional targeted interventions which will promote public health. On smoking, this includes delivering the national smoke-free pregnancy incentives scheme, and working to ensure that all hospitals integrate opt-out smoking cessation interventions into routine care.

For drug and alcohol treatment, the Government continues to invest in improvements to local alcohol and drug treatment and recovery services to enable people to access high quality help and support, should they need it. In addition, the Government has allocated local authorities a further £267 million in 2024/25 to improve the quality and capacity of drug and alcohol treatment and recovery, alongside £105 million made available by the Department of Health and Social Care, the Department for Work and Pensions, and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to improve treatment pathways and recovery, housing, and employment outcomes for people with drug and alcohol problems.

The Government is committed to raising the healthiest generation of children ever. There are a range of public health services through which children and their families can access support. This includes the Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme, which places at its heart preventative health services from conception to the age of two years old, in 75 local authorities with high levels of deprivation. In addition, the Healthy Child Programme provides targeted support, offering universal, personalised services provided by a health visiting team for those aged zero to five years old.

■ Health Visitors

Daisy Cooper:

[\[11343\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the adequacy of the number of health visitors available to support babies with special educational needs and disabilities.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Government is committed to raising the healthiest generation of children. The child health workforce, including health visitors, is central to how we support all families to give their child the best start in life. Their contact with parents, carers, and children of all ages provides vital advice and support and helps ensure that health and development needs are identified early, including those children with special educational needs and disabilities.

We are committed to training the staff we need to ensure people, their carers, and their families are cared for by the right professional, when and where they need it. We will want to assure ourselves, and the National Health Service, that the current workforce plan will deliver the reform needed. We will need to do this in light of the 10-Year Health Plan.

■ Heart Diseases

Jim Shannon:

[\[11575\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce waiting lists for cardiac treatments.

Karin Smyth:

Tackling waiting lists is a key part of our Health Mission. The waiting list for England at the end of August stood at 7.64 million patient pathways, with 418,669 waiting for treatment for cardiology.

We will deliver an extra 40,000 operations, scans, and appointments per week, including in cardiology services, as a first step in our commitment to ensuring patients can expect to be treated within 18 weeks, supported by new funding announced at the Autumn Budget. We will be supporting National Health Service trusts to deliver these through innovation, sharing best practice to increase productivity and efficiency, and ensuring the best value is delivered.

The Government is committed to putting patients first. This means making sure that patients across all specialities, including cardiology, are seen on time, and ensuring that people have the best possible experience during their care. We know that waiting lists are a challenge across the United Kingdom and the Government is keen to take a collaborative approach so that there is strong recovery across all four nations.

■ HIV Infection

Josh Babarinde:

[\[11359\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to reduce levels of stigma experienced by people with HIV within the health and social care system.

Andrew Gwynne:

The latest Positive Voices Report published by the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) in January 2024 made it clear that stigma continues to be experienced by people living with HIV.

HIV Prevention England, funded by the Department, hosted a HIV Stigma Symposium in March 2024 which brought together approximately 100 community experts, activists, healthcare professionals, and affected individuals to discuss the impact of HIV stigma. This showcased the innovation and effectiveness of stigma reduction strategies being implemented across the country.

The Department, the UKHSA, NHS England, and a broad range of system partners are developing a new HIV Action Plan which will include a focus on stigma. We aim to publish this by summer 2025.

Josh Babarinde:

[\[11360\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve NHS workforce training on HIV (a) awareness and (b) treatment.

Andrew Gwynne:

The standard of training for health care professionals is the responsibility of the independent, statutory health care regulatory bodies and higher education institutions who set the outcome standards expected at undergraduate level and determine the content of their curriculum, in line with General Medical Council guidelines.

Individual National Health Service trusts are responsible for investing in post-registration training to ensure that staff can effectively deliver sexual and reproductive health services, including HIV treatment. In addition, NHS England's e-Learning for Healthcare includes a range of programmes and material which focus on HIV.

The Department, the UK Health Security Agency, NHS England, and a broad range of system partners are developing a new HIV Action Plan and considering the next steps needed for the workforce within it. We aim to publish this by summer 2025.

Hospitals: Buckinghamshire**Callum Anderson:**[\[11428\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of patients at (a) Milton Keynes University Hospital and (b) Stoke Mandeville Hospital are discharged to social care.

Stephen Kinnock:

The data below shows the proportion of patients who were discharged via pathways 1, 2, and 3. These pathways include both National Health Service and local authority funded services, with each pathway being defined as follows:

- pathway 1 involves discharge at home, or to a usual place of residence, with new or additional health or social care needs, or both;
- pathway 2 involves discharge to a community bed-based setting which has dedicated recovery support, with new or additional health or social care support, or both, required in the short-term to help the person recover in a community bed-based setting, before they are ready to either live independently at home or receive longer-term or ongoing care and support; and
- pathway 3 involves discharge to a new residential or nursing home setting, for people who are considered likely to need long-term residential or nursing home care, and should be used only in exceptional circumstances.

We do not collect hospital level data on discharge pathways, therefore this data is not available for Stoke Mandeville Hospital. However, we do collect data by trust. For the Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust, which includes Stoke Mandeville Hospital, in September 2024, 4% of patients were discharged on pathway 1, 0.4% on pathway 2, and 0.4% on pathway 3.

For the Milton Keynes University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust in September 2024, 7.3% of patients were discharged on pathway 1, 1.3% of patients on pathway 2, and 1.3% on pathway 3.

■ Jordan's Syndrome

Tom Hayes:

[\[11708\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve (a) care and (b) treatment for people with Jordan's Syndrome.

Andrew Gwynne:

The government is committed to improving the lives of those living with rare diseases, such as Jordan's Syndrome. The UK Rare Diseases Framework sets out four priorities collaboratively developed with the rare disease community: these include better coordination of care and improving access to specialist care, treatments, and drugs. We remain committed to delivering under the Framework and will publish an annual England action plan in 2025 which will report on progress.

Jordan's syndrome is a rare and complex neurodevelopmental disorder and it is important to get a rapid and accurate diagnosis to ensure timely access to treatment and care. Currently NHS England offers genomic testing for two of the genes associated with Jordan's Syndrome and any healthcare professional can refer their patient for testing based on their clinical indication. The NHS Clinical Genomic Services (CGS) deliver a comprehensive clinical genomic and counselling service and have a key role in providing care and coordinating care being provided by other clinical specialties to patients and their families. As part of the NHS CGS, the patient and their family will access diagnosis, and management relevant to their condition, but also receive support and guidance so that they are able to understand their condition, its implications, and their options in relation to reproduction, screening, prevention and clinical management.

■ Long Covid

David Smith:

[\[11719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the NHS is taking to improve support for people suffering from long covid.

Andrew Gwynne:

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

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

Over the last five years, the Government, through the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) and the Medical Research Council (MRC), has invested more than £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. Further information on the research into long COVID commissioned through the NIHR can be found at the following link:

<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/about-us/what-we-do/covid-19/long-COVID>

The NIHR and MRC are committed to funding high-quality research to understand the causes, consequences and treatment of long COVID, and are actively exploring next steps for research in these areas.

■ **Mental Health Act 1983**

Tom Hayes:

[10290]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the impact of the Mental Health Act 1983 on individuals with complex mental health needs.

Stephen Kinnock:

The independent review: Modernising the Mental Health Act, chaired by Professor Sir Simon Wessely, and published in 2018, provided an assessment of how the Act is working, its impact on those detained under the Act, including individuals with complex needs, and what improvements are needed to make it fit for the 21st century.

The Act has an important role in our society, and it is crucial to get the balance right to ensure that people get the support and treatment they need when necessary, for their own protection or that of others. However, we recognise that detention under the Act can be a traumatic experience, and more needs to be done to improve this.

The Mental Health Bill announced in the King's Speech will deliver the Government's commitment to modernise the Mental Health Act 1983. The Bill will give patients greater choice, autonomy, enhanced rights and support, and ensure everyone is treated with dignity and respect throughout treatment. The Bill will be published when Parliamentary time allows.

Tom Hayes:

[10291]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the Mental Health Act 1983 on black people.

Stephen Kinnock:

We know that rates of detention under the Mental Health Act 1983 for Black people were more than three times higher than that for White people in 2023/24, with use of Community Treatment Orders for Black people being seven times higher than for

White people. Black people were also the most likely to be subject to repeated detention, with 20.1 per cent of this group being detained more than once. More information is available in the NHS England Mental Health Services Monthly Statistics, Performance June 2024, which are available at the following link:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/mental-health-services-monthly-statistics/performance-june-2024>

The NHS Patient and Carer Race Equality Framework arose out of Professor Sir Simon Wessely's Independent Review: Modernising the Mental Health Act, and became mandatory for all mental health trusts in the National Health Service from April 2024. It supports mental health trusts to improve access, experience and outcomes and reduce disparities for people from ethnic minority groups. All mental health trusts will be required to have a framework in place by March 2025.

The Mental Health Bill announced in the King's Speech will deliver the Government's manifesto commitment to modernise the Mental Health Act 1983. It will give patients greater choice, autonomy, enhanced rights and support, and ensure everyone is treated with dignity and respect throughout treatment. The Bill will be published when Parliamentary time allows.

Pilots are currently underway to test models of Culturally Appropriate Advocacy, which provide tailored support to hundreds of people from ethnic minorities to better understand their rights when detained under the Act.

■ Mental Health Services: Milton Keynes

Callum Anderson:

[\[11425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of patients referred to mental health services in Milton Keynes are seen within the target waiting time.

Stephen Kinnock:

The following table shows information on the agreed mental health waiting time standards relating to the NHS Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care Board, broken down by the services provided, and compared to their actual performance:

SERVICE	WAITING TIME STANDARD	LATEST REPORTING PERIOD	PERFORMANCE
Early Intervention in Psychosis	60% of referrals entering treatment within two weeks	June to August 2024	73%
NHS Talking Therapies	75% of referrals that finished a course of treatment waiting six	August 2024	98%

SERVICE	WAITING TIME STANDARD	LATEST REPORTING PERIOD	PERFORMANCE
	weeks or less for first treatment contact		
NHS Talking Therapies	95% of referrals that finished a course of treatment waiting 18 weeks or less for first treatment contact	August 2024	100%
Children and young people's eating disorder services	95% of children and young people referred for assessment or treatment for an eating disorder receiving National Institute for Health and Care Excellence approved treatment within one week if the case is urgent, and four weeks if the case is routine or non-urgent.	June to August 2024	Data suppressed due to fewer than five referrals entering treatment during the reporting period

Source: NHS England.

■ Mental Health Services: Waiting Lists

Andrew Cooper:

[\[11531\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate he has made of the average waiting time for mental health treatment in (a) Mid Cheshire constituency, (b) Cheshire and (c) England in each of the last five years.

Stephen Kinnock:

The following table shows both the mean and median average waiting times, measured in days, for mental health treatment for adults in the Cheshire East local authority, for the last five years:

WAITING TIME BETWEEN REFERRAL AND SECOND CONTACT FOR ADULTS IN THE CHESHIRE EAST LOCAL AUTHORITY

Year in which contact occurred	Number of adult referrals with a second contact in the year	Mean average waiting time	Median average waiting time
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WAITING TIME BETWEEN REFERRAL AND SECOND CONTACT FOR ADULTS IN THE CHESHIRE EAST LOCAL AUTHORITY

2019/20	5,262	148.8	51
2020/21	5,986	122.2	34
2021/22	4,285	156.3	43.5
2022/23	3,005	234.3	69
2023/24	5,165	206.4	51

Similarly, the following table shows both the mean and median average waiting times, measured in days, for mental health treatment for children and young people aged under 18 years old in the Cheshire East local authority, for the last five years:

WAITING TIME BETWEEN REFERRAL AND FIRST CONTACT FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AGED UNDER 18 YEARS OLD IN THE CHESHIRE EAST LOCAL AUTHORITY

Year in which contact occurred	Number of child referrals with a first contact in the year	Mean average waiting time	Median average waiting time
2019/20	3,244	133.5	28
2020/21	2,854	71.1	17
2021/22	2,810	139.6	27
2022/23	3,615	197.1	46
2023/24	4,145	104.3	30

The following table shows both the mean and median average waiting times, measured in days, for mental health treatment for adults in the Cheshire East and Cheshire West, and Chester local authorities combined, for the last five years:

WAITING TIME BETWEEN REFERRAL AND SECOND CONTACT FOR ADULTS FOR THE CHESHIRE EAST AND CHESHIRE WEST, AND CHESTER LOCAL AUTHORITIES COMBINED

Year in which contact occurred	Number of adult referrals with a second contact in the year	Mean average waiting time	Median average waiting time
2019/20	10,328	132.9	47
2020/21	10,474	115.6	27

WAITING TIME BETWEEN REFERRAL AND SECOND CONTACT FOR ADULTS FOR THE CHESHIRE EAST AND CHESHIRE WEST, AND CHESTER LOCAL AUTHORITIES COMBINED

2021/22	7,645	164.8	48
2022/23	6,210	218.1	56
2023/24	10,005	157.9	34

In addition, the following table shows both the mean and median average waiting times, measured in days, for mental health treatment for children and young people aged under 18 years old in the Cheshire East and Cheshire West, and Chester local authorities combined, for the last five years:

WAITING TIME BETWEEN REFERRAL AND FIRST CONTACT FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AGED UNDER 18 YEARS OLD FOR CHESHIRE EAST, AND CHESHIRE WEST AND CHESTER LOCAL AUTHORITIES COMBINED

Year in which contact occurred	Number of child referrals with a first contact in the year	Mean average waiting time	Median average waiting time
2019/20	5,300	106.0	27
2020/21	4,732	63.1	14.5
2021/22	4,510	133.2	26
2022/23	5,715	172.9	44
2023/24	7,310	83.3	30

The following table shows both the mean and median average waiting times, measured in days, for mental health treatment for adults in England, for the last five years:

WAITING TIME BETWEEN REFERRAL AND SECOND CONTACT FOR ADULTS IN ENGLAND

Year in which contact occurred	Number of adult referrals with a second contact in the year	Mean average waiting time	Median average waiting time
2019/20	1,137,746	82.1	20
2020/21	1,139,423	69.7	13
2021/22	1,188,529	63.6	15
2022/23	1,176,748	68.2	19

 WAITING TIME BETWEEN REFERRAL AND SECOND CONTACT FOR ADULTS IN ENGLAND

2023/24	1,289,417	72.3	20
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Finally, the following table shows both the mean and median average waiting times, measured in days, for mental health treatment for children and young people aged under 18 years old in England, for the last five years:

 WAITING TIME BETWEEN REFERRAL AND FIRST CONTACT FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AGED UNDER 18 YEARS OLD IN ENGLAND

Year in which contact occurred	Number of child referrals with a first contact in the year	Mean average waiting time	Median average waiting time
2019/20	567,236	81.6	13
2020/21	568,703	75.3	7
2021/22	652,869	65.0	11
2022/23	674,702	69.7	13
2023/24	744,506	75.4	14

Source: Mental Health Services Dataset (MHSDS), NHS England

Notes:

1. waiting time is measured in days;
2. this data differs from published waiting times because rather than looking at just community mental health it looks at the full scope of data in the MHSDS, so will include neurodevelopmental referrals across all ages, and neurocognitive referrals, including a large number of dementia diagnostic referrals for adults, as well as other smaller areas of provision, such as services for gender identity and for addictions; and
3. the statistics including waiting times for adult services for Talking Therapies for Anxiety and Depression are reported via a separate dataset and have not been included here.

■ **Milton Keynes University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust: Diagnosis**

Callum Anderson:

[\[11427\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce waiting lists for diagnostic services at Milton Keynes University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust.

Karin Smyth:

Cutting waiting lists, including for diagnostic tests, is a key priority for the Government. We will provide the number of computed tomography (CT), magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), and other tests that are needed to increase capacity and reduce elective and cancer waits. It is unacceptable that, as of August 2024, 23.9% of patients are waiting over six weeks for a test, against an objective in the 2024/25 Operational Planning Guidance for no more than 5% to wait six weeks.

The Milton Keynes University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust has implemented several initiatives to improve access to diagnostic services and to meet the needs of its growing community. This includes the opening of the Lloyds Court Community Diagnostic Centre (CDC) in Milton Keynes and the Whitehouse Health Centre CDC in Whitehouse, as part of national efforts to bring essential diagnostic services into the local community.

Construction has also commenced for a new three-storey imaging centre at the new Women's and Children's Hospital through the New Hospital Programme. This facility will provide a modern central location for several imaging diagnostic services, and will include two MRI scanners, two CT scanners, and a new Ultrasound Department. Locating imaging services in one place will improve efficiency and enhance patient's experience of the service.

■ NHS**Charlotte Nichols:**[\[11330\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the findings of Lord Darzi's Independent investigation of the NHS in England, published on 12 September 2024, what steps his Department is taking to strengthen NHS resilience; and whether he plans to collaborate with auxiliary support partners such as St John Ambulance to help (a) reduce NHS pressures and (b) improve health outcomes.

Charlotte Nichols:[\[11332\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to take steps to enable Integrated Care Boards to draw on surge capacity from auxiliary organisations such as St John Ambulance to help support NHS emergency preparedness.

Karin Smyth:

The independent investigation into National Health Service performance, published on 12 September, is helping to inform a 10-Year Health Plan to reform the NHS and build a health service that is more resilient and fit for the future.

It is for local integrated care boards, in partnership with providers and stakeholders, to take decisions on how NHS services, including those delivered by the voluntary and charitable sectors, can best meet the needs of their local populations, and help improve patient outcomes.

■ NHS: Drugs

Susan Murray:

[\[11398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that suitable stockpiles of essential medications are available to the NHS to limit the effects of production shortages.

Karin Smyth:

Whilst stock of a small number of medicines is held by the Government, for example as a result of COVID-19 preparedness, stockpiling essential medicines centrally is not a tool that the Department uses to limit the effects of production shortages. While we can't always prevent supply issues from occurring, we have a range of well-established processes and tools to manage them when they do arise, to mitigate risks to patients. These include close and regular engagement with suppliers, use of alternative strengths or forms of a medicine to allow patients to remain on the same product, expediting regulatory procedures, sourcing unlicensed imports from abroad, adding products to the restricted exports and hoarding list, use of Serious Shortage Protocols, and issuing National Health Service communications to provide management advice and information on the issue to healthcare professionals, including pharmacists, so they can advise and support their patients.

■ Nurses: Finance

Jayne Kirkham:

[\[12219\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of making retrospective payments to student nurses who were not eligible for the £5,000 annual training grant through the NHS Learning Support Fund since 2019.

Karin Smyth:

The Department has no plans to make retrospective payments to student nurses who were not eligible for the £5,000 annual training grant through the NHS Learning Support Fund since 2019.

■ Public Health: Finance

Dr Danny Chambers:

[\[12178\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has had discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on raising the public health grant allocated to local authorities.

Andrew Gwynne:

My Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, has discussed the Department's settlement for 2025/26 with my Rt Hon. Friend, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, as part of the Spending Review process.

We will confirm 2025/26 local authority public health grant allocations at the earliest opportunity, and will confirm future years' allocations as part of the forthcoming Spending Review next year.

■ Public Health: Investment Returns

Helen Morgan: [\[12176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the implications for his Department's policies of the report entitled Return on investment of public health interventions: a systematic review, published in March 2017. .

Andrew Gwynne:

We agree with the overall systematic review findings that local and national preventative public health interventions can be highly cost effective. The systematic review sets out analysis and evidence which has informed the Department's own analysis.

■ Respiratory Syncytial Virus: Vaccination

Munira Wilson: [\[11923\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason the respiratory syncytial virus vaccination programme does not include people who are 80 and over.

Andrew Gwynne:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for York Central on 14 October 2024 to Question [7797](#).

■ Sick Leave

Liam Conlon: [\[11434\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help reduce the number of people off work due to long term sickness.

Andrew Gwynne:

We know that appropriate work is generally good for health and wellbeing. We want everyone to get work and get on in work, whoever they are and wherever they live. We want people to avoid poverty, and for this to happen we must ensure that disabled people and people with health conditions have the opportunity to work and save for as long as they wish and are able to. Disabled people and people with health conditions are a diverse group, so access to the right work and health support, in the right place, at the right time, is key.

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

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

We have also launched WorkWell services in 15 integrated care board areas across England from October this year. WorkWell seeks to help people with health-related barriers to start and get on in work.

Employers play a key role in increasing employment opportunities and supporting disabled people and people with health conditions to thrive as part of the workforce. Our support to employers includes increasing access to Occupational Health, a digital information service for employers, and the Disability Confident scheme. Further information on the digital information service is available at the following link:

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

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

The Autumn Budget 2024 included more than £2.7 billion in 2025/26 for the Department for Work and Pensions to deliver individualised employment support programmes and reduce health related inactivity, helping the Government meet its ambition to support more people into work. This includes more than £800 million for disability employment support and £240 million to tackle the root causes of inactivity through the Get Britain Working White Paper.

■ Strokes

Jim Shannon:

[11586]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to raise awareness of stroke symptoms among young people.

Andrew Gwynne:

Although stroke is rare in children and young people, education around the early signs of a stroke in adults, like those shown in the Act FAST Campaign, is still relevant. Spotting the early signs assists in rapid diagnosis, access to time-dependent acute stroke care, and delivery of community-based stroke rehabilitation. Further information about the Act FAST campaign is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/actfast/>

NHS England works collaboratively with The Stroke Association and Different Strokes, who focus on helping younger stroke survivors to share key messaging. Further information is available at The Stroke Association and Different Strokes' websites, which are available, respectively, at the following two links:

<https://www.stroke.org.uk/>

<https://differentstrokes.co.uk/>

Evidence based clinical guidelines on stroke in childhood have been published by the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health and the Stroke Association, and are accredited by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. These include recommendations for diagnosis, management, and rehabilitation. These guidelines are available at the following link:

<https://www.rcpch.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2021-02/Stroke%20guideline%2008.04.19%20updated%202021.pdf>

■ Syringes

Mr Richard Holden: **[11363]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure the adequate supply of needles for (a) diabetic and (b) other healthcare provision.

Karin Smyth:

NHS Supply Chain sources, delivers, and supplies healthcare products for National Health Service trusts and healthcare organisations across England and Wales, and also has robust measures in place to ensure the continuity of supply of medical products, including needles. This includes close collaboration with suppliers, and managing supply levels. As a result of a broad supply base within the syringes and needles framework agreement, NHS Supply Chain seeks to maintain adequate volumes to meet demand, whilst minimising the risk of supply gaps.

The Department has arrangements in place to help ensure the continuity of the supply of medical products, such as needles, in the event of disruption. This includes the National Supply Disruption Response (NSDR), which acts as a single point of contact to the health and care system in the event of a supply issue. In the event a shortage does occur, the NSDR can work with the medical supply industry, the health and care system, and our system partners to put mitigations in place to help minimise any impact to patients and the provision of care.

HOME OFFICE

■ Animal Experiments

Sarah Champion: **[11300]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 14 October 2024 to Question 6246 on Animal Experiments, what harms were experienced by dogs used in research on muscular dystrophy; and how much funding is being provided for human-specific research into that condition.

Dan Jarvis:

The Home Office assigns severity classification to protocols in accordance with the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 (as amended) which is published at:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1986/14/contents>.

The classification takes account of the highest severity likely to be experienced by any animal used in the protocol and takes account of the pain, suffering, distress and lasting harm that an animal is likely to experience, after applying all the appropriate refinement techniques. Of the 21 dogs used for creation and breeding in research on muscular dystrophy, 15 were subject to 'Mild' severity and 6 'Moderate' severity.

The Home Office assures that, in every research proposal, animals are replaced with non-animal alternatives wherever possible, the number of animals are reduced to the minimum necessary to achieve the result sought, and that, for those animals which must be used, procedures are refined as much as possible to minimise their suffering.

The Department for Science, Innovation & Technology (DSIT) is leading on plans to accelerate the development, validation and uptake of alternatives to animal testing.

■ **Antisocial Behaviour: Motorcycles**

David Williams:

[\[11353\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to help tackle anti-social behaviour caused by the illegal use of off-road bikes.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Government will give police the powers they need to swiftly seize dangerous and antisocial off-road vehicles and take them off the streets for good.

Enforcement of road traffic law, including in relation to the anti-social behaviour caused by the use of illegal off-road bikes, is an operational matter for Chief Officers who will decide how to deploy available resources, taking into account any specific local problems and demands.

■ **Asylum: Expenditure**

Rupert Lowe:

[\[11418\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much her Department has spent on asylum support in each year since 2018.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Home Office publishes information on asylum expenditure in the Home Office Annual Report and Accounts at [HO annual reports and accounts - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)\(opens in a new tab\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/114181/2023-24-annual-report-and-accounts).

Prior to 2023/24 asylum support costs were not published separately.

The government is determined to restore order to the asylum system so that it operates swiftly, firmly, and fairly, this includes reviewing all spending to ensure the best value for money for the British taxpayer.

■ Asylum: Finance**Nick Timothy:**[\[11377\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 15 October 2024 to Question 7600 on Asylum: Finance, whether her Department holds data on the lifetime fiscal (a) cost of and (b) income generated by those granted asylum in the UK.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The information requested is not currently available. The information is currently an active piece of our research programme, which includes working with relevant government departments to ensure all the impacts relating to granting a person asylum are identified and measured as accurately as possible. I refer the Honourable Gentleman to PQ 5435.

Nick Timothy:[\[11378\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 7 October 2024 to Question 7600 on Asylum: Finance, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of publishing an estimate of the lifetime fiscal (a) cost of and (b) income generated by people granted asylum.

Dame Angela Eagle:

As has been the case under successive governments, there is no published estimate available of the requested information.

■ Asylum: Hotels**Sarah Hall:**[\[11450\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her planned timetable is for processing asylum seekers currently resident in hotels.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Government is determined to restore order to the asylum system so that it operates swiftly, firmly and fairly. This includes our accommodation sites, as the Home Office clears the backlog, increases removals and continues to identify a range of options to minimise the use of hotels and ensure better use of public money.

All asylum claims will continue to be assessed on an individual basis, in line with published policies.

■ Campsfield House Immigration Removal Centre**Calum Miller:**[\[11992\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the contract for the development of a Immigration Removal Centre at the former Campsfield House site in Oxfordshire, if there are any options for either party to (a) cancel and (b) vary the contract; and if this contract applies only to phase one of the development.

Dame Angela Eagle:

As previously announced, the Home Office is proceeding with plans to open an Immigration Removal Centre (IRC) on the site of the former Campsfield House IRC.

The contract referenced relates to building works for Phase 1 of the development being undertaken at the site. This may be terminated at any time by the Home Office, or by the contractor in the event of a breach of the terms of the contract.

Regulation 72 of the Public Contracts Regulations (PCR) 2015 details the extent to which a contract can be amended after an award of contract.

■ Community Policing: Beckenham and Penge**Liam Conlon:**[\[11435\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to improve neighbourhood policing in Beckenham and Penge constituency.

Dame Diana Johnson:

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.

This includes getting thousands of neighbourhood police personnel back on the beat, ensuring local people have a named officer who they can turn to when things go wrong, and cracking down on the street crime, shop theft and anti-social behaviour which has made communities feel less safe for far too long.

■ Community Policing: Lincolnshire**Sir John Hayes:**[\[11224\]](#)

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) South Holland and the Deepings constituency and (b) Lincolnshire.

Dame Diana Johnson:

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.

This includes getting thousands of neighbourhood police personnel back on the beat, ensuring local people have a named officer who they can turn to when things go wrong, and cracking down on the street crime, shop theft and anti-social behaviour which has made communities feel less safe for far too long.

■ Deportation and Detainees: Disclosure of Information**David Davis:**[\[12027\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 28 October 2024 to Question 10678 on Deportation and Detainees, if she will issue cross-Departmental guidance on the public disclosure of unpublished data.

David Davis:

[12028]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 28 October 2024 to Question 10678 on Deportation and Detainees, what steps she takes to ensure that her Department follows the Office for Statistics Regulation's guidance on data transparency.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The [Statement of Compliance with the Code of Practice for Statistics](#) sets out how the Home Office and all Government departments should comply with the Code of Practice agreed by the UK Statistics Authority (UKSA) and Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR).

As referenced in the [Ministerial Code](#), Ministers are mindful of the UK Statistics Authority's [Code of Practice](#) which defines good practice in relation to official statistics, though it is not for the Home Secretary to offer guidance to government on the public disclosure of unpublished data.

Our Head of Profession for Statistics meets regularly with the OSR to discuss statistics matters, including the department's approach to handling requests for operational data that might not be routinely published. OSR have been supportive of the general approach this department has taken. In the note on embedding transparency in government written by the OSR Director General and [published on 14th October](#), the Home Office was cited as having demonstrated good practice in this regard.

■ **Drugs: Death**

Andrew Rosindell:

[11239]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to help reduce the number of drug-related deaths.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Drug-related deaths are tragically at record highs and this government is committed to gripping this problem.

The Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) is actively working to reduce the number of drug-related deaths and has invested an additional £267 million in drug and alcohol treatment this year, improving the quality and capacity of drug and alcohol treatment services in England.

This is supporting delivery of a national action plan to prevent a greater number of drug and alcohol-related deaths. The plan has five priorities around improving: treatment practice; local systems; toxicology and surveillance; stigma; and poly-drug and alcohol use. Guidance was published in September 2024 [Preventing drug and alcohol deaths: partnership review process - GOV.UK](#) to help local partnerships set up and evaluate their review processes for drug-related deaths, alcohol-related deaths and near-fatal overdoses.

Alongside this, the Home Office is providing funding to law enforcement partners to target the organised crime groups and county lines gangs supplying harmful drugs to our streets.

A further part of our response is addressing the threat from synthetic drugs, including synthetic opioids like nitazenes, as well as synthetic cannabinoids and benzodiazepines, which have been linked to drug related deaths in the UK. The Home Office, DHSC, National Crime Agency, Border Force and the National Police Chiefs Council are working with local partners to proactively monitor the situation, tracking drug related deaths and other intelligence to ensure a quick response to respond to the threat as required. This includes expanding access to naloxone, a life-saving medicine that reverses the effects of an opioid overdose, including synthetic opioids.

Through our mission-driven government, we will continue to work with partners across health, policing, devolved governments and wider public services to coordinate and drive down drug use and build a fairer Britain for all.

■ **Drugs: Lincolnshire**

Sir John Hayes:

[\[11222\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to reduce levels of drug offences in (a) South Holland and the Deepings constituency and (b) Lincolnshire.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Reducing drug-related crime is a key priority for this Government and is part of our mission to take back our streets and drive down crime and antisocial behaviour.

An additional £267 million in drug and alcohol treatment is being invested into services this year to improve quality and capacity, which has the potential to reduce crime and reoffending.

As part of the Government's work to reduce drug-related harms and crime, every area in England has a dedicated Combating Drugs Partnership (CDP). In Lincolnshire, the Government has supported the establishment of a Lincolnshire Drug and Alcohol Partnership, to help bring together key local partners to address drug related-crime, drug use and drug deaths, in line with local context and need. Between March 2022 and August 2024 there has been an increase of 248 treatment places in Lincolnshire.

Broader work across the county to reduce drug offences included targeting drug treatment referrals at offenders. As well as continuing work with the National Police Chiefs Council to increase police referrals into drug treatment.

We are committed to reducing drug offences in supply of illicit drugs. Recent police activity on County Lines has resulted in over 5,100 line drug dealing line closures, over 15,600 arrests and over 8,000 safeguarding referrals. In addition, we are working continuously to disrupt the organised criminal gangs behind the importation and supply of drugs in the UK.

■ Drugs: Seized Articles

Sir John Hayes:

[\[11544\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the total (a) amount and (b) value was of Class A drugs coming into the UK that were seized at the borders in the last five years.

Seema Malhotra:

The latest transparency data showing the total amount of Class A drugs seized by Border Force across the last five years is available at the following pages:

[Seizures of drugs in England and Wales statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/seizures-of-drugs-in-england-and-wales)

[Border Force transparency data: Q1 2024 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/transparency/border-force-transparency-data-q1-2024)

[Border Force transparency data: Q2 2024 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/transparency/border-force-transparency-data-q2-2024).

The statistics below are taken from the Q2 2024 transparency data. These cannot be combined into a single figure due to the different units of measurement, so a breakdown of each drug is provided.

CLASS A DRUGS BY							
YEAR	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	TOTAL
Cocaine (KG)	8,886.73	3,757.51	9,475.49	17,096.72	15,222.7	26,692.52	81,131.67
Crack (KG)	0.03	34.8	0.06	0.41	3.42	6.43	45.15
Heroin (KG)	428.46	2,210.62	1,812.28	1,117.22	659.94	327.05	6555.57
LSD (Dose 000s)	52.7	20.76	105.86	30.41	29.55	4.68	243.96
MDMA (Dose 000s)	1,912.11	1,390.22	1,025.98	453.81	1,390.17	1,227.08	6,172.29
Methadone (Dose 000s)	N/A	N/A	0.18	1.28	0.2	0.39	2.05
Morphine (Dose 000s)	0.35	1.07	2.52	0.42	1.13	2.93	8.42
Fentanyl (KG)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0.02	0.02

Border Force does not estimate, disclose, or publish the value of drugs seized.

■ Fraud

Andrew Cooper:

[\[11532\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of trends in the level of fraud in each of the last five years.

Dan Jarvis:

	YEAR ENDING JUNE				
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
No. of estimated fraud incidents against individuals	4,332,000	5,035,000	3,819,000	3,335,000	3,560,000

The ONS' Crime Survey for England & Wales (CSEW) has been used to assess trends in the level of estimated fraud against individuals in England and Wales in each of the last 5 years (Year ending June 2020 to Year ending June 2024) ¹.

Estimated incidents of fraud peaked sharply during the COVID-19 pandemic, reaching a peak of over 5 million incidents in 2021. Fraud incidents then declined gradually, falling to 3.335 million incidents in YE June 2023.

The latest CSEW data shows that, in the year ending June 2024, there were an estimated 3.560 million incidents of fraud against individuals in England and Wales.

This Government takes the treat of fraud extremely seriously, and is committed to bring forward a new, expanded fraud strategy covering all elements of pernicious and damaging crime.

¹ The CSEW only represents estimated incidents of fraud against individuals in England and Wales and does not capture fraud against businesses or HMG. Therefore, the true scale of fraud is likely to be larger than the figures presented above.

■ Gender Based Violence: Northampton North

Lucy Rigby:

[\[11522\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps the Government is taking to reduce violence against women and girls in Northampton North constituency.

Jess Phillips:

This Government has set out an unprecedented ambition to halve violence against women and girls within a decade.

In September, we announced a set of measures aimed at strengthening the police response to domestic abuse, increasing protections for victims, and holding

perpetrators to account. Starting in early 2025, a new approach called "Raneem's Law" will place domestic abuse specialists within 999 control rooms to advise on risk assessments, collaborate closely with officers on the ground, and expedite referrals to appropriate support services for victims. We are rolling out a pilot of Domestic Abuse Protection Orders from November in order to further strengthen protections for victims, and we are working with the police to develop a national framework utilising data-driven tools to track and target high-harm perpetrators involved in domestic abuse, sexual assault, harassment, and stalking.

These early measures are important steps in tackling violence against women and girls across the country, including in Northampton North.

■ Heathrow Airport: USA

Andrew Rosindell: [\[11841\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions she has had with her US counterpart on establishing US pre-clearance facilities at London Heathrow Airport.

Seema Malhotra:

A decision to explore US pre-clearance is primarily a commercial decision for airport operators. An outline commercial agreement between the airport operator and US authorities would be required before any formal discussions between the UK and US government could take place.

■ Home Office: Art Works

Nick Timothy: [\[11391\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 22 October 2024 to Question 8515 on Home Office: Art Works and Cultural Heritage, if she will publish the correspondence regarding the formulation of the answer given.

Dame Diana Johnson:

A Freedom of Information request was submitted to the Home Office on 22 October on this matter.

We will be happy to share a copy of the response to that request with the Hon. Gentleman once it has been published to the requester.

■ Home Office: Runnymede Trust

Sir John Hayes: [\[11226\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether (a) Ministers and (b) officials in her Department have met the Runnymede Trust charity since July 5 2024.

Dame Angela Eagle:

All relevant meetings attended by ministers, special advisers and senior officials are declared in the normal way in the department's quarterly transparency releases.

■ Knives: Crime

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[11340\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department plans to take steps to include first aid education in Young Futures Hubs; and what steps she is taking to consult with the voluntary sector on the 10-year knife crime plan.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Government is committed to rolling out a Young Futures Programme, made up of local prevention partnerships and a network of Young Futures Hubs across the country. These will bring together services to help improve the way that children and young people can access the support they need.

This is a cross-government endeavour and expertise is being brought together from across departments to deliver on this manifesto commitment. The Government will be engaging with national and local partners, local communities and children and young people to explore options for the design and delivery of the hubs. This co-design will support local areas to meet local needs.

The Government is also launching a new Coalition to Tackle Knife Crime. The Coalition will bring together campaign groups, families of people who have tragically lost their lives to knife crime, young people who have been impacted and community leaders, united in their mission to save lives and make Britain a safer place for the next generation.

It will work with experts to develop an extensive understanding of what causes young people to be drawn into violence, providing vital evidence that will drive government policy and help to hold the government to account on its knife crime commitments.

■ Lord Walney

Steve Witherden:

[\[11671\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to retain Lord Walney as the Independent Adviser on Political Violence and Disruption.

Dan Jarvis:

The Home Office is currently reviewing the role of the Independent Adviser on Political Violence and Disruption through the Counter-Extremism sprint.

Any decisions arising from this review will be announced in the normal way in due course.

■ National Police Air Service

Danny Kruger:

[\[11344\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to review the effectiveness of the National Police Air Service.

Danny Kruger:

[\[11345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has had discussions with (a) Cabinet colleagues and (b) relevant stakeholders on levels of police grants in the context of procuring new aircraft for the National Police Air Service.

Danny Kruger:

[\[11346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has had discussions with police forces on aerial service needs.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The National Police Air Service (NPAS) is a police-led collaboration governed by the NPAS National Strategic Board (NSB), which is made up of Chief Constables and PCCs representing each policing region. The NSB sets the direction for the National Police Air Service and reviews its effectiveness on behalf of the other police bodies of England and Wales.

Representatives from West Yorkshire Police, West Yorkshire Combined Authority and the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) recently met with the Minister for Policing, Fire and Crime Prevention to discuss policing's air service requirements, including both crewed and uncrewed aircraft.

The Home Secretary has regular discussions with both Chief Constables and Police and Crime Commissioners, which cover a wide variety of subject areas.

■ National Security

Jim Shannon:

[\[11577\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to track people working for hostile states in the UK.

Dan Jarvis:

As a matter of long-standing policy, we do not comment on the detail of security and intelligence issues.

The government's first duty is to protect our national security and keep our country safe. We keep potential threats to the UK under constant review and, where necessary, we use all the tools at our disposal to mitigate these threats.

The UK has a strong record of responding robustly to state threats and our intelligence and law enforcement agencies are at the forefront of these efforts. Alongside our existing operational response, new legislation has been brought in through the National Security Act 2023 to deal with the range of modern state threats and make the UK a harder target for those state which seek to conduct hostile acts against the UK, including espionage, interference in our political system, and sabotage.

■ Police: Training

Alex Mayer:

[\[11375\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions her Department has had with police forces on training on links between domestic violence and animal abuse.

Jess Phillips:

This Government is committed to tackling domestic abuse in all its forms. Achieving the mission of halving violence against women and girls in a decade will require a whole systems approach. Domestic abuse is a hidden crime and it is critical that all agencies and services that come into contact with victims can identify abuse, effectively assess risk and help victims access support.

Domestic abuse can affect all parts of a victim's life and relationships including, for example, through threats and harm to pets as a means of control. The Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance that accompanies the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 provides an explanation of the different characteristics of domestic abuse and includes reference to how pets can be used by perpetrators.

It is essential that every police force has the right specialist capability to properly investigate these crimes. The College of Policing has developed specialist domestic abuse training, the Domestic Abuse Matters programme, which is being delivered in many police forces and this Government has committed to strengthening police training on Violence Against Women and Girls. We will work closely with the College of Policing and the National Police Chiefs' Council to do this.

■ Proceeds of Crime Act 2002

Suella Braverman:

[\[12129\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make it her policy to publish where funds from the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 are distributed.

Dan Jarvis:

The Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 enables law enforcement agencies to deprive criminals of their money, or other property connected to criminal activity, and recover the proceeds of crime.

Recovered criminal proceeds can subsequently be returned in compensation to victims (following criminal conviction) or reinvested for use in tackling crime through the Asset Recovery Incentivisation Scheme (ARIS) and ARIS 'Top Slice' grant.

Information on both victim compensation and ARIS can be found in the data tables within the Asset Recovery Statistical Bulletin, which is published annually by the Home Office. Data on victim compensation can be found in tab 2 and data on ARIS allocations and money allocated to Top Slice projects can be found in tabs 12 - 14 within the published data tables which can be found here: [Asset recovery statistics, financial years ending 2019 to 2024: Data Tables.](#)

■ Prostitution: Rotherham**Sarah Champion:**[\[11297\]](#)

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

Jess Phillips:

The trafficking of women and girls for sexual exploitation is a truly horrific crime. This Government has set out a mission to halve violence against women and girls in a decade, and we will use all the levers available to us to deliver this ambition.

The Government is working closely with law enforcement to tackle the drivers of trafficking for sexual exploitation, including through operational intensifications to target perpetrators.

This Government will also work closely with the voluntary and community sector to help sexually exploited people and ensure that those who want to exit prostitution are able to. We have several ways to estimate the scale of sexual exploitation. Victims of sexual exploitation make up a significant proportion of referrals to the National Referral Mechanism (the framework for identifying and referring potential victims of modern slavery to appropriate support). The most recent statistics show that in 2023, sexual exploitation accounted for 10% (1,679) of all referrals, a 2% increase from the previous year, with 9% (1,470) of referrals relating to women. The Home Office does not hold data specific to Rotherham. However, between January and June 2024, there were 25 potential victims of modern slavery referred to the NRM who reported (either part or whole) sexual exploitation which was disclosed as occurring in South Yorkshire.

To help support people at risk of being sexually exploited, Changing Lives has received £1.36m from the Home Office over three years (2022-2025) for their Net-Reach project, which provides online outreach, early intervention and intensive support for women and girls at high-risk of exploitation and abuse. The Net-Reach project operates in several locations in England, including South Yorkshire.

In addition, the Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract provides support to adult potential and confirmed victims of modern slavery in England and Wales, including a support worker to help them access wider services, such as medical treatment, legal aid, legal representatives, and legal advice.

■ Royal and VIP Executive Committee**Paul Holmes:**[\[11634\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 22 October 2024 to Question 9549 on Royal and VIP Executive Committee, who represents her on the Executive Committee for the Protection of Royalty and Public Figures.

Dan Jarvis:

The Home Secretary is responsible within Cabinet and accountable to Parliament for the protective security of members of the Royal Family and public figures at particular risk.

The Home Secretary has delegated responsibility to the Executive Committee for the Protection of Royalty and Public Figures (RAVEC).

■ Undocumented Migrants: Crimes of Violence**Rupert Lowe:**[\[11414\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many incidents of assault there were by irregular migrants against her Department's staff in each year since 2018.

Dame Angela Eagle:

As has been the case during successive administrations, this data is not routinely published. We will take every measure possible to keep Home Office Employers safe at work, and any criminality will face the full force of the law.

■ Undocumented Migrants: Offenders**Rupert Lowe:**[\[11395\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of irregular migrants who arrived in the UK since 2020 have (a) previous criminal convictions and (b) subsequently obtained a criminal record.

Dame Angela Eagle:

As has been the case for many years, the information requested is not routinely published.

We are committed to delivering justice for victims and safer streets for our communities. Foreign nationals who commit crime should be in no doubt that the law will be enforced and, where appropriate, we will pursue their deportation, and they will be swiftly removed from the country.

■ Windrush Compensation Scheme**Kim Johnson:**[\[11456\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her planned timeline is for the review of accounting for the loss of private and occupational pensions under the Windrush Compensation Scheme.

Kim Johnson:[\[11457\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she plans to take to (a) improve the efficiency of the application process for the Windrush compensation scheme and (b) limit further delays.

Kim Johnson:

[\[11458\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to take steps to lower the burden of proof for Windrush compensation scheme claims.

Seema Malhotra:

We recognise that justice has taken far too long for the Windrush community, and this Government will not allow the Windrush Compensation Scheme to fail the victims that deserve our compassion and rightly expect their trauma and experiences to be both heard and understood.

Since February 2024, processes have been in place so that where individuals were unable to work because they could not demonstrate their lawful status in the UK, their National Insurance record is corrected so their State Pension entitlement is not affected.

Officials are working at pace to consider how losses from Private and Occupational pensions could also be accounted for. This is a complex issue, and we will continue to work closely with stakeholders and victims as the work progresses.

The Windrush Compensation Scheme is committed to continuing to listen to and to work with victims and stakeholders to ensure all aspects of the Scheme operating effectively for those affected.

On 8 July 2024, a new single named caseworker process was implemented. This was in direct response to stakeholder and victim feedback. This change has streamlined the process, improving consistency, increasing transparency, and removing duplication that led to avoidable delay.

On 24 October 2024, the Home Secretary made a Written Ministerial Statement to Parliament announcing an injection of £1.5m grant funding to enable organisations to provide advocacy and support for individuals who need additional help with the application process, out of recognition that for many filing a claim is intimidating and requires them to revisit past traumas. This will ensure claimants feel supported, improving the efficiency of the process.

This assistance will be offered alongside but separate from existing claims support, giving individuals increased flexibility and choice regarding the type of help they want and where they can access it.

The Home Secretary also confirmed that she will be establishing a Windrush Commissioner; an independent advocate for all those affected. This role will oversee the compensation scheme's delivery, the implementation of the Windrush Lessons Learned Review, and act as a trusted voice for families and communities, driving improvements and promoting lasting change.

In addition, as promised, the Home Secretary has re-established a Windrush Unit in the Home Office reporting to the Departmental Ethics Adviser and dedicated to driving forward the action needed to ensure that what happened to the Windrush generation can never happen again to any part of our society. The new unit stands ready to support the Windrush Commissioner when appointed.

This renewed work and the recruitment of a dedicated Windrush Commissioner must drive enduring change that matters to the Windrush community and has wider impact across the whole department and across Government.

■ **Windrush Compensation Scheme: Public Appointments**

Kim Johnson:

[\[11459\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to appoint a Windrush Commissioner.

Seema Malhotra:

In her written ministerial statement on 24th October, the Home Secretary announced plans to establish a Windrush Commissioner; an independent advocate for all those affected, who will oversee the compensation scheme's delivery, the implementation of the Windrush Lessons Learned Review, and act as a trusted voice for families and communities, driving improvements and promoting lasting change.

Officials are working at pace to design the recruitment process for the Windrush Commissioner. They are also working through the detail of the role and remit of a Windrush Commissioner including how they would interact and support other related public appointments such as the Windrush Compensation Scheme Independent Person, the Independent Examiner of Complaints and any appointment of a Migrant's Commissioner.

As promised, we have re-established a Windrush Unit in the Home Office reporting to the Departmental Ethics Adviser and dedicated to driving forward the action needed to ensure that what happened to the Windrush generation can never happen again to any part of our society. The new unit stands ready to support the Windrush Commissioner when appointed.

This renewed work and the recruitment of a dedicated Windrush Commissioner must drive enduring change that matters to the Windrush community and has wider impact across the whole department and across Government.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ **Cladding Safety Scheme: Romford**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[11237\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many buildings have registered for the Cladding Safety Scheme in Romford constituency.

Alex Norris:

To date, there have been four applications to the Cladding Safety Scheme that have been started for buildings located within the Romford constituency.

Two applications are at Apply for Grant stage where information is being gathered and submitted by one applicant. The other application is currently undergoing an

eligibility check. Once this process has been finalised, we will confirm eligibility in no more than 10 days.

The remaining two applications are at Grant Funding Agreement stage. Both Grant Funding Agreements have been issued, one has so far been returned by the applicant.

■ Disabled Facilities Grants: Romford

Andrew Rosindell: [\[11238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how much funding has been provided through the Disabled Facilities Grant in Romford constituency in each year since 2022.

Rushanara Ali:

Romford constituency is part of the Havering London Borough Council area. Government provided the following Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) funding to Havering London Borough Council for each financial year since 2022-2023.

DFG FUNDING

2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
£2,056,802	£2,056,802	£2,242,458

This information is publicly available on the Foundations website: [Disabled Facilities Grant Annual Allocations](#).

■ Green Belt

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[2998\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the written ministerial statement of 30 July 2024 entitled Building the homes we need, HCWS48, what the evidential basis is for the assessment that large areas of the Green Belt have little ecological value.

Matthew Pennycook:

The latest official Land Use statistics are available at gov.uk [here](#). As these set out, 6.8% of the Green Belt is already developed land. This includes 24,400ha of land which is hardstanding (usually car parks, paved areas, tarmac, or other similar construct). Less than 13% of land in the Green Belt is subject to an environmental designation or other protected area.

In planning terms, the Green Belt serves a number of specific purposes, but the fundamental aim of green belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The Green Belt is not an environmental designation.

■ Ground Rent: Beckenham and Penge

Liam Conlon:

[\[11442\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to tackle unaffordable and unfair ground rents in Beckenham and Penge constituency.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government are committed to tackling unregulated and unaffordable existing ground rents. We will set out further details on this in due course.

■ Homelessness: Death

Andrew Cooper:

[\[11436\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate she has made of the number of homeless people who have died while living on the street in each of the last five years in (a) Mid Cheshire constituency, (b) Cheshire and (c) England; and what steps her Department is taking to end rough sleeping in those areas.

Rushanara Ali:

Every death of someone sleeping rough on our streets is one too many. The estimated number of deaths of homeless people in England and Wales is published by the Office for National Statistics. You can find the data for between 2013 and 2021 [here](#). ONS are doing further work revising their methodology for the data set to make it more robust so it is likely that their next publication will be in 2025.

We are developing a new cross-government strategy to get us on back on track to ending homelessness and rough sleeping. The £547 million Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) is continuing its support to up to 300 local authorities across England by funding local, tailored rough sleeping services. Cheshire East received £222,000 and Cheshire West and Chester received £661,000 of RSI funding for 2024-25.

As announced at Budget, we are also providing an additional £233 million in 2025-26 to prevent homelessness, taking total spending to £1 billion in 2025-26.

■ Homelessness: Young People

Steve Darling:

[\[11453\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will bring forward legislative proposals to ensure that care leavers below the age of 26 are given priority need status for homelessness support.

Tom Hayes:

[\[11525\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to include a chapter on youth homelessness in the future homelessness strategy.

Tom Hayes: [\[11526\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she plans to take to ensure that the homelessness sector will be consulted on the homelessness strategy.

Tom Hayes: [\[11527\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions has she had with the homelessness sector on youth homelessness.

Rushanara Ali:

The Government recognises that homelessness levels are far too high and this can have a devastating impact on those affected, including young people and care leavers. We will look at these issues carefully and will consider youth and care leaver homelessness as we develop our long-term, cross-government strategy working with Mayors and councils across the country, to get us back on track to ending homelessness.

Helping care leavers to make a successful transition from care to independence is a priority for this Government. We will improve access to social housing for care leavers under 25 and exempt them from local connection and residency tests for social housing. We will work with the sector and engage with relevant stakeholders to bring forward these changes in due course.

The Homelessness Reduction Act places duties on local housing authorities to take reasonable steps to try to prevent and relieve a person's homelessness. These duties apply irrespective of whether a person has 'priority need' or if they are 'intentionally homeless'.

■ Housing: Construction

Andrew Rosindell: [\[11236\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent progress her Department has made on simplifying the planning process for house building.

Matthew Pennycook:

We recently consulted on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system. 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. As set out in the King's Speech, the Government intend to introduce a Planning and Infrastructure Bill to accelerate the delivery of high-quality infrastructure and housing.

■ Housing: Heating

Dr Neil Shastri-Hurst: [\[11484\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will take steps to ban the use of direct emission heating systems in new build homes.

Alex Norris:

Future standards will set our new homes and building on a path that moves away from relying on volatile fossil fuels and towards more clean, secure energy. The future is likely to see a mix of low carbon technologies used for heating, including heat pumps and heat networks.

The Future Homes Standard consultation was published in December 2023 and closed in March 2024. It set out detailed technical proposals for what future standards could entail. All the options that were proposed would preclude the use of fossil-fuel boilers in new homes. We are reviewing proposals and feedback from the consultation and will publish the Government response in due course.

Land Registry: Standards**Manuela Perteghella:**[\[11364\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will take steps to help improve processing times for applications made to HM Land Registry.

Matthew Pennycook:

Improving speed of service remains the top priority for HM Land Registry (HMLR). It has been making the improvements needed through hiring and training staff and enhancing the services its customers use. This has been undertaken alongside continuing to deliver the essential services required to enable property transactions to complete. Following these activities and a renewed focus on the oldest applications, HMLR has seen a reduction in the overall age of applications. It is committed to continuing this progress over the coming months.

HMLR acknowledges that some customers will not yet feel the positive impact of these improvements. Anyone who is concerned that a delay with their application may cause financial, legal or personal problems or put a property sale at risk, can apply to have their application expedited free of charge. HMLR processes nearly 1,300 expedited applications every day, with around 95% actioned within 10 working days.

HMLR publishes information each month about its latest processing times on GOV.UK [here](#).

Land Use: Havering**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[11231\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she has made an estimate of the proportion of green belt land that could be re-designated as grey belt land in (a) Romford constituency and (b) Havering.

Matthew Pennycook:

In our consultation on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and other changes to the planning system, it was suggested that grey belt land be defined as Green Belt land which makes a limited contribution to the Green

Belt's purposes, as set out in paragraph 143 of the current NPPF. The Government is proposing that assessments of what land is identified as grey belt be undertaken by local planning authorities themselves, informed by relevant guidance. As such, the department is unable to provide the estimate requested.

■ Leasehold: Older People

Freddie van Mierlo:

[\[11487\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to include retirement property leaseholders as a separate category in planned leasehold and commonhold reform.

Matthew Pennycook:

Over the course of this Parliament, the Government will honour its manifesto commitment to finally bring the feudal leasehold system to an end.

We will enact remaining Law Commission recommendations relating to enfranchisement and the Right to Manage, tackle unregulated and unaffordable ground rents, reinvigorate commonhold through a comprehensive new legal framework, and ban the sale of new leasehold flats so commonhold becomes the default tenure.

We have made clear that we intend to publish draft legislation on leasehold and commonhold reform in this session so that it may be subject to broad consultation and additional parliamentary scrutiny. We will announce further details in due course.

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. As part of the King's Speech, we committed to consulting on the best way of restricting the sale of new leasehold flats. This consultation will provide an opportunity for interested stakeholders to make their views known.

■ Leasehold: Reform

Will Stone:

[\[11471\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what her timeline is for implementation of (a) the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024 and (b) other government initiatives to tackle leasehold issues.

Matthew Pennycook:

I refer my Hon Friend to the answer I gave to Question UIN [8491](#) on 18 October 2024.

■ Local Government: Equality

Lee Anderson:

[\[11179\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department has provided funding to local authorities for diversity and inclusion projects in the last three financial years.

Jim McMahon:

The department funds the Local Government Association (LGA) to deliver a sector support programme for the benefit of local authorities, which during the last three years has included elements of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) work e.g. an online hub housing EDI learning resources and tools, guidance on public sector equality duty and support to councils on the design of EDI policies and services.

The department does not maintain a central list of funding to local authorities titled 'diversity and inclusion projects' so we are not able to provide that information.

■ Planning Permission: Listed Buildings

Edward Morello:

[\[11473\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if her Department will take steps to provide additional (a) support and (b) guidance to the owners of listed buildings in West Dorset constituency on her proposed changes to the planning framework.

Edward Morello:

[\[11474\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the consultation entitled Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system, published on 24 September 2024, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of including proposals to reduce the administrative requirements for the owners of listed buildings who are seeking planning permissions.

Matthew Pennycook:

Further to my answer to Question UIN [10200](#) on 29 October 2024, as the Government takes forward its programme of planning reform we will consider the need for guidance to support listed building owners and look for opportunities to improve the heritage planning process.

■ Playgrounds

Cat Smith:

[\[11307\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of the (a) quantity, (b) quality and (c) location of public playgrounds.

Alex Norris:

Playgrounds are an important part of healthy, happy and connected communities. Playgrounds can be found in schools, private housing, public parks and many other places.

Local authorities maintain many public playgrounds. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out that decisions should aim to promote inclusive design by creating buildings and spaces that are safe, social and inclusive, with an integrated mix of uses that are accessible for all.

We are proud that this year's Budget has delivered a real term increase in local government spending. Local authorities can decide how to use funding to best serve their communities, including investing in improving and developing public playgrounds.

JUSTICE■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Mr Peter Bedford:**[\[901072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of sentencing guidelines.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The independent Sentencing Council is responsible for the development of sentencing guidelines. The Council regularly evaluates the guidelines to ensure they are operating as intended.

The Government is responsible for sentencing law, and last month we have launched an independent Sentencing Review, chaired by the former Lord Chancellor David Gauke.

Sarah Olney:[\[901074\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the cost of providing free court transcripts to survivors of sexual assault and other serious crimes.

Heidi Alexander:

I understand transcripts may help individuals obtain closure from traumatic events.

Since May 2024, the Ministry of Justice has been running a pilot providing free sentencing remarks to victims of rape and serious sexual offences. We will be evaluating the pilot to understand cost, uptake and impact on victims when it ends in May 2025.

■ Courts: Lincolnshire

Sir John Hayes:

[\[11225\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps she is taking to reduce the backlog of court cases in Lincolnshire.

Heidi Alexander:

We have interpreted this question as in reference to the Crown Court outstanding caseload in Lincolnshire. We inherited a record and rising Crown Court backlog from the previous Government and we are committed to tackling it.

We are pursuing a number of measures at a national level that will contribute to the reduction of outstanding cases in Lincolnshire.

The Crown Court outstanding caseload remains one of the biggest challenges facing the Criminal Justice System. We have already shown we are committed to bearing down on the caseload and bringing waiting times down.

This Government has increased the number of Crown Court sitting days to 106,500, more than in six out of the last seven years. We will soon extend magistrates' court sentencing powers from 6 to 12 months, freeing up 2,000 days in the Crown Court to handle the most serious cases.

Judges have been prioritising rape cases that have been waiting for over two years to go to trial. Despite this, there are some cases in the outstanding caseload which are taking far too long to progress through the system. We want to make sure every victim has the swift access to justice they deserve. This is why we have committed to fast-tracking rape cases through the courts, to deliver swift and effective justice to some of the most vulnerable victims in the criminal justice system, and will say more on this in due course.

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.

At Lincoln Crown Court specifically, we have expanded physical capacity of the HMCTS estate by creating a permanent fourth Crown Courtroom based in Lincoln Magistrates Court. As a result, we also plan to sit 903 sitting days this financial year at Lincoln Crown Court, this is an increase from 885 sitting days in the last financial year (FY23/24). An uplift in sitting days has taken place across East Midlands in response to growing Crown Court caseload pressures.

■ Prisoners on Remand

Ben Goldsborough:

[\[11190\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps she is taking to address the increase in the remand population across the prison estate.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

We are committed to working with partners across the criminal justice system to effectively manage the growth in the prison remand population, which currently sits at a record high.

On 17 October 2024, we 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.

The change will help us bear down on the remand population by ensuring those on remand are tried and sentenced quicker.

This change will help us to better manage the pressure on reception jails and maximise the space across the prison estate, created by SDS40. The Statutory Instrument to increase magistrates' courts sentencing powers was laid on 28 October 2024 and these changes will come into force on 18 November 2024.

Prisoners' Release: Lincolnshire**Sir John Hayes:**[\[11158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prisoners released under the early release scheme on (a) 10 September 2024 and (b) 22 October 2024 are registered as residing in (i) South Holland and the Deepings constituency and (ii) Lincolnshire.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Data on SDS40 releases forms a subset of data intended for future publication.

Prisoners' Release: Reoffenders**Rupert Lowe:**[\[11206\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of prisoners released under the early release scheme have been rearrested since September 2024.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Reoffending rates are published regularly on an annual and quarterly basis. The most recent rates are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/proven-reoffending-statistics>.

Prisoners released on SDS40 will be subject to licence and liable to recall to prison if they do not comply or are judged a risk to public safety.

Data on recall and reoffending of prisoners released since September 2024 forms a subset of data intended for future publication.

Sexual Offences: Sentencing**Sir John Hayes:**[\[11230\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of those convicted for sexual offences were not given prison sentences in the last five years.

Alex Davies-Jones:

Sentencing in individual cases is a matter for the independent judiciary.

This Government was elected with a landmark mission to halve violence against women and girls within the decade. To do so, we must improve the justice system's response to these crimes. We must relentlessly target the most prolific and harmful perpetrators; better support victims and survivors; and ensure timely and effective justice.

The Ministry of Justice publishes data on convictions for a wide range of offences, including sexual offences in the period requested, via the Outcomes by Offence data tool: December 2023, which can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/criminal-justice-system-statistics-quarterly-december-2023>.

NORTHERN IRELAND**■ Castlereagh Foundation****Mr Gregory Campbell:****[12025]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what plans he has for the (a) establishment and (b) work of the Castlereagh Foundation.

Hilary Benn:

The Executive Office is responsible for taking forward the necessary arrangements to implement the commenced provisions of the Identity and Language (Northern Ireland) Act 2022 that includes the establishment of the Castlereagh Foundation. The Government expects the Executive Office will make an announcement in due course regarding next steps on implementation of the legislation. The Government wants to see devolved institutions in Northern Ireland consider the provisions set out under the legislation themselves before any consideration of using or commencing the powers provided for in section 8 of the Act.

■ Drugs: Shortages**Andrew Rosindell:****[11557]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, whether he has taken steps to help tackle medicine shortages in Northern Ireland.

Hilary Benn:

Medicines supply in Northern Ireland remains stable. UK-wide supply issues may arise from time to time due to manufacturing problems or access to raw materials. The overwhelming majority of medicines are in good supply and we have well-established processes to manage supply issues.

■ New Businesses: UK Internal Trade**Dr Al Pinkerton:**[\[11776\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what steps the Government are taking to help support businesses transition to new trading arrangements between Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Hilary Benn:

This Government is committed to implementing the Windsor Framework in good faith and protecting the UK internal market.

We continue to work closely with businesses to support a smooth and effective transition to the new arrangements under the Framework. In September, the Government announced that the Trader Support Service has been extended to the end of 2025 and that a competitive procurement exercise will begin in early 2025 to deliver ongoing support to traders from 2026.

■ Terrorism: Northern Ireland**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[11559\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, with reference to the independent report entitled Assessment on paramilitary groups in Northern Ireland, published on 20 October 2015, what recent assessment his Department has made of the level of influence the IRA army council has on Sinn Fein.

Hilary Benn:

The 'Paramilitary Groups in Northern Ireland' report was published in 2015 by the UK Government in order to provide a one-off factual assessment from the UK security agencies and the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) on the structure, role and purpose of paramilitary organisations in Northern Ireland. This public assessment, which was intended to inform the then ongoing cross-party talks, has not been repeated.

Although it is acknowledged that some individuals engaged in serious criminality may also have ties to former paramilitary Republican organisations, such activity does not present a threat to national security.

The PSNI and UK security agencies continually assess the threat, risk and harm posed by paramilitary, terrorist and organised crime groups to inform the most appropriate operational response. The threat from Northern Ireland Related Terrorism (NIRT) is assessed by the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre (JTAC), after MI5 passed over responsibility earlier this year. JTAC keeps the Threat Level in Northern Ireland from NIRT under constant review and formally reviews it twice a year. However, the threat is wholly driven by violent Dissident Republicans who reject the Good Friday Agreement (GFA), and not by Groups that support the GFA.

Where any criminality exists, this should be dealt with fully by the police.

Andrew Rosindell:

[11560]

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, if he will take steps to commission a report on paramilitary influence in Northern Ireland.

Hilary Benn:

The 'Paramilitary Groups in Northern Ireland' report was published in 2015 by the UK Government in order to provide a one-off factual assessment from the UK security agencies and the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) on the structure, role and purpose of paramilitary organisations in Northern Ireland. This public assessment, which was intended to inform the then ongoing cross-party talks, has not been repeated.

This Government is committed to making streets across the United Kingdom safer, and we want to see a safer Northern Ireland, where terrorist and paramilitary groups are no longer able to cause harm to communities. Where any criminality exists, it should be dealt with fully by the police.

The effort to tackle paramilitarism is led by the NI Executive in particular through its Programme on Paramilitarism and Organised Crime (EPPOC), which was established after the Fresh Start Agreement. The Programme is working to tackle the presence of paramilitaries through evidence-based early interventions, targeted law enforcement measures and initiatives that provide direct support to help build safer communities resilient to paramilitarism. The UK Government provides 50% of the funding for the Programme - currently £8m per year through to March 2026.

The Programme has tracked changes in public perceptions of paramilitary influence since 2017 through the Northern Ireland Life & Times (NILT) Survey. This information can be accessed here: <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/perceptions-paramilitarism-northern-ireland-findings-northern-ireland-life-and-times-survey-2017>

The Independent Reporting Commission (IRC) which was established in 2017 reports annually on progress towards ending paramilitary activity connected with Northern Ireland. The IRC's most recent report, the Sixth Report, was published in December 2023, with the latest report due to be published in Winter 2024.

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[12036]

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, when his Department last reviewed the (a) structures, (b) weaponry and (c) capability of (i) loyalist and (ii) republican terror groups in Northern Ireland; and if he will publish that review.

Hilary Benn:

The 'Paramilitary Groups in Northern Ireland' report was published in 2015 by the UK Government in order to provide a one-off factual assessment from the UK security agencies and the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) on the structure, role and purpose of paramilitary organisations in Northern Ireland. This public assessment, which was intended to inform the then ongoing cross-party talks, has not been repeated.

The PSNI and UK security agencies continually assess the threat, risk and harm posed by paramilitary, terrorist and organised crime groups to inform the most appropriate operational response. The threat from Northern Ireland Related Terrorism (NIRT) is assessed by the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre (JTAC), after MI5 passed over responsibility earlier this year. JTAC keeps the Threat Level in Northern Ireland from NIRT under constant review and formally reviews it twice a year. However, the threat is wholly driven by violent Dissident Republicans who reject the Good Friday Agreement (GFA), and not by Groups that support the GFA.

The Chief Constable's statement of 30 October was clear that the PSNI, alongside security partners "continually assess the threat, risk and harm posed by paramilitary, terrorist and organised crime groups to inform the most appropriate operational response."

Rightly, any criminality or threat - by individuals or groups, loyalist or republican - will be investigated by the PSNI and those responsible will be brought before the courts.

■ **Veterans: Civil Proceedings**

Stuart Anderson:

[\[11908\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what recent discussions he has had with (a) Cabinet colleagues and (b) the Northern Ireland Executive on protecting veterans who served in Northern Ireland from vexatious claims in relation to their service.

Hilary Benn:

I regularly discuss the Government's approach to the legacy of the Troubles with Cabinet colleagues and with the Northern Ireland Executive, and I am consulting widely on the repeal and replacement of the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act, including with the veterans community.

The Government recognises the dedicated service of the vast majority of members of the Armed Forces, as well as police officers and members of the security services, who did so much to keep people in Northern Ireland safe during the Troubles. Any veteran who does go through legal proceedings will receive welfare and, where appropriate, legal support.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

■ **Animal Experiments: Cats**

Sarah Champion:

[\[11301\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, pursuant to the Answer of 14 October 2024 to Question 6247 on Animal Experiments: Cats, what funding is being provided to support human-specific research into relevant conditions.

Feryal Clark:

UKRI (UK Research and Innovation) fund a variety of approaches to research on conditions affecting humans. One third of MRC (Medical Research Council) and

BBSRC's (Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council) research grants involve the use of animals licensed under ASPA (Animals Scientific Procedures Act) in some part of the research project. There are no active grants using cats.

Although animal use is still considered important for many research areas, UKRI funds multiple approaches to the replacement of animals in research, including through core funding to the NC3Rs (National Centre for the Replacement, Refinement and Reduction of Animals in Research).

■ **Broadband: Rural Areas**

Sir Julian Smith:

[\[11249\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he is taking to improve rural ultrafast broadband connectivity.

Chris Bryant:

The government is committed to delivering fast, reliable broadband through Project Gigabit with a goal of nationwide coverage by 2030. There are 36 contracts in place, set to connect over 1 million homes and businesses that would otherwise miss out, with more contracts to be awarded in the coming months.

Although the vast majority of premises will be covered by commercial activity or Project Gigabit, a small proportion of premises will remain too expensive to build a gigabit capable connection to. These very hard to reach premises may require additional government intervention to help provide them with ultrafast connections.

■ **Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Civil Servants**

Sir Ashley Fox:

[\[9825\]](#)

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

Feryal Clark:

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

LOCATION	HEADCOUNT	DESKS
10 VICTORIA STREET, LONDON	183	105
100 Parliament Street, London	564	566
22 Whitehall, London	972	204
3 Glass Wharf, Bristol	9	5
Apex Court, Nottingham	3	3
Atlantic Quay, Glasgow	4	2

LOCATION	HEADCOUNT	DESKS
10 VICTORIA STREET, LONDON	183	105
Citygate, Newcastle	5	5
Companies House, Cardiff	77	51
Erskine House, Belfast	12	8
Feethams House, Darlington	43	43
Foss House, York	1	1
Mann Island, Liverpool	2	2
Queen Elizabeth House, Edinburgh	45	86
Rivergate House, Bristol	16	30
St Pauls Place, Sheffield	2	1
Trinity Bridge House, Salford	207	233
Ty William Morgan House, Cardiff	4	5
Victoria Square House, Birmingham	82	78
Wellington Place, Leeds	4	3

■ Nuisance Calls

Alex Mayer:

[\[11369\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps his Department is taking to tackle (a) scam and (b) nuisance calls.

Chris Bryant:

The Department works closely with Ofcom, who are responsible for tackling silent and abandoned calls, and the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) who lead on enforcement of unsolicited direct marketing calls and ensuring companies adhere to the Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations. The new [Data \(Use and Access\) Bill](#) will empower the ICO to take action against companies sending nuisance communications.

To address scam calls, the Department works closely with Ofcom, and the Home Office (who are responsible for fraud policy). From January, new Ofcom rules will require telecoms operators to block calls from abroad presenting with a UK number.

■ Ofcom: Internet

Neil Coyle:

[\[11624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if he will make an assessment of the effectiveness of Ofcom in helping tackle the dissemination of online conspiracy theories.

Feryal Clark:

The Online Safety Act will require platforms to tackle false information where it is illegal or harmful to children. The Act will also hold Category 1 platforms to account over the enforcement of their terms of service, including terms relating to conspiracy theories. As the regulator, Ofcom will ensure companies comply with these duties. Section 178 of the Act requires the Secretary of State to carry out a review of the effectiveness of the regulatory framework and to lay a report in parliament. It is important to allow time for measures to be fully implemented before carrying out any review.

■ Open Government Partnership: Public Appointments

Joe Powell:

[R] [\[11509\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what progress he has made on appointing a Ministerial lead for the UK's seat on the Open Government Partnership Steering Committee.

Feryal Clark:

The responsibility for the interrelated areas of open government and open data is currently held in the Central Digital and Data Office (CDDO). However, as part of a Machinery of Government change to create the Digital Centre of Government, CDDO has moved into the Department for Science Innovation and Technology (DSIT) from the Cabinet Office. The ongoing work to design the digital centre will assess the suitability of the current arrangement and make recommendations for the future responsibility for the delivery of the principles of Open Government and the National Action Plan for Open Government and inform the Ministerial lead for the UK's seat on the Open Government Partnership Steering Committee.

■ Project Gigabit: Rural Areas

Sir Julian Smith:

[\[11250\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the progress of Project Gigabit in rural areas.

Chris Bryant:

As of February 2024, over 1 million premises had been upgraded to gigabit-capable broadband through government-funded programmes. Between April 2022 and March 2023, 90% of premises benefiting from government broadband schemes were in rural areas.

To improve coverage further, we currently have 36 Project Gigabit contracts in place to bring fast, reliable broadband to over 1 million more homes and businesses, and further contracts are scheduled to be awarded in the coming months.

■ Research: Finance

Chi Onwurah: [\[12053\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what the evidential basis is for the calculation that the increase in his Department's R&D budget to £13.9 billion is a rise by 8.5% in real terms.

Feryal Clark:

DSIT's capital budget in 2024/25 was £13.3bn, with £12.5bn allocated for investment in R&D. As outlined in the Autumn Budget 2024, DSIT's R&D allocation has risen to £13.9bn in 2025/26, a £1.4bn cash-terms uplift.

Using the latest OBR GDP deflator estimate for 2025/26 of 2.4 per cent (Autumn Budget 2024), this equates to a real-terms increase of 8.5%.

■ Social Media: Regulation

Patrick Hurley: [\[11379\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, when measures under the Online Safety Act 2023 to help protect social media users from (a) fake and (b) anonymous accounts will be implemented; and whether Ofcom's consultation on additions to the Illegal Content Codes will include those accounts.

Feryal Clark:

Under the Online Safety Act, all services in scope must tackle illegal content and activity which is harmful to children, including activity through fake and anonymous accounts. The illegal harms duties will come into force in Spring 2025, followed by the child safety duties in Summer 2025.

Ofcom's draft codes include proposed measures to allow children to block accounts, and to reject unwanted invitations to group chats. The Act also requires Category 1 providers to offer user verification options, enabling users to filter out non-verified users and their content. Ofcom expects to consult on these duties in late 2025.

■ Starlink

Mark Pritchard: [\[11232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of trends in the level of reliance on Starlink in the (a) private and (b) public sectors; what steps he is taking to help increase competition in satellite technologies.

Chris Bryant:

The government acknowledges rapid evolutions in the global satellite communications sector. Monopoly rarely serves the public interest and a competitive

market is important to ensuring public and private sector value. We are keen to secure UK leadership in commercial satellite communications, which is why the UK has:

- delivered the Connectivity in Low Earth Orbit programme to develop the next generation of UK satellite communications technologies;
- led the European Space Agency's Advanced Research in Telecommunications Systems programme;
- supported a series of satellite broadband trials with a range of suppliers; and
- acquired a stake in UK based low Earth orbit satellite operator OneWeb, which supports over 400 highly productive UK jobs.

■ STEM Subjects

Jim Shannon:

[\[11257\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what plans he has to (a) improve and (b) standardise data collection for STEM careers.

Chris Bryant:

My department works closely with the Department for Education (DfE) and Skills England to ensure that data collection for STEM careers is standardised across government and has already started using the occupation classifications published by the DfE in March of this year. We will continue engaging with the DfE and the Office for National Statistics to improve these classifications, ensuring that Standard Occupational Classifications are updated to reflect new and emerging technologies and occupations.

TRANSPORT

■ A52: Nottinghamshire

James Naish:

[\[11358\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, which organisation is responsible for (a) litter collection and (b) tree management along the A52 in Nottinghamshire.

Lilian Greenwood:

Responsibility for litter collection on the A52 in Nottinghamshire lies with the local authorities in the area, in this case that is Broxtowe Borough Council, Nottingham City Council and Rushcliffe Borough Council.

National Highways is responsible for tree management on the A52 in Nottinghamshire, this includes cyclical inspections of trees within National Highways ownership and can include third party trees that are identified as being a significant and imminent hazard to the Strategic Road Network.

■ Aberdeen Airport**Harriet Cross:** [\[11540\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department is taking steps to tackle changes in the (a) number of flight services and (b) level of fares at Aberdeen International Airport.

Harriet Cross: [\[11542\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has made an assessment of the economic impact of seasonal flight reductions at Aberdeen International Airport; and whether he is taking steps to encourage year-round services.

Mike Kane:

Whilst the Government recognises the role that regional airports, including Aberdeen Airport, play in acting as a gateway to international opportunities, maintaining social and family ties and strengthening bonds between the four nations, the UK aviation market operates predominantly in the private sector. It is for AGS Airports Ltd as the owners of the airport to invest in infrastructure to attract passengers, and work with airlines to maintain and create new connections, including negotiating year-round services and fares.

■ Airports: Disability**Robin Swann:** [\[12186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will publish a breakdown of funding for passengers with reduced mobility services at United Kingdom airports provided by her Department.

Mike Kane:

Under the UK law, the managing body of the airport is responsible for ensuring the provision of free assistance, for disabled or less mobile passengers. The UK aviation sector operates in a private market, therefore the sector is responsible for funding the provision of assistance.

■ Aviation: Fares**Harriet Cross:** [\[11541\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to monitor pricing practices by airline operators on routes where there is (a) limited and (b) no competition (i) generally and (ii) at (A) Aberdeen International Airport and (B) other airports serving (1) remote and (2) rural areas.

Harriet Cross: [\[11543\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to protect consumers on routes where a single airline operates the only available service.

Mike Kane:

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has statutory competition functions in relation to airline markets. The CMA and the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) both have responsibilities for enforcing consumer protections relating to price transparency, contract terms and passenger rights, including those during flight disruption.

Additionally, Public Service Obligations (PSOs) support vital domestic routes that are at risk of being lost, particularly those connecting remote areas, guaranteeing a reliable and consistent service. The Department is actively engaging with regional airports, including Aberdeen Airport, to understand how Government can support and unlock opportunities for growth.

■ Bus Services: Concessions**Nadia Whittome:**[\[12190\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of allowing English National Concessionary Travel Scheme bus passes to be used before 9.30 am.

Simon Lightwood:

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

■ Large Goods Vehicles: Concrete**Ian Sollom:**[\[12239\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will carry out an assessment of the impact of the regulatory changes to volumetric concrete mobile plants in 2018 on the construction industry.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Department ran a call for evidence from October to December 2023 seeking views on three potential options on weight limits for VCMs. Any potential changes to the current policy position on VCM weight limits will need to consider the implications for road safety, infrastructure, the environment, and maintaining fair competition in the market. The Department is currently reviewing the outcomes and will publish its findings in due course.

■ Motor Vehicles: Carbon Emissions**Alex Mayer:**[\[11372\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 18 October 2024 to Question 8554 on Buses and Large Goods Vehicles: Carbon Emissions, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending the zero emission vehicle mandate to include (a) trucks, (b) buses and (c) other vehicles.

Lilian Greenwood:

The ZEV Mandate sets a clear pathway for the decarbonisation of new cars and vans and is the largest carbon saving measure across government. The Department is committed to decarbonising other vehicle categories and is exploring options for implementation that meet the needs of each segment of the market.

■ National Highways: Litter and Trees**James Naish:**[\[11357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to ensure that Highways England fulfils its statutory functions for (a) litter collection and (b) tree management.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Department for Transport regularly engages with National Highways to discuss its performance and management of the Strategic Road Network.

The Office for Road and Rail, as Highways Monitor, also plays an important role in monitoring on behalf of the Secretary of State, holding National Highways to account for its licence commitments to maintain, operate and improve motorways and major 'A' roads in England. Should the Office for Road and Rail deem that National Highways is not complying with its statutory functions or the requirements outlined in the Roads Investment Strategy, they may determine that enforcement action is appropriate.

■ Purfleet Port: Accidents**Apsana Begum:**[\[11280\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when the Maritime Accident Investigation Branch will publish its interim report in relation to its investigation on the fatal injury to a crew member on a Malta-registered RoRo cargo vessel while loading freight vehicles in Purfleet on 13 July 2024.

Mike Kane:

The accident on the Laureline happened on 13/07/2024. The Maritime Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) is required to make every effort to publish a full report as soon as possible and in any case within 12 months of the accident. If this is not possible then an interim report is issued at the 12 month point. MAIB does not generally issue interim reports outside of this timeframe.

■ Railways: Lincolnshire**Richard Tice:**[\[11402\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to improve the service on the trainline between Grantham and Skegness.

Simon Lightwood:

More modern Class 170 trains were introduced to this route in 2023, and additionally these trains will be completely refurbished over the next three years. Meanwhile, East Midlands Railway will continue to improve its timetable of strengthened trains and passenger handling in the summer peak, building on the success of the last two years.

Railways: Passengers**Grahame Morris:**[\[11233\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 14 October 2024 to Question 6029 on Railways: Passengers, if he will publish those forecasts.

Simon Lightwood:

The Department develops and maintains a number of possible rail demand forecasts. These are published when appropriate to evidence policy decisions.

Railways: Suffolk**Nick Timothy:**[\[11439\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what his planned timescale is for (a) commencing and (b) completing upgrades to Ely and Haughley junctions.

Lilian Greenwood:

This government is committed to delivering economic growth, and projects such as the Ely Area Capacity Enhancement and upgrades to Haughley Junction have the potential to contribute to this. While the previous government made public statements of support for both projects, no funding was provided to allow either to progress.

The Chancellor has been clear about the state of the nation's finances and has launched a multi-year Spending Review. Decisions and timescales about individual projects will be informed by the review process and confirmed in due course.

Shipping: Apprentices**Grahame Morris:**[\[11235\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on the provision of maritime apprenticeships.

Grahame Morris:[\[11258\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions she has had with (a) shipowners, (b) training providers and (c) trade unions on the provision of maritime apprenticeships.

Mike Kane:

The UK must continue to be at the leading edge of maritime skills and provide a world-class education to benefit both UK economic growth and support a maritime sector fit for the challenges and opportunities ahead. This is why DfT officials are engaging with the Department for Education on the establishment of Skills England.

Ministers will be kept updated on this work as it progresses and will hold discussions with industry and Cabinet colleagues as appropriate.

■ Undocumented Migrants: English Channel

Rupert Lowe: [\[11419\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what information his Department holds on the number of emergency calls made by irregular migrants crossing the channel on the basis of information that is later found to be false for each year since 2018.

Mike Kane:

HM Coastguard does not hold information on the number of emergency calls made by irregular migrants crossing the channel on the basis of information that is later found to be false.

TREASURY

■ Business Rates

Nick Timothy: [\[11438\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she plans to reform business rates.

James Murray:

The government is creating a fairer business rates system that protects the high street, supports investment, and is fit for the 21st century.

Autumn Budget 2024 announced the government's first steps, including an intention to introduce permanently lower multipliers for high street retail, hospitality, and leisure (RHL) properties from April 2026. The government intends to fund this sustainably via a higher multiplier on properties with Rateable Values (RV) of £500,000 or more.

During the interim period, for 2025-26, RHL properties will receive a 40% relief on business rates bills up to a cash cap of £110,000 per business. The small business multiplier paid by properties with RVs below £51,000 will also be frozen for a further year.

The government has published a discussion paper which sets out priority areas for further reform and invites stakeholders to a conversation about transforming the system over the Parliament.

■ Economic Growth: Lincolnshire and Yorkshire and the Humber

Mark Swards: [\[11684\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps her Department is taking to support economic growth across (a) Yorkshire and (b) northern Lincolnshire.

Tulip Siddiq:

At Autumn Budget 24 the government set out the first major steps in our approach to regional growth, through devolution, investment and reform.

The Government is investing in total over £2.5 billion over 30 years in West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire and York and North Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authorities to support growth and business investment.

In 26/27 we will introduce integrated settlements in West Yorkshire and South Yorkshire Combined Authorities, giving mayors greater control of their budgets. We are investing in transport by securing delivery of the TransPennine Route Upgrade between York and Manchester, via Leeds and Huddersfield, and have invested £1.3 billion capital through the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements to unlock growth-enhancing transport projects such as the Mass Transit system in West Yorkshire.

The Government also confirmed the designation of the first customs site in the Humber Freeport, enabling the release of seed capital funding to support the Freeport to build upon the £1bn of investment it has attracted so far, with a particular focus on renewable energy and advanced manufacturing.

Through the Government owned British Business Bank, we are also investing over £1billion through their regional Investment Fund programmes, including supporting growing businesses across Yorkshire and northern Lincolnshire.

■ Economic Situation: Equality

Andrew Cooper:

[\[11529\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent fiscal steps her Department has taken to help tackle regional economic inequalities.

Darren Jones:

At Autumn Budget 24 this Government invested for the long-term in regional economic growth, supporting city regions to achieve their potential and spread growth across the country. It set out the first major steps in our approach to regional growth, through devolution, investment and reform. Mayors now have greater control of their budgets through the first integrated settlements, which will apply for the West Midlands and Greater Manchester from 2025-26, and for other eligible Mayoral Combined Authorities from 2026-27. The Government has also committed to giving local leaders the powers and resources they need to secure growth in their communities, and will set out more detail in the upcoming English Devolution White Paper.

To ensure all parts of the UK feel the benefits of growth, we invested in major railway projects like the TransPennine Route Upgrade, East West Rail, and High Speed 2; confirmed funding for Investment Zones and Freeports across the UK; set out plans to give places long-term certainty through the Government's 10-year vision for infrastructure and confirmed long-term support for growth-driving sectors ahead of the full modern Industrial Strategy's publication in the Spring; and invested in public services through apprenticeships and the Get Britain Working package, including Health and Growth Accelerators which will tailor employment, health, and skills support to the needs of local people.

■ Financial Services: Carbon Emissions

Sarah Gibson:

[\[12209\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment has been made of the adequacy of the UK's Sustainability Disclosure Requirements: and whether the Government plans to publish an updated review timeline.

Tulip Siddiq:

The government is committed to leading the world in sustainable finance by making the UK a global hub for green and transition finance activity, and delivering a world-leading sustainable finance regulatory framework.

The government will provide further information about its plans to support growth and integrity in the UK sustainable finance landscape, including sustainability disclosures, in due course.

■ Health Services: Pay

Claire Hanna:

[\[11400\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will release funding to enable payment for the Pay Review Body recommendation for a 5.5% pay uplift for health workers in Northern Ireland.

Darren Jones:

The Northern Ireland Executive (NIE) is being funded above its independently assessed relative need level of 124% in 2024-25 and 2025-26, including the 2024 restoration financial package. As a result of decisions taken at the Autumn Budget and Phase 1 of the Spending Review, the Northern Ireland Executive is receiving £18.2 billion in 2025-26. This represents the largest real-terms settlement since devolution.

The NIE is responsible for deciding how to allocate their funding across their devolved responsibilities, including the provision of pay awards for health workers.

■ Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme

Pippa Heylings:

[\[11389\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she has made a recent assessment with the Secretary of State for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport of the potential merits of making the Listed Places of Worship Scheme (a permanent grant to help support (a) historic buildings central to local communities and (b) the livelihoods of skilled crafts people.

James Murray:

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport continues to closely monitor the implementation and impact of the grant scheme through the regular reporting of the grant administrator, EMB. Since 2010, the Government has returned over £350 million to listed places of worship such as churches, synagogues, mosques and temples through the grant scheme. This has helped protect our listed places of

worship and enabled them to continue their work as centers of worship and community assets.

The Chancellor has now set departmental budgets for 2025-26, further decisions around individual schemes such as these will be considered by standard departmental allocation processes later this financial year. Funding beyond 25-26 will be set at Phase 2 of the Spending Review.

■ **No-interest Loans Scheme: Northern Ireland**

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[12026\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she plans to expand the pilot No Interest Loan Scheme to Northern Ireland.

Tulip Siddiq:

The government recognises the importance of affordable credit in helping people across the UK manage their finances. A government-funded No Interest Loan Scheme (NILS) pilot is being conducted by Fair4All Finance and its partners in England, Scotland, and Wales. The pilot aims to assess how effectively NILS meets the needs of vulnerable consumers. PwC has been appointed to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the pilot to determine whether NILS is a viable and sustainable product that should be made permanently available.

Lending for the pilot concluded on 31 August 2024. Although Fair4All Finance intended to extend the pilot to Northern Ireland, the absence of a Northern Ireland Executive from October 2022 to February 2024 meant there was insufficient time to secure sign-off for the necessary capital to fund the pilot there before the lending period ended.

■ **Pensions: Lump Sum Payments**

David Chadwick:

[\[11670\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will bring forward legislative proposals to extend eligibility for trivial commutation.

Tulip Siddiq:

My response to Parliamentary Question 11127 provides more details on the rules around trivial commutation.

The purpose of these rules is to provide individuals with flexibility, while also helping to reduce the administrative burden on pension schemes of paying small pensions. In the case of trivial commutation, the £30,000 limit applies to the aggregate value of an individual's pensions, rather than to each pension pot. This is to prevent the commutation of much larger – non-trivial - pensions by splitting them into multiple smaller pots just before retirement.

The Government has no current plans to extend this limit.

■ Public Finance

James Cartlidge:

[\[12125\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to her Department's policy paper entitled Fixing the foundations: public spending audit 2024-25, updated on 2 August 2024, whether the results of the Spending Review will be announced at a future fiscal event.

Darren Jones:

The results of 'Phase 1' of the Spending Review, announced in July, were laid with the Autumn Budget on 30 October. 'Phase 1' covers the financial years 2024-25 and 2025-26. The Budget fixed the envelope for 'Phase 2' of the Spending Review, which will conclude in late spring 2025.

■ Research: Finance

Chi Onwurah:

[\[11881\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to Autumn Budget 2024, HC 295, published on 30 October 2024, if her Department will publish a tabular summary of Capital DEL allocated in the Budget to research and development by Department.

Chi Onwurah:

[\[11882\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 3.19 of the Autumn Budget 2024, HC 295, published on 30 October 2024, if she will publish an allocation breakdown of the £20.4 billion spending on research and development for 2025-26.

Darren Jones:

To fully harness the potential of the UK's excellent science base and to foster a dynamic investment economy, the Budget protects record levels of government research and development (R&D) investment with £20.4 billion allocated in 2025-26. This is allocated as per the table below.

DEPARTMENT	25-26 R&D*
DSIT	£13,936m
DHSC	£2,036m
MOD	£1,685m
DESNZ	£730m
DEFRA	£512m
SIA	£439m
FCDO	£335m
DBT	£329m

DEPARTMENT	25-26 R&D*
DfT	£154m
DCMS	£63m
DfE	£50m
HO	£45m
DWP	£39m
MHCLG	£9m
FSA	£8m
MOJ	£3m
HMRC	£2m
HMT	£1m
TOTAL	£20,376m

■ Tax Avoidance

Kevin Hollinrake: [\[11656\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether it remains her policy to commission an independent review of the Loan Charge.

Laura Trott: [\[11949\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 25 October 2024 to Question 9707 on Tax Avoidance, when she will provide an update on her policy on the Loan Charge.

James Murray:

The government announced at Autumn Budget that it will commission an independent review of the Loan Charge to help bring the matter to a close for those affected whilst ensuring fairness for all taxpayers.

Further details about the review will be set out in due course.

■ Wines: Excise Duties

Lee Barron: [\[11490\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment with the Secretary of State for Business and Trade of the potential impact of withdrawing temporary easement for wine on business operations and the UK supply chain.

Lee Barron:

[11491]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate she has made of the cost to businesses of administering the excise duty system following the end of the temporary easement on 1 February 2025.

James Murray:

In August 2023 the Government introduced reforms to alcohol duty so that products are taxed in proportion to their alcoholic strength, not volume. The reforms aimed to modernise and simplify the system, to prioritise public health and incentivise consumption of lower strength products.

To help the wine industry adapt to the new duty system, the current, temporary duty easement was introduced as a transitional measure, which was intended to allow time for wine producers to adapt to calculating duty based on alcohol by volume.

By the planned end-date of 31 January 2025, the wine industry will have had over two years to adapt to the new strength-based system.

The Government publishes tax information and impact notes (TIINs) for tax policy changes. The summary of impacts from the changes to alcohol duty announced at Spring Budget 2023, including the wine easement, can be found here: [Reform of Alcohol Duty Rates and Reliefs - GOV.UK](#)

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Autism: Employment

Alison Bennett:

[11486]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to enable people with autism spectrum disorder conditions into employment in Mid Sussex constituency.

Alison McGovern:

We recognise that autistic people face particular barriers to employment, which is reflected in a poor overall employment rate. In our plan to make work pay, we committed to raising awareness of neurodiversity in the workplace.

Our forthcoming employment White Paper considers how to improve employment outcomes and experiences for disabled people and people with health conditions. We are exploring how we can build on the earlier, independent, Buckland Review which was focused more narrowly on autism and employment, to improve understanding and support for all neurodivergent people at work.

We also have a range of specialist initiatives which can provide support to neurodivergent people to get back into work and stay in work, including support from Work Coaches and Disability Employment Advisers in Jobcentres and Access to Work grants.

Employers will also be a large part of our success in this work. Our current support to employers includes [a digital information service for employers](#), and the Disability Confident scheme. We will be considering how to enhance our work with employers in the months ahead.

■ Carer's Allowance

Jim Shannon:

[\[11581\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the earnings threshold was for (a) Carer's Allowance and (b) Invalid Care Allowance in each of the last 30 years.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Carer's Allowance, formerly known as Invalid Care Allowance, was introduced in 1976.

The following table provides details of all increases to the earnings limit, from 1976 to the present day.

DATE FROM	DATE TO	EARNINGS LIMIT
05.07.76	11.11.82	£6
12.11.82	08.04.90	£12
09.04.90	07.04.91	£20
08.04.91	05.04.92	£30
06.04.92	11.04.93	£40
12.04.93	08.04.01	£50
09.04.01	07.04.02	£72
08.04.02	06.04.03	£75
07.04.03	11.04.04	£77
12.04.04	10.04.05	£79
11.04.05	09.04.06	£82
10.04.06	08.04.07	£84
09.04.07	30.09.07	£87
01.10.07	11.04.10	£95
12.04.10	19.05.14	£100
20.05.14	05.04.15	£102

DATE FROM	DATE TO	EARNINGS LIMIT
06.04.15	09.04.17	£110
10.04.17	08.04.18	£116
09.04.18	07.04.19	£120
08.04.19	05.04.20	£123
06.04.20	11.04.21	£128
12.04.21	10.04.22	£128
11.04.22	09.04.23	£132
10.04.23	07.04.24	£139
08.04.24	06.04.25	£151

Kim Leadbeater:[\[11614\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has made an assessment of the impact of carers losing access to Carers Allowance once they become entitled to the State Pension on those carers.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Although there is no upper age limit to claiming Carer's Allowance, it cannot normally be paid with the State Pension. It has been a long held feature of the UK's benefit system, under successive Governments, that where someone is entitled to two benefits for the same contingency, then whilst there may be entitlement to both benefits, only one will be paid to avoid duplication for the same need.

Although entitlement to State Pension and Carer's Allowance arise in different circumstances they are nevertheless designed for the same contingency – as an income replacement.

Carer's Allowance replaces income where the carer has given up the opportunity of full-time employment in order to care for a severely disabled person, while State Pension replaces income in retirement. For this reason, social security rules operate to prevent them being paid together, to avoid duplicate provision for the same need.

However, if a carer's State Pension is less than Carer's Allowance, State Pension is paid and topped up with Carer's Allowance to the basic weekly rate of Carer's Allowance which is currently £81.90.

Where Carer's Allowance cannot be paid, the person will keep underlying entitlement to the benefit. This gives access to the additional amount for carers in Pension Credit of £45.60 a week and even if a pensioner's income is above the limit for Pension Credit, they may still be able to receive Housing Benefit.

■ Heat Pumps

Mohammad Yasin:

[\[12115\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will bring forward legislative proposals to extend the (a) statutory and (b) regulatory standards for drilling boreholes in mineral exploration or evaluation to the drilling of boreholes for the purposes of installing ground-source heat pumps; and whether her Department plans to introduce safety legislation for borehole drilling on private land.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The Borehole Sites and Operations Regulations 1995 (BSOR) require operators to notify the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) in advance if drilling is taking place in a defined mining area. These Regulations do not apply to drilling for the purposes of installing ground-source heat pumps (GSHPs).

Drilling for the purposes of installing GSHPs is covered by the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 (HSWA), which places a fundamental general duty on employers to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of their employees, and of other people who may be affected by the work activity. The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 also apply, which requires suitable and sufficient risk assessments to be carried out and suitable arrangements to be implemented to manage risks.

There is currently no intention to bring drilling for the installation of GSHPs within the scope of BSOR.

■ Lithium: Labelling

Sir Iain Duncan Smith:

[\[11825\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) report entitled Agency Opinion on the classification and labelling of lithium carbonate [1] lithium chloride [2] and lithium hydroxide [3], published in August 2013, whether the HSE plans to initiate the Article 37A process; and what discussions she has had with the HSE on that issue.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is considering whether to initiate the Article 37A process under the GB Classification, Labelling and Packaging Regulation (GB CLP) following publication of the Agency Opinion on the classification and labelling of lithium carbonate [1] lithium chloride [2] and lithium hydroxide [3] in August 2023.

Under Article 37A, HSE, as the GB CLP Agency, may submit a proposal for a new or revised GB mandatory classification and labelling requirement when there is evidence of new scientific data or information that may lead to a new or revised mandatory classification and labelling for a priority hazard class, such as carcinogenicity, mutagenicity or reproductive toxicity.

There is no statutory time limit on HSE to prepare and submit a proposal. HSE regulatory and scientific specialists are investigating the evidence and new scientific

data made available and, if necessary, seeking any additional information or consulting other departments or agencies. HSE is continuing to engage with stakeholders during this process.

No discussions have been held on this issue between the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions and HSE.

■ **Motor Vehicles: Disability**

Anna Dixon: [\[12244\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department is taking steps to provide financial support to people to make deposit payments on wheelchair accessible vehicles.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The Department for Work and Pensions are responsible for the disability benefits that provide a passport to the Motability Scheme. The Scheme is operated by the Motability Foundation.

Should an individual choose to join the Motability Scheme, then Scheme customers can apply to Motability Foundation for a means tested grant that can help towards the cost of an advance payment on a vehicle including wheelchair accessible vehicles.

■ **Pension Wise**

Steve Darling: [\[11390\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the impact of the stronger nudge to pensions guidance on Pension Wise guidance usage by pension savers.

Emma Reynolds:

The Stronger Nudge to pension guidance regulations were introduced in June 2022. In the year following this (June 2022 to May 2023) around 124,000 Pension Wise appointments were attended, and in the subsequent year (June 2023 to May 2024) around 119,000 appointments were attended. These figures represent a 14% and 9% increase, respectively, on the number of appointments prior to the introduction of the regulations.

Overall, Stronger Nudge has accounted for around 16% of attended Pension Wise appointments between June 2022 and October 2024, according to unpublished data from the Money and Pensions Service (MaPS).

Increases in Pension Wise uptake cannot be solely attributed to the Stronger Nudge regulations. The Department for Work and Pensions works closely with MaPS to understand what pensions guidance people are using and to help people get the right guidance at the right time, with further support available through multiple channels.

Depending on individual circumstances, these channels may direct people, through triaging, to Pension Wise (delivered by MaPS) or may help them decide Pension Wise is not appropriate for them at that time. For example, in the 2023/24 financial

year, 258,000 people accessed the more holistic Money Helper pensions guidance (also delivered by MaPS). This is a 13% increase from 2022/23.

■ **Poverty: Children**

Alex McIntyre:

[\[11802\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to help reduce the number of children in poverty in Gloucester.

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 Spring 2025.

Our publication on 23 October 'Tackling Child Poverty: Developing our Strategy' sets out how we will develop the Strategy, harnessing all available levers to deliver a reduction in child poverty this Parliament.

The Strategy will look at policies across four key themes of increasing incomes, reducing essential costs, increasing financial resilience, and better local support especially in the early years. This will build on the reform plans underway across government and work underway in Devolved Governments.

The Taskforce will hear directly from experts on each of the Strategy's themes including children and families living in poverty and work with leading organisations, charities, and campaigners.

The vital work of the Taskforce comes alongside our commitments to triple our investment in breakfast clubs to over £30 million, extend the Household Support Fund for an additional year until 31 March 2026, introduce a Fair Repayment Rate for deductions from Universal Credit, and increase the National Living Wage to £12.21 an hour from April 2025 to boost the pay of 3 million workers.

■ **Unemployment: Essex**

James McMurdock:

[\[11814\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to help reduce the unemployment rate in Essex.

Alison McGovern:

Both Basildon and Grays Jobcentres serve the South Basildon and East Thurrock constituency. Both Jobcentres collaborate with employers and providers to resolve recruitment needs, focusing on overcoming common barriers. Solutions include tailored Sector Based Work Academy Programmes, organising recruitment events themed by sector and claimant group, and innovative Movement to Work placements. Both Jobcentres also deliver claimant information sessions, covering topics such as childcare costs, various labour market sectors, 50PLUS Mid-Life MOTs, CV and job application support, and interview preparation.

Basildon Jobcentre are delivering a youth customer forum to encourage their younger customers into work. This is designed to be a provider-led programme to support customers with mental health challenges, as this was their main barrier to employment.

Basildon Jobcentre, Basildon Council, and Essex County Council also recently collaborated to deliver Spectrum, a neurodivergent wellbeing and recruitment event. Among other partners, the local NHS Trust attended the event and is now planning to replicate and deliver similar events across other boroughs. DWP and Thurrock Council will deliver a variation of this event in early 2025 for Grays' neurodivergent constituents.

Basildon Jobcentre and Basildon Council co-delivered activities for their recent Apprenticeship Day and following its success, both are planning to co-deliver a season recruitment event. Pathways, Basildon Council's community employment support hub, are committed to delivering monthly recruitment and training events.

■ Universal Credit

Rupert Lowe:

[\[11420\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many individuals claiming Universal Credit have received fit notes for each of the last three financial years.

Alison McGovern:

The number of people on Universal Credit in Great Britain who submitted an accepted fit note to the Department for each of the last three financial years is shown in the table below:

2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024
854,390	896,790	908,740

Notes:

Numbers are rounded to 10.

Although most will have submitted Statements of Fitness for Work (fit notes), other forms of medical evidence that the Department accepts (e.g. hospital discharge letters) will be included in the totals.

Data is taken from Universal Credit analytical systems but results have not been quality assured to Official Statistics publication standard.

The Department regularly publishes Universal Credit Health Journey caseload statistics on [Stat-Xplore](#) including the monthly number of people on UC Health with a current fit-note.

■ Universal Credit: Temporary Employment

Dr Beccy Cooper:

[\[11981\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will take steps to amend the eligibility criteria for Universal Credit so that people on temporary employment contracts are able to make claims as soon as their contract ends.

Sir Stephen Timms:

A person on a temporary contract can claim UC at any time and the amount of UC will adjust depending on their earnings. The Government is committed to reviewing Universal Credit. Details of the review will be set out in due course.

■ Vacancies: Romford

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[11242\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to help fill job vacancies in Romford constituency.

Alison McGovern:

The Romford Jobcentre team deliver a bespoke service to employers, including candidate matching and screening, employer interviews on site, and group information sessions to help customers into work, as well as job fairs targeting specific sectors and customer groups, such as events for older workers, National Care Leavers Week, and Disability Confident. The team also arrange employer-led insight days and webinars, such as the current collaboration with Voice, an adult social care provider, to boost awareness and interest in this sector.

In the constituency and across the London Borough of Havering, Romford Jobcentre partners with both local and national employers to meet their recruitment needs, creating Sector Based Work Academy Programmes tailored to their requirements, including pre-employment training and work experience placements, allowing employers to assess whether the participant is a good match for the role and the company.

The weekly job club at Romford Jobcentre supports residents in CV preparation, job applications, interview preparation, and techniques. We also host information sessions on topics to aid customers in finding employment, including insights into different job sectors, childcare advice, support for individuals with additional health needs, and motivational sessions.

The Romford team work closely with the London Borough of Havering, recently co-hosting two job fairs. More job fairs are planned, including those with money management and cost of living support. We actively engage with the Local Authority Regeneration Team, sharing local labour market intelligence and collaborating with further education providers and local independent providers to shape provisions that meet the current and emerging demands of employers.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Castlereagh Foundation

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[12025\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what plans he has for the (a) establishment and (b) work of the Castlereagh Foundation.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 5 November 2024. The correct answer should have been:

Hilary Benn:

~~The Executive Office is responsible for taking forward the necessary arrangements to implement the commenced provisions of the Identity and Language (Northern Ireland) Act 2022 that includes the establishment of the Castlereagh Foundation. The Government expects the Executive Office will make an announcement in due course regarding next steps on implementation of the legislation. The Government wants to see devolved institutions in Northern Ireland consider the provisions set out under the legislation themselves before any consideration of using or commencing the powers provided for in section 8 of the Act.~~

The Identity and Language (Northern Ireland) Act 2022 contains provisions for the Establishment of the Castlereagh Foundation. The Executive Office is responsible for taking forward the necessary arrangements to implement the commenced provisions under this Act. The Government expects the Executive Office will make an announcement in due course regarding next steps on implementation of the legislation. The Government wants to see devolved institutions in Northern Ireland consider the provisions set out under the legislation themselves before any consideration of using or commencing the powers provided for in section 8 of the Act.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

BUSINESS AND TRADE

■ Post Office Update

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Services, Small Businesses and Exports) (Gareth Thomas): [\[HCWS184\]](#)

The Horizon scandal represents one of the biggest miscarriages of justice of our time. The Government's priority is to get redress to those affected as quickly as possible and is doing all it can to increase the pace of redress across all schemes. We continue to review each scheme to explore ways to speed up redress. To ensure postmasters are receiving redress as quickly as possible, we are making upfront fixed offers and providing interim and partial payments wherever possible. As of 31 October 2024, approximately £438 million has been paid to over 3,100 claimants across four schemes. The total amount of redress paid out has increased by over 85% since the end of June. There is still a lot more to do.

While we continue to address the past, now is also the time to consider the future of the Post Office. Exploring ways to strengthen the Post Office network is a manifesto commitment for the Government and a priority for the Department for Business and Trade. The UK-wide Post Office branch network is an essential part of the UK's economic infrastructure, supporting high streets, businesses, and contributing directly to the Government's mission to kick start economic growth.

The company has undoubtedly had a challenging period and it is clear the Post Office is at a critical juncture. While Post Office continues its work to make the company more efficient, it is also important that Government has a clear vision for the future direction of the Post Office to make sure that this public asset delivers what is important to the British public. Given the complexity and scale of some of the challenges being faced by the Post Office, the Department has appointed external consultants to support this work.

The Government will be carefully considering what customers, communities and postmasters would like to see from a modern Post Office network. Given the Post Office is a public asset, it is essential the public have their say on the future direction. As such, Government plans to publish a Green Paper to seek the public's views on a range of different proposals in the first half of 2025.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ The Local Digital Television Programme Services (Amendment) Order 2024

Minister for Sport, Media, Civil Society and Youth (Stephanie Peacock):
[\[HCWS186\]](#)

The Government has today laid in draft [The Local Digital Television Programme Services \(Amendment\) Order 2024](#). This statutory instrument will give Ofcom new powers to renew

the licences for the local TV multiplex and the 34 local TV services until 2034. The current licences are due to expire in November 2025.

A previous version of this Statutory Instrument was laid in draft on 7 May 2024. However it was subsequently withdrawn as delays caused by the General Election meant that it was no longer possible to take forward the renewal process provided for by the Order. The updated draft includes additional powers for Ofcom to extend the licences for a period of 12 months, subject to the consent of the licence holder, before renewing them. This will ensure Ofcom has sufficient time to conduct the renewal process before the licences would otherwise expire.

This Government is committed to supporting a thriving local media, and in particular the role it plays in providing trusted and accurate news at a local level. However, we are aware of the challenges it faces in the context of a rapidly changing industry landscape. We want local media, including local TV, to survive and thrive long into the future. That is why we are taking steps to ensure the continuity of local TV services until at least 2034 so that audiences, and the sector more widely, can continue to benefit from the valuable local news and content that they provide.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ RAAC in the NHS Estate

Minister of State for Health (Secondary Care) (Karin Smyth): [\[HCWS190\]](#)

Today I wish to update the House on the presence of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) in the NHS estate. RAAC is a type of concrete that is prone to collapse and needs replacing.

As the Chancellor announced on 30 October, over £1 billion will be invested to tackle dangerous reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) and make inroads into the existing backlog of critical maintenance, repairs, and upgrades across the NHS estate. This Budget will begin delivering on our promise of change for the NHS. It will take time, but we are beginning to rebuild the health service to make it fit for the future.

We are committed to removing RAAC from the NHS estate as a priority. The NHS has been surveying hospital sites to identify the presence of RAAC since 2019. As of 3 October 2024, there are 47 hospital sites in England with confirmed RAAC, a reduction of 7 since February of this year. To date, RAAC has been completely eradicated at 13 hospital sites and further sites will have eradicated RAAC this financial year. The published list of sites on GOV.UK has been updated accordingly and can be found here [Reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete \(RAAC\) in hospitals: management information - GOV.UK](#). The full list of sites with RAAC as well as eradications can also be found in the table below.

Once the presence of RAAC is confirmed at a hospital site, the Trust joins NHS England's national RAAC programme. This programme has delivered mitigation, safety, and eradication works across all hospital sites with confirmed RAAC to keep facilities safe and open and is working to remove RAAC fully from the NHS estate.

The Chancellor reiterated in her Autumn Budget Statement that the seven identified hospitals in England constructed wholly or primarily from RAAC in the New Hospital Programme will proceed at pace, due to substantive safety risks associated with these. These schemes were out of scope of the recent NHP review and have continued to their existing delivery timeframes.

These seven hospitals continue to receive funding and support to ensure patient and staff safety from NHS England's national RAAC programme ahead of the delivery of replacement hospitals. Keeping capacity open but being scrupulous about RAAC monitoring and mitigation until the RAAC can be removed is fully in line with the current evidence and recommendations of the Institution of Structural Engineers.

Current List of Hospital Sites with RAAC and Eradications in England as of 3 October 2024

TRUST	SITE NOTES	RAAC STATUS
Doncaster and Bassetlaw Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	Bassetlaw District General Hospital	RAAC eradicated
London Ambulance Service NHS Trust	Oval Depot	RAAC eradicated
Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust	Haywood Hospital	RAAC eradicated
Medway NHS Foundation Trust	Medway Maritime Hospital	RAAC eradicated
Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust	University Hospital Lewisham	RAAC eradicated
Norfolk Community Health and Care NHS Trust	Norwich Community Hospital	RAAC eradicated
Barnsley Hospital NHS Foundation Trust	Barnsley Hospital	RAAC eradicated
Barnet, Enfield and Haringey Mental Health NHS Trust	Chase Farm Hospital	RAAC eradicated
Warrington And Halton Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	Warrington General Hospital	RAAC eradicated
Hull University Teaching Hospital Trust	Castle Hill Hospital	RAAC eradicated

TRUST	SITE NOTES	RAAC STATUS
Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	Blackpool Victoria Hospital	RAAC eradicated
Cambridgeshire Community Services NHS Trust	North Cambridgeshire Hospital - Wisbech	RAAC eradicated
Stockport NHS Foundation Trust	Stepping Hill Hospital	RAAC eradicated
Airedale NHS Foundation Trust	Airedale General Hospital	RAAC confirmed; in national programme and in the NHP
Countess of Chester Hospital NHS Foundation Trust	Countess of Chester Hospital	RAAC confirmed; in national programme
Frimley Health NHS Foundation Trust	Frimley Park Hospital	RAAC confirmed; in national programme and in the NHP
James Paget University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	James Paget Hospital	RAAC confirmed; in national programme and in the NHP
Liverpool University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	University Hospital Aintree	RAAC confirmed; in national programme
Mid and South Essex Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	Broomfield Hospital	RAAC confirmed; in national programme
Mid Cheshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	Leighton Hospital	RAAC confirmed; in national programme and in the NHP
Queen Elizabeth Hospital King's Lynn NHS Foundation Trust	The Queen Elizabeth Hospital	RAAC confirmed; in national programme and in the NHP
West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust	West Suffolk Hospital	RAAC confirmed; in national programme and in the NHP
North West Anglia NHS Foundation Trust - Hinchingbrooke	Hinchingbrooke Hospital	RAAC confirmed; in national programme and in the NHP
North West Anglia NHS Foundation Trust - Stamford	Stamford and Rutland Hospital	RAAC confirmed; in national programme

TRUST	SITE NOTES	RAAC STATUS
Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust - NorthManGH	North Manchester General	RAAC confirmed; in national programme
Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust - Wythenshawe	Wythenshawe Hospital	RAAC confirmed; in national programme
York and Scarborough Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	Scarborough General Hospital	RAAC confirmed; in national programme
Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust	Harrogate Hospital	RAAC confirmed; in national programme
University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust	Southampton General Hospital	RAAC confirmed; in national programme
Northern Care Alliance - Salford Royal Hospital	Salford Royal Hospital	RAAC confirmed; in national programme
Northern Care Alliance - The Royal Oldham Hospital	The Royal Oldham Hospital	RAAC confirmed; in national programme
East Lancashire Hospitals (Blackburn)	Royal Blackburn Hospital	RAAC confirmed; in national programme
Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust	Kidderminster Hospital	RAAC confirmed; in national programme
Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	Churchill Hospital	RAAC confirmed; in national programme
Solent NHS Trust	St. Mary's Community Hospital	RAAC confirmed; in national programme
University Hospitals Sussex NHS Foundation Trust - St Richard's	St Richard's Hospital	RAAC confirmed; in national programme
University Hospitals Sussex NHS Foundation Trust	Worthing Hospital	RAAC confirmed; in national programme
North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust	University Hospital of North Tees	RAAC confirmed; in national programme

TRUST	SITE NOTES	RAAC STATUS
South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	James Cook Hospital	RAAC confirmed; in national programme
Northern Lincolnshire and Goole NHS Foundation Trust	Scunthorpe General Hospital	RAAC confirmed; in national programme
The Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust	The Princess Royal Hospital	RAAC confirmed; in national programme
The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust - Russell's Hall	Russell's Hall	RAAC confirmed; in national programme
Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust	Royal Free Hospital	RAAC confirmed; in national programme
Homerton University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust	Homerton University Hospital	RAAC confirmed; in national programme
Wirral University Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	Clatterbridge Hospital	RAAC confirmed; in national programme
Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust	North Devon District Hospital	RAAC confirmed; in national programme
University Hospitals Plymouth NHS Trust	Derriford Hospital	RAAC confirmed; in national programme
Royal Surrey County Hospital NHS Foundation Trust	Guildford Hospital	RAAC confirmed; in national programme
University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust	Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Edgbaston	RAAC confirmed; in national programme
Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust	New Cross Hospital, Wolverhampton	RAAC confirmed; in national programme
Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	Northern General Hospital	RAAC confirmed; in national programme
Kettering General Hospital NHS Foundation Trust	Kettering General Hospital	RAAC confirmed; in national programme

TRUST	SITE NOTES	RAAC STATUS
Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust	Sandwell General Hospital	RAAC confirmed; in national programme
Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust	Rowley Regis Hospital	RAAC confirmed; in national programme
Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	Royal Hampshire County Hospital, Winchester	RAAC confirmed; in national programme
Bolton NHS Foundation Trust	Royal Bolton Hospital	RAAC confirmed; in national programme
Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust	Royal United Hospital, Bath	RAAC confirmed; in national programme
Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh NHS Foundation Trust	Leigh Infirmary	RAAC confirmed; in national programme
Queen Victoria Hospital Foundation Trust	Queen Victoria Hospital, East Grinstead	RAAC confirmed; in national programme
University Hospitals Bristol and Weston NHS Foundation Trust	Bristol Eye Hospital	RAAC confirmed; in national programme

HOME OFFICE

■ Police Workforce Update

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Yvette Cooper): [\[HCWS187\]](#)

I would like to provide clarification on the written statement I made on 29 July 2024 (HCWS36).

I stated that London Allowance for officers appointed on or after 1 September 1994 will be increased by £1,250. I would like to clarify that this should have stated that the maximum rate of London Allowance for officers appointed on or after 1 September 1994 and not receiving a replacement allowance will be increased by £1,250.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Supported Housing Consultation

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Homelessness and Democracy

(Rushanara Ali):

[\[HCWS185\]](#)

Supported housing provides a home to over half a million people who rely on support to live as independently as possible or recover from a period of crisis. When it is provided responsibly, it results in improved wellbeing, health, and employment prospects for residents, and can relieve pressure on services like the NHS and social care.

There are many excellent supported housing providers in England providing high quality support and accommodation to their residents. But sadly, there continue to be cases of residents finding themselves at the hands of exploitative landlords. A minority of rogue landlords are failing to give residents the support they need, which is resulting in poor outcomes for residents and poor value for money for the taxpayer. It is vital that the quality of supported housing improves and delivers a better experience for residents.

The Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023 (the Act) includes measures to drive out rogue providers and drive-up standards for vulnerable people living in supported housing. It contains powers for the government to set new National Supported Housing Standards for the support provided to residents, enforced through a licensing regime. It also allows for a link between licensing, the standards and Housing Benefit, delivering better value for money for the taxpayer. We are committed to delivering the measures in the Act and to improving the quality of supported housing in England to ensure residents get the support that they deserve.

I am making this statement today to fulfil my duty under the Act to update Parliament on the progress made towards making licensing regulations. My officials have been working with stakeholders to develop the proposals in the forthcoming consultation on licensing, which we will publish in the new year. We also remain committed to establishing a Supported Housing Advisory Panel.

We strongly encourage supported housing providers, local authorities, regulators, provider organisations, and crucially residents to respond to the consultation as it is vital that we get these reforms right. I look forward to working with the sector and residents on this important issue.

PRIME MINISTER

■ NATO Parliamentary Assembly

Prime Minister (Sir Keir Starmer):

[\[HCWS189\]](#)

The following will represent the United Kingdom at the NATO Parliamentary Assembly:

Derek Twigg MP (Leader)

Stuart Anderson MP

The Rt. Hon. the Lord Beamish

Kevin Bonavia MP

Nesil Caliskan MP

Juliet Campbell MP

The Rt. Hon. the Lord Dodds of Duncairn

Richard Foord MP

Lord Fox

The Rt. Hon. the Lord Lancaster of Kimbolton

Baroness Kingsmill

Emma Lewell-Buck MP

Gordon McKee MP

Yasmin Qureshi MP

Lucy Rigby MP

Tim Roca MP

The Rt. Hon. Sir Alec Shelbrooke MP

The Rt. Hon. the Lord Spellar

TREASURY

■ Single Trade Window

The Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury (James Murray):

[\[HCWS188\]](#)

The government is considering its future plans for the border and how best to meet the needs of its users. In the context of financial challenges, the government is pausing delivery of the UK Single Trade Window in 2025/26.

As part of its efforts to support businesses trading across the UK border, the government will consider the role of the Single Trade Window and will provide an update as part of the next phase of the Spending Review, reporting in late Spring 2025.