



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 8 November 2024 and the information is correct at the time of publication (03:25 P.M., 08 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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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

ATTORNEY GENERAL

■ Domestic Abuse: Animal Welfare

Alex Mayer:

[11376]

To ask the Solicitor General, what training her Department provides for prosecutors on links between domestic violence and animal abuse.

Sarah Sackman:

Tackling violence against women and girls is a top priority for this Government and ending the scourge of domestic abuse is a crucial aspect of this.

Prosecutors in the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) must have regard to the Government's statutory guidance framework for controlling or coercive behaviour (the "Framework"). The Framework is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/controlling-or-coercive-behaviour-statutory-guidance-framework>.

CPS guidance on controlling or coercive behaviour in an intimate or family relationship explicitly refers to and expands on this Framework. When considering evidence of coercive or controlling behaviour, the guidance states that relevant behaviour can include "threatening to hurt or physically harming a family pet". CPS guidance is available here: <https://www.cps.gov.uk/legal-guidance/controlling-or-coercive-behaviour-intimate-or-family-relationship>.

CPS prosecutors can access a wide range of domestic abuse learning modules and instructor-led programmes, in which they are prompted to consult the CPS guidance above. Prosecutors also recently completed the roll out of a national course on domestic abuse, which all prosecutors who handle these cases were required to attend.

■ Ministers: Law Officers

James Wild:

[11623]

To ask the Solicitor General, with reference to paragraph 7.16 of the Ministerial Code, how many ministers have consulted the law officers on legal proceedings in a personal capacity since 4 July 2024.

Sarah Sackman:

Paragraph 7.16 of the Ministerial Code (3.17 of the Ministerial Code updated on 6 November 2024) obliges Ministers involved in legal proceedings in a personal capacity to consult the Law Officers in good time and before legal proceedings are initiated.

The Law Officers do not disclose whether ministers have consulted them on legal proceedings in a personal capacity.

This is due to the long-standing convention, observed by successive Governments, that the fact of, and substance of advice from, the Law Officers of the Crown is not disclosed outside government. The purpose of this convention is to enable the Government to obtain frank and full legal advice in confidence. This is set out in paragraph 21.27 of Erskine May, is known as the Law Officers' Convention, and it applies to your question.

BUSINESS AND TRADE

■ Business: Debts

Andrew Cooper:

[\[11447\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what recent assessment he has made of trends in the regional spread of business debt in each of the last five years.

Gareth Thomas:

Business debt in the UK is spread across each of the regions, with the biggest proportions found in London, the South East and South West. Please find a detailed breakdown of the changes in the regional spread of business debt in each of the last five years, using figures from UK Finance:

Table: The share of the value of SME loan facilities (with each year-on-year difference)

REGION	Q2 2019	Q2 2020	Q2 2021	Q2 2022	Q2 2023	Q2 2024
London	19.7%	21.0% (+1.3%)	21.6% (+0.6%)	20.9% (- 0.7%)	21.6% (+0.6%)	21.4% (- 0.2%)
South East	13.0%	13.5% (+0.6%)	13.3% (- 0.2%)	13.2% (- 0.1%)	13.8% (+0.6%)	12.9% (+1.0%)
South West	12.1%	10.9% (- 1.2%)	10.7% (- 0.2%)	10.7% (+0.1%)	10.9% (+0.2%)	11.9% (+1.0%)
East Midlands	5.6%	5.7% (+0.1%)	5.7% (- 0.1%)	6.1% (+0.4%)	5.8% (- 0.3%)	6.1% (+0.3%)
West Midlands	9.1%	9.0% (+0.0%)	8.9% (- 0.1%)	8.6% (- 0.3%)	8.8% (+0.2%)	8.5% (- 0.2%)
East of England	6.7%	6.6% (- 0.1%)	6.7% (+0.0%)	6.5% (- 0.1%)	6.7% (+0.2%)	6.8% (+0.1%)
Yorkshire & The Humber	7.1%	7.1% (+0.1%)	7.3% (+0.2%)	7.1% (- 0.2%)	7.4% (+0.3%)	7.2% (- 0.2%)

REGION	Q2 2019	Q2 2020	Q2 2021	Q2 2022	Q2 2023	Q2 2024
North East	3.2%	3.1% (-0.1%)	3.1% (+0.0%)	3.1% (+0.0%)	3.0% (-0.1%)	2.9% (-0.1%)
North West	10.1%	10.5% (+0.4%)	10.4% (-0.1%)	11.2% (+0.8%)	9.7% (-1.5%)	9.5% (-0.2%)
Wales	4.7%	4.3% (-0.5%)	4.2% (-0.1%)	4.5% (+0.3%)	4.3% (-0.2%)	4.3% (+0.0%)
Scotland	8.7%	8.2% (-0.6%)	8.2% (+0.1%)	8.1% (-0.2%)	8.0% (-0.1%)	8.5% (+0.5%)

Source: UK Finance (Aggregated SME Database, average of small and medium businesses value of loan facilities). *Quarterly figures may not be directly comparable between years due to a re-segmentation of businesses and improvements in reporting from 2023 Q2 onwards.* This includes some regional re-classification.

■ Department for Business and Trade: Australia

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[12047\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he has met with the Agent-General of (a) New South Wales, (b) Queensland, (c) South Australia, (d) Tasmania, (e) Victoria, and (f) Western Australia.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

The Department for Business and Trade is working in close partnership with Australia across a range of areas, most notably on the implementation and utilisation of the UK-Australia Free Trade Agreement. This engagement has not included meetings by the Secretary of State with any of the Agent-Generals in Australia.

■ Department for Business and Trade: Civil Servants

Sir Ashley Fox:

[\[9606\]](#)

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

Justin Madders:

Please see below a summary of the number of staff assigned by each location and the number of desks per location as of 30th September 2024:

DBT HUB	HEADCOUNT	DESK NUMBERS
Belfast	63	16
Birmingham	403	216

DBT HUB	HEADCOUNT	DESK NUMBERS
Cardiff	145	66
Darlington	248	100
Edinburgh	92	56
Greater Manchester	171	65
London	4010	1500
*Regional Offices	194	141
Total	5326	2160

*We have several offices across the country that are listed under Regional Offices, it would exceed the word count if these were to be listed in totality.

■ Department for Business and Trade: Departmental Responsibilities

Kevin Hollinrake: [\[12095\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with which businesses the Minister for Industry had meetings on 30 October 2024.

Sarah Jones:

Details of Ministerial meetings with external organisations are published routinely on Gov.uk as part of the Government's transparency agenda.

■ Department for Business and Trade: Official Cars

Charlie Dewhirst: [\[11973\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 14 October 2024 to Question 7006 on Department for Business and Trade: Official Cars, how many of those allocated three vehicles are electric cars.

Justin Madders:

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

Charlie Dewhirst: [\[11974\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 14 October 2024 to Question 7007 on Department for Business and Trade: Official Cars, which senior officials in his Department have access to a government car; and whether those officials had that access before the general election.

Justin Madders:

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

■ Electric Bicycles: Antidumping Duties

Matt Western:

[\[12285\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the Trade Remedies Authority's recommendation to remove anti-dumping measures on e-bikes on the UK Cycle Manufacturing Industry.

Matt Western:

[\[12287\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Transport on the Trade Remedies Authority's recent recommendation to remove anti-dumping measures on e-bikes from China and the potential impact on the UK cycle manufacturing industry.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

The UK applies separate anti-dumping and anti-subsidy measures on imports of Chinese e-bikes. The Trade Remedies Authority is currently conducting transition reviews of both measures and I therefore cannot comment further. Relevant information will be published on the Trade Remedies Authority's public file as both reviews progress.

■ Horizon IT System: Compensation

James Wild:

[\[11296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, when the independent appeals process for the Horizon Shortfall Scheme will start accepting applications.

Gareth Thomas:

In September, the Government announced that it would establish an HSS appeals process to provide individuals with a chance to have their claims reassessed through a DBT-run process. We are working with representative groups and the Horizon Compensation Advisory Board to make sure that that the process is fit for purpose and that claims can be assessed and resolved quickly. We will announce further details as soon as we can.

■ Living Wage and Minimum Wage: Birmingham

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[12299\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what estimate he has made of the number of workers that will benefit from the increase to the (a) National Minimum Wage and (b) National Living Wage in Birmingham.

Justin Madders:

In total, over 3 million workers are expected to receive a pay rise due to increases to the National Minimum Wage and National Living Wage in April 2025.

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

Assessment will provide a regional and country breakdown on the number of workers benefitting from an increase.

■ Living Wage and Minimum Wage: West Midlands

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[12298\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how many workers aged above 16 years old are paid within 50p of the (a) National Minimum Wage and (b) National Living Wage in (i) Birmingham and (ii) the West Midlands.

Justin Madders:

The Low Pay Commission publishes a report that provides a coverage of the National Minimum Wage (NMW) and National Living Wage (NLW) each year, shortly before the rates are updated in April. The report provides a Local Authority and Regional breakdown of NMW and NLW coverage, including those paid below or within 5p of the applicable rate. Data on those who are within 50p of the rates is not provided as part of the report.

■ Trade Agreements: India

Clive Jones: [\[11986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what recent assessment he has made of the potential economic impact of a free trade agreement with India on the egg industry in the UK.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

The first mission of this Government is to drive economic growth, Free Trade Agreements have a critical role to play in delivering that mission.

The Secretary of State announced the Government's intention to deliver the UK's Free Trade Agreement programme, including India in July 2024. Our trade programme is driven by stakeholder engagement, including with egg producers and their representative organisations.

In line with our parliamentary commitments, we will publish an independently scrutinised Impact Assessment once the agreement has been signed which will cover the economic impacts of the deal.

■ Whisky: Scotland

Andrew Bowie: [\[10754\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to support the Scotch whisky industry.

Gareth Thomas:

DBT leads a whole of Government effort, working with devolved governments and the sector to support this important industry, which exported £5.6bn of Scotch Whisky worldwide in 2023. We boost exports by leveraging trade agreements and removing barriers. For example, in August we announced the recognition of the Scotch Whisky

Geographic Indicator in Brazil, valued at £25m over five years. We will continue to spotlight Scotch Whisky at global trade shows in key markets, including a spirits trade mission to India in November. The Export Academy food and drink programme, launched in October, offers dedicated upskilling to both emerging and experienced distilleries.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Civil Servants: Recruitment

John Glen: [\[6055\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he has received representations from (a) civil servants and (b) trade unions on the use of recruitment principles exemptions since 4 July 2024.

Georgia Gould:

The Minister has received no such representations from (a) civil servants and (b) trade unions on the use of recruitment principles exceptions since 4 July 2024.

John Glen: [\[8640\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 16 September 2024 to Question 4658 on Civil Servants: Recruitment, if he will place a copy of the report on Time to Hire in the Library.

John Glen: [\[8816\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 16 September 2024 to Question 4658 on Civil Servants: Recruitment, if he will publish the Time To Hire data.

Georgia Gould:

Since question 4658 was answered the data has been updated. The Time To Hire data, for campaigns completed between April and June 2024, indicates the median averages for the Whitehall 17 departments range between 25 and 69 calendar days for grades AA to Grade 6, and 20 and 70 calendar days for SCS Pay Bands 1 and 2.

■ Civil Servants: Temporary Employment

John Glen: [\[10439\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the answer of 16 September 2024 to Question 4698 on Civil Servants: Temporary Employment, what steps the Government is taking to reduce reliance on contingent labour; and what guidance his Department has issued.

Georgia Gould:

I refer the Honourable Gentleman to his previous question of September 9th of this year, the details of which remain the same. Further information will be announced in due course.

■ Council of the Nations and Regions**Mr Richard Holden:** [\[12224\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, for what reason the Prime Minister's new Envoy for the Nations and Regions did not attend the first meeting of the Council for the Nations and Regions.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

The attendee list at the first meeting of the Council for the Nations and Regions was: the Prime Minister, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the First Ministers of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, the Deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland, and the regional Mayors.

■ Government Departments: Corporate Hospitality**Paul Holmes:** [\[8998\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what plans the Government has for revising his policy on accepting hospitality from the (a) football and (b) music industry.

Georgia Gould:

I refer the hon. Member to the answers by my hon. Friend, the Minister without Portfolio, during the Urgent Question, Reporting Ministerial Gifts and Hospitality, on 14 October 2024, Official Report, Columns 594-602.

■ Government Departments: Disclosure of Information**John Glen:** [\[12388\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 31 October 2024 to Question 10967 on Government Departments: Disclosure of Information, if he will outline (a) potential changes to the scope, manner and frequency of Ministerial reporting and (b) the extent to which those changes differ from the previous Government's commitments set out in his Department's policy paper entitled Strengthening Ethics and Integrity in Central Government, published in July 2023.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

This Government will introduce a register for ministers' gifts and hospitality bringing publication of ministerial transparency data on a broadly equivalent basis to the parliamentary register.

This Government is fully committed to transparency and openness, and is committed to looking at how the range of information published can be improved and made as useful as possible.

■ Government Departments: Procurement**John Glen:** [\[8124\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what guidance his Department issues on Environmental, Social and Governance requirements in government procurement.

Georgia Gould:

The National Procurement Policy Statement (NPPS) will set out the Government's strategic policy priorities for public procurement to create a mission-led procurement regime delivering value for money, economic growth, social value, and driving up standards.

Government Departments: Trade Unions**John Glen:**[\[8431\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 12 September 2024 to Question 4654 on Public Sector: Trade Unions, what the Government's policy is on check-off; and how many departments (a) charge trade unions for levying check-off and (b) have no check-off arrangements.

Georgia Gould:

I refer the Rt. Hon. Member to the answer given to PQ 4654 on 12 September 2024.

Data on check-off provisions in the Civil Service can be found in the impact assessment published under the previous administration alongside The Trade Union (Deduction of Union Subscriptions from Wages in the Public Sector) Regulations 2024. This data was collected prior to the regulations coming into effect.

National Security Committee: Deputy Prime Minister**Mr Richard Holden:**[\[12233\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to (a) written statement entitled Cabinet Committees, published on 10 October 2024, HCWS118 and (b) his Department's publication entitled List of Cabinet Committees, updated on 21 October 2024, for what reason the Deputy Prime Minister was not listed as a member of the National Security Committee in the version published on 10 October.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

The National Security Council is a Cabinet Committee, membership of Cabinet Committees is decided by the Prime Minister. In recognition that the Deputy Prime Minister would be regularly invited to attend, she has been made a permanent member as of 21 October 2024.

Prime Minister: Samoa**Sir Gavin Williamson:**[\[11276\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what is the estimated carbon footprint of the Prime Minister's recent visit to Samoa.

Georgia Gould:

Ministerial travel is undertaken using efficient and cost-effective travel arrangements. Security considerations are also taken into account. It has been the practice that official Prime Ministerial flights are carbon offset and use Sustainable Aviation Fuel where either are possible.

■ Procurement: National Security**John Glen:**[\[10699\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many evaluations relating to Government policies, projects or programmes have been exempted from publication due to national security concerns in the last 12 months; and what steps his Department is taking to ensure adequate levels of public accountability of (a) high-risk and (b) high-cost projects.

Georgia Gould:

Departments are responsible for making determinations about whether evaluation plans and findings should be withheld from publication on the grounds that publication would threaten national security.

In cases where departments determine that evaluation plans or reports should not be published because the contents fall under any exemption outlined in the Freedom of Information Act, the Evaluation Registry guidance states that departments should make this clear in writing to the Evaluation Task Force (Cabinet Office). Exemptions include but are not limited to national security.

Since April 2024 -- when the use of the Evaluation Registry was made mandatory for government departments -- the Evaluation Task Force has been notified of one evaluation which has not been added to the Evaluation Registry on the grounds that it meets an exemption outlined in the Act. Further guidance on publication exemptions is available online on the 'Guidance on using the Evaluation Registry' webpage.

■ Public Sector: Pay**John Glen:**[\[8427\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the timetable is for publication of up to £150,000 senior salaries transparency data on gov.uk; and whether this list will include special advisers.

Georgia Gould:

The Cabinet Office publishes an annual list of named senior civil servants and senior officials in departments, agencies and non-departmental public bodies earning £150,000 and above. The previous administration did not publish a 2023 list. The Cabinet Office will confirm arrangements for future publications of the list in due course. There are separate transparency arrangements for special advisers.

■ Public Sector: Productivity**Mr Richard Holden:**[\[9049\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 10 October 2024 to Question 7568 on Civil Service: Productivity, what metrics his Department uses to assess productivity in the (a) Civil Service and (b) wider public sector.

Georgia Gould:

Over the coming months the Cabinet Office and HM Treasury will continue to work with departments to improve productivity and efficiency both in the public sector and

in the Civil Service. More detail on this work will be provided at the next multi-year Spending Review, due to conclude in Spring 2025. The Government is also developing a strategic plan for a more efficient and effective civil service, including bold options to improve skills, harness digital technology and drive better outcomes for public services.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) publishes quarterly and annual estimates for public service productivity. To further improve this world leading measure the ONS is undertaking a review of public service productivity, partnering with government departments, academics and expert users to help develop and improve methodology and data sources.

■ **Public Sector: Translation Services**

Chris Hinchliff: [\[7162\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will conduct a review on insourcing public sector language services.

Georgia Gould:

The Government will always aim to secure value for money and social value. As part of this, contracting authorities are required to take an analytical evidenced based approach on each contract and undertake a Delivery Model Assessment when making decisions about the right model for delivering public services.

This assessment is the responsibility of the relevant individual contracting authority.

■ **Select Committees**

Sir Bernard Jenkin: [\[12023\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, when he plans to respond to the First Report of the Liaison Committee of 2023-24 on Promoting national strategy: How select committee scrutiny can improve strategic thinking in Whitehall, HC 31, published on 29 May 2024; and whether he plans to establish a new national school for government and public services.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

The Government looks forward to discussing this report with the incoming Liaison Committee Chair once elected.

■ **Senior Civil Servants: Recruitment**

John Glen: [\[4669\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 30 July 2024 to Question 1261 on Senior Civil Servants, if he will provide a breakdown by (a) department and (b) job title of senior civil service jobs (i) offered and (ii) appointed since 30 July 2024.

Georgia Gould:

Information on Senior Civil Service appointments is not collated centrally.

Departments can run campaigns outside of the central recruitment services through

their own Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) or processes or made appointments from existing reserve lists. Therefore, we are unable to provide a full response.

■ **Special Advisers: Business Interests**

John Glen: [\[11839\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 27 September 2024 to Question 5039 on Special Advisers: Business Interests, if he will publish that register before 19 December 2024.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

I refer the Right Honourable member to the previous answer.

■ **Special Advisers: Corporate Hospitality**

Paul Holmes: [\[8999\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether planned revised guidance on Ministers accepting hospitality from the (a) football and (b) music industry will apply to specialist advisers.

Georgia Gould:

Ministerial Code guidance on hospitality applies to ministers.

The Code of Conduct for Special Advisers sets out the requirements for Special Advisers in respect of hospitality. .

■ **Taylor Swift**

Paul Holmes: [\[9001\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether (a) the Prime Minister and (b) the Prime Minister's officials had discussions with the (i) the Home Department, (ii) Attorney General and (iii) Metropolitan Police on Special Escort Group policing for (A) Taylor Swift and (B) her entourage.

Georgia Gould:

The safety of the British public is the first priority of this Government. We make no apologies for ensuring citizens are protected.

It is entirely right that for major events in the capital, the Government has a dialogue with the Metropolitan Police and Mayor to discuss planning to ensure events happen safely. Operational decisions on security arrangements are made by the police, independent of politicians.

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

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**Charities: Sheffield Central**

Abtisam Mohamed: [\[12230\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to support charities in Sheffield Central constituency.

Abtisam Mohamed: [\[12232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of increasing national funding for charities.

Stephanie Peacock:

This Government recognises the vital role that charities play up and down the country, including in Sheffield, by providing crucial support to different groups and communities. This Government is committed to resetting the relationship with civil society and treating them as an equal, expert partner who are integral to delivery of the Government's vision for national renewal.

DCMS is currently supporting charities in several ways. This includes delivery of a number of grant schemes, such as the £25.5m VCSE Energy Efficiency Scheme, which is supporting frontline organisations across England to improve their sustainability. This scheme is part of a wider £101.5 million package to support organisations struggling with cost of living pressures, along with the £76 million [Community Organisations Cost of Living Fund](#); a full list of recipients of that Fund is available [online](#), with recipients from Sheffield listed under Yorkshire and the Humber.

DCMS is supporting voluntary youth services in the Sheffield Central area through the [Million Hours](#) and [Youth Investment fund](#). The Million Hours Fund is investing £22 million into youth organisations up to March 2026, to deliver more than a million extra hours of youth work in areas across England where young people may be at risk of anti-social behaviour. The Youth Investment Fund enables local, not for profit youth providers to invest in capital projects that expand the reach, number and range of services they currently offer. A list of recipients of this funding is available online for [phase one](#) and [phase two](#), with a range of recipients based in Sheffield.

DCMS is also supporting organisations with other forms of funding, including through growing the social investment market (which provides access to grants, repayable finance and a blend of the two) and providing advice on competing for public sector contracts through the £900,000 Contract Readiness Fund.

Charity Commission: Correspondence

Richard Fuller: [R] [\[12252\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will hold discussions with the Charity Commission on when the Commission plans to provide a substantive

reply to the letter from the Conservative Party to the Commission of 14 June 2024, acknowledged by the Commission on 12 July 2024.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Charity Commission responded to the Conservative Party's Legal Officer on 15th August 2024, providing a full update on the case in question.

■ **Gambling: Economic Situation**

Gareth Bacon:

[\[10782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what estimate she has made of the contribution of the betting and gaming industry to the economy.

Stephanie Peacock:

Official statistics from a range of sources provide the Government with insights into the economic contribution of the betting and gaming industry, including estimates for gross value added (GVA), employment generated and tax revenue raised.

The latest headline statistics show that the gambling sector contributed £4.9bn to GVA in 2022, accounting for 0.2% of UK GVA. In the financial year 2023/24, the gambling sector employed around 94,000 people in Britain (provisional), accounting for 0.2% of UK jobs and paid approximately £3.4bn in betting and gaming duty.

Stuart Andrew:

[\[9440\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what estimate she has made of the contribution of the betting and gaming industry to the UK economy.

Stephanie Peacock:

Official statistics from a range of sources provide the Government with insights into the economic contribution of the betting and gaming industry, including estimates for gross value added (GVA), employment generated and tax revenue raised.

The latest headline statistics show that the gambling sector contributed £4.9bn to GVA in 2022, accounting for 0.2% of UK GVA. In the financial year 2023/24, the gambling sector employed around 94,000 people in Britain (provisional), accounting for 0.2% of UK jobs and paid approximately £3.4bn in betting and gaming duty.

■ **Gambling: Internet**

Mr Luke Charters:

[\[10962\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department plans to take to (a) protect and (b) support vulnerable people in relation to online gambling addictions.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Government is acutely aware of the impact harmful gambling can have on individuals and their families. We are committed to reviewing the best available evidence from a wide range of sources and working with all stakeholders in order to

support the industry and ensure there are robust protections in place to protect those at risk. We will provide further updates to the House soon.

The Gambling Commission is responsible for the implementation of a number of the regulatory reforms set out in the white paper, such as introducing new regulations to make online games safer, and financial vulnerability checks aimed at reducing cases of unaffordable losses. It has consulted on and implemented the majority of these reforms.

■ **Gambling: Taxation**

Dr Beccy Cooper: [\[9006\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, when she plans to introduce a statutory levy on gambling operators.

Dr Beccy Cooper: [\[9007\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions she has had with (a) gambling companies and (b) relevant trade associations on the potential introduction of a statutory levy.

Stephanie Peacock:

The implementation of a statutory levy is under consideration as part of the Government commitment to tackle gambling harm. The Minister for Gambling has recently met and held wide-ranging discussions with the Betting and Gaming Council, the British Amusement Catering Trade Association, British Horseracing Association, GambleAware, Gambling with Lives and others.

We will provide further updates to the House soon.

■ **Gaming: Retail Trade**

Andrew Rosindell: [\[12031\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make an estimate of the economic contribution of adult gaming centres to (a) high streets and (b) town centres.

Stephanie Peacock:

Official statistics from a range of sources provide the Government with insights into the economic contribution of the betting and gaming industry as a whole. The latest headline statistics show that the gambling sector contributed £4.9bn to Gross Value Added (GVA) in 2022, accounting for 0.2% of UK GVA. In the financial year 2023/24, the gambling sector employed around 94,000 people in Britain (provisional), accounting for 0.2% of UK jobs and paid approximately £3.4bn in betting and gaming duty.

The [Gambling Commission's industry statistics](#) show that between April 2022 and March 2023, gross gambling yield for adult gaming centres was £533m. This represented c. 11% of gross gambling yield generated by non-remote casinos, arcades, betting and bingo.

■ Parthenon Sculptures**John Glen:** [\[11838\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether the Government has received representations from the Greek Government on (a) loaning and (b) donating the Elgin Marbles to Greece.

Chris Bryant:

Yes.

■ Welsh National Opera**Liz Saville Roberts:** [\[12116\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to support the Welsh National Opera.

Chris Bryant:

I have held a series of very productive meetings with the Wales Office, Welsh Government, Arts Council England, and Welsh National Opera to understand the issue in more detail and to see how, within the parameters of the arm's length principle, I can best help ensure a strong and secure future for the WNO.

The core point of commonality across all these meetings and across all partners was a recognition of the value of the Welsh National Opera and its work - for the people of England as well as for the people of Wales. It was clear that all partners are keen to achieve a positive long-term future for the organisation, and are working towards that goal.

I was pleased that this series of meetings was able to reassure everyone that all partners wanted to see a positive future for Welsh National Opera, that the funding bodies across the border will work more collaboratively in future and that the new leadership at the WNO have a clear idea of how to progress. Everyone wants to burnish and sustain the WNO so that as many people as possible in Wales and England have a chance to enjoy world class opera close to home. Funding decisions are for the Welsh Arts Council and Arts Council England, but I am confident that the WNO is in a strong place to succeed.

■ Youth Services: Slough**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[11888\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to improve the provision of youth services in Slough.

Stephanie Peacock:

As set out in section 507B of the Education Act 1996, local authorities have a statutory duty to secure, so far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient provision of educational and recreational leisure-time activities for young people. At the Autumn Budget, we announced £1.3 billion of extra funding through the Local Government Finance Settlement for the next financial year.

This Government recognises the vital role that youth services play in improving young people's life chances and wellbeing. That is why, on 17 October 2024, the Secretary of State committed to a new National Youth Strategy, co-produced with young people and the youth sector to support a generation to succeed.

DEFENCE

■ Air Force: Communication

James Cartlidge:

[\[12145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he plans that the GUARDIAN Air Command and Control system based in the Falklands will reach full operating capability.

Luke Pollard:

The GUARDIAN Air Command and Control system based in the Falkland Islands reached Full Operating Capability in April 2024.

■ Armed Forces: Deployment

Rupert Lowe:

[\[11997\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many trained military personnel were ready to deploy in a combat role in each branch of the armed forces in each of the last five years.

Luke Pollard:

The below table represents the number of UK Armed Forces personnel with a Medical Deployability Standard (MDS) of Medically Fully Deployable (MFD) and Medically Limited Deployable (MLD), in a combat role, as at 1 July for each year between 2020 and 2024, by Service.

	ROYAL NAVY (INCL. ROYAL MARINES)		BRITISH ARMY ¹			ROYAL AIR FORCE				
	DATE									
	MFD	MLD	Total	MFD	MLD	Total	MFD	MLD	Total	
01 July 2020		23,772	2,319	26,091	20,574	2,175	22,749	23,823	2,303	26,126
01 July 2021		24,379	2,397	26,776	21,488	2,274	23,762	23,975	2,405	26,380
01 July 2022		24,203	2,286	26,489	20,551	2,428	22,979	23,223	2,485	25,708
01 July 2023		23,717	2,227	25,944	19,489	2,219	21,708	22,509	2,477	24,986

	DATE	ROYAL NAVY (INCL. ROYAL MARINES)			BRITISH ARMY ¹			ROYAL AIR FORCE	
01 July 2024	22,994	2,385	25,379	18,398	2,123	20,521	21,915	2,465	24,380

Source: Analysis (Health)

The new Government is determined to improve readiness and recruitment levels from those we inherited. Work to do so is underway and the MOD will be making announcements on action in due course.

Notes/caveats:

1. For the Army, the figures reflect the MDS of Full-Time Trade Trained Strength of the Infantry, the Household Cavalry and Royal Armoured Corps and the Army Air Corps only, which are defined by the Army as personnel serving in a 'combat role'.
2. The Royal Navy, Royal Marines and Royal Air Force do not have a definition for 'combat role' and the figures therefore reflect the MDS of Full-Time Trained Strength.
3. The figures include Reserve Forces personnel filling Regular posts whilst serving on Full Time Reserve Service and Gurkha personnel. Other Reserves, Civilians, Foreign Service, and non-UK military personnel are excluded.
4. The Defence Medical Information Capability Programme (DMICP) was used to obtain information on MDS. Prior to July 2022, MDS was sourced from a combination of DMICP medical records and data held on the Joint Personnel Administration (JPA) system. Since July 2022 MDS has been sourced directly from DMICP due to improvements in data quality.

■ **Armed Forces: Engineers**

James Cartlidge:

[\[12130\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of his timetable for reaching 2.5% GDP of expenditure on engineer retention in the armed forces.

Maria Eagle:

The Government is committed to setting a path to spending 2.5% of GDP on defence at a future fiscal event. Budget allocations will be set in the usual way and informed by the findings of the Strategic Defence Review.

■ Armed Forces: Helicopters

James Cartlidge: [\[12131\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of his timetable for reaching 2.5% GDP of expenditure on helicopter pilot training in the armed forces.

Maria Eagle:

The Government remains committed to setting a path to spending 2.5% of GDP at a future fiscal event. Budget allocations will be set in the usual way and informed by the findings of the Strategic Defence Review.

■ Armed Forces: Private Education

James Cartlidge: [\[11946\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he plans to take to assist recipients of the Continuity of Education Allowance with payment of VAT on school fees.

James Cartlidge: [\[11947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing assistance with VAT on school fees to children of service families not currently in receipt of the Continuity of Education Allowance.

Al Carns:

The Continuity of Education (CEA) scheme recognises the enormous sacrifices our military families make and aims to minimise the disruption to their children's education caused by Service commitments involving frequent moves of the family home.

The Government remains committed to improving Service life and renewing the nation's contract with those who serve and their families. Whilst the new VAT policy does not offer any exemptions, the Government is committed to monitoring how these changes affect military families, with any potential adjustments to the scheme being considered during the next Spending Review.

To protect the integrity of the allowance the Secretary of State has directed that the cap on the current rates is updated, and CEA rates are recalculated to take into account the addition of VAT. This will ensure the Ministry of Defence continues to pay up to 90% of private school fees following the taxation changes.

■ Armed Forces: Recruitment

Rupert Lowe: [\[11998\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recruitment targets there were in each branch of the armed forces in each of the last five years; and how many people were recruited to each branch in the same period.

Luke Pollard:

The information requested by the hon. Member can be found below.

Financial Year	ROYAL NAVY		ARMY		ROYAL AIR FORCE	
	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual
2019-20	4,180	3,520	10,110	9,590	2,900	2,970
2020-21	4,410	3,900	9,420	9,330	2,490	2,570
2021-22	4,350	3,550	7,360	7,230	2,670	2,620
2022-23	3,840	2,770	8,830	6,080	2,370	2,150
2023-24	4,040	2,450	10,450	6,720	2,560	1,810

The new Government has made improving recruitment and readiness of our armed forces an early priority. The Secretary of State has already made announcements to improve recruitment and further announcements will be made by the Ministry of Defence in due course.

Notes:

Royal Navy

1. Full-Time Naval Service personnel (Royal Navy and Royal Marines), including Nursing Services, but excluding Full-Time Reserve Service (FTRS) personnel and reservists.
2. Untrained intake for Navy include Marines and comprises new entrants into Phase 1 training. Figures do not include transfers from another Service or include transfers from Other Rank to Officer.

Army

1. The figures are for the Regular Army only and therefore exclude Gurkhas, Full Time Reserve Service, Mobilised Reserves, Army Reserve and all other Reserves, but includes those personnel that have transferred from GURTAM to UKTAP.
2. Untrained intake for Army comprises new entrants into Phase 1 training. Figures do not include transfers from another Service. Figures also do not include transfers from Other Rank to Untrained Direct Entry Officer.
3. The Army Regular Other Rank Basic Training Starts (BTS) targets exclude re-joiners and personnel joining the Military Provost Guard Service and the Royal Gibraltar Regiment.
4. In 2019-20 the target was exceeded; however, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent reduction in BT capacity, the number of BTS was impacted. Recruits were loaded to training, however, but were unable to start BT in year.
5. The Army reduced its recruitment targets in 2020-21 and 2021-22 due to measures under Future Soldier, which are reflected in the above figures. The Other Ranks

target for 2020-21 was reported as 8,270 due to an administrative error in an earlier Parliamentary Question (UIN 7264) dated 8 January 2024 and has been corrected in the calculations for the above table.

6. Figures have been rounded to the nearest 10 for presentational purposes.

Royal Air Force

1. Intake to the Regular RAF includes both trained and untrained intake. The figures match the Service Personnel Statistics, Table 5A.

2. Recruitment and intake is likely to be affected by wider circumstances, such as the Covid-19 pandemic and cost of living.

3. Figures have been rounded to 10 for presentational purposes. Numbers ending in 5 have been rounded to the nearest multiple of 20 to prevent systemic bias.

■ **Artillery: Iron and Steel**

James Cartlidge:

[\[12141\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the manufacture of large-calibre gun barrels as part of the Trinity House Agreement will exclusively use recycled British steel.

Maria Eagle:

The Trinity House Agreement will drive investment into the UK, and pave the way for the way for a new artillery gun barrel factory to be opened in the UK. The opening of the Rheinmetall factory will see the UK manufacture artillery gun barrels for the first time in 10 years, using British steel produced by Sheffield Forgemasters.

Discussions are ongoing between Rheinmetall and Sheffield Forgemasters on the specific arrangements.

■ **Cybersecurity and Hybrid Warfare: Northern Ireland**

Carla Lockhart:

[\[12161\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to ensure that Northern Ireland is integrated into the national defence strategy for (a) cyber defence and (b) hybrid threats.

Luke Pollard:

Cyber defence and hybrid threats are crucial considerations as part of the Strategic Defence Review (SDR), which will establish the roles, capabilities and reforms required by UK Defence to meet the challenges, threats, and opportunities of the twenty-first century.

The first duty of Government is to defend the UK and its citizens, making the defence of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales a priority for the SDR. The Reviewers have invited the views of the devolved administrations and will ensure that Defence is central both to the security, economic growth and prosperity of the United Kingdom.

■ Defence: Innovation

James Cartlidge: [\[12139\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he plans to continue providing funding for NATO's Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic into 2025/26.

Maria Eagle:

The UK remains committed to funding NATO's Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic (DIANA), as part of its wider commitment to NATO.

As the host of the European Regional Office of DIANA, the UK has been a champion of this initiative, additionally committing an affiliated UK Accelerator and bolstering access to national test centres across the UK to innovators and start-ups.

DIANA's success is essential to ensure NATO remains agile and responsive to technological threats and opportunities.

James Cartlidge: [\[12140\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent discussions he has had with the Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic.

Maria Eagle:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) is fully engaged with NATO's Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic (DIANA) programme across all areas in which the UK is supporting DIANA initiatives, including strategic direction, challenge formation and rapid adoption.

As the host of the European Regional Office of DIANA, the UK MOD and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office retains a close working relationship with the DIANA Executive to ensure we meet our responsibilities on duty of care to NATO International Staff living and working in the UK.

■ Defence: Iron and Steel

James Cartlidge: [\[12143\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential impact that closing blast furnaces in (a) Port Talbot and (b) Scunthorpe on the UK's (i) virgin steel supply and (ii) defence industry.

Maria Eagle:

This Government recognises the vital role the UK steel industry plays in Defence, to both our national security and economic growth. .

It is not anticipated that the closure of the blast furnaces at Port Talbot or Scunthorpe will have any adverse impact on Defence, but we will continue to monitor that situation. The Government will be bringing forward a new Steel Strategy next spring that will ensure a sustainable future for UK steelmaking.

■ Defence: Research

James Cartlidge:

[\[12138\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Research and Development programmes were listed under the Defence Sourcing Portal in the last twelve months.

Maria Eagle:

There were 114 Invitation To Tender (ITTs) published on the Defence Sourcing Portal (DSP) in the last twelve months (01/11/2023 to 31/10/2024). These ITTs were listed under the category of Research and Development services.

■ Future Combat Air System

Dr Neil Shastri-Hurst:

[\[12149\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what his policy is on the future of the Tempest programme.

Maria Eagle:

Tempest is the name used in the UK for the next generation combat aircraft being jointly developed with Japan and Italy under the Global Combat Air Programme (GCAP). GCAP is an important programme, as the Prime Minister has stated, which is why the Defence Secretary hosted his Japanese and Italian counterparts within weeks of taking office. Positive progress on GCAP continues, with over 3,500 people employed on future combat air. In October, the UK completed its ratification processes for the GCAP Convention, the International Treaty that sets up the GCAP International Government Organisation, earlier this month.

■ Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation

James Cartlidge:

[\[12134\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has made an assessment of the potential implications for his policies recommendation of the Haythornthwaite Review that the Armed Forces trial new total reward approaches for (a) engineers and (b) other key skills cohorts.

Al Carns:

The Government is prioritising its response to the Armed Forces recruitment and retention challenge, and has taken action already to modernise recruitment processes and award our Armed Forces the largest pay increase in over two decades. The Haythornthwaite Review work-streams are being taken forward in our longer-term plans, and will be informed by the findings of the Strategic Defence Review. These include trials aimed at a wide engineering cohort, along with other measures to meet the needs of today's Service people and their families.

■ Ministry of Defence: New Zealand**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[12050\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has met with his New Zealand counterpart.

Luke Pollard:

The Secretary of State has met the Defence Minister for New Zealand, and looks forward to our countries working together on a range of defence and security issues.

■ Ministry of Defence: STEM Subjects**James Cartlidge:** [\[12132\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he plans to (a) continue and (b) amend the Defence STEM Undergraduate scheme.

AI Carns:

Defence is fully committed to encouraging and recruiting high quality STEM graduates. The Defence STEM Undergraduate Scheme (DSUS) is a key part of that, with enduring funding secured within the Departments Annual Budget Cycle (ABC) 24. Amendments to the DSUS will be considered as demands on Defence require it.

James Cartlidge: [\[12133\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of the ratio of STEM-related MOD Apprenticeship schemes to Civilian MOD Apprenticeship schemes.

AI Carns:

There has been no specific assessment undertaken on the policy implications of ratios of Civil Service to Military STEM apprenticeships. Both organisations separately draw upon the government apprenticeship levy reducing the impact of any policy changes relating to the ratio of Military to Civil Service apprenticeships. STEM apprenticeship schemes are strongly supported across both the Civil Service and Military commands and are a priority as we look to the future of apprenticeships.

The Ministry of Defence is the largest single deliverer of apprenticeships in the UK, with over 24,000 personnel employed on a nationally recognised apprenticeship programme at any one time. Over 95% of our non-commissioned military recruits are offered an apprenticeship aligned to their trade training and 7.5% of Armed Forces personnel have started an apprenticeship in the last two years. In addition, 3.6% of our Civil Service workforce is currently undertaking an apprenticeship, spanning over 80+ different apprenticeship programmes within a variety of sectors and professional areas, working to build a skilled workforce fit for the future.

Defence's commitment to apprenticeship provision is recognised by the Department for Education's Top 100 Apprenticeship Employers rankings 2024, with Army (1), RN (2), RAF (4) and Civil Service (33). Collectively, 130 apprenticeships are offered across the three Services and the Civil Service, ranging from Aeronautical Engineering to Clinical Healthcare Support and Nuclear.

■ RAF Shawbury: Helicopters

James Cartlidge: [\[12135\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many helicopter engineers are employed at RAF Shawbury.

Maria Eagle:

Due to commercial sensitivities, we cannot disclose the number of contracted civilian engineers based at RAF Shawbury.

There are a number of military engineers based at RAF Shawbury but they are not necessarily employed in direct engineering roles.

James Cartlidge: [\[12136\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an estimate of how many helicopter pilots at RAF Shawbury will be unable to complete their training on schedule this year.

Luke Pollard:

There will be a limited short-term impact to the number of trainees completing UK Military Flying Training System (UKMFTS) Rotary Wing aircrew training at RAF Shawbury this year.

However, this will not have an impact to the number of Tri-Service aircrew commencing Operational Conversion Unit training or on Front Line units. UKMFTS continues to deliver the number of Rotary Wing aircrew needed by Defence.

■ Strategic Defence Review

James Cartlidge: [\[12126\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 28 October to Question 10454 on Strategic Defence Review, whether all submissions by Parliamentarians will be read in the first instance by human beings, before the use of artificial intelligence.

Luke Pollard:

The Strategic Defence Review received a number of submissions from Parliamentarians, and all have been read by human beings.

■ Typhoon Aircraft: Procurement

Mr Andrew Snowden: [\[12181\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department's budget for 2025-26 includes 24 Typhoon jets.

Maria Eagle:

Budget allocations for 2025-26 will be set in the usual way and informed by the findings of the Strategic Defence Review.

■ Veterans: Northern Ireland**Carla Lockhart:**[\[12160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to ensure that former Armed Forces personnel based in Northern Ireland are adequately supported through veterans' services.

AI Carns:

The Government is committed to ensuring that veterans are able to access the appropriate support they require wherever they live in the UK and will be seeking to more effectively coordinate and cohere the support that is available.

Specialist statutory support is delivered by the Veterans Welfare Service Northern Ireland, which has been successfully expanded to all veterans and their families across Northern Ireland. This provides information and practical support to veterans and their families, including physiotherapy and psychological therapies for eligible veterans.

In addition, the £500,000 Defence Medical Welfare Service pilot, which supports veterans' health and wellbeing in Northern Ireland, is providing valuable insight to improve our understanding of veterans' health needs.

These initiatives also build on the work of the 11 Veterans' Champions in Northern Ireland and the recent enhancement of the Office for Veterans Affairs' presence in Northern Ireland.

■ VJ Day: Anniversaries**Chris Vince:**[\[11956\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department plans to take steps to recognise people who were prisoners of war in the Far East at any VJ Day 80th anniversary commemoration.

AI Carns:

The 80th anniversary of VJ Day in August 2025, led by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, will serve as a significant occasion to honour the service and sacrifice of all those who served in the Far East and brought the Second World War to an end. The Government continues to recognise those that served in the Far East during World War II, with eligible personnel entitled to receive the Pacific Star and the Burma Star in recognition of their service.

EDUCATION**■ Alternative Education and Special Educational Needs: Finance****Damian Hinds:**[\[12063\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to paragraph 4.8 of the Autumn Budget 2024, how she plans to allocate the additional (a) SEND and (b) Alternative Provision funding.

Catherine McKinnell:

The high needs national funding formula (NFF) will be used to allocate high needs funding to local authorities for the 2025/26 financial year. The department is taking more time to consider what changes to the NFF are needed, both to make sure that we establish a fair education funding system that directs funding to where it is needed, and to support any special educational needs and disabilities reforms that will be taken forward.

The department is now in the process of calculating the high needs NFF allocations, which will provide local authorities with indicative amounts for 2025/26. We expect to publish those allocations by the end of November 2024.

■ Apprentices**Damian Hinds:**[\[12066\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to paragraph 4.10 of the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 October 2024, HC 295, when she plans to announce details of new foundation and shorter apprenticeships.

Damian Hinds:[\[12067\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to paragraph 4.10 of the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 October 2024, HC 295, in which key sectors there will be new foundation and shorter apprenticeships.

Damian Hinds:[\[12068\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to paragraph 4.10 of the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 August 2024, HC 295, how new foundation and shorter apprenticeships are different to the model of traineeships in operation until July 2023.

Janet Daby:

This government has a driving mission to break down barriers to opportunity and to grow the economy. Too many young people are struggling to access high quality opportunities after leaving school and this government wants to ensure that more young people can undertake apprenticeships.

The department is beginning work to develop new foundation apprenticeships, which will provide high quality entry pathways for young people.

Apprentices are employed, and so as jobs with training, the department's new foundation apprenticeship offer will start with the needs of employers as well as young people. Foundation apprenticeships will focus on ensuring that training is directed towards skills and staff shortage areas and offer young people a broad training offer with clear, seamless, progression into other apprenticeships.

The department will set out more detail on foundation apprenticeships, including the sectors they will be available in, in due course.

■ **Breakfast Clubs: Primary Education**

Damian Hinds: [\[12043\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to paragraph 4.11 of the Autumn Budget 2024, whether she plans to fund breakfasts in all primary schools.

Damian Hinds: [\[12044\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to paragraph 4.11 of the Autumn Budget 2024, how she plans to allocate the funding for free breakfast clubs between (a) mainstream primary schools, (b) mainstream secondary schools, (c) special schools and (d) other settings.

Stephen Morgan:

The government confirmed it will triple its investment in breakfast clubs to over £30 million in the 2025/26 financial year to help ensure children are ready to learn at the start of the school day and help drive improvements to behaviour, attendance and attainment. This will also support parents, supporting them to work the jobs and hours they choose.

This funding will support up to 750 early adopters of the new breakfast clubs starting as early as April 2025 to March 2026, as well as enabling continued support for around 2,700 schools currently on the national schools breakfast programme. All state-funded schools in England with primary-aged pupils are eligible to be an early adopter.

Once rolled out nationally, breakfast clubs will be available to every school with primary-aged children.

■ **Childcare: Per Capita Costs**

Damian Hinds: [\[12070\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will adjust childcare hourly funding rates to reflect changes to employer NICs.

Stephen Morgan:

As announced at Budget, the department expects to provide £8.1 billion for early years entitlements in 2025/26, which is around a 30% increase compared to 2024/25, as we continue to rollout the expansion of the entitlements to eligible working parents of children aged from nine months. The department is looking at what changes announced in the Budget will mean for the early years sector and will announce more

details as soon as possible. The Employment Allowance will be worth up to £10,500 for eligible providers, meaning smaller providers may pay no National Insurance at all in 2025/26. We are working at pace to publish funding rates for 2025/26, as we know how important this is for local authorities and providers.

■ Department for Education: Apprentices

Rupert Lowe:

[\[12204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many apprentices there were in her Department in each of the last five years.

Janet Daby:

The table below is a breakdown of apprentices in the department for the last five financial years:

DATE	NUMBER OF APPRENTICES
31 March 2020	324
31 March 2021	468
31 March 2022	451
31 March 2023	540
31 March 2024	515

■ Department for Education: Employers' Contributions

Damian Hinds:

[\[12071\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of changes to employer national insurance contributions on each sector for which her Department has responsibility.

Janet Daby:

My right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, made an announcement at Budget on 30 October 2024 setting out changes to Employer National Insurance Contributions policy. Alongside this, she has decided to provide funding to the public sector to support them with the additional associated cost.

Given the impacts of this policy change will need to be worked through in further detail, this additional support is not reflected in departmental spending review settlements immediately.

HM Treasury will confirm funding allocations by department as part of setting baselines and planning assumptions for phase 2 of the spending review.

■ Family Hubs: Finance

Adam Dance: [12154]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to paragraph 4.11 of the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 October 2024, HC 295, whether the £69 million to continue delivery of a network of Family Hubs will be used to include (a) more and (b) all local authorities in the programme.

Janet Daby:

The Budget announcement includes £69 million to continue delivery of a network of Family Hubs. The announcement is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/autumn-budget-2024>.

Decisions on the breakdown of this funding are yet to be taken. The department will provide further details in due course.

■ Free Schools

James Wild: [12117]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 29 October to Question 11052 on Free Schools, if she will list the 44 projects.

Catherine McKinnell:

I refer the hon. Member for North West Norfolk to the answer of 29 October 2024 to Question [11051](#).

■ Higher Education: Finance

Chi Onwurah: [11884]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the Autumn Budget 2024 on higher education institutions.

Janet Daby:

Although my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, did not announce new funding for the higher education (HE) sector, we have since announced measures across fees, maintenance and wider HE reform to address financial pressures faced by the sector, increase support for students, strengthen efforts to improve access and outcomes for disadvantaged students and enable flexibility to be at the core of our HE system.

The department is aware that HE providers will have to pay increased national insurance contributions. As my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer set out in the Budget, raising the revenue required to fund public services and restore economic stability requires difficult decisions which is why the government has asked employers to contribute more.

The tuition fee limit increase represents an increased investment from students for the sector and will support HE providers in managing the financial challenges they are facing.

The department will explore how best it can continue to improve access to HE, thus widening opportunity for our students and learners, while driving the HE system to play a bigger role in our ambitions for national growth.

■ **Private Education: Bedfordshire**

Blake Stephenson:

[\[11982\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate her Department has made of the number of pupils in Bedfordshire who will leave the independent school system as a result of VAT on school fees.

Stephen Morgan:

The department has made no estimate of the number of pupils in Bedfordshire who will leave the independent school system as a result of VAT on school fees.

The government predicts that, in the long-run steady state, there will be 37,000 fewer pupils in the private sector in the UK as a result of the removal of the VAT exemption applied to school fees. This represents around 6% of the current private school population. This movement is expected to take place over several years.

Of the 37,000 pupil reduction in the private sector, the government estimates an increase of 35,000 pupils in the state sector in the steady state following the VAT policy taking effect, with the other 2,000 consisting of international pupils who do not move into the UK state system, and domestic pupils moving into homeschooling. This state sector increase represents less than 0.5% of total UK state school pupils, of which there are over 9 million. This movement is expected to take place over several years.

The impact on individual local authorities will interact with other pressures and vary. Local authorities have a statutory duty to provide full-time education for all children of statutory school age in their area, suitable for their age, aptitude, ability and any special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The department works with local authorities to help them fulfil their duty to secure school places. Requirements for state-funded places for children that would have attended a private school will be addressed in each local authority through normal processes.

■ **Private Education: VAT**

Damian Hinds:

[\[12038\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the policy paper entitled Applying VAT to private school fees, published on 30 October 2024, if she will make an estimate of potential increases in the number of pupils in secondary state education in each of the next five financial years, broken down by each local authority; and if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of those increases on levels of available state secondary school education places in those local authority areas.

Damian Hinds: [\[12040\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the policy paper entitled Applying VAT to private school fees, published on 30 October 2024, what discussions she has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the potential impact of the expected increase in the number of pupils at state schools in each (a) age group and (b) region.

Damian Hinds: [\[12041\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to HMRC's policy paper entitled Applying VAT to private school fees, published on 30 October 2024, whether she has had discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the potential range of the number of children leaving independent schools; and what estimate she has made of the maximum likely number.

Damian Hinds: [\[12042\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to monitor the potential impact of VAT on independent schools on pupil numbers in those schools.

Stephen Morgan:

The government predicts that there will be 37,000 fewer pupils in the private education sector in the UK as a result of the VAT on private schools fees policy, which takes effect from January 2025. This represents around 6% of the current private school population. It is anticipated that 35,000 of these pupils will move into UK state schools in the long-term steady state, with the remainder composed of international pupils who do not move into the UK state system, and domestic pupils moving into homeschooling.

This increase in the state sector represents less than 0.5% of total UK state school pupils, of which there are over 9 million. The number expected to move before the end of the 2024/25 academic year is around 3,000. The government's estimate of the number of pupils leaving private schools is within the Institute for Fiscal Studies' estimated range of 20,000 to 40,000 and is also significantly lower than some other public estimates.

The government expects many of these moves to take place at natural transition points, such as from primary to secondary school, or at the beginning of exam courses. The impact on the state education system as a whole is therefore expected to be very small. The government expects the associated revenue costs of pupils entering the state sector to steadily increase to a peak of around £0.3 billion after several years.

Differences in local circumstances will mean that the impacts of this policy will vary between parts of the UK. The number of pupils that would have attended private schools seeking state-funded places will vary and this will interact with other local place pressures. Local authorities and schools already have processes in place to support pupils moving between schools, and children move between the private sector and the state-funded sector every year. Local authorities will consider pressures following the removal of the VAT exemption on school fees alongside other

pressures as part of the normal place planning cycle. This is business as usual. The department will be monitoring demand and capacity using our normal processes and working with local authorities to meet any pressures.

Although the department does not hold information for private schools, data on the numbers of pupils in private schools is collected through the annual school census. The latest data can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics#dataBlock-53cdc8f7-fc56-4c64-a79d-ccf5047b7616-tables>.

■ Pupils: Absenteeism

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[11894]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what additional support she plans to provided to (a) parents and guardians and (b) children to help tackle the root causes of persistent school absences.

Stephen Morgan:

Tackling school absence is at the heart of the department's mission to break down the barriers to opportunity. However, 20.7% of children remain persistently absent, missing 10% or more of lessons, and we recognise that supporting parents, guardians and children is vitally important in overcoming this.

This is why the department has published the 'Working together to improve school attendance' guidance, which became statutory in August 2024. The guidance promotes a 'support first' approach, setting clear expectations that schools and local authorities should work with families to address barriers to attendance in a sensitive way. To support parents, we have published a parent-facing version of the guidance and have worked with schools to strengthen communications to parents around attendance.

In addition, backed by £15 million, the government is expanding attendance mentoring to reach 10,000 more children and cover an additional ten areas. This is alongside the commitment to roll out funded breakfast clubs to all primary schools to ensure all children are ready to learn.

Mental health support is particularly important for enabling pupils to attend. The department has provided grants for all schools to train a senior mental health lead. We are also committed to delivering access to specialist mental health professionals in every school.

■ Pupils: Assessments

Anna Dixon:

[11988]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what number and proportion of pupils in (a) state and (b) independent schools had access arrangements for extra time during (i) GCSEs and (ii) A-Levels in the summer exams 2024.

Catherine McKinnell:

This is a matter for Ofqual, the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation. I have asked its Chief Regulator, Sir Ian Bauckham, to write to the hon. Member directly and a copy of his reply will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

■ Pupils: Attendance**Rupert Lowe:**[\[11954\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of allowing parents to take their children out of school during term time for up to five days per year.

Stephen Morgan:

Tackling absence is at the heart of this government's mission to break down barriers to opportunity. If children are not in school, it does not matter how effective or well-supported teaching and learning is, they will not benefit. The government recognises school absence as a key barrier to learning.

Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child of compulsory school age attends school regularly. Regular school attendance is vital for children's attainment, mental wellbeing and long-term development.

Taking children out of school during term time can damage their education and cause unnecessary disruption for teachers and other pupils. There are 175 days per year when pupils are not expected to be in school which gives families various opportunities to enjoy holidays.

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.

■ Schools: Finance**Steve Darling:**[\[12010\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much funding per (a) primary and (b) secondary school student is provided in (i) Cornwall, (ii) Plymouth, (iii) Torbay, (iv) Devon and (v) in the five local authorities with the highest level of education attainment.

Catherine McKinnell:

Mainstream schools receive the majority of their core school funding through the schools block of the dedicated schools grant (DSG).

DSG has funding data for Cornwall, Plymouth, Torbay and Devon. It does not include funding in respect of the 'local authorities with the highest level of education attainment' because there are a number of different ways in which education attainment can be measured. The local authorities which have the highest level of education attainment would depend on which of these measures were used.

The primary and secondary per-pupil funding for the 2024/25 financial year through the schools block of the DSG can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dedicated-schools-grant-dsg-2024-to-2025>.

The DSG funding excludes the additional funding schools have received through other grants, notably the 2024/25 teachers' pay additional grant, the 2024/25 teachers' pensions employer contribution grant and the 2024/25 core schools budget grant.

Damian Hinds:

[12062]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the change in the core schools budget will be for (a) 2025-6, (b) 2026-7 and (c) 2027-8 (i) in total and (ii) per pupil.

Catherine McKinnell:

Funding for schools and young people with high needs is set to increase by £2.3 billion in 2025/26 compared to 2024/25, bringing the total core schools budget to almost £63.9 billion in 2025/26. The department will confirm per pupil increases for schools and high needs once the national funding formulae for 2025/26 have been calculated.

The Budget on 30 October sets out the government's plans for the upcoming 2025/26 financial year. Core schools budgets beyond 2025/26 have not been set.

■ Schools: Fylde

Mr Andrew Snowden:

[12182]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department plans to provide additional funding to increase the number of school places in Fylde before January 2025, in the context of the introduction of VAT on independent school fees.

Stephen Morgan:

The department has already set out funding allocations for all schools in the current year. The removal for the school fees exemption to VAT does not change those allocations.

The government has also set out that it expects the number of additional pupils joining the state-funded sector to be low, around 35,000 pupils UK-wide, which is less than 0.5% of the state-funded pupil population, over several years.

The impact on individual schools and local authorities will vary and interact with other pressures. The department works with local authorities to help them fulfil their duty to secure school places. Deciding whether to move a child part-way through the school year in January 2025 is a matter for parents. Requirements for state-funded places for children that would have attended a private school will be addressed in each local authority through normal processes.

■ Schools: Mental Health Services**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhese:****[11895]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what specialist mental health support she plans to provide to secondary schools to help tackle absences.

Stephen Morgan:

Poor mental health in children and young people is a significant contributing factor in school absence, and a key barrier to opportunity and learning, that the government is committed to addressing.

To tackle mental ill-health among children and young people, the government has committed to provide access to specialist mental health professionals in every school. We need to ensure any support meets the needs of young people, teachers, parents, and carers which is why we are exploring a range of options. This includes existing programmes of support with evidence of a positive impact, such as Mental Health Support Teams in schools and colleges. 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.

This is in addition to activity to support schools and local authorities to tackle the school absence challenge, which includes setting clear expectations for schools, trusts and local authorities to provide a 'support first' approach to attendance.

Departmental guidance can be viewed here:

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

The department is also piloting attendance mentors, offering 1:1 targeted support to 10,000 persistently absent pupils and their families across 15 local authorities to identify and address barriers to education.

■ Social Work England: Finance**Cat Smith:****[12085]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will take steps to provide additional funding to Social Work England for the provision of additional fitness to practice final hearings.

Janet Daby:

The department has provided additional funding of £7.1 million to Social Work England to clear the backlog of legacy cases inherited from the previous regulator. The department continues to look at ways to provide additional support to reduce cases currently at final hearing stage.

■ Special Educational Needs

Dr Beccy Cooper:

[\[12162\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to help support local authorities to reduce the waiting times for education, health and care plans to be processed.

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.

The department wants to ensure that, where required, education, health and care (EHC) plan assessments are progressed promptly and, if needed, plans are issued as quickly as possible so that children and young people can access the support they need.

The department publishes annual data from the SEN2 survey in relation to the processes associated with EHC plans, including the timeliness of assessments and, where agreed, the issuing of an EHC plan. The department also closely monitors the information from the annual SEN2 data release and uses it to inform discussions with local areas.

Local authorities identified as having issues with EHC plan timeliness are subject to additional monitoring by the department, who work with the specific local authority. Where there are concerns about the local authority's capacity to make the required improvements, the department can secure specialist SEND Adviser support to help identify the barriers to EHC plan process timeliness and put in place practical plans for recovery.

The department knows that local authorities have been impacted by increased demand for EHC plans and workforce capacity to meet this demand, so more efficient and effective service delivery, alongside communication with schools and families, is central to the recovery.

When inspections indicate that there are significant concerns with local authority performance, the department will intervene directly. This may mean issuing an improvement notice, statutory direction and/or appointing a commissioner, the deployment of which is considered on a case-by-case basis. We also provide support and challenge, for example from SEND Improvement Advisers and Sector-Led Improvement Partners to address the challenges local authorities face and improve services for children.

■ Special Educational Needs: Beckenham and Penge

Liam Conlon:

[\[12241\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to improve support for children with (a) autism and (b) SEND in mainstream settings in Beckenham and Penge constituency.

Catherine McKinnell:

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

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

The department is strengthening the evidence base of what works to improve inclusive practice in mainstream settings. We have recently commissioned evidence reviews from Newcastle University and University College London. These reviews will help to drive inclusive practices by highlighting what the best available evidence suggests are the most effective tools, strategies and approaches for teachers and other relevant staff in mainstream settings to identify and support children and young people, aged 0 to 25, with different types of needs.

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

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

■ Special Educational Needs: Employers' Contributions**Damian Hinds:**[\[12069\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of changes to employer national insurance contributions on SEND cost pressures.

Catherine McKinnell:

At Budget, HM Treasury confirmed that all public sector organisations will be funded for the increase in employer contributions to national insurance in 2025/26. This will include funding for schools.

The department anticipates providing this funding to schools, including with regard to special educational needs and disabilities, funding for special schools, and alternative provision. This will be through an additional grant in 2025/26. The department will provide more information on this, including funding rates and allocations, as soon as practicable.

Special Educational Needs: Nottinghamshire**Lee Anderson:**[\[12109\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans his Department has to support students with special needs in the Ashfield and Mansfield district.

Catherine McKinnell:

Nottinghamshire received a joint local area special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) inspection by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) in February 2023 under the current Area SEND Inspection framework. Ofsted and the CQC found widespread and/or systemic failings leading to significant concerns about the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND which the local area partnership must address urgently. The report, which was published on 16 May 2023, included two areas for priority action (APA). The local area submitted a Priority Action Plan to Ofsted and the CQC to address these APAs, which was approved on 14 July 2023.

The department's regional team has put in place systems to track outcomes against the APAs found by inspectors and the progress made by children and young people with SEND. Nottinghamshire County Council is committed to working closely with the department to improve services.

The department has appointed a SEND Advisor to work collaboratively with an NHS England Adviser to challenge, support and work alongside Nottinghamshire County Council and the local area partnership. In addition, the department commissioned the Council for Disabled Children, which is part of the Research and Improvement for SEND Excellence Consortium contract, to deliver a bespoke package, supporting the local area to develop an outcome-based framework to underpin their new SEND strategy. This is available here:

<https://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/education/special-educational-needs-and-disabilities-send/special-educational-needs-and-disabilities-send/nottinghamshire-local-area-send-strategy>.

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, improving inclusivity and

expertise in mainstream schools, as well as ensuring special schools cater to children and young people with the most complex needs.

■ Students: Finance

Paula Barker: [\[12213\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department plans to support students with (a) the cost of living and (b) accommodation costs.

Janet Daby:

The government is determined that the higher education funding system should deliver for our economy, for universities and for students. This government is committed to supporting the aspiration of every person who meets the requirements and wants to go to university.

The government recognises the impact that the cost of living crisis has had on students. That is why we are increasing the maximum maintenance loans for living costs for the 2025/26 academic year by 3.1%, in line with the forecast rate of inflation, to ensure that more support is targeted at students from the lowest income families.

Maximum maintenance loans will increase in line with forecast inflation, giving students up to an additional £414 a year of support in the 2025/26 academic year. This is the increase in the maximum loan for living costs for students living away from, and studying in, London from £13,348 to £13,762.

Therefore, a student living away from home and studying outside London on a household income of £25,000 or less will qualify for a maximum loan for living costs of £10,544 for the 2025/26 academic year, an increase of £317 compared to 2024/25. Students living away from home and studying in London will qualify for higher rates of loan, as will students eligible for benefits and some disabled students.

Abtisam Mohamed: [\[12227\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the level of maintenance support available to students in England.

Abtisam Mohamed: [\[12314\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of maintenance loans for students.

Janet Daby:

The government recognises that UK higher education (HE) creates opportunity, is an engine for growth in our economy and supports local communities. We are determined that the HE funding system should deliver for our economy, for universities and for students. This government is committed to supporting the aspiration of every person who meets the requirements and wants to go to university. The student finance system removes upfront financial barriers so that everyone with the ability and desire to enter HE can do so. We recognise the impact that the cost of living crisis has had on students.

That is why the government is increasing the maximum maintenance loans for living costs for the 2025/26 academic year by 3.1%, in line with the forecast rate of inflation, to ensure that more support is targeted at students from the lowest income families.

Upfront tuition fee loans allow students, including disadvantaged students, to access HE who would otherwise not be able to. Students undertaking nursing, midwifery and allied health profession courses qualify for additional grant support through the NHS Learning Support Fund. Students undertaking tuition fee based Initial Teacher Training courses leading to Qualified Teacher Status may qualify for bursaries or scholarships depending on their subject and/or previous qualifications.

■ Universities: Employers' Contributions

Abtisam Mohamed:

[\[12223\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the increase in National Insurance employer contributions on university finances.

Janet Daby:

The department is aware that higher education (HE) providers will have to pay increased national insurance contributions. As my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer set out in the Budget, raising the revenue required to fund public services and restore economic stability requires difficult decisions, which is why the government has asked employers to contribute more.

The department understands that universities are under financial pressure, which is why we have taken the difficult decision to announce a tuition fee rise of 3.1% which will take effect at the start of the 2025/26 academic year.

The tuition fee limit increase represents an increased investment from students for the sector and will support HE providers in managing the financial challenges they are facing.

In return for higher investment, the government is calling for universities to strengthen efforts to improve access and outcomes for disadvantaged students.

The government will be boosting support for disadvantaged learners with an inflation-linked increase to maintenance loans for those facing cost of living pressures.

The department will explore how best we can continue to improve access to HE, widening opportunity for our students and learners, while driving the HE system to play a bigger role in our ambitions for national growth.

■ Universities: Finance

Abtisam Mohamed:

[\[12228\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to help ensure the financial sustainability of universities.

Janet Daby:

The department understands that universities are under financial pressure, which is why we have taken the difficult decision to announce a tuition fee rise of 3.1% which will take effect at the start of the 2025/2026 academic year.

The tuition fee limit increase represents an increased investment from students for the sector and will support higher education (HE) providers in managing the financial challenges they are facing.

In return for higher investment, the government is calling for universities to strengthen efforts to improve access and outcomes for disadvantaged students.

The government will be boosting support for disadvantaged learners with an inflation linked increase to maintenance loans for those facing cost of living pressures.

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education has already taken the important first step of appointing Sir David Behan as interim Chair of the Office for Students (OfS) to oversee the important work of refocusing the OfS role to concentrate on key priorities, including the HE sector's financial sustainability. The department continues to work closely with the OfS as the independent regulator of HE in England to understand the changing financial landscape.

The department will also explore how to best continue improving access to HE, widening opportunity for students and learners.

Abtisam Mohamed:**[12229]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what funding is available to universities via the Strategic Priorities Grant.

Janet Daby:

The government provides funding through the Strategic Priorities Grant (SPG) on an annual basis to support teaching and students in higher education (HE), including expensive to deliver subjects such as science and engineering, students at risk of discontinuing their studies and world leading specialist providers.

The total recurrent SPG funding to be distributed by the Office for Students (OfS) for the 2024/25 academic year is £1.426 million. This comprises £1.402 million in recurrent grant for providers and £24 million in funding for national facilities and regulatory initiatives.

The department made £281 million of funding available to providers for the 2024/25 academic year in the form of student premiums and mental health support to promote successful outcomes for students, including for disadvantaged students.

For the three-year period from 2022/23 to 2024/25, the SPG multi-year capital funding was set at £450 million to support investment in teaching and learning facilities. The outcomes for the distribution of capital grant funding by the OfS to eligible HE providers is available here:

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/capital-funding-for-financial-years-2022-23-to-2024-25/>.

On 29 July 2024, the OfS published the outcomes of their decision on how the 2024/25 academic year SPG recurrent funding would be allocated to eligible HE providers. The full summary of their decision-making can be accessed here:

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/467e28b4-7bc4-4223-bfbc-33de5836c349/funding-for-2023-24-ofs-decisions.pdf>.

On 25 October 2024, the OfS also published the latest edition of the funding allocations for each provider for the 2024/25 academic year. The breakdown for each HE provider is available here:

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/recurrent-funding-for-2024-25/>.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

■ Coal: Imports

Rupert Lowe:

[12330]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what the (a) value and (b) volume of coal imported into the UK was in each of the last five years.

Michael Shanks:

Data showing the value and volume of coal imported into the UK is presented in the following table:

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
UK coal imports (million tonnes)	5.4	3.7	4.5	6.6	2.9
Value of UK coal imports (£m)	574	318	470	1,573	519

Source: [HMRC trade data](#)

■ Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: Official Cars

Charlie Dewhirst:

[11953]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, pursuant to the Answer of 14 October 2024 to Question 7000 on Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: Official Cars, what proportion of journeys taken in a shared vehicle from the Government Car Service by (a) him and (b) Ministers in his Department were in an electric car in the latest month for which information is available.

Michael Shanks:

The Government Car service (GCS) provides vehicles to a number of Government departments. Due to logistical and operational reasons the type of vehicles deployed at each department can vary on a daily or weekly basis. The vehicle fuel type can vary depending on which car has been allocated to cover on that day. Generally, the cars are electric or hybrid.

■ **Fisheries: Wind Power****Steve Darling:**[\[12012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of compensating commercial fishermen who are displaced from fishing grounds by offshore wind development projects.

Michael Shanks:

Impacts of proposed offshore wind developments on affected stakeholders, including fishers, is considered during the development consent process. The Government encourages offshore wind developers and the fishing industry to discuss potential impacts at an early stage.

In cases where there have been monetary settlements for disruption or displacement, these have been agreed on an individual project basis between the offshore wind developer and the affected fishers.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS■ **Beavers: Nature Conservation****Andrew Cooper:**[\[11950\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the reintroduction of beavers to the wild on meeting targets on halting the decline in species abundance by 2030 as set under the Environment Act 2021.

Mary Creagh:

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

No direct assessment of beavers' impact on the species abundance target has been conducted but we continue to improve our evidence base underpinning the targets more broadly.

However, evidence demonstrates that beavers can boost biodiversity and create and restore wetland habitats. A 2020 evidence review of the interaction between beavers and the natural and human environments found that beaver reintroductions can bring many benefits by helping to restore lost natural ecosystem function. Therefore, beaver reintroductions could contribute to broad ambitions to restore biodiversity,

through the restoration of more naturally functioning habitat mosaics, benefitting many species.

Beaver populations in England are currently small, so any positive impact on biodiversity and species abundance will be spatially limited.

■ Dogs: Smuggling

Carla Lockhart:

[\[12157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what (a) resources and (b) training his Department provides to the Animal and Plant Health Agency to assist in the detection of puppies being smuggled through UK ports.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Government takes the illegal importation of pets seriously. It is an abhorrent trade which causes suffering to animals.

We work closely with UK enforcement bodies including the Animal and Plant Health Agency to develop guidance and ensure they have the correct tools and resources to enforce the Pet Travel rules, disrupt illegal imports, safeguard the welfare of animals and seize non-compliant animals.

■ Incinerators: Licensing

Lee Barron:

[\[11520\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what guidance his Department issues on licence approvals for incineration plants in residential areas.

Emma Hardy:

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

The EA must follow the guidance on determining permit applications which is set out in Section 7 of the EPR Core Guidance and in the EPR Part A Guidance, including for incinerators in residential areas. The guidance documents can be found at the following links:

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-permitting-guidance-core-guidance--2>
- <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7b8e02e5274a7318b8f6b3/pb13898-epr-guidance-part-a-130222.pdf>

As set out in the guidance, in England all large incinerators must comply with strict emission limits and the Best Available Techniques (BAT) conclusions for waste incineration. If impacts from an incinerator could cause an Air Quality Limit or Standard to be exceeded for the local area (as set out in the Air Quality Standards Regulations 2010), a lower limit for the relevant pollutant could be specified in the

permit, or the permit may be refused. The EA will only grant a permit if it is satisfied that the proposal would not give rise to any significant pollution of the environment or harm to human health.

■ Pesticides: Public Places

Dr Beccy Cooper: [\[12342\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to take steps to introduce a national phase-out of the use of pesticides in public areas under local authority control.

Emma Hardy:

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

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

■ Plastics: Waste

Wera Hobhouse: [\[11916\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to help ensure the enforcement of the single-use plastics ban.

Mary Creagh:

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.

■ Rivers: Pollution

Liam Conlon: [\[12212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what progress his Department has made on tackling illegal water pollution in rivers (a) nationally and (b) in Beckenham and Penge constituency.

Emma Hardy:

In July, we announced swift action to begin resetting the water sector, including ringfencing vital funding for infrastructure investment and placing customers and the environment at the heart of water company objectives.

In September, the Government introduced the Water (Special Measures) Bill to give regulators new powers to take tougher and faster action to crack down on water companies damaging the environment and failing their customers.

Furthermore, on 23 October, the Secretary of State, in conjunction with the Welsh government, launched an Independent Commission on the water sector regulatory system, to fundamentally transform how our water system works and clean up our rivers, lakes and seas for good.

The Environment Agency regulates discharges to water using environmental permits and investigates pollution incidents, nationally and in the Beckenham and Penge constituency. Regulators will take action when illegality is identified, in line with their enforcement and sanctions policies.

■ **Sewage: West Dorset**

Edward Morello:

[\[11507\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans his Department has to ensure that water companies do not allow storm sewage overflows to impact (a) rivers and (b) coastal areas in West Dorset constituency.

Emma Hardy:

The Government has taken immediate and substantial action to address water companies who are not performing for the environment or their customers. In July, we announced swift action to begin resetting the water sector, including ringfencing vital funding for infrastructure investment and placing customers and the environment at the heart of water company objectives.

In September, Government introduced the Water (Special Measures) Bill to give regulators new powers to take tougher and faster action to crack down on water companies damaging the environment and failing their customers.

Furthermore, on 23 October, the Secretary of State, in conjunction with the Welsh government, launched an Independent Commission on the water sector regulatory system, to fundamentally transform how our water system works and clean up our rivers, lakes and seas for good.

All storm overflows in the West Dorset constituency are now fitted with event duration monitors and, from January 2025, water companies will have a duty to publish spill frequency and duration data in near real-time.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]**

Rupert Lowe:

[\[11725\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much his Department spent on first class flights in each of the last five years.

Catherine West:

This information could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. In line with FCDO Travel Policy for all staff, first class air travel is prohibited.

■ **Bangladesh: Foreign Relations**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[12033\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has met with his Bangladeshi counterpart since 4 August 2024.

Catherine West:

The UK Government is supporting Bangladesh's Interim Government as it works to create a pathway to a more inclusive, democratic and prosperous future for the people of Bangladesh. In October, the Foreign Secretary met with Bangladesh's Foreign Affairs Adviser during the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting and discussed democracy in Bangladesh, climate and the Rohingya. The British High Commission in Dhaka will continue to engage with the Interim Government in Bangladesh on mutual key priorities.

■ Climate Change: International Cooperation**Liam Conlon:**[\[11994\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking with his international counterparts to help tackle climate change.

Anneliese Dodds:

The Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary focused on action on climate and nature at the UN General Assembly and with Commonwealth leaders at CHOGM. We will send a strong delegation to COP29, including the new the UK Special Representative for Climate.

We are seizing the opportunity of this year's three COPs on biodiversity, climate and desertification, to drive international progress with partners. This will include building a Global Clean Power Alliance, taking our mission to make the UK a Clean Energy Superpower to the international stage, and pushing for an ambitious new climate finance goal at COP29.

■ Egypt: British Nationals Abroad**Layla Moran:**[\[11911\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help ensure consular access to British tourists in Egypt who have been arrested.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The FCDO, via our consular staff, is available 24/7 to provide consular support to British nationals abroad. Whenever the FCDO is informed of the arrest of a British national in Egypt, our consular officials aim to make contact as soon as possible to seek more information and assess their situation, including requesting consular access. In the event consular access is delayed or denied, we can raise this with the Egyptian authorities where appropriate.

■ Ethiopia: Armed Conflict**Kate Osamor:**[\[12086\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Ethiopian counterpart on the conflict in Amhara region.

Anneliese Dodds:

The UK regularly discusses the conflict in Amhara with the Ethiopian government, condemning violence and calling for a peaceful resolution. On 15 August, the Foreign Secretary discussed the conflict with the then Ethiopian Foreign Minister, including its impact on civilians and on stability in the region. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Africa and I have both recently visited Ethiopia and raised the conflict in Amhara at the highest levels.

Kate Osamor:[\[12087\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of the matters raised in the Amnesty International press release entitled Ethiopia: Human rights bodies failure to act as justice continues to elude victims of atrocities, published on 6 August 2024.

Anneliese Dodds:

The Amnesty International press release on 6 August has drawn attention to the conduct of actors across northern Ethiopia. Their reporting is consistent with UN investigations which found that all sides committed major human rights abuses, some of which might amount to crimes against humanity. The UK has consistently called for accountability for victims across Ethiopia and is supporting Ethiopia's transitional justice efforts, including by working with national human rights organisations to enhance evidence collection that could support criminal procedures.

■ Ethiopia: Humanitarian Aid**Kate Osamor:**[\[12088\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help ensure that UK aid is able to pass into the Amhara region of Ethiopia.

Anneliese Dodds:

With active conflict leading to humanitarian access restrictions across much of Amhara, we are aware that aid agencies struggle to deliver assistance to civilians across the region. We are providing funding for a UN-led civil-military coordination team in Amhara, which negotiates humanitarian access throughout the region. This will improve the ability of partners to deliver humanitarian support, including UK-funded aid to affected peoples.

■ Israeli Settlements: Sanctions**Andy McDonald:**[\[11604\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to his Oral Statement of 28 October 2024 on Middle East, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of the application of additional sanctions to further extremist illegal settlers and illegal settlement-related organisations.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

Our position on Israeli settlements in the West Bank is clear. They are illegal under international law, an obstacle to peace and threaten the physical viability of a two-state solution. We strongly condemn settler violence and the actions of those who seek to incite violence and inflame tensions, and we call on Israel to act accordingly. As the occupying power, Israel has an obligation to protect the civilian Palestinian population in the West Bank. On 15 October we sanctioned three outposts and four entities linked to West Bank violence, under the Global Human Rights regime. The UK is considering all options to support a more stable West Bank. It would not be appropriate to speculate about future sanctions designations as to do so could reduce their impact.

■ Occupied Territories: Human Rights**Imran Hussain:**[\[11869\]](#)

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 (a) the human rights situation in (i) the Occupied Palestinian Territories, (ii) the West Bank and (iii) East Jerusalem and (b) the position paper entitled Legal analysis and recommendations on implementation of the International Court of Justice, Advisory Opinion, Legal Consequences arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, published by the United Nations Palestinian Rights Committee on 18 October 2024.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

We continue to work with our international partners, including at the UN, to put pressure on Israel to show the world it is complying with international humanitarian law. The UK does not disagree with the central findings of the International Court of Justice's (ICJ) Advisory Opinion on the 'Legal Consequences arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem'. We are of the clear view that Israel should bring an end to its presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territories as rapidly as possible - but we are clear that every effort must be made to create the conditions for negotiations towards the two-state solution. Our commitment to a two-state solution is unwavering. The UK abstained on the UN General Assembly resolution in September because it did not provide sufficient clarity to advance a negotiated two-state solution. The UK respects the independence of the ICJ.

■ Pacific Ocean Islands: Diplomatic Relations**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[12034\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had discussions with his counterparts in the Pacific region on the potential merits of upgrading Honorary Consulates in (a) the Solomon Islands, (b) Vanuatu and (c) Tuvalu to High Commissions.

Catherine West:

The UK has High Commissions with accredited resident High Commissioners in the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, the latter of which was opened in 2019. The UK High Commissioner to Fiji is also the accredited non-resident High Commissioner to Tuvalu. The UK does not have Honorary Consulates in the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu or Tuvalu.

■ **Russia: Sanctions****Alicia Kearns:**[\[12301\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will place sanctions on the (a) Montenegro based company International Business Corporation Bar and (b) Serbia based company Ventrade DOO for supplying Russia with advanced technology and equipment for its invasion of Ukraine.

Stephen Doughty:

The UK remains steadfast in our support to Ukraine. Together with our international partners, we have implemented the most severe package of sanctions ever imposed on a major economy. The UK alone has sanctioned more than 2,000 individuals and entities under the Russia sanctions regime. Whilst we do not comment on future or individual designations, the Foreign Secretary underlined the importance of tackling third-country support to Russia's military-industrial complex at the EU Foreign Affairs Council on 22 October. I [Minister Doughty] regularly raise third-country circumvention and the Common High Priority Items list with counterparts. We have sanctioned several entities in third countries involved in supporting Russia's war machine.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE■ **Ambulance Services: South West****Sarah Gibson:**[\[12339\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce ambulance waiting times in the South West.

Karin Smyth:

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

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

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

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

■ Brain: Tumours

Dr Ben Spencer:

[11608]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has had discussions with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence on the potential merits of reviewing guidance for the (a) diagnosis, (b) care and (c) treatment of brain tumours.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 4 November 2024]: Officials in the Department regularly discuss a range of issues with colleagues in the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), including proposals to review or update existing guidelines. NICE keeps its published guidelines under surveillance and decisions on whether they should be updated in light of new evidence taken independently by NICE's prioritisation board. NICE currently has no plans to update its guideline on "brain tumours (primary) and brain metastases in over 16s".

We are aware of Siobhain McDonagh's campaign, in memory of the late Baroness McDonagh, and are committed to working together to explore options.

■ Dementia

Andrew Rosindell:

[11563]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve dementia (a) diagnosis, (b) research and (c) treatment.

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.

NHS England publishes a monthly report detailing the number of people with a recorded dementia diagnosis nationally and in each locality. They also measure the of quality of care such as the proportion of patients who have had a care plan review in the previous 12 months.

To reduce variation in diagnosis rates, the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities' Dementia Intelligence Network has developed a tool for local systems, which includes an assessment of population characteristics such as rurality and socio-economic deprivation. This enables systems to investigate local variation in diagnosis and take informed action to enhance their diagnosis rates. The tool has been released and is available via the NHS Futures Collaboration platform.

The United Kingdom has established a rich ecosystem for dementia research, including through the UK Dementia Research Institute and related initiatives such as the Dementia Trials Accelerator which is supported by the Government's Dame Barbara Windsor Dementia Goals programme, with £120 million of Government funding committed to it. This aims to speed up the development of new treatments for dementia and neurodegenerative conditions by accelerating innovations in biomarkers, clinical trials and implementation.

The £49.9 million National Institute for Health and Care Research Dementia Trials Network will deliver a coordinated network of early phase dementia trial sites to test for potential treatments.

To prepare for the new generation of dementia treatments, NHS England is working closely with regulators to ensure that arrangements are in place to support the adoption of any new licensed and National Institute for Health and Care Excellence recommended treatments as soon as possible.

■ **Dental Services: Cambridgeshire**

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[\[10546\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of establishing mobile dental services in (a) Cambridgeshire and (b) Peterborough.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 28 October 2024]: We are clear that Faster, simpler and fairer: our plan to recover and reform NHS dentistry, also known as the Dentistry Recovery Plan, published on 7 February 2024, did not go far enough to improve access for dentistry patients in the National Health Service. As part of our ambitions for dentistry, we will review what elements of the Dentistry Recovery Plan can be taken forward and within NHS budgets, including the proposals for dental vans.

■ **Dental Services: Northampton North**

Lucy Rigby:

[\[11521\]](#)

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

Stephen Kinnock:

The Government plans to tackle the challenges for patients trying to access National Health Service dental care with a rescue plan to provide 700,000 more urgent dental appointments and recruit new dentists to the areas that need them most. To rebuild dentistry in the long term and increase access to NHS dental care, we will reform the dental contract, with a shift to focus on prevention and the retention of NHS dentists.

The responsibility for commissioning primary care services, including NHS dentistry, to meet the needs of the local population has been delegated to integrated care boards (ICBs) across England. For the Northampton North constituency, this is the NHS Northamptonshire ICB.

Lucy Rigby:

[11804]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help ensure that NHS dental practices in Northampton North constituency have the capacity to treat more patients.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Government plans to tackle the challenges for patients trying to access National Health Service dental care with a rescue plan to provide 700,000 more urgent dental appointments and recruit new dentists to the areas that need them most. To rebuild dentistry in the long term and increase access to NHS dental care, we will reform the dental contract, with a shift to focus on prevention and the retention of NHS dentists.

The responsibility for commissioning primary care services, including NHS dentistry, to meet the needs of the local population has been delegated to the integrated care boards (ICBs) across England. For the Northampton North constituency, this is the NHS Northamptonshire ICB.

■ **Diabetes: Medical Equipment**

Rachel Gilmour:

[12329]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to roll out NHS-funded Hybrid Close Loop technology to all Type 1 Diabetics in the UK.

Andrew Gwynne:

In December 2023, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence published the Technology Appraisal guidance, and recommended that the National Health Service in England makes Hybrid Closed Loop (HCL) systems available to eligible adults, and all children and young people, those under 19 years old, with type 1 diabetes. The NICE and NHS England agreed on a phased implementation period for HCL over five-years, and without the usual 90-day funding mandate. This is because of a need to build essential workforce competencies within specialist adult services. The NHS England HCL Implementation Strategy, published in January 2024, set out how local systems can meet the needs of the eligible population living with type 1 diabetes. The initial phase of the roll out of HCL systems started earlier this year, in April 2024. Further information on the HCL Implementation Strategy is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/hybrid-closed-loop-technologies-5-year-implementation-strategy/>

■ **East London NHS Foundation Trust: Mental Health Services**

Uma Kumaran:

[11957]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of trends in the number of people who have accessed adult mental health services in the East London NHS Foundation Trust.

Stephen Kinnock:

We recognise that the overall number of people being referred to National Health Service adult mental health services is increasing, including in East London, and too many people are not receiving the mental health care they need.

That is why, as part of our mission to build an NHS that is fit for the future and that is there when people need it, the Government will recruit an additional 8,500 mental health workers to reduce delays and provide faster treatment, which will also help ease pressure on busy mental health services.

Uma Kumaran:[\[11958\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help support the (a) recruitment and (b) retention of mental health specialists in the East London NHS Foundation Trust.

Stephen Kinnock:

To address the current mental health workforce shortages in trusts, like the East London NHS Foundation Trust, we plan to recruit an additional 8,500 mental health workers across child and adult mental health services, to reduce waiting times and provide faster treatment.

We are working to consider options to deliver this expansion of the mental health workforce, including where they should be deployed to achieve maximum effect. NHS England is also working to improve retention through clearer career progression pathways.

Health Services: Essex**Priti Patel:**[\[12269\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 October 2024, HC 295, what estimate he has made of the amount of funding that will be allocated to NHS services in Essex in each of the next five years.

Karin Smyth:

The recent Budget set out the overall funding for the Department for 2024/25 and 2025/26. In terms of the next five years, the funding that will be allocated to the three integrated care boards covering Essex will be set out alongside planning guidance for 2025/26 at the earliest opportunity. Funding beyond 2025/26 will be determined as part of Phase 2 of the Spending Review, which will be announced in Spring 2025.

Health Services: Undocumented Migrants**Rupert Lowe:**[\[11416\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the average waiting was for an irregular migrant to see a (a) healthcare professional and (b) dentist in the latest period for which data is available.

Rupert Lowe:

[11417]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much his Department has spent on dental services for irregular migrants in each year since 2018.

Stephen Kinnock:

We do not hold data on the expenditure of dental services for irregular migrants, or the average waiting time to see a healthcare professional or a dentist.

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

The Government is committed to building a fairer Britain by tackling the inequalities that contribute to poor health, particularly for disadvantaged groups. We are dedicated to ensuring that people live well for longer, spending less time in ill health, regardless of where they are born or their financial circumstances.

■ Heart Diseases: Health Education

Alison Bennett:

[12318]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he is taking steps to increase awareness amongst GPs of the signs and symptoms of cardiomyopathy.

Andrew Gwynne:

As part of the 2023 England Rare Disease Action Plan, NHS England's Genomics Education Programme has developed GeNotes, to increase the awareness of genetic and rare diseases amongst healthcare professionals. GeNotes puts information on genetic and rare diseases at the fingertips of healthcare professionals, including general practitioners. The GeNotes resource has a cardiology speciality section and includes several pages on cardiomyopathies. Further information on GeNotes more generally and about the cardiology speciality section specifically is available, respectively, at the following two links:

<https://www.genomicseducation.hee.nhs.uk/genotes/>

<https://www.genomicseducation.hee.nhs.uk/genotes/cardiology/>

Furthermore, cardiac networks of care, established locally to ensure joined up patient pathways, provide support in raising awareness of inherited cardiac conditions, including cardiomyopathy, across healthcare providers, in accordance with the services specification for inherited cardiac conditions, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/cardiology-inherited-cardiac-conditions-all-ages/>

■ Home Care Services: Finance

James Naish:

[\[11356\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that domiciliary care is sustainably funded.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Government is committed to reforming adult social care and improving the quality of care for people in need. That's why we are taking steps to ensure all adult social care is sustainably funded, including domiciliary care. In 2025/26, the Government is providing at least £600 million in new grant funding for social care, as part of a broader estimated real terms increase in local government spending power of approximately 3.2%.

■ Hospitals: Hampshire

Luke Murphy:

[\[11951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much funding the Hampshire Hospitals scheme received to the end of the 2023-24 financial year.

Karin Smyth:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 29 October 2024 to Question [10950](#).

■ Kidney Diseases: Screening

Alicia Kearns:

[\[12566\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase uptake of early screening interventions for chronic kidney disease.

Andrew Gwynne:

NHS England is working to detect people at risk of kidney disease through the NHS Health Check Programme. The programme, which is available for everyone between the ages of 40 and 74 years old who are not already on a chronic disease register, assesses people's health and risk of developing certain health problems. Using this information, patients are supported to make behavioural changes and access treatment which helps to prevent and detect kidney disease earlier.

The UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC) reviewed chronic kidney disease (CKD) and glomerulonephritis in 2011, concluding that a population-wide screening programme would not be recommended. The UK NSC has not looked at the evidence for a targeted programme. The UK NSC can be alerted to any new published peer-reviewed evidence which may suggest the case for a new screening programme. Further information is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-nsc-annual-call-submitting-a-screening-proposal/uk-nsc-annual-call-how-to-submit-a-proposal>

The National Health Service provides access to tests and therapies to diagnose, code, and treat patients with early-stage CKD. NHS England, through the Renal

Services Transformation Programme and regional renal networks, is implementing initiatives to provide better integrated care, reduce health inequalities, and focus on prevention and timely intervention for kidney disease. Regional renal clinical networks prioritise CKD diagnosis and prevention within their transformation ambitions, facilitating earlier treatment. This includes considerations to develop a unified approach to testing populations at risk of developing CKD, and includes raising awareness of diagnostic tools like urine albumin creatinine tests, enabling CKD diagnosis at stages 1 and 2. NHS England aims to improve awareness and access to these important urine and blood tests across primary and secondary care. In addition, the transformation programme launched a renal toolkit earlier last year, for use by systems, that outlines the principles to support better management of patients identified with CKD throughout their patient journey.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's guidance, Chronic kidney disease: Assessment and management [NG203], updated in November 2021, sets out best practice for clinicians in the diagnosis and management of CKD. The guidance covers the care and treatment of patients at risk of CKD. It includes recommendations on the monitoring of patients at risk of CKD and aims to prevent or delay the progression of the disease. The guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng203>

■ Magnesium: Dietary Supplements

Ruth Cadbury:

[12434]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential health benefits of magnesium supplements.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Government's nutrition advice is based on recommendations from the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) and its predecessor, the Committee on Medical Aspects of Food and Nutritional Policy (COMA).

The COMA set dietary reference values for magnesium for men and women aged 19 to 64 years old at 300 milligrams and 270 milligrams a day, respectively. Current Government advice is that individuals should be able to get all the magnesium they need by eating a varied and balanced diet.

The SACN discussed the topic of magnesium as part of its horizon scanning in 2020, 2022, and 2024. Meeting papers are available on the SACN webpage. The committee has noted that while 'significant proportions of the population had [low intakes], there was limited evidence that this was of public health concern'. There is no agreed biomarker for measuring magnesium status.

Magnesium is therefore on the SACN's watching brief as a low priority, and the SACN may consider it again in future, if there are any developments regarding biomarkers for magnesium status, to warrant a review of recommendations.

■ Mental Health Services

Tom Hayes:

[\[10288\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help improve the integration of mental health services into existing NHS provision.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 24 October 2024]: We will ensure that we give mental health the same attention and focus as physical health, so that people can be confident in accessing high quality mental health support when they need it.

We know wider change is needed and we have launched a national conversation, called Change NHS: help build a health service fit for the future, to develop the 10-Year Health Plan. We are inviting people to share their ideas on what needs to change across the health and care system, including: how the National Health Service could change to deliver high quality care more effectively; how other parts of the health and care system and other organisations in society could change to promote better health and improve the way health and care services work together; and how individuals and communities could do things differently in the future to improve people's health.

Andrew Cooper:

[\[9371\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve access to mental health services in (a) Mid Cheshire constituency, (b) Cheshire and (c) England.

Stephen Kinnock:

NHS Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board is responsible for providing health and care services to meet the needs of the people of Mid Cheshire constituency and Cheshire, taking into account local considerations.

Nationally, we recognise that many people with mental health issues are not getting the support or care they need, which is why we will fix the broken system to ensure that mental health is given the same attention and focus as physical health, so that people can be confident in accessing high quality mental health support when they need it. We will recruit an additional 8,500 mental health workers to reduce delays and provide faster treatment which will also help ease pressure on hospitals. By cutting mental health waiting lists and intervening earlier with more timely mental health support, we can get this country back to good health.

We will also ensure every young person has access to a mental health professional at school, and set up Young Futures hubs in every community, offering open access mental health services for young people.

■ Mental Health Services: Bournemouth**Tom Hayes:** [\[10301\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase the availability of specialist mental health support in Bournemouth.

Stephen Kinnock:

NHS Dorset Integrated Care Board is responsible for providing health and care services, including specialist mental health support, to meet the needs of the people of Bournemouth.

Nationally we recognise that many people in Bournemouth and across England are not getting the support or care they deserve, which is why we will fix the system to ensure that mental health is given the same attention and focus as physical health, so that people can be confident in accessing high quality mental health support when they need it, wherever they live.

■ Mental Health Services: Buckinghamshire**Callum Anderson:** [\[11430\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve mental health service provision for young people in Buckinghamshire.

Stephen Kinnock:

It is unacceptable that too many children and young people, including in Buckinghamshire, are not receiving the mental health care they need, and we know that waits for mental health services are far too long.

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

Alongside this we are working towards rolling out Young Futures hubs in every community and working with colleagues at NHS England to consider options to deliver our commitment to recruit 8,500 additional mental health workers across both adult, and children and young people's mental health services.

It will be important that these commitments can provide appropriate support for children and young people with a range of mental health needs.

■ Mental Health Services: Recruitment**Josh Newbury:** [\[10840\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase the number of mental health practitioners working in the NHS.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 29 October 2024]: To help address the chronic workforce shortages in the mental health workforce we plan to recruit an additional 8,500 mental health workers across child and adult mental health services, to reduce waiting times and provide faster treatment. We are currently working with colleagues at NHS England to consider options to deliver this commitment.

NHS England is also working to improve the retention of mental health workers through clearer career progression pathways.

■ Mental Health Services: Sheffield Central**Abtisam Mohamed:**[\[11095\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce waiting times for children's mental health services in Sheffield Central constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 1 November 2024]: It is unacceptable that too many children and young people, including in the Sheffield Central constituency, are not receiving the mental health care they need, and we know that waits for mental health services are far too long.

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

Alongside this we are working towards rolling out Young Futures hubs in every community and working with colleagues at the Department for Education and NHS England to consider options to deliver our commitment to recruit 8,500 additional mental health workers across both adult, and children and young people's mental health services.

It will be important that these commitments can provide appropriate support for children and young people with a range of mental health needs.

■ Mental Health Services: Staffordshire**Josh Newbury:**[\[10849\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve mental health services in (a) Cannock Chase constituency and (b) Staffordshire.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 1 November 2024]: People with mental health issues are not getting the support or care they deserve, which is why we will fix the broken system to ensure we give mental health the same attention and focus as physical health.

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

NHS Talking Therapies, such as cognitive behavioural therapy, provide treatment to adults, including in the Cannock Chase constituency and Staffordshire, with common mental health conditions including depression and anxiety. People can self-refer to NHS Talking Therapies services or be referred by their general practitioner.

■ Mental Health Services: Waiting Lists**Tom Hayes:**[\[10300\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce mental health waiting lists.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 24 October 2024]: It is unacceptable that too many people are not receiving the mental health care they need, and we know that waits for mental health services are far too long. That is why we will recruit 8,500 additional mental health workers across both adult, and children and young people's mental health services.

■ Mental Health Services: Wiltshire and Gloucestershire**Dr Roz Savage:**[\[11817\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce delays in response times in mental health services in (a) Wiltshire and (b) Gloucestershire.

Stephen Kinnock:

It is unacceptable that too many people in Wiltshire and Gloucestershire are not receiving the mental health care they need, and we know that waits for mental health services are far too long.

That is why we will recruit 8,500 additional mental health workers nationally across both adult and children and young people's mental health services to improve response times, reduce delays, and provide faster treatment, which will also help ease pressure on busy mental health services.

In addition, people of all ages who are in crisis or who are concerned about a family or loved one can now call 111, select the mental health option, and speak to a trained mental health professional. National Health Service staff can guide callers with next steps such as organising face-to-face community support or facilitating access to

alternative services, like crisis cafés or safe havens, which provide a place for people to stay as an alternative to accident and emergency or a hospital admission.

■ **Mental Health Services: Young People**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[11890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of mental health services available for young people in Slough.

Stephen Kinnock:

NHS Frimley Integrated Care Board is responsible for making adequate and appropriate provision available to meet the mental health and other care needs of children and young people in Slough.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[11891\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve the provision of mental health services for young people in Slough.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 4 November 2024]: It is the responsibility of the NHS Frimley Integrated Care Board to make available appropriate provision to meet the mental health and other care needs of children and young people in Slough.

Nationally, we will recruit 8,500 additional mental health workers across children and adult mental health services to reduce delays and provide faster treatment, which will also help ease pressure on busy children and young people's mental health services.

We will also provide access to specialist mental health professionals in every school in England so that mental health conditions, such as anxiety and depression, can be identified early on and prevented from developing into more serious conditions in later life. We will also roll out open access Young Futures hubs for children and young people in every community. This national network is expected to bring local services together, and deliver support for teenagers at risk of being drawn into crime or facing mental health challenges.

We are currently working with colleagues at NHS England and across Government to consider options to deliver these commitments.

■ **Mental Health: Disadvantaged**

David Williams:

[\[10924\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how the Mental Health Bill will improve mental wellbeing in (a) Stoke-on-Trent North constituency, (b) Kidsgrove and (c) other areas with high rates of socioeconomic deprivation.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 1 November 2024]: The Mental Health Bill announced in the King's Speech will deliver the Government's commitment to modernise the Mental Health

Act 1983, so that it is fit for the modern world. The bill will amend the act, which applies to England and Wales, and sets out the legal rights that apply to people with a mental disorder. This bill does not apply to general mental health services to help individuals with their mental wellbeing. Under this law, a person can be admitted, detained, and treated in hospital for a mental disorder without their consent, if they are posing a risk to themselves or others.

More broadly, the NHS Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Integrated Care Board (ICB) is responsible for providing health and care services to meet the needs of the people of the Stoke on Trent constituency and Kidsgrove, taking into account local considerations. The NHS Mental Health Dashboard shows how National Health Service mental health services are performing, broken down to ICB level, and is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/mental-health-five-year-forward-view-dashboard/>

■ Mpx: Disease Control

Jim Shannon:

[12429]

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

Andrew Gwynne:

There are two distinct types, known as clades, of the Mpx virus, specifically clade I and clade II. The previous significant outbreak in the United Kingdom in 2022 was from clade II. Details of the current National Health Service Mpx vaccination programme are available at the following link:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/mpox/#:~:text=people%20who%27ve%20been%20in,u p%20to%2014%20days%20after>

Clade I is currently classified as a high consequence infectious disease. The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has led extensive planning across the Government and the NHS to deal with Mpx cases in the UK, and will coordinate contact tracing and offer testing and vaccination to contacts as needed.

Four cases of clade I Mpx have been detected in the UK, three of which are household contacts of the first case. All four patients are currently under specialist medical care.

In line with the advice of the Advisory Committee for Dangerous Pathogens, the border response for direct flights from affected countries includes pre-arrival health declarations. Digital messaging is displayed on information screens at 10 international airports in England and the Eurostar terminal, and the UKHSA is meeting flights from affected countries and giving health advice leaflets to passengers and crew.

We are placing a strong emphasis on ensuring that there are high levels of awareness among clinicians about the risks and the actions they need to take. The

UKHSA Returning Workers Scheme for organisations sending workers to outbreak areas also provides pre-travel advice, active monitoring on return, and medical support for symptomatic returnees when necessary. Pre-travel advice for Mpox is publicly available on TravelHealthPro website, which is available at the following link:

<https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/>

The risk to the general population of the UK of being exposed to Mpox clade I is currently considered low.

■ Musculoskeletal Disorders: Health Services

Ayoub Khan:

[12612]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 October 2024, HC 295, how much and what proportion of the additional funding for the NHS will be spent on support for people with (a) arthritis and (b) other musculoskeletal conditions.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Government recognises the importance of improving health for the 20 million people in the United Kingdom who live with a musculoskeletal condition. This forms a key part of the Government's mission to build a National Health Service fit for the future.

Financial allocations will be confirmed through NHS Planning Guidance. In the meantime, we are working with NHS England and other stakeholders to explore options to increase access to, and improve support for, those living with arthritis and musculoskeletal conditions.

We will publish a 10-Year Health Plan for the NHS in the spring which will focus on increasing productivity and ensuring that every pound of taxpayer money is spent wisely, by reforming how healthcare is delivered.

Ayoub Khan:

[12613]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 October 2024, HC 295, how much and what proportion of the additional funding for the NHS will be spent on (a) physiotherapy and (b) other community services for people with musculoskeletal conditions.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Government recognises the importance of improving health for the 20 million people in the United Kingdom who live with musculoskeletal condition. This forms a key part of the Government's mission to build a National Health Service fit for the future.

Financial allocations will be confirmed through NHS Planning Guidance. In the meantime, we are working with NHS England and other stakeholders to explore options to increase access to, and improve support for, those living with arthritis and musculoskeletal conditions.

We will publish a 10-Year Health Plan for the NHS in the spring which will focus on increasing productivity and ensuring that every pound of taxpayer money is spent wisely, by reforming how healthcare is delivered.

Dr Beccy Cooper:

[12647]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to provide additional support for people with (a) arthritis and (b) musculoskeletal conditions.

Andrew Gwynne:

Services for those with musculoskeletal (MSK) conditions, including arthritis, are commissioned locally by integrated care boards (ICBs). The Department expects MSK services and fragility fracture to be fully incorporated into integrated care system planning and decision-making.

At a national level, NHS England is working to improve the diagnosis, treatment, and care of patients with MSK conditions, such as arthritis, and increase support for patients with arthritis through its Getting It Right First Time rheumatology programme. In January 2023, NHS England also published an improvement framework to reduce community MSK waits while delivering the best outcomes and experience. This supports integrated care systems to improve timely access to commissioned MSK triage and therapy services.

To support health and care professionals in the early diagnosis and management of rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis, and in the provision of services for people living with arthritis, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence has published expert guidance for rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis, with further information on the two available, respectively, at the following two links:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng100>

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng226>

The Department funds research into MSK conditions, including arthritis, through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). Through the NIHR, the Department spent approximately £26.3 million on MSK research in 2023/24 and £79.2 million since 2019/20. Six NIHR Biomedical Research Centres have MSK conditions as a research theme. In particular, the Leeds Biomedical Research Centre aims to improve treatment for osteoarthritis. The NIHR, in collaboration with Versus Arthritis, also funds a dedicated UK Musculoskeletal Translational Research Collaboration, aligning investment in MSK translational research, and creating a United Kingdom-wide ambition and focus to drive cutting edge research and improve outcomes for patients.

Dr Beccy Cooper:

[12648]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to provide additional funding to (a) community musculoskeletal services and (b) physiotherapy.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Government recognises the importance of improving health for the 20 million people in the United Kingdom who live with a musculoskeletal condition. This forms a key part of the Government's mission to build a National Health Service fit for the future.

Financial allocations will be confirmed through NHS Planning Guidance. In the meantime, we are working with NHS England and other stakeholders to explore options to increase access to, and improve support for, those living with arthritis and musculoskeletal conditions.

We will publish a 10-Year Health Plan for the NHS in the spring which will focus on increasing productivity and ensuring that every pound of taxpayer money is spent wisely, by reforming how healthcare is delivered.

■ NHS: Health Services**Alicia Kearns:**[\[12568\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that patient (a) experience and (b) voice is reflected in the NHS 10-year plan.

Andrew Gwynne:

As the Government works to fix the National Health Service, the public must begin to feel the difference in their daily lives. That is why, as part of the engagement exercise to support the development of the 10-Year Health Plan, there will be lots of easy ways for the public to express their views, with face-to-face events in every region, local conversations, and an online portal.

Working with Thinks Insight, integrated care systems, and the voluntary, community, and social enterprise sector, we will seek to reach demographics and communities who may experience barriers to being involved.

This will be the biggest conversation in the NHS's history. We want to hear from a wide range of individuals, including the experiences of patients, carers, and health and care workers. We have ambitious plans to engage across the country, and want as many people as possible to share their views.

■ NHS: Negligence**Charlotte Nichols:**[\[12586\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what level of indemnity is required for each NHS job category.

Andrew Gwynne:

All regulated healthcare professionals in the United Kingdom are legally required to hold appropriate clinical negligence cover for the costs of claims and damages awarded to patients. This is set out under Section 44 of the Medical Act 1983.

Most staff at National Health Service trusts and NHS general practices in England and Wales benefit from state indemnity, in respect of NHS clinical negligence. These

state indemnity schemes are the Clinical Negligence Scheme for Trusts, the Clinical Negligence Scheme for General Practice, and the Existing Liabilities Scheme For General Practice, with further information about all three schemes available, respectively, at the following three links:

<https://resolution.nhs.uk/services/claims-management/clinical-schemes/clinical-negligence-scheme-for-trusts/>

<https://resolution.nhs.uk/services/claims-management/clinical-schemes/general-practice-indemnity/clinical-negligence-scheme-for-general-practice/>

<https://resolution.nhs.uk/services/claims-management/clinical-schemes/general-practice-indemnity/existing-liabilities-scheme-for-general-practice/>

Clinical negligence claims under these schemes are administered by NHS Resolution on behalf of the Government. Where regulated healthcare professionals undertake work not covered by a state scheme, for instance doctors working in private practice, dentists, and general practitioners in Scotland and Northern Ireland, they must purchase their own cover.

■ Palliative Care: South Basildon and East Thurrock

James McMurdock:

[11818]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve palliative and end of life care in South Basildon and East Thurrock constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

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

NHS England has also developed a palliative and end of life care dashboard, which brings together all relevant local data in one place. The dashboard helps commissioners understand the palliative and end of life care needs of those their local population, thereby enabling ICBs to put plans in place to address and track the improvement of health inequalities.

I recently met NHS England and discussions have begun on how to reduce inequalities and variation in access to, and the quality of, palliative and end of life care. We are also in active discussions with NHS England about maintaining the £25 million of annual funding for children and young people's hospices in 2025/26, with further information to follow in due course.

Additionally, we have committed to develop a 10-year plan, to deliver a National Health Service fit for the future, as part of which we will carefully be considering policies, including those that impact people with palliative and end of life care needs, with input from the public, patients, health staff, and our stakeholders as we develop

the plan. More information about how they can input into the 10 Year Health Plan is available at the following link:

<http://change.nhs.uk>

■ Pharmacy

Dr Neil Shastri-Hurst:

[11510]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help community pharmacies with (a) funding, (b) workforce and (c) supply of medicines.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Government is committed to expanding the pharmacy workforce and better utilising the skills of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians. That includes making prescribing part of the services delivered by community pharmacists, as we shift care from the hospital to the community.

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

Now that the budget for the Government has been set, we will shortly be resuming our consultation with Community Pharmacy England regarding the funding arrangements for 2024/25. We are unable to say more until these have been concluded.

■ Pharmacy: Boston and Skegness

Richard Tice:

[11775]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will (a) increase funding for community pharmacies in Boston and Skegness constituency and (b) provide additional support to encourage such pharmacies to take on more responsibilities in (i) patient care and (ii) urgent health advice.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Government is committed to expanding the role of pharmacies and better utilising the skills of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians. That includes making prescribing part of the services delivered by community pharmacists, as we shift care from hospitals into the community.

Now that the budget for Government has been set, we will shortly be resuming our consultation with Community Pharmacy England regarding the funding arrangements for 2024/25. We are unable to say more until these have been concluded.

■ Primary Health Care: Pharmacy**Edward Morello:** [\[11215\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support community pharmacies in providing primary healthcare consultations.

Edward Morello: [\[11472\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of increasing the amount of funding provided to community pharmacies for delivering primary healthcare services.

Stephen Kinnock:

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

Now that the budget for Government has been set, we will shortly be resuming our consultation with Community Pharmacy England regarding the funding arrangements for 2024/25. We are unable to say more until these have been concluded.

■ Radioisotopes: Northern Ireland**Sorcha Eastwood:** [\[12022\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking with his Northern Irish counterpart to ensure that radioisotopes are distributed to areas most in need.

Karin Smyth:

The Department has been working hard with industry to help resolve the shortages of radioisotopes, which are affecting the United Kingdom and other countries around the world. The affected radioisotopes are mainly used for diagnosing cancers, including prostate and breast cancer, and are also used for the imaging of organ function in scans, including for the heart. Despite efforts to limit the impact, there will be delays for some patients accessing services which rely on this affected radioisotope, with potential cancellations. In the most urgent cases patients will be prioritised for care while supplies are limited. Patients may also be offered the necessary treatment at another hospital.

The Department is working in close partnership with National Health Service specialists from across the UK, suppliers, the British Nuclear Medicine Society, UK Radiopharmacy Group, and the devolved administrations, including Northern Ireland, to ensure that critical patients are prioritised and the limited supply is shared equitably between hospitals and trusts across the UK.

The Department has worked with specialist clinicians to develop comprehensive management advice for NHS clinicians across the UK on how to manage and prioritise patients affected by these shortages. The guidance covers actions for health

boards in the devolved nations, including on the coordination of mutual aid arrangements and escalation routes where issues are identified.

■ Smoking: Health Services

Rachael Maskell:

[\[12436\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will help ensure that smoking cessation is offered as an opt-out, co-located service for lung screening appointments.

Andrew Gwynne:

The NHS Lung Cancer Screening programme's standard protocol includes a mandatory referral to smoking cessation services for all current smokers invited to the programme.

The Government is providing £70 million of additional funding this year to support local authorities to increase the provision of local stop smoking services, which will support improved referral pathways and integrated working.

■ Social Services

Dr Allison Gardner:

[\[11535\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress his Department has made on the creation of a National Care Service.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 4 November 2024]: The Government is committed to building consensus on the long-term reform needed to create a National Care Service, including by engaging cross-party and with people who draw on care and support.

Alongside our plan for health, we will create a 10-year plan for social care which recognises the importance of social care in its own right, as well as its role in the success of the National Health Service. On 10 October, we took a critical step by introducing legislation to establish the first ever Fair Pay Agreement for care professionals to ensure care workers are recognised and fairly rewarded for the important work they do.

To stabilise the system in the short term, we are providing at least £600 million of new grant funding for social care to support local authorities. This is part of a broader real-terms uplift to core local government spending power of approximately 3.2%.

■ Social Services: Finance

Helen Morgan:

[\[12187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to paragraph 2.72 of the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 October 2024, HC 295, whether the £600 million for social care is in addition to Accelerating Reform Fund money yet to be released to councils.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 5 November 2024]: The Budget announced that the Government is providing at least £600 million of new grant funding for social care in 2025/26, as part of the broader estimated real-terms uplift to core local government spending power of approximately 3.2%. To support our unpaid carers, from April 2025, the Government will also increase the Carer's Allowance weekly earnings limit from £151 a week to £196, which is the equivalent of 16 hours at the National Living Wage.

The funding announced at the budget for 2025/26 is distinct from the £22.6 million intended to support the Accelerating Reform Fund in 24/25.

Special Educational Needs**Samantha Niblett:**[\[11780\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the availability of appropriate SEND educational placements with care support.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 5 November 2024]: As announced by my Rt Hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer in last week's budget, this Government are committed to reforming special educational needs provision, and we recognise the importance of improving outcomes for our most vulnerable children.

My Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care regularly engages in conversations with Cabinet colleagues on a range of issues.

Vaccination: Regulation**Kate Osamor:**[\[12089\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to regulate the provision of injections of (a) dermal fillers and (b) weight-loss medications.

Karin Smyth:

The majority of the medicines that can be used for weight management, including injectable medicines containing liraglutide, semaglutide, and tirzepatide, are prescription only medicines. They cannot be advertised, including through social media, to the general public or supplied without a valid prescription. The Human Medicines Regulations 2012 (HMR) tightly regulate the manufacture, sale, and supply of such products.

Through its dedicated Criminal Enforcement Unit, the Medicine and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) works with partners to enforce the HMR and to disrupt the illegal trade in weight loss and other medicines. Selling or supplying weight loss medicines without a prescription is a criminal offence, and the MHRA takes robust and proportionate enforcement action where non-compliance is identified, including prosecution where appropriate.

The Government is currently exploring what steps may need to be taken regarding the safety of the cosmetics sector, including in relation to the provision of dermal filler and weight loss injections for cosmetic purposes. The Government will set out its position at the earliest opportunity.

■ **Veterans: Fireworks**

Neil Duncan-Jordan:

[\[12016\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment with Cabinet colleagues of the potential impact of fireworks on veterans (a) with PTSD and (b) experiencing other war-related mental health trauma.

Stephen Kinnock:

No assessment has been made of the potential impact of fireworks on veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder or any other mental health condition.

Recognising the particular challenges that veterans face, NHS England has commissioned several services for veterans, including Op COURAGE, the bespoke integrated veterans' mental health and wellbeing service. The services provide a fully integrated mental health care pathway, including personalised care plans, to ensure veterans can access support and treatment both in and out of hours.

Op COURAGE is available across England. Individuals can contact the service to make an appointment or ask someone to do this on their behalf. Further information is available at the following link:

<https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/armed-forces-community/mental-health/veterans-reservists/>

HOME OFFICE

■ **Abortion: Clinics**

Paula Barker:

[\[12214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with police forces on how to effectively enforce the law in respect to buffer zones around abortion clinics.

Jess Phillips:

The Crown Prosecution Service published guidance on 31 October 2024, alongside further information from the College of Policing, setting out how the police and prosecutors should approach enforcing the new offence.

■ **Animal Breeding: Animal Welfare**

Alex Mayer:

[\[12522\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to (a) regulate and (b) monitor (i) MBR Acres and (ii) other breeding facilities to ensure compliance with animal welfare standards.

Dan Jarvis:

The Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 (ASPA) provides protections for animals bred in the UK for use in scientific procedures. All establishments licenced to breed protected animals under ASPA are required to comply with the published Code of Practice, which sets out standards for the appropriate care and accommodation of animals, including dogs.

The Animals in Science Regulation Unit conducts both announced and unannounced audits to ensure establishments compliance with the terms of their licences, the Code of Practice and with ASPA.

■ **Asylum: Finance****Rupert Lowe:**[\[12166\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the cost of Aspen cards was to the public purse in each of the last five years.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Home Office has a statutory obligation to provide accommodation and other support to asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute.

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/121666/2023-24-annual-report-and-accounts).

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

■ **Asylum: MOD Wethersfield****Priti Patel:**[\[12056\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department plans to continue to use the Wethersfield site to provide accommodation for asylum seekers.

Priti Patel:[\[12057\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate her Department has made of the number of asylum seekers who will be accommodated at Wethersfield in (a) 2024 and (b) each of the next five years.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The government inherited an asylum system under unprecedented strain. We have taken immediate action to restart asylum processing which will save an estimated £7 billion for the taxpayer over the next ten years, and are delivering a major uplift in returns to remove people with no right to be in the UK. Over the long term this will reduce our reliance on hotels and costs of accommodation.

Occupancy at the Wethersfield site is currently capped at 580 as part of the Special Development Order. This means that during current operation of the site, the population will not exceed 580.

Once the relevant Special Development Order conditions have been discharged, regular occupancy will be capped at 800.

The number of residents on the site at any one time is likely to vary due to a number of factors, including individuals having moved to onward dispersed accommodation while their claims are being considered.

Priti Patel: [12058]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate her Department has made of the cost of operating the Wethersfield site for asylum accommodation in each of the next five years.

Priti Patel: [12059]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the (a) average and (b) total cost of financial support provided to asylum seekers at the Wethersfield site was in the last 12 months.

Dame Angela Eagle:

Cost information is prospective and commercially sensitive, and as such is not available to be released.

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/131422/2023-24-annual-report-and-accounts.pdf). It does not publish a breakdown of statistics which disaggregates asylum accommodation costs by type or location.

Asylum seekers who are resident in accommodation where meals are provided, such as Wethersfield, are in receipt of 8.86 per week. Further details about support asylum seekers may be entitled to can be found at [Asylum support: What you'll get - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/131422/2023-24-annual-report-and-accounts.pdf).

■ **British Nationality: English Language**

Abtisam Mohamed: [12225]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, which levels of study the Future opportunity Market testing for Home Office English Language Testing (HOELT) services, notice reference: 2024/S 000-027422, published on 28 August 2024, applies to.

Seema Malhotra:

The new service will cover the policies in place across all visa routes where there is a requirement for language ability to be tested as part of the visa application process.

■ **Home Office: Official Cars**

Charlie Dewhirst: [11966]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 14 October 2024 to Question 7022 on Home Office: Official Cars, how many of those vehicles are electric.

Dame Diana Johnson:

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:**[11967]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 14 October 2024 to Question 7022 on Home Office: Official Cars, if she will publish a list of senior officials with access to a government car.

Dame Diana Johnson:

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.

■ Police: Injuries**Suella Braverman:****[12128]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what data her Department holds on the number of police officers that are restricted from active duty due to (a) physical and (b) psychological injury; and if she will make an estimate of the average period of time that officers have been on (i) long-term sick leave and (ii) restricted duties in each of the last five years.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Home Office collects and publishes data annually on the number of police officers on recuperative duties (duties falling short of full deployment, undertaken by a police officer following an injury, accident, illness or medical incident), and those on long-term sick absence (that have lasted for more than 28 calendar days), as at 31 March each year in the 'Police Workforce, England and Wales' statistical bulletin which can be accessed here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/police-workforce-england-and-wales>.

Information on long-term sick absences each year as at 31 March 2007 to 2024, can be found in the 'Absences Open Data Table' here:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64ba613a2059dc00125d2782/open-data-table-police-workforce-absence-260723.ods>.

Information on the number of police officers on recuperative duties each year as at 31 March 2016 to 2024, can be found in the 'Limited Duties Open Data Table' here:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/669fb849a3c2a28abb50d546/open-data-table-police-workforce-limited-duties-240724.ods>.

The Home Office does not collect data on the specific length of time a police officer has been on long-term absence or recuperative duties.

The Home Office does not collect data on the reason for recuperative duties. As such it is not possible to separately determine the number of police officers on restrictive duties due to physical and psychological injury.

■ Police: Retirement

Suella Braverman:

[12127]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many police officers have medically retired from active duty due to (a) physical and (b) psychological (i) injury and (ii) trauma in the last five years.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Home Office collects and publishes data annually on the number of police officers leaving the police service in the 'Police Workforce, England and Wales' statistical bulletin which can be accessed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/police-workforce-england-and-wales>.

Information on the number of police officers leaving via medical retirement, between the years ending 31 March 2007 to 2024, can be found in the 'Leavers Open Data Table' here:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/669a917cce1fd0da7b59294f/open-data-table-police-workforce-leavers-240724.ods>

The Home Office does not collect data on the specific reason for medical retirement.

■ Prostitution: Gower

Tonia Antoniazzi:

[12093]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to reduce Commercial Sexual Exploitation in Gower.

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 of the levers available to us to deliver this.

The Government is working closely with law enforcement to tackle the drivers of trafficking for sexual exploitation, including through operational intensifications to target perpetrators, and we are working closely with the voluntary and community sector to help victims. 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 Gower. However, between January and June 2024, there were 7 potential victims of modern slavery referred to the NRM who reported (either part or whole) sexual exploitation which was disclosed as occurring in West Glamorgan.

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.

In addition, the Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract provides support to adult potential and confirmed victims of modern slavery in England and Wales. This support includes a support worker to help them access support services, including medical treatment, legal aid, legal representatives, and legal advice.

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

■ Refugees: Palestinians

Imran Hussain:

[\[11872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of establishing a legal pathway for Palestinian children in Gaza to travel to the UK to receive medical treatment.

Seema Malhotra:

The Government is determined to secure a ceasefire in Gaza and rapidly increase aid, ensuring humanitarian support is reaching people there. We have been assisting British nationals and other eligible people to leave Gaza, liaising closely with the Israeli and Egyptian authorities.

There are provisions that allow Palestinians to come to the UK for Private Medical Treatment under the Immigration Rules. Where a relevant application is made consideration will be given to exceptional circumstances or where there are compelling or compassionate grounds. The government is keeping all existing visa pathways under review in response to events in Gaza.

Israel should engage with its partners to urgently establish sustained, safe and timely passage for patients who need medical or surgical interventions not available in Gaza.

The UK is supporting the provision of essential healthcare to civilians in Gaza, including support to UK-Med for operating their field hospitals. On 16 October, Minister Falconer announced £1m for WHO Egypt to help Egypt's Ministry of Health support medically evacuated civilians from Gaza who are receiving care in Egypt.

It should be noted that the World Health Organisation (WHO) position is that people who are medically evacuated should stay as close to home as possible, so that they remain amongst those who are more likely to understand their language and culture, and so that their return home, when ready, is easier.

■ Shoplifting: Criminal Investigation

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[12030\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions she has had with the Metropolitan Police on investigating shoplifting offences where the value of goods stolen is less than £200.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Shoplifting is a damaging crime, which soared under the previous government, and we are determined to remove any perception that offenders will escape punishment.

To that end, this Government will end the effective immunity, introduced by the previous Government, granted to shoplifting of goods under £200.

This Government regularly engages with National Police Chiefs' Council retail crime leads, ensuring effective collaboration to help combat retail crime.

Operational commitments were made by the police in its October 2023 [Retail Crime Action Plan](#). The plan contains a commitment for police across England and Wales to prioritise attendance where violence has been used towards shop staff, where an offender has been detained by store security, and where evidence needs to be secured by police personnel.

This Government will also introduce a new offence of assaulting a retail worker to protect the hardworking and dedicated staff that work in stores.

■ Stalking

Luke Taylor:

[\[12163\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure police officers are more able to (a) identify and (b) respond to stalking crimes.

Luke Taylor:

[\[12164\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to improve support to victims of stalking.

Dame Diana Johnson:

This Government is fully committed to tackling stalking as part of our ambition to halve violence against women and girls in a decade.

Achieving this will require a dramatic improvement in the policing and criminal justice response to these crimes, including stalking. Improving the police and wider criminal justice response and sustained support for victims.

To start that work, we have committed to giving women the right to know the identity of online stalkers and to strengthening the use of Stalking Protection Orders, and will set out further action on stalking in the coming weeks.

In addition, to help ensure support for victims, the Home Office part-funds the National Stalking Helpline, run by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust.

■ Undocumented Migrants: English Channel**Priti Patel:** [\[12060\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate her Department has made of the number of small boat arrivals there will be by the end of (a) 2024 and (b) 2025.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Home Office does not make estimates of this kind.

■ Visas: Palestinians**Imran Hussain:** [\[11870\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a visa scheme to enable displaced Palestinians living in (a) Gaza, (b) Egypt and (c) other countries to be reunited with family members in the UK.

Seema Malhotra:

The Government is determined to secure a ceasefire in Gaza and rapidly increase aid, ensuring humanitarian support is reaching people there.

The government is keeping existing visa pathways under review in response to events. Palestinian nationals who wish to come to the UK can do so via the existing range of visa routes available.

Our embassy staff are ready to provide support as appropriate. They continue to support British nationals and other eligible persons who have exited Gaza to access the necessary medical, consular and administrative support.

Any application for a UK visa will be assessed against the requirements of the Immigration Rules. Immediate family members of British citizens and those settled in the UK who wish to come and live in the UK can apply under one of the existing family visa routes.

There are also routes available for dependants of those who are in the UK on most work routes and certain postgraduate student routes.

Individuals with protection status or settlement on a protection route may sponsor their partner or child (under 18), to join or stay with them in the UK, providing they formed part of the pre-flight family unit before the sponsor fled their country to seek protection.

Where a relevant application is made, consideration will be given to compelling compassionate factors that are raised.

Imran Hussain:[\[11871\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of increasing the resources available to process family visa applications from British-Palestinians.

Seema Malhotra:

The Government is assisting British nationals to leave Gaza. The FCDO is also providing consular assistance to those with British nationality, or dual nationality including British, who are in Gaza or who have left Gaza to a third country. Dual national British-Palestinians are not required to make a visa application as they have the right of abode in the UK.

Our embassy staff are ready to provide support as appropriate. They continue to support British nationals and other eligible persons who have exited Gaza to access the necessary medical, consular and administrative support.

Immediate family members of British nationals and those settled in the UK who wish to come and live in the UK can apply under one of the existing family visa routes.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**■ Affordable Housing****Liam Conlon:**[\[11993\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will take steps to introduce regulatory reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework to help deliver affordable homes in (a) Beckenham and Penge constituency and (b) England.

Matthew Pennycook:

I refer my Hon Friend to the answer I gave to Question UIN [11383](#) on 31 October 2024.

■ Asylum: Housing**David Simmonds:**[\[11929\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what obligations local authorities have to house (a) asylum seekers and (b) refugees not covered by Government funded accommodation.

Rushanara Ali:

I refer the hon Member to the answer given to Question UIN [10286](#) on 29 October 2024.

Individuals granted refugee status are eligible for assistance from their local authority in finding accommodation, if homeless, as well as temporary accommodation if they have a priority need. The Homelessness Code of Guidance sets out the framework

which local authorities must follow when carrying out their homelessness duties. See: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities>.

■ Council Tax: Greater London

David Simmonds:

[11925]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to paragraph 2.81 of Autumn Budget 2024, HC 295, what the assumptions are on the increase in the percentage Band D level of the (a) social care, (b) police, (c) fire and (d) Greater London Authority precepts in 2025-26 as part of the estimate of the increase in local government core spending power.

Jim McMahon:

Local government core spending power (CSP) is £64,786m in 2024-25, and is forecast to be £68,459m in 2025-26.

These figures for CSP are estimates and subject to data changes. Final figures will be published as part of the 2025-26 Local Government Finance Settlement (LGFS). Components of CSP will be confirmed in the 2025-26 LGFS, including council tax referendum principles.

■ Employers' Contributions: Local Government

Priti Patel:

[11851]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of changes to employer National Insurance contributions on (a) local government salary related costs and (b) local government third party spend costs.

Jim McMahon:

We have announced £1.3 billion of new grant funding in 2025/26 for local government to deliver core services, of which at least £600 million is for social care.

The Government has committed to provide support for departments and other public sector employers for additional employer NICs costs. This applies to those directly employed by the public sector, including local government.

■ Households: Single People

John Glen:

[12084]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will ask the Office for National Statistics to publish data on the number and proportion of households that have only one adult in each local authority.

Jim McMahon:

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) is responsible for collating and publishing official statistics and performs this function independent of the Government.

The ONS have published data on household composition at local authority level from the 2021 Census. This can be found here: [Household composition - Office for National Statistics](#).

■ Housing: Older People

Lee Anderson:

[\[12110\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department plans to take to provide safe and affordable (a) assisted living facilities and (b) other housing options for elderly citizens.

Matthew Pennycook:

The government has committed to building 1.5 million new homes in this parliament, including housing for older people.

At the Budget on 30 October, the Chancellor set out details of an immediate one-year cash injection of £500 million to top up the existing Affordable Homes Programme which will deliver up to 5,000 new social and affordable homes. This comes ahead of the multi-year Spending Review next spring, where the Government will set out details of new investment to succeed the 2021-26 Affordable Homes Programme, including assisted living and housing for older people.

In our recent consultation on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework, we proposed policy changes to deliver more mixed tenure development including housing designed for specific groups such as older people. 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.

The government provides funding for the Disabled Facilities Grant, a capital grant administered by local authorities that can help pay the cost of adapting eligible disabled and older people's homes, regardless of tenure, to allow them to live safely and independently. Local authorities have a statutory duty to provide adaptations for people who satisfy a needs assessment, eligibility criteria and a means test. An additional £86 million for the DFG for 2025-26 was announced in the Budget, bringing the total to £711 million.

The last government appointed an independent Older People's Housing Taskforce to look at options for the provision of greater choice, quality and security of housing for older people. We intend to provide an update in relation to the Older People's Housing Taskforce report in due course.

Rebecca Smith:

[\[12221\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when she plans to publish the report of the Older People's Housing Taskforce.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government will provide an update in relation to the Older People's Housing Taskforce report in due course.

Local Government: Reorganisation**David Simmonds:**[\[11926\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to paragraph 2.98 of the Autumn Budget 2024, HC 295, published on 30 October 2024, what her policy is on whether local authorities will (a) be selected by her Department or (b) volunteer to work with her Department to create simpler organisational structures.

Jim McMahon:

The Government has now been clear on its long term vision for simpler local government structures so councils are the right size and shape to deliver citizen-focused services for their communities. We have heard from councils that unitarisation can be a positive way to increase sustainability and resilience of local government and want to work in partnership with local leaders to support them to achieve these objectives. Further detail will follow in the English Devolution White Paper, to be published shortly.

London Councils**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[12032\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to meet with the Chief Executive of London Councils in the next 12 months.

Jim McMahon:

I am clear that resetting the relationship with local government is a priority. I was pleased to be joined at the Leader's Council meeting two weeks ago by the Chair of London Councils, Cllr Claire Holland, alongside colleagues from across local government. My department, both ministers and officials, regularly meet with senior leaders from across local government, including London Councils.

Property Ombudsman: Standards**Ben Coleman:**[\[12172\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what information her Department holds on the average time taken by the Property Ombudsman to reach a decision on complaints.

Ben Coleman:[\[12173\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what information her Department holds on how many and what proportion of complaints to the Property Ombudsman have been outstanding for three months or more.

Ben Coleman:[\[12174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will hold discussions with the Property Ombudsman on potential measures to enable the Ombudsman to respond more quickly to complaints.

Matthew Pennycook:

While the Property Ombudsman (TPO) is independent of Government, we are committed to ensuring that the agent redress schemes work well for consumers. My department receives regular data from TPO and meets with them regularly to discuss policy and performance. These arrangements provide an opportunity for discussion of emerging concerns and measures TPO are taking - and plan to take - to improve their service. From the point at which a complaint has been accepted for review and allocated, it can take between 16-18 weeks for a review to be completed. The time taken to reach a decision is generally dependent on the complexity of the complaint.

■ Right to Buy Scheme**David Simmonds:**[\[11928\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to paragraph 5.149 of the Autumn Budget 2024, HC 295 published on 30 October 2024, what the new Right to Buy discount rates are; and if she will make a comparative assessment of the adequacy of these rates compared to the previous regime.

Matthew Pennycook:

As announced in the Autumn Budget and in accordance with our manifesto commitment, the Government reviewed the increased Right to Buy discounts introduced in 2012 and determined to reduce the maximum cash discounts to between £16,000 and £38,000. The level of discount available will depend on where a tenant lives. The review of Right to Buy discounts was published alongside the Budget and can be found on gov.uk [here](#). Secondary legislation to reduce the maximum cash discounts was laid in Parliament on 30 October and is intended to come into force on 21 November.

■ Social Rented Housing: Construction**Paula Barker:**[\[12217\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many social houses will be built by housing associations with Government support in the next 12 months.

Matthew Pennycook:

I refer my Hon Friend to the answer I gave to Question UIN [11383](#) on 31 October 2024. The Government supports housing associations and local authorities to build new social and affordable housing through the Affordable Homes Programme. We do not set annual targets for the programme.

■ Social Rented Housing: Pets**Carla Lockhart:****[12159]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of introducing a right of tenants in social housing to keep a pet.

Matthew Pennycook:

Many social landlords set out their pet policies in their tenancy agreements and will allow tenants to keep pets where it is appropriate to do so. Consideration is given to whether the pets can be well looked after and any adverse effects on the lives of neighbours and those living nearby. We encourage all social landlords to adopt similar policies. The circumstances in which pets may be kept is, however, for social landlords to determine locally, taking account of the views of their tenants.

■ Social Services: Finance**Priti Patel:****[11850]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to (a) continue the Adult Social Care Precept and (b) amend the Council Tax referendum limit.

Jim McMahon:

The Government is committed to keeping taxes on working people as low as possible. Decisions of the future of local authority funding are a matter for the Local Government Finance Settlement which will report in the coming months.

JUSTICE**■ Shoplifting: Great Yarmouth****Rupert Lowe:****[11955]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many shoplifting convictions there were by the nationality of the offender in Great Yarmouth constituency in each of the last five years.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The Ministry of Justice publishes information on the number of defendants convicted for shoplifting offences by Police Force Area in each of the last five years in the Outcomes by Offences data tool, that can be downloaded from the Criminal Justice Statistics landing page here: [Criminal Justice System statistics quarterly: December 2023 - GOV.UK](#).

However, it is not possible to identify an offender's nationality from the centrally collated convictions data. This information may be held on court records but to examine individual court records would be of disproportionate costs.

■ Theft: Criminal Proceedings

Rupert Lowe:

[\[12192\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will make an estimate of the average time taken for theft cases to be processed through the courts in each year since 2019.

Heidi Alexander:

The Ministry of Justice publishes information on the average duration for various stages of the criminal justice system for defendants by offence group, including theft, from 2014 to 2023 (latest available) in the 'End-to-end timeliness tool' as part of [Criminal Court Statistics Quarterly](#).

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

■ Animal Experiments

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[12045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether his Department is taking steps to help support the transition from animal testing to new approach methodologies.

Feryal Clark:

The Government is committed to supporting the uptake and development of alternative methods to the use of animals in science. The Labour Manifesto includes a commitment to “partner with scientists, industry, and civil society as we work towards the phasing out of animal testing”, which is a long-term goal.

We recognise that any work to phase out animal testing and support the transition to new approach methodologies must be science-led and in lock step with partners.

■ Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Official Cars

Charlie Dewhirst:

[\[11968\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, pursuant to the Answer of 14 October 2024 to Question 7010 on Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Official Cars, how many of those vehicles are electric.

Charlie Dewhirst:

[\[11969\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, pursuant to the Answer of 15 October 2024 to Question 7011 on Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Official Cars, if she will publish a list of senior officials in his Department with access to a government car; and whether those officials had access to a government car before the general election.

Feryal Clark:

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.

■ **Digital Technology: Disadvantaged**

Adrian Ramsay: [\[11990\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, pursuant to the Answer of 14 October 2024 to Question 7064 on Digital Technology: Disadvantaged, whether he plans to update the digital inclusion strategy.

Chris Bryant:

Yes, because digital inclusion is a priority for the Government and we have already set up the Digital Inclusion and Skills Unit (DISU) to address it.

■ **New Businesses: Finance**

Chi Onwurah: [\[11883\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to paragraph 3.70 of the Autumn Budget 2024, HC 295, published on 30 October 2024, what funding his Department has allocated to extend the Innovation Accelerators programme.

Feryal Clark:

The Government will extend the Innovation Accelerators pilot for a year to continue to bolster high-potential innovation clusters in the Glasgow City Region, Greater Manchester and the West Midlands. We will announce further details on the allocation of the R&D budget in due course.

■ **NHS: Digital Technology**

Adrian Ramsay: [\[11979\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on ensuring that people who (a) cannot and (b) choose not to be online are not excluded by the NHS's planned transition from analogue to digital.

Chris Bryant:

Digital inclusion is a priority for Government. It means ensuring everyone has the access, skills, support and confidence to engage in our modern digital society, whatever their circumstances. We understand, however, that some people will remain offline by choice, and that alternative, accessible pathways to access public services need to be readily available and advertised. We are working across government departments to develop our approach on tackling digital exclusion, including colleagues at DHSC and NHS England.

■ Public Sector

Adrian Ramsay:

[\[11980\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether the Government has issued guidance to local authorities on providing offline options for people to access public services.

Chris Bryant:

We have not done so as yet, but digital inclusion is a priority for the Government and we understand that some people will remain offline by choice, so alternative, accessible pathways need to be readily available and advertised. We are developing our approach on digital inclusion and will be working closely with the third sector, industry and local authorities.

TRANSPORT

■ A120: Repairs and Maintenance

Priti Patel:

[\[11847\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will provide funding for the A120 dual carriageway scheme.

Lilian Greenwood:

The A120 Braintree to A12 dualling scheme is part of the pipeline of projects being considered for possible delivery as part of a future Road Investment Strategy beyond 2030.

■ Bus Services: Community Transport

Kevin Hollinrake:

[\[12096\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the Better Buses Bill on connectivity in (a) rural and (b) underserved areas; and whether she plans to allow community transport schemes to participate in the enhanced bus services framework under the Bill.

Simon Lightwood:

As announced in the King's Speech on 17 July 2024, the government will introduce a Buses Bill later this parliamentary session, which will put decision-making into the hands of local leaders, including in rural areas right across England. The Bill will seek to give local areas the choice of pursuing bus franchising, high quality partnerships with the private sector, or local authority owned bus companies. This will allow local areas to determine how best to design their bus services so that they have control over routes and schedules to ensure they reflect the needs of the communities they serve, including considering how community transport services, alongside regular stopping services, can improve the experience for bus passengers. The Bus Services

Act 2017 requires that community transport operators are consulted as part of the franchising process.

■ Department for Transport: Official Cars

Charlie Dewhirst: [\[11972\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answers of 14 October 2024 to Questions 7031 and 7032 on Department for Transport: Official Cars, which senior officials in her Department have access to a government car; and whether those officials had that access before the general election.

Mike Kane:

The Government Car Service (GCS) offers vehicles to government departments as a shared resource. Each department independently determines the allocation of these vehicles.

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

There has been no change in this policy since the general election.

■ Driving Licences: Digital Technology

Jake Richards: [\[12490\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress she has made on the introduction of digital drivers licences.

Lilian Greenwood:

In September, the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) introduced a digital representation of the photocard driving licence as the latest enhancement to its Driver and Vehicle Account.

The DVLA is in the process of introducing functionality which will enable customers to obtain a QR code to allow them to share information from their driving licence with third parties within the Driver and Vehicle Account in addition to the Share Driving Licence service.

Discussions continue on future developments in the area of digital driving licences.

■ Driving Licences: Foreign Nationals

Sir John Hayes: [\[12358\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 29 October 2024 to Question 10405 on Driving Licences: Foreign Nationals, if she will hold discussions with the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency on the potential merits of recording statistics on the nationality of newly qualified driving licence holders.

Lilian Greenwood:

As information on nationality is not required for driving licence purposes, there are no plans for the Driver and Vehicle Agency to record this data for newly qualified drivers.

■ Driving Tests: Essex and Greater London

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[12377\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to help reduce waiting times for practical driving tests in (a) Greater London and (b) Essex.

Lilian Greenwood:

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

Measures in place to reduce waiting times for customers at all driving test centres, include the recruitment of new driving examiners (DE), conducting tests outside regular hours, including at weekends and on public holidays, and buying back annual leave from DEs.

DVSA also continues to deploy DEs from areas with lower waiting times into those where waiting times are longer.

For recent recruitment campaigns, DVSA has used additional measures when advertising in and around the Greater London area, such as radio advertising, local managers attending and running recruitment events, and improved social media coverage.

From recent recruitment DVSA has had 11 new DEs successful on their training course. This includes 10 for London and one for Essex.

DVSA is planning training courses to the end of the business year and currently has nine individuals, who will serve the London and Essex areas, confirmed on courses to the end of February. Further applicants are in checks awaiting course dates.

■ Freight: Channel Tunnel

David Smith:

[\[12308\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will hold discussions with freight companies on the cost of transporting small vans across the Channel.

Lilian Greenwood:

As Minister for the Future of Roads I regularly meet with freight companies and trade associations, as do officials. Noting that lorries and vans crossing the Channel continue to be a key route for importing and exporting goods, I am keen to continue these discussions and welcome using a future engagement to consider small vans specifically.

■ Motorway Service Areas: Leasehold

Stuart Andrew:

[\[12390\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she plans to extend the lease on the Motorway Service Area at Watford Gap.

Stuart Andrew: [\[12391\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to resolve the status of lease renewals of Motorway Service Areas.

Stuart Andrew: [\[12392\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions her Department has had with Motorway Service Area operators on the renewal of leases for those areas.

Lilian Greenwood:

I am able to confirm that lease extension options at the Motorway Service Areas in which the Secretary of State has an interest are the subject of current, detailed discussions with the third parties concerned, including Roadchef who operate Watford Gap Service Area. However, because these are sensitive, on-going commercial negotiations in which value for the taxpayer is being sought, I can share no further details at this time.

■ Road Traffic: Lincolnshire

Sir John Hayes: [\[12367\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to help reduce congestion on roads in (a) South Holland and the Deepings constituency and (b) Lincolnshire.

Lilian Greenwood:

This Government is committed to maintaining and renewing our road network so it can serve all road users and is safe. Traffic management of local roads is the responsibility of local traffic authorities who are best placed to understand local circumstances and needs.

Traffic authorities are subject to the statutory network management duty which requires them to manage their roads to secure the 'expeditious movement' of all traffic including pedestrians, with a view to reducing congestion, and they have a wide range of tools already available to them to enable this.

■ Roads: Floods

Alex Mayer: [\[12530\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if her Department will make an estimate of the cost of closing roads during flooding in (a) Bedfordshire and (b) nationally in September.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Department recognises the profound importance of our country's road network in moving people, goods, and services around the country. The economic impact of closing roads will vary greatly depending on the roads in question and on the scale and severity of the flooding.

The Government does not routinely make a detailed estimate of the economic impact of particular road closures of this sort, either in Bedfordshire or nationally. These are matters for local highway authorities. Bedford Council and Central Bedfordshire Council, as the relevant local highway authorities for Bedfordshire, are responsible for the management of their respective local networks, including making operational network decisions in the event of severe weather events including flooding.

On a national basis, management of the highway network is the responsibility of over 150 highway authorities in England, who make operational decisions based on the scope and severity of severe weather affecting their area.

■ Roads: Romford

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[12374\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to help repair potholes in Romford constituency.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Government takes the condition of local roads very seriously and is committed to maintaining and renewing the local highway network. Havering Council is the local highway authority for the Romford constituency, and they are therefore responsible for the condition and maintenance of their local network.

This Government has a commitment to enable local highway authorities in England to fix up to a million more potholes a year. At Budget 2024, the Chancellor announced an extra £500 million for local highway maintenance for the 2025/26 financial year, an increase of nearly 50% compared to the current financial year. The Government will confirm funding allocations to English local highway authorities in due course.

■ Roads: South Holland and the Deepings

Sir John Hayes:

[\[12365\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress she has made on supporting pothole repairs in South Holland and the Deepings constituency.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Government takes the condition of local roads very seriously and is committed to maintaining and renewing the local highway network.

At Budget 2024, the Chancellor announced an extra £500 million for local highway maintenance for the 2025/26 financial year, an increase of nearly 50% compared to the current financial year - exceeding this Government's manifesto commitment on repairing local roads.

The Government will confirm 2025/26 funding allocations to English local highway authorities, including Lincolnshire County Council, in due course.

Sir John Hayes:[\[12384\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many road accidents there were in (a) South Holland and the Deepings constituency and (b) Lincolnshire in the most recent period for which data is available.

Lilian Greenwood:

Data on road injury collisions are reported by police using the STATS19 system. The number of personal injury road collisions reported to police in each of the areas requested in 2023 are shown in the table below.

AREA	ALL COLLISIONS
South Holland and the Deepings constituency	215
Lincolnshire	1,724

■ Roads: Standards

Alex McIntyre:[\[12662\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the condition of local roads.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Government takes the condition of local roads very seriously and is committed to maintaining and renewing the local highway network. It publishes data annually on the condition of local roads which is available on gov.uk.

At Budget 2024, the Chancellor announced an extra £500 million for local highway maintenance for the 2025/26 financial year, an increase of nearly 50% compared to the current financial year - exceeding this Government's manifesto commitment on repairing local roads. The Government will confirm 2025/26 funding allocations to English local highway authorities, including Gloucestershire County Council, in due course.

■ Speed Limits: Fines

Freddie van Mierlo:[\[12191\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, If she will bring forward legislative proposals to allow (a) police forces and (b) local councils to keep speeding fines from fixed point cameras to fund further safety measures on the highway network.

Lilian Greenwood:

There are no plans to bring forward legislative proposals to allow (a) police forces and (b) local councils to keep speeding fines from fixed point cameras to fund further safety measures on the highway network. Money from fines and penalty receipts, including for speeding, goes to the Treasury into the Consolidated Fund. It does not go to police forces or local authorities.

Money from the Consolidated Fund supports general expenditure on public services, and that would include services that motorists will benefit from, such as healthcare, policing, local government grants and transport.

TREASURY

■ Agriculture: Business Rates

Steve Barclay:

[\[12076\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what data HM Revenue and Customs holds on the (a) area and (b) value of (i) farms and (ii) farmland.

James Murray:

HMRC receives information in relation to the agricultural value of agricultural land, buildings, and other assets as part of claims for agricultural property relief. This information relates to the agricultural property owned by the individual who may not own all of the relevant farm

■ Agriculture: Inheritance Tax

Rupert Lowe:

[\[12001\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 5.54 of Autumn Budget 2024, HC 295, published on 30 October 2024, whether her Department has carried out an impact assessment on the proposed changes to agricultural property relief.

James Murray:

The Government has published information about the reforms to agricultural property relief at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/what-are-the-changes-to-agricultural-property-relief#:~:text=From%206%20April%202026%2C%20the,rather%20than%20the%20standard%2040%25>. Almost three-quarters of estates claiming agricultural property relief in 2026-27 are expected to be unaffected by these reforms.

In accordance with standard practice, a tax information and impact note will be published alongside the draft legislation before the relevant Finance Bill.

Kevin Hollinrake:

[\[12101\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate her Department has made of the number of farmers who will be affected by the withdrawal of agricultural property relief in Thirsk and Malton constituency.

James Murray:

The Government has published information about the reforms to agricultural property relief at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/what-are-the-changes-to-agricultural-property-relief#:~:text=From%206%20April%202026%2C%20the,rather%20than%20the%20standard%2040%25>. Almost three-quarters of estates claiming agricultural property relief in 2026-27 are expected to be unaffected by these reforms.

Estates claiming agricultural property relief are required to provide HMRC with the value of agricultural assets, and this is used when calculating whether tax is due. However, it is not possible to provide constituency level analysis on claims which may be made in the future.

Ben Maguire:

[12165]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 2.51 of Autumn Budget 2024, HC 295, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of changes to Agricultural Property Relief on food security.

James Murray:

The Government has published information about the reforms to agricultural property relief at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/what-are-the-changes-to-agricultural-property-relief#:~:text=From%206%20April%202026%2C%20the,rather%20than%20the%20standard%2040%25>. Almost three-quarters of estates claiming agricultural property relief in 2026-27 are expected to be unaffected by these reforms.

In accordance with standard practice, a tax information and impact note will be published alongside the draft legislation before the relevant Finance Bill.

The UK has high food security and Autumn Budget 2024 continued to support and improve food security. The Government has provided £5 billion across this year and next to support the ongoing transition towards a more productive and environmentally sustainable agricultural sector in England. This will strengthen the domestic sector, and improve food security.

Mr Andrew Snowden:

[12185]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 2.51 of the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 October 2024, what guidance her Department issues to small business farmers who wish to keep an inherited family farm.

James Murray:

The Government has published information about the reforms to agricultural property relief at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/what-are-the-changes-to-agricultural-property-relief#:~:text=From%206%20April%202026%2C%20the,rather%20than%20the%20standard%2040%25>. Almost three-quarters of estates claiming agricultural property relief in 2026-27 are expected to be unaffected by these reforms.

Individuals can pass up to £325,000 inheritance tax free, and £500,000 if includes a residence to a direct descendant, and £1m when a tax free allowance is passed to a surviving spouse or civil partner.

The reforms to agricultural property relief and business property relief mean that farmers can access 100% relief for the first £1 million and 50% relief thereafter - meaning an effective tax rate of up to 20% on those assets. These reliefs are in addition to the normal inheritance tax allowances, and mean any couple, whether or

not married, could pass on up to £1.5 million each or £3 million tax-free between them.

Individuals will need to consider their own circumstances and may wish to speak to a tax advisor or accountant.

■ Alcoholic Drinks: Excise Duties

Stuart Anderson:

[\[12290\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the impact of the alcohol duty freeze on pubs in South Shropshire.

James Murray:

Pubs and breweries make an enormous contribution to our economy and society, and this is recognised in the tax system.

At the Budget, the Chancellor cut alcohol duty on qualifying draught products – approximately 60% of the alcoholic drinks sold in pubs. This represents an overall reduction in duty bills of over £85m a year and is equivalent to a 1p duty reduction on a typical pint. This reduction increased the relief available on draught products to 13.9%.

■ Business Rates and Inheritance Tax: Tax Allowances

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[11924\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 October 2024, HC 295, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of changes to (a) agricultural property relief and (b) business rate relief on long-term food security.

James Murray:

The Government has published information about the reforms to agricultural property relief at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/what-are-the-changes-to-agricultural-property-relief#:~:text=From%206%20April%202026%2C%20the,rather%20than%20the%20standard%2040%25>. Almost three-quarters of estates claiming agricultural property relief in 2026-27 are expected to be unaffected by these reforms.

In accordance with standard practice, a tax information and impact note will be published alongside the draft legislation before the relevant Finance Bill.

Agricultural land and associated buildings are exempt from business rates.

The Government made announcements at Autumn Budget 2024 to support and improve food security. The Government has provided £5 billion across this year and next to support the ongoing transition towards a more productive and environmentally sustainable agricultural sector in England. This will strengthen the domestic sector and improve food security.

■ Business Rates: Tax Yields**David Simmonds:**[\[11932\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 5.69 of the Autumn Budget 2024, HC 295, what estimate her Department has made of the yearly change in business rates receipts from private schools in each of the next five financial years; and whether (a) her Department and (b) the Valuation Office Agency has made an estimate of the number of hereditaments that are expected to become liable to pay higher business rates.

James Murray:

At Autumn Budget 2024, the Government reconfirmed that it will remove private schools' eligibility for charitable rates relief under business rates in England from April 2025. This intervention will raise around £140 million per year.

Business rates retention means that local authorities retain a proportion of all business rates revenue. As such, the increase in rates receipts due to the reduction in charitable rates relief for private schools will be shared between central and local government.

There are approximately 2,440 private schools in England, of which around 1,140 are charities. The business rates system already provides an exemption for certain properties being used for disabled people. Additionally, the government will legislate to ensure that private schools providing "wholly or mainly" for pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) will retain their relief. Taken together, the Government expects that around 1,040 private schools will lose their charitable rate relief.

■ Covid Counter-fraud Commissioner**Rupert Lowe:**[\[12002\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the office budget will be for the Covid Counter-Fraud Commissioner.

Darren Jones:

The Commissioner will be supported by a team of experts from HM Treasury, the Public Sector Fraud Authority, the Government Commercial Function, the Government Debt Management Function and the Department of Health and Social Care.

■ Department for Business and Trade: Finance**Chi Onwurah:**[\[12054\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 3.19 of Autumn Budget 2024, HC 295, whether the funding for growth-driving sectors will be allocated to the Department for Business and Trade.

Tulip Siddiq:

This government is committed to delivering a modern Industrial Strategy. The Budget took a first step towards supporting our growth driving sectors, by providing funding in 2025-26 for life sciences manufacturing, allocated to the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, and to automotive and aerospace manufacturing, allocated to the Department for Business and Trade.

The Budget also confirmed long-term funding for these sectors - £975m for aerospace, over £2bn for automotive, and up to £520m for life sciences supporting the development of new technology, further details of this funding will be set out through the Spending Review and publication of the full Industrial Strategy in Spring 2025.

Equitable Life Assurance Society: Compensation**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[12481\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of the compensation provided to Equitable Life investors via the Equitable Life payment scheme.

Tulip Siddiq:

The Equitable Life Payment Scheme has been fully wound down and closed since 2016 and there are no plans to reopen any decisions relating to the Payment Scheme or review the £1.5 billion funding allocation previously made to it. Further guidance on the status of the Payment Scheme after closure is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equitable-life-payment-scheme#closure-of-the-scheme>.

Government Departments: Cost Effectiveness**Charlie Dewhirst:**[\[11978\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 11 October 2024 to Question 5747 on Government Departments: Cost Effectiveness, if she will publish a table of the monetary value of the 2% reduction in administration budget of each public body that aggregates to £225 million.

Darren Jones:

As part of the measures the Chancellor took following the spending audit, departments were asked to reduce their admin budgets by 2%, saving £225 million across departments.

All savings and investments announced at the July statement have been factored into the departmental budgets for 24-25 which were set out on 30 October as part of the Spending Review. The split between programme and administration spending will be published as part of the Supplementary Estimates.

■ Lifelong Education

Damian Hinds: [\[12065\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 4.10 of the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 October 2024, HC 295, what the fiscal effect is of revised launch date of the Lifelong Learning Entitlement.

Darren Jones:

The Government is committed to delivering the Lifelong Learning Entitlement, which will transform the post-18 student finance system to create a single funding system, to a revised launch date of September 2026 for courses starting in January 2027. The launch has been postponed by a year to ensure that policy and design fully align with this government's ambitious vision for the future of our skills landscape, as well as to give providers the necessary time to prepare.

The student finance impacts of the revised launch date were scored by the OBR at the Autumn Budget. The Public Sector Net Borrowing impacts of the delay can be found in the policy costings document on page 81:

[Policy Costing Document - Autumn Budget 2024.pdf](#)

The delay will have a negligible fiscal impact in 2025-26 and 2026-27 and will generate savings of around £10m a year, measured by Public Sector Net Borrowing, for the rest of the scorecard period. This includes the impact of the previous government's decision to postpone the launch from February to September 2025.

■ Local Government Finance

David Simmonds: [\[11935\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 2.81 of Autumn Budget 2024, HC 295, published on 30 October 2024, what the assumed local government core spending power in cash figures is in (a) 2024-25 and (b) 2025-26: and what the assumed respective cash figures within that are for (i) council tax, (ii) business rates and (iii) central government grants in each year.

Darren Jones:

Local government core spending power (CSP) is £64,786m in 2024-25, and is forecast to be £68,459m in 2025-26. These figures for CSP are estimates and subject to data changes. Final figures will be published as part of the 2025-26 Local Government Finance Settlement (LGFS). Components of CSP will be confirmed in the 2025-26 LGFS.

■ Office for Value for Money

Rupert Lowe: [\[12003\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the budget will be for the Office for Value for Money; and how many staff it will have.

Darren Jones:

The Office for Value for Money is a time-limited, multidisciplinary team of up to 20 civil servants based in HM Treasury and led by David Goldstone, the independent Chair. Its costs in 2024-25 and 2025-26 will be funded from HM Treasury's RDEL settlements, which were announced as part of the first phase of the Spending Review in Budget 2024.

■ **Private Education: VAT****Damian Hinds:**[\[12037\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to HMRC's policy paper entitled Applying VAT to private school fees, published on 30 October 2024, if she will publish detail of the analysis that produced an estimate of 37,000 fewer pupils in independent schools and 35,000 more pupils in the state sector.

Damian Hinds:[\[12039\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 28 October 2024 to Question 10422 on Private Education: VAT, if she make an estimate of the cost to the public purse of VAT reclaimed by independent schools for capital spending for items under ten years old.

James Murray:

The government published its response to the *VAT on private school fees* technical note at the Autumn Budget.

This can be found online here:

[Government Response to the Technical Note on Applying VAT to Private School Fees and Removing the Business Rates Charitable Rate Relief.pdf](#)

Annexed to the consultation response is a detailed explanation of the costing methodology used, including the estimation of pupil movements. Where movement occurs, the government expects many of these moves to take place over a number of years at natural transition points, such as when a child moves from primary to secondary school, or at the beginning of their GCSE or A-Level years. Furthermore, some of this movement will result from parents opting not to send their child to private school when they otherwise might have done, rather than removing their child from a private school.

In the same document the government has set out its estimate of the effect of the Capital Goods Scheme on input tax recovery. This adjusts input tax recovery on certain (mainly property) assets acquired over the previous 10 years over the remainder of the 10-year period since their acquisition, aligning it with the business's current input tax recovery status. This adds £60 million to input tax recovery in the first year, reducing to around £30 million by 2029/30.

■ Public Sector: Finance**David Simmonds:****[11936]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 2.99 of Autumn Budget 2024, HC 295, published on 30 October 2024, which public bodies can apply for funding from the new Public Sector Reform and Innovation Fund; whether public bodies will bid for those funds competitively; and if she will publish the terms of reference for that Fund.

Darren Jones:

The Public Sector Reform and Innovation Fund allocates £165 million to a range of projects in 2025-26, including support for foster care, delivering apprenticeships and planning reforms.

In addition, the Budget allocates a further £100 million over the next three years to trial new and innovative projects, partnering with Mayors and local leaders, and focused on developing new approaches to public services with a focus on experimenting and learning. We will announce more details on this in due course.

■ Revenue and Customs and Valuation Office Agency: Buildings**Sir Ashley Fox:****[9060]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many and what proportion of desks were occupied in each of (a) HMRC's and (b) the Valuation Office Agency's offices in the most recent four weeks for which figures are available; and how many staff attended each office in person in the same period.

James Murray:

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

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

■ Revenue and Customs: Internet and Telephone Services**Mr Richard Holden:****[12151]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made with Cabinet colleagues of the adequacy of (a) online and (b) telephone services for voluntary National Insurance contributions.

James Murray:

To support customers, an enhanced online State Pension forecast service was launched on 29 April 2024. New functionality enables the majority of working age customers to view their payable gaps and make payments online. This service has successfully allowed a large number of people to self-serve, with a satisfaction rate of over 80%.

The National Insurance helpline remains in place for customers who are unable to use the online service or who need additional assistance. In October 2024, performance on this helpline was in line with service standards.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Chemicals: Labelling

Sir Iain Duncan Smith:

[\[11824\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of applying a weight of evidence approach when making decisions on the mandatory (a) classification and (b) labelling of chemicals.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) leads across government on the classification and labelling of chemicals and acts as the Agency for the assimilated Regulation (EC) No. 1272/2008 on classification, labelling and packaging of substances and mixtures as amended in Great Britain (or the GB CLP Regulation).

HSE is responsible for the GB mandatory classification and labelling system (GB MCL) and its administrative procedures in accordance with a timetable set out in UK law.

The weight and strength of all the available scientific information relating to the hazardous properties of a chemical are used when making recommendations for mandatory classification and labelling of chemicals. The technical assessments and reports that underpin these recommendations follow the criteria in the GB CLP Regulation.

Ministers have made no assessment of the potential merits of applying a wider weight of evidence approach when making decisions on the mandatory (a) classification and (b) labelling of chemicals.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Telephone Services

Rupert Lowe:

[\[12208\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the average (a) waiting time for people calling and (b) time people spent on hold for (i) Job Centre Plus, (ii) the Universal Credit helpline and (iii) the Personal Independence Payment helpline was in each of the last five years.

Andrew Western:

The table below shows the Average Speed of Answer and Average Hold Time for all people calling (i) Job Centre Plus, (ii) the Universal Credit helpline and (iii) the Personal Independence Payment helpline in each of the last 4 business years, with 2024 to 2025 being to date only (01/04/24 to 27/10/24). We are only able to provide a breakdown of the Average Speed of Answer for 5th business year 2020/2021, we do

not hold that breakdown of data for Average Hold Time, this was only reported at DWP level prior to 2021.

Please note for part(i) of the request, figures provided are from Job Centre enquiry line only. DWP hierarchy does not have a telephony service line for Job Centre Plus.

REPORTING YEAR	PRODUCT LINE	AVERAGE SPEED OF ANSWER (HH:MM:SS)	AVERAGE HOLD TIME (HH:MM:SS)
2020-2021	Jobcentre Enquiry Line	00:01:02	N/A
	Personal Independence Payment	00:18:15	N/A
	Universal Credit	00:03:41	N/A
2021-2022	Jobcentre Enquiry Line	00:02:03	00:00:59
	Personal Independence Payment	00:18:10	00:00:25
	Universal Credit	00:05:09	00:00:41
2022-2023	Jobcentre Enquiry Line	00:02:34	00:00:40
	Personal Independence Payment	00:19:21	00:00:29
	Universal Credit	00:02:56	00:00:21
2023-2024	Jobcentre Enquiry Line	00:01:52	00:00:37
	Personal Independence Payment	00:17:33	00:00:42
	Universal Credit	00:02:45	00:00:13

REPORTING YEAR	PRODUCT LINE	AVERAGE SPEED OF ANSWER (HH:MM:SS)	AVERAGE HOLD TIME (HH:MM:SS)
	Jobcentre Enquiry Line	00:01:21	00:00:33
*2024-2025	Personal Independence Payment	00:11:35	00:00:40
	Universal Credit	00:03:24	00:00:09
	*year to date 01/04/2024 to 27/10/2024		

DISCLAIMER

Please note this information is derived from the Department's management information, designed solely for the purpose of helping the Department to manage its business. As such, it has not been subjected to the rigorous quality assurance checks applied to our published official statistics. As DWP holds the information internally, we have released it. However, it is possible information held by DWP may change due to operational reasons and we recommend that caution be applied when using it.

■ Pension Credit

Sarah Olney:

[\[12097\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many claims for pension credit there were in each week from 23 September to 28 October 2024.

Emma Reynolds:

As per [Gov.uk](#), the Department has announced it will publish updated Pension Credit application and award statistics on 28 November 2024. Releases will be quarterly, including Pension Credit application, clearance, and award/non-award volumes data from 1 April 2024, up to the most recent data available before each publication.

Sarah Olney:

[\[12098\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many pension credit claims were processed within her Department's planned timescale in 2024.

Emma Reynolds:

As per the publication of the DWP Annual Report and Accounts (ARA), 77.7% of Pension Credit claims were processed within the Department's planned timescales in the Financial Year 2023 to 2024. The next publication of the ARA will include claims processed in the Financial Year 2024 to 2025.

Daisy Cooper:[\[12478\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, on what date her Department sent letters to people eligible for Pension Credit to inform them that they must apply for Pension Credit to continue receiving winter fuel payments.

Emma Reynolds:

The department sent letters between 7th October and 4th November 2024 to pensioners who, under previous rules, would have received a Winter Fuel Payment this year. The letters informed customers of the change in eligibility for receiving the payment and urged them to check their potential entitlement to Pension Credit which would provide them with a range of additional benefits, including the Winter Fuel Payment.

■ Personal Independence Payment

Rupert Lowe:[\[12320\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the total number of staff employed to review Personal Independence Payment claims is; and how many fraudulent claims were made in each of the last five years.

Sir Stephen Timms:

DWP currently has 2,700 FTE employed to review Personal Independence Payment Claims.

STAFF ROLE	FTE
DS PIP New Claims and Award Reviews	2700

Notes:

- Data is correct as of 04 th November 2024.
- Data for PIP New Claims and Award Reviews staff has been derived from the Department's Activity Based Model (ABM).
- ABM FTE (Full Time Equivalent) have been rounded to the nearest 100.
- The number of staff that are employed on PIP New Claims and Award Reviews activity is unpublished management information, collected and intended for internal department use and has not been quality assured to National Statistics or Official Statistics standard. As the Department holds the information, we have released it.

Please refer to table 12 in the following published document which shows levels of fraud and error in the benefits system, including PIP. [fraud-and-error-statistics-release-2023-2024-estimates-data-tables.xlsx](#)

The published fraud statistics only provide an estimate of the percentage of PIP cases that are fraudulent. The total number can be calculated by applying that percentage to the total PIP caseload – information can be found at: [Personal Independence Payment: Official Statistics to July 2024 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

■ **Sickness Benefits: Earley and Woodley**

Yuan Yang:

[\[12335\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of (a) the number of constituents in Earley and Woodley who will be affected by reductions in sickness benefits announced at the budget and (b) the average financial impact of those reductions on individuals.

Sir Stephen Timms:

No reductions in sickness benefits were announced at the Budget.

■ **Social Security Benefits**

Yuan Yang:

[\[12680\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 October 2024, HC 295, how many people claim benefits that were uprated at the Budget in (a) Earley and Woodley constituency, (b) each region and (c) the UK.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The estimated number of individuals in families benefitting from the uprating of benefits in the financial year 2025/26 in each region of the UK and the UK overall can be found here [Benefit uprating: estimated number and type of families and individuals in families benefitting from the uprating of benefits in financial year 2025 to 2026 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

An assessment cannot be made at a constituency level however official statistics for the number of people in receipt of [Employment and Support Allowance](#), [Jobseeker's Allowance](#), [Income Support](#), [Pension Credit](#), [Universal Credit](#) and other benefits uprated at the Budget are published regularly on [Stat-Xplore](#), with breakdowns available by various geographical areas, including Westminster parliamentary constituency.

The latest statistics are available to September 2024 for Universal Credit, and February 2024 for the other benefits listed above. Universal Credit statistics to October 2024 are due to be published on 12 November 2024, and for the other benefits to May 2024 on 28 November 2024. In February 2024 the Accredited Official Statistics for State Pension were suspended due to issues with processing data from the new Get Your State Pension (GYSP) system. The Accredited Official Statistics for State Pension will be reinstated in the [release of statistics on 28 November 2024](#).

Users can log in or access [Stat-Xplore](#) as a guest and, if needed, can access [guidance](#) on how to extract the information required. There is also a [Universal Credit Official Statistics: Stat-Xplore user guide](#).

■ Social Security Benefits: Disqualification

Steve Darling:

[\[12240\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of benefits sanctions on children in the households of those sanctioned.

Alison McGovern:

Our manifesto commitment to tackle child poverty is a key priority for this Government. The Child Poverty Taskforce has already started urgent work to publish the Child Poverty Strategy in Spring 2025 and will continue to explore all available levers to drive forward short and long-term actions across government to reduce child poverty.

No assessment has been made of the potential impact of benefit sanctions on children in the households of those that have been sanctioned.

The Department records information on the number of children living in Universal Credit (UC) households as part of the official [Universal Credit Statistics](#). The Department also records information on the number of people on UC who have received a sanction as part of the official [Benefit Sanctions Statistics](#). These statistics are produced using different methodologies, therefore information on the number of children living in households subject to a UC sanction is not readily available.

■ Work Capability Assessment: Earley and Woodley

Yuan Yang:

[\[12336\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of (a) the number of constituents in Earley and Woodley who will be impacted by the proposed reforms to the Work Capability Assessment and (b) the average financial impact on those individuals of those reforms.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The Department does not hold constituency-level information about the specific Work Capability Assessment descriptors met by claimants, so we are unable to estimate impacts for individual constituencies robustly.

■ Workplace Pensions

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[12215\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 31 October 2024 to Question 11172 on Workplace Pensions, what her planned timetable is for the Pensions Review.

Emma Reynolds:

Phase Two of the Governments landmark Pensions Review will launch later this year. The timetable for delivery will be published in due course as part of the Terms of Reference.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

HOME OFFICE

■ Refugees

Tim Farron:

[\[10416\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to take steps to increase the number of safe routes available to people fleeing persecution.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 30 October 2024. The correct answer should have been:

Seema Malhotra:

~~This country will always do our bit alongside others to help those fleeing war and persecution, but we need a proper system where rules are enforced.~~

The United Kingdom will always take seriously our responsibility alongside others to help those fleeing war and persecution, but we need a proper system where rules are enforced.

Safe and legal routes will continue to play a vital role in our overall migration system.

~~Our priority right now is the relocation of those who have been identified as eligible for resettlement under our resettlement schemes, and fixing the gaps in existing routes. That is why we have already taken steps to support the reunification of Afghan families under the ACRS route.~~

Our priority right now is the relocation of those who have been identified as eligible for resettlement under our resettlement schemes, and fixing the gaps in existing routes. That is why we have affirmed our ongoing commitment to the UK Resettlement Scheme; supported the reunification of Afghan families under the ACRS route; provided sanctuary for Ukrainians under our Ukraine schemes; and provided routes for Hong Kongers under our Hong Kong British National (Overseas) route. We will continue to keep this system under review.