



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 11 November 2024 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:32 P.M., 11 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

BUSINESS AND TRADE

■ Department for Business and Trade: Products

Ms Stella Creasy:

[\[12704\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how many officials in his Department have worked on product standard regulations in each year since 31 January 2020.

Justin Madders:

The Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) is the UK's national product regulator within the Department for Business and Trade (DBT). As well as policy responsibility for product safety and standards, OPSS delivers front line product regulation for DBT, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, and the Department for Transport.

The Department does not routinely publish separate data on the number of staff employed in OPSS. The last separately published figures for OPSS were that it employed 430 staff in the year 2021/22.

■ Fast Food: Delivery Services

Rachel Blake:

[\[12855\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to improve employment regulation applicable to (a) Deliveroo, (b) Just Eat and (c) other online food delivery companies.

Justin Madders:

Online food delivery companies, like all companies, must comply with their legal obligations to ensure those they engage receive the rights and protections to which they are entitled.

However, we recognise the complexity of the UK's current three-tiered employment status framework, and have committed to consult in detail on moving towards a simpler two-part framework that differentiates between workers and the genuinely self-employed. This consultation will include how to implement measures to strengthen protections for the self-employed including a right to a written contract and extension of health and safety and blacklisting protections to self-employed workers.

■ Fireworks: Noise

Shivani Raja:

[\[12773\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to work with local authorities to enforce noise curfews during fireworks.

Justin Madders:

Existing legislation already controls the sale, availability, and use of fireworks. For example, there is an 11pm curfew in place for the use of fireworks, with later exceptions only for the traditional firework periods. Using fireworks outside the curfew hours is a criminal offence, enforced by the police, and can lead to imprisonment and a substantial fine. Local authorities are also responsible for investigating any noise or nuisance issues brought to their attention under the Environmental Protection Act.

It is for local areas to decide how best to deploy these powers, based on their specific circumstances.

Food: Production**Gareth Snell:**[\[12724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of making an assessment of (a) core food and drink production standards, (b) environmental sustainability and (c) animal welfare standard before commencing negotiations with potential trade partners.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

The Government is firmly committed to upholding our high environmental protection, animal welfare and food safety standards, areas in which the UK is a world leader. We assess environmental and food production impacts in our published FTA scoping assessments.

Foreign Companies: Property**Joe Powell:**[\[12343\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of including publicly accessible trust data in the Register of Overseas Entities.

Justin Madders:

While the Government remains committed to enhancing transparency in relation to trusts within the Register of Overseas entities (ROE), we must carefully consider the privacy risks that come with it. The government will be laying regulations in due course to allow applications to be made for public access to unpublished trust information on the ROE in circumstances to be specified in the regulations. We are also currently reviewing responses to the public consultation on Transparency of Land Ownership Involving Trusts which provided a range of views and perspectives.

Parental Leave**Josh Simons:**[\[12565\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how much has been spent on the statutory element of Shared Parental Leave since its inception (a) in total and (b) by (i) geographical area and (ii) industry.

Justin Madders:

Information provided by employers to HMRC shows that the total value of payments made to individuals in receipt of Statutory Shared Parental Pay was £178.9m between 2014/15 and 2023/24 (the latest year for which full year data is available).

The table below presents a breakdown of the value of payments made to individuals by the region (based on recipient residence). Information on the sector or industry worked in by the recipient of Shared Parental Pay is not available.

Table 1: Total value of payments made to individuals in receipt of Statutory Shared Parental Pay (ShPP) by claimant resident region, 2014/15 to 2023/24

GOVERNMENT OFFICE REGION (BASED ON RESIDENCE OF RECIPIENT OF SHPP)	TOTAL VALUE OF STATUTORY SHARED PARENTAL PAY PAYMENTS
East Midlands	£10,300,000
East of England	£16,200,000
London	£40,800,000
North East	£4,800,000
North West	£15,300,000
South East	£27,500,000
South West	£18,000,000
West Midlands	£10,400,000
Yorkshire and The Humber	£12,200,000
Northern Ireland	£2,900,000
Scotland	£9,900,000
Wales	£5,900,000
Other	£4,600,000

Notes

1. Data collected using HMRC Real Time Information (RTI). RTI is subject to revision or updates
2. Shared Parental Leave and Pay came into force on 1 December 2014 for eligible parents of children due to be born or adopted on or after 5 April 2015.
3. In the 2014/15 and 2015/16 tax year, those receiving Additional Statutory Paternity Pay (ASPP) for children born before 6 April 2015 cannot be distinguished from those claiming ShPP within RTI data. The value of ShPP payments in 2014/15 was less than £2.5m only.

Steve Darling:[\[12607\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will review support for parents who will not be entitled to Neonatal Care Leave and Pay because they (a) are self-employed and (b) have another ineligible employment status.

Justin Madders:

The Government recognises the challenges and worry facing parents whose babies are admitted to neonatal care; we will set out more information on our plans in this area shortly.

The Government is committed to reviewing the parental leave system so that it best supports working families.

■ **Products: Standards****Ms Stella Creasy:**[\[12705\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make an estimate of the number of EU product standard regulations that will be issued in the next five years.

Justin Madders:

No estimate has been made on the number of product standard regulations that will be issued by the EU in the next five years. Some expected changes to EU regulations have been identified, with outdoor noise regulations due to be implemented in May 2025 for instance.

The Government takes consumer protection very seriously which is why we are introducing the Product Regulation and Metrology Bill. This Bill is intended to enable the UK to maintain high product standards, supporting businesses and economic growth, by allowing the UK Parliament the power to update relevant laws.

Ms Stella Creasy:[\[12926\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make a comparative assessment of UK and EU product standard regulations issued since 31 January 2020.

Justin Madders:

The UK's product safety and metrology framework is derived from EU law and has developed over the past four decades, while the UK was a Member of the EU. While there have been some product standard developments since 31 January 2020, the regulations in the EU and UK currently remain broadly similar.

■ **Trade Agreements: Gulf Cooperation Council****Clive Jones:**[\[12539\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, for what reason his Department is pursuing a multilateral free trade agreement with the Gulf Cooperation Council rather than bilateral agreements with the member states.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

The UK and GCC Member States have agreed to negotiate a GCC-wide FTA, reflecting the opportunities this presents to increase trade and investment with all parties. The GCC is equivalent to the UK's 9th largest trading partner.

During the Call for Input launched in advance of negotiations and subsequently, businesses and stakeholders expressed a preference for a UK-GCC FTA. An FTA will enable UK businesses to benefit from preferential access with all six GCC markets, unlocking new opportunities and giving them an advantage over international competitors.

We are committed to further deepening the bilateral trade and investment relationship through formal and informal dialogue with Gulf partners.

Clive Jones:[\[12540\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of a Free Trade Agreement with the Gulf Cooperation Council on human rights in member states of that council.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

We're proud of the UK's role as a leading human rights advocate worldwide. This work takes place separately to trade negotiations, but growing our trading relationships is one way to promote British values abroad while boosting our economy. The GCC is an economically and strategically important group of countries and an ambitious trade deal is firmly in the UK's national interest, helping to achieve the highest sustained growth in the G7.

Strengthening our trading relationships increases UK influence, enabling open discussions with partners on a range of issues. Our close relationship with our partners in the Gulf allows us to discuss important issues such as human rights at official and Ministerial level.

Clive Jones:[\[12541\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will include dispute settlement mechanisms on (a) human rights and (b) labour into any Free Trade Agreement with the Gulf Cooperation Council.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

We do not comment on the details of live negotiations.

■ Trade Agreements: USA**James McMurdock:**[\[13123\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he has had recent discussions with his US counterpart on a free trade agreement.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

Ministers and officials regularly engage with their US counterparts to discuss ways to strengthen the UK-US trading relationship, already worth £304 billion. The Secretary

of State met US Trade Representative Katherine Tai at the G20 Summit in October where they discussed deepening UK-US collaboration.

CABINET OFFICE

■ 10 Downing Street: Food

Rupert Lowe: [\[12331\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what percentage of the food served at receptions in Number 10 Downing Street is domestically produced.

Georgia Gould:

10 Downing Street hosts a variety of events and catering is tailored accordingly, often using events to showcase British produce.

■ Cabinet Office: Social Media

John Glen: [\[8644\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the policy of the Government Communications Service is on promoting government communications on (a) Tiktok, (b) WeChat and (c) Telegram.

Georgia Gould:

The Government uses a range of channels to reach and engage the public. Any use of these platforms would be assessed against the high standards for digital safety set out in the Government Communication Service (GCS) SAFE framework. Neither WeChat or Telegram are currently used to promote government communications. Currently TikTok can only be used in exceptional circumstances.

■ Civil Servants: Recruitment

John Glen: [\[12413\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Civil Service Fast Stream Recruitment Data 2024 published on 27 September 2024, for what reason the diversity data is collected by gender rather than sex.

Georgia Gould:

The Fast Stream has reported on gender for over a decade, including when the Rt Hon member was a Minister in this department under the previous administration.

We keep reporting methods under review to ensure that we align with best practices on statistical analysis and reporting.

■ Civil Servants: Strikes

Rupert Lowe: [\[12332\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many days were lost to strike action in the Civil Service in each of the last five years.

Georgia Gould:

This information is not held centrally by the Cabinet Office. Each department is responsible for the management of their workforce.

■ Departmental Coordination**Mr Richard Holden:**[\[12275\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Prime Minister's speech of 6 July 2024 and to the Cabinet Office guidance entitled List of Cabinet Committees and their membership, updated on 21 October 2024, for what reason the Prime Minister is not chairing the Mission Delivery Boards.

Ellie Reeves:

Missions are a priority for the Government. The Prime Minister has established a Cabinet committee structure, including mission boards, to support his policy agenda. Secretaries of State chair mission boards to drive delivery of mission outcomes, supported by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, who is responsible for driving mission delivery across government, ensuring mission-led government is at the heart of the administration.

■ Government Departments: Disclosure of Information**Mr Richard Holden:**[\[12487\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 31 July 2024 to Question 1207 on Ministers: Media and the Answer of 15 October 2024 to Question 7434 on Political Parties: Donors, whether his Department has issued guidance to Departments on what constitutes a senior media figure for the purposes of publishing that data.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

Details of official meetings held in a ministerial capacity with external organisations or individuals are declared quarterly, alongside details of all meetings with senior media figures. Ministers' Transparency Guidance, which is published on GOV.UK, details what constitutes a senior media figure for the purposes of publishing this data.

■ Government Departments: Photography**John Glen:**[\[8812\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 16 September 2024 to Question 4695 on Government Communication Service, whether the Government plans to reduce spending on official photographers in order to meet the savings on communications listed in Table 2 of HM Treasury's publication entitled Fixing the foundations: public spending audit 2024-25, CP 1133, published in July 2024.

Georgia Gould:

The referenced savings from the 'Fixing the foundations' document relates to spend on communications and marketing campaign activity. The review has concluded and it will deliver immediate savings to support HM Treasury efficiencies.

■ Ministers: Gifts and Endowments**John Glen:** [\[12259\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of issuing guidance on (a) accepting and (b) declaring (i) donations in kind, (ii) gifts and (iii) sponsorship of retail goods or services by commercial organisations by Ministers' partners.

Mr Richard Holden: [\[12485\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what guidance is available to the partners of Ministers on the acceptance of gifts.

Georgia Gould:

The new Ministerial Code sets out the guiding principles ministers should consider when offered any gift, hospitality or service. These principles also apply to their family members.

The new Ministerial Code also sets out details of a new Register of Ministers' Gifts and Hospitality, which brings the publication of ministerial transparency data more closely into line with the parliamentary regime for gifts and hospitality.

Gifts, hospitality or services given to ministers in their capacity as constituency MPs or members of a political party fall within the rules relating to the Registers of Members' and Lords' Interests.

■ National Security: Risk Assessment**Phil Brickell:** [\[13112\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, when his Department plans to publish the 2025 edition of the National Risk Register; and whether she plans to enable Parliament to (a) feed into and (b) scrutinise that register.

Ms Abena Opong-Asare:

The UK is facing an ever-changing and growing set of risks. All risks in the National Risk Register, which is the public-facing version of the internal, classified National Security Risk Assessment, are kept under review to ensure that they are the most appropriate scenarios to inform emergency preparedness and resilience activity.

The National Risk Register will be updated in the coming months.

Lead government departments are responsible for providing updates and use the latest evidence and analysis to ensure the government's assessment of risks reflects the risk landscape.

The Government is committed to opportunities for openness and scrutiny, for example, the opportunity to discuss risk assessment at the Public Accounts Committee on Extreme Weather events in February 2024.

■ Prime Minister: Public Appointments

John Glen:

[\[6079\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what role Lord Alli has had in decisions relating to (a) shortlists and (b) appointments to public posts; whether the Prime Minister sought advice from the Cabinet Office Propriety and Ethics team on that role in the context of Lord Alli's donations to the Labour Party; and if she will publish (i) terms of reference and (ii) other documents relating to the work of Lord Alli in relation to that role.

Georgia Gould:

Lord Alli has played no role in public appointments processes.

■ Prime Minister: Staff

John Glen:

[\[8435\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 23 September 2024 to Question 5043 on Prime Minister: Staff, how many staff work in (a) press, (b) marketing and (c) communications roles.

Georgia Gould:

As a modern communications service, the Prime Minister's communications team covers a wide range of functions, including press, digital, strategic comms and private office support.

In addition to supporting directly the work of the Prime Minister, Downing Street also serves as a central communications team, working across Whitehall to prepare content, communicate the delivery of policies and coordinate communications activity across government departments, in line with the Civil Service Code. As of November 7, there are 47.6 FTE Civil Servants in the communications team. This remains unchanged in size since the election.

As was the case under the previous Administration, information about Special Adviser numbers and costs will be published in the Annual report on Special Advisers.

■ Senior Civil Servants: Recruitment

John Glen:

[\[5280\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many and what proportion of advertised senior civil service vacancies were open to external candidates since 4 July 2024.

Georgia Gould:

Out of 72 Senior Civil Service vacancies advertised on CS Jobs since 4 July 2024, 59 were open to external candidates. A portion of SCS roles might not be advertised on Civil Service Jobs, due to departments using alternative recruitment platforms and the need to fill roles temporarily or at pace, by exception. Information is not held centrally on these roles.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT■ **Football: Women**

Samantha Niblett: [\[12198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what plans she has to regulate Women's Football.

Stephanie Peacock:

Karen Carney OBE led an independent review of domestic women's football, which was published in July 2023. We agree with the recommendation that the women's game should be given the opportunity to self-regulate rather than moving immediately to independent statutory regulation.

While the Independent Football Regulator will be focused on the men's game, it will cooperate, coordinate and share information where it can with the relevant industry bodies in the women's game to help deliver the shared goal of a successful, sustainable English game.

However, the Secretary of State will be keeping the scope of the Regulator under review, including whether additional competitions should be specified, such as women's football competitions.

■ **Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme**

Stuart Andrew: [\[12273\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department will continue to support the continuation of the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme which is due to expire in March 2025.

Chris Bryant:

Departmental settlements have been set following the Budget announcement on October 30. Individual programmes, such as the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme, will now be assessed during the departmental Business Planning process.

■ **Music Venues: Government Assistance**

Mr Richard Holden: [\[12517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to support grassroots music venues.

Chris Bryant:

The Government is working closely with the live music sector to support an economically sustainable grassroots music sector. Following the Autumn Budget, we are continuing to support Art Council England's (ACE's) successful Supporting Grassroots Music fund which provides grants to grassroots music venues, recording studios, promoters and festivals of live and electronic music gig-goers across the UK.

The Government response to the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee's report on grassroots music venues will be published soon. It will set out in further detail the

Government's position on working with industry to support the grassroots music sector.

■ **Parades: Spalding**

Sir John Hayes:

[\[12366\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing funding for the Spalding Flower Parade.

Chris Bryant:

I think of floristry as one of the great unsung British creative industries, with florists providing imaginative joy for vital family and civic occasions and for private happiness in every constituency in the land. The reinstatement of the Spalding Flower Parade in 2023 ensures that there is once again a great opportunity to celebrate Lincolnshire's flower industry .

As part of DCMS' restructuring of destination management in England, VisitEngland have recently accredited Destination Lincolnshire as the Local Visitor Economy Partnership with the skills and experience to grow visitor numbers and spend in the region. Destination Lincolnshire would be best placed to make an assessment of the value of the parade to future tourism in the region.

■ **Television Channels: Political Impartiality and Sanctions**

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[12687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions she has had with Ofcom on (a) allegations that Channel One Russia Worldwide has breached the conditions of its TLCS licence and (b) the imposition of statutory sanctions on GB News Limited for breaching the special impartiality requirements in the programme People's Forum: The Prime Minister broadcast on 12 February 2024.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Secretary of State has had no discussions with Ofcom regarding Channel One Russia Worldwide or the imposition of statutory sanctions on GB News.

Ofcom is the UK's regulator for broadcasting and by law carries out its duties independently of the Government. Ofcom's Broadcasting Code contains rules to ensure that due impartiality must be preserved on matters of major political or industrial controversy and major matters relating to current public policy. It is for Ofcom, as the independent regulator, to determine whether there has been a breach of their rules and whether to apply sanctions.

Although Channel One Russia Worldwide holds an Ofcom TLCS licence, it is not available on any regulated service in the UK.

■ Tourism Industry Council: Passenger Ships**Llinos Medi:**[\[12609\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will invite representatives of the cruise industry to join the Tourism Industry Council.

Chris Bryant:

DCMS recognises that the cruise sector makes a significant contribution to the UK economy, namely £9.4 billion and supporting 82,000 jobs pre-pandemic. As a new government we are reviewing the composition and terms of reference of the Tourism Industry Council with the aim of securing broad and diverse representation from a variety of industries and delivering clear outcomes for the sector.

DEFENCE**■ BAE Systems: Barrow in Furness****Mr Mark Francois:**[\[11833\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the extent of the damage caused by the fire at BAE Systems in Barrow-in-Furness on 30 October 2024.

Maria Eagle:

I refer the right hon. Member to the written statement I laid in the House on 30 October 2024, HCWS176.

Attachments:

1. BAE Systems Barrow Incident [BAE Systems Barrow Incident.docx]

■ Boxer Vehicles: Ammunition**Mr Mark Francois:**[\[11840\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the estimated minimum deployable capability date is for the Boxer (a) 120mm self-propelled mortar system and (b) 155mm self-propelled artillery system.

Maria Eagle:

The Mechanised Infantry (BOXER) programme uses the terms Initial Operating Capability (IOC) and Full Operating Capability. The Armoured Mortar Vehicle is a project within this programme and therefore uses those terms. The Mobile Fires Platform project is a part of the Close Support Fires Programme, which uses the term Minimum Deployable Capability instead.

Whilst the Mechanised Infantry (BOXER) programme has an IOC, the definition of the IOC for the Armoured Mortar Vehicle project within the programme is yet to be confirmed. The Mobile Fires Platform project does not have a confirmed definition for Minimum Deployable Capability (MDC). Therefore, an estimated IOC or MDC for either variant cannot be projected at this time.

■ Defence Equipment: Procurement

Mr Mark Francois:

[\[11835\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assumed increase in the UK's defence budget his Department is using for the purposes of estimating its 10-year Equipment Plan, calculated (a) in cash terms and (b) as a percentage of gross domestic product.

Maria Eagle:

On 30 October His Majesty's Treasury published the Autumn Budget which confirmed the Ministry of Defence's Departmental Expenditure Limit for financial years 2024-25 and 2025-26. The longer-term budget will be confirmed through phase two of the Spending Review which is planned for late Spring 2025.

■ Gaza: Surveillance

Brendan O'Hara:

[\[12446\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on ensuring that any information gathered by unarmed RAF surveillance flights over Gaza can be used solely in relation to locating Israeli hostages.

Brendan O'Hara:

[\[12449\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to implement a mechanism to ensure that intelligence information shared with the Israeli government is used within the boundaries of international humanitarian law, and what discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on ensuring that any information provided is used in compliance with international humanitarian law.

Luke Pollard:

The Ministry of Defence's (MOD) mandate is narrowly defined to focus on securing the release of the hostages only, including British nationals. Only information relating to hostage rescue will be passed to the relevant authorities. The MOD has robust policies, practices and processes which are entirely consistent with our legal obligations under domestic and international law.

The Secretary of State for Defence, and MOD officials, have regular discussions with their Israeli counterparts on the remaining hostages and other matters, including complying with International Humanitarian Law and the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

Brendan O'Hara:

[\[12447\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has established a process for the (a) assessment and (b) retention of evidence gathered by unarmed RAF surveillance flights over Gaza.

Luke Pollard:

Our mandate is narrowly defined to focus on securing the release of the hostages only. We are unable comment further on detailed intelligence matters for operational security reasons.

■ Ministry of Defence: Employers' Contributions**Dr Caroline Johnson:**[\[12740\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 4 November 2024 to Question 11939 on Ministry of Defence: Employers' Contributions, whether the £216 million figure given is the (a) direct cost of his Department's Ministry of Defence: Employers' Contributions national insurance contribution, (b) indirect cost to his department of higher contributions by suppliers and contractors and (c) total of direct and indirect costs.

AI Carns:

The £216 million Employers' National Insurance cost provided in the previous answer is the estimated direct cost to the Department.

■ Veterans: Homelessness**Stuart Anderson:**[\[12448\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to tackle homelessness among veteran communities in rural areas.

AI Carns:

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

This Government has, just last week, committed £3.5 million for veteran supported homelessness programmes, including Op FORTITUDE, the homelessness pathway for veterans. As of 3 November 2024, Op FORTITUDE has taken over 2,700 referrals and supported nearly 800 veterans into housing.

This new funding announcement follows the Prime Minister's commitment earlier in the year that veterans living in England will be exempt from local connection and residency tests when applying for social housing. I recently attended a roundtable with veteran housing organisations to discuss the implementation of this reform, and I am also a member of the Inter-ministerial Group on Homelessness and Rough Sleeping which is driving progress on the development of our cross-government homelessness strategy.

EDUCATION**■ Childcare: Employers' Contributions****Neil O'Brien:**[\[12802\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to paragraph 2.40 of the Autumn Budget 2024, HC 295, published on 30 October 2024, what estimate she has made of the potential impact of the rise in the rate of employer national insurance contributions on childcare provider costs in each year of the Budget forecast.

Neil O'Brien:

[\[12803\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to paragraph 2.40 of the Autumn Budget 2024, HC 295, published on 30 October 2024, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of increasing funding rates for (a) public and (b) private sector childcare providers to account for the impact of the rise in the rate of employer national insurance contributions on childcare provider costs.

Neil O'Brien:

[\[12804\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made on the impact that the national insurance increase will have on the cost of paid-for childcare.

Stephen Morgan:

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

The Employment Allowance will be worth up to £10,500 for eligible providers, meaning some smaller providers may pay no National Insurance at all in the 2025/26 financial year.

The department is working at pace to publish funding rates for 2025/26 as we know how important this is for local authorities and providers.

■ Childcare: Rural Areas

Stuart Anderson:

[\[12291\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of childcare places in rural communities.

Stephen Morgan:

High quality, affordable early education and childcare is essential to ensuring that all our children get the best start in life.

The department recognises that there are differences in the availability of childcare depending on where you live.

The latest data from the Office for National Statistics and Ofsted shows variations in the level of access to childcare places across the country, with the most deprived local authorities and rural areas the most likely to be areas that have faced low childcare accessibility over time. The data is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/changes-to-access-to-childcare-in-england/commentary-changes-in-access-to-childcare-in-england>.

The government has committed to working with the sector to embed early years within the wider education system, and to find new ways to shift the early education system to better support parents in poorer and rural areas. This starts with the plan to

utilise unused space in primary schools to create much needed places in 3,000 nurseries, working in partnership with all parts of the sector and local authorities.

Under Section 6 of the Childcare Act 2006, local authorities are responsible for ensuring that the provision of childcare is sufficient to meet the requirements of parents in their area. Part B of the 'Early education and childcare' statutory guidance for local authorities highlights that local authorities are required to report annually to elected council members on how they are meeting their duty to secure sufficient childcare, and to make this report available and accessible to parents. The department has regular contact with each local authority in England about their sufficiency of childcare and any issues they are facing

Where local authorities report sufficiency challenges, the department discusses what action the local authority is taking to address those issues and, where needed, support the local authority with any specific requirements through our childcare sufficiency support contract. We have recently launched a termly local authority readiness self assessment tool, which is intended to enable local authorities to gauge their progress as we move towards rollout. This will enable the department to work with local authorities to address issues as they emerge.

■ Further Education: Finance

Mary Kelly Foy:

[\[12433\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to help ensure that new investment in further education contributes to (a) improving staff conditions and (b) closing pay gaps between college and school teachers.

Janet Daby:

This government is committed to ensuring there is a thriving further education (FE) sector, which is vital to our missions to break down the barriers to opportunity and deliver economic growth.

At the October 2024 Budget, my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer set out an additional £300 million for FE revenue funding to ensure young people are developing the skills this country needs, as well as £300 million new capital funding to address condition and capacity issues in the FE estate. The department will set out in due course how this funding will be distributed.

This investment is on top of around an additional £600 million in FE across the 2024/25 and 2025/26 financial years. This includes extending retention payments of up to £6,000 after tax for eligible early career FE teachers in key subject areas,

The government does not set pay or conditions within FE. This remains the responsibility of individual providers. However, the department continues to support the sector to recruit and retain expert teachers. We have continued to offer financial incentives for those undertaking teacher training for the FE sector in priority subject areas, worth up to £30,000 each, tax free. Additionally, the department is supporting industry professionals to enter the teaching workforce through the Taking Teaching Further programme.

■ Pupil Referral Units

Kim Johnson:

[\[12494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 25 October 2024 to Question 9795 on Pupil Referral Units, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of recording the number of children registered at Pupil Referral Units who have previously been excluded from school.

Kim Johnson:

[\[12495\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 25 October 2024 to Question 9795 on Pupil Referral Units, if her Department will undertake a manual audit of all children registered at Pupil Referral Units since 1 November 2023 to see how many have previously been excluded from school.

Catherine McKinnell:

All decisions to exclude a pupil must be lawful, reasonable and fair. Permanent exclusion should only be used as a last resort.

There are legal duties on schools and local authorities to provide suitable full-time education from the sixth day of a suspension or permanent exclusion. Where children are permanently excluded, they are frequently placed in alternative provision schools (also known as pupil referral units) so that they can receive the dedicated support they require to return to a new mainstream school or a sustained post-16 educational destination.

The department does not hold statistics centrally on the number of children registered at pupil referral units who have previously been excluded from school. The department is not currently planning to develop this data.

Our aim is to reduce numbers of preventable exclusions, including by using the expertise of alternative provision schools to support pupils whilst they are in mainstream school, before behaviour issues or other barriers to learning escalate.

■ Pupil Referral Units: Special Educational Needs

Kim Johnson:

[\[12496\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answers of 14 October to Questions 7569 on Special Educational Needs and 7570 on Pupil Referral Units, how many and what proportion of children who attended Special Educational Needs schools were then registered at Pupil Referral Units in each of the last ten years, broken down by (a) sex/gender, (b) ethnicity, (c) free school meal status and (d) region.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department does not hold statistics centrally showing how many children who attended special schools were then registered at pupil referral units in each of the last ten years.

■ Pupils: Absenteeism**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhési:** [\[12418\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the timeline is for the increase in the number of attendance mentors for schools.

Stephen Morgan:

On 11 October 2024, the department announced an additional £15 million to expand the attendance mentoring programme to at least 10,000 pupils across ten new areas.

Mentoring support is expected to begin in April 2025. More information can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/thousands-of-pupils-receive-support-to-boost-school-attendance--2>.

■ Pupils: Refugees**Samantha Niblett:** [\[12604\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the provision of language support for refugee children in school whose first language is not English.

Catherine McKinnell:

It is currently for schools to determine what support provision to put in place for all pupils, including refugees, whose first language is other than English, and who have English language development needs. Schools are able to draw on their overall budgets for this purpose, including funding allocated through the English as an additional language factor in the national funding formula. No recent assessment has been made of the adequacy of this approach, however the government will keep the matter under review.

■ Schools: Finance**Andrew Cooper:** [\[12581\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what capital funding her Department has allocated to schools in (a) Mid Cheshire constituency, (b) Cheshire and (c) England in each of the last 10 years.

Stephen Morgan:

The department provides annual capital funding to support the education sector, which includes funding to maintain and improve the condition of the school estate and to create school places. The department's capital budget also supports providers other than schools, and there is no separate capital budget for schools specifically. It is not possible to break all funding down by constituency or local authority.

The total Capital Departmental Expenditure Limit (CDEL) outturn in each financial year since 2014/15 is available in the table below. More information can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/dfе-annual-reports>.

Table 1: Total CDEL outturn in each financial year since 2014-15

FINANCIAL YEAR	CDEL, £BILLIONS
2014/15	4.8
2015/16	5.1
2016/17	5.7
2017/18	4.9
2018/19	5.4
2019/20	4.9
2020/21	4.8
2021/22	4.8
2022/23	5.9
2023/24	6.6

The department supports schools by providing capital funding to responsible bodies, including local authorities, academy trusts and voluntary aided bodies to invest in improving the condition of their estates. In addition, we deliver rebuilding programmes to replace school buildings in the worst condition.

In the last ten years, under the Priority School Building Programme and the School Rebuilding Programme, the department has handed over, or committed to, ten rebuilding projects in Cheshire West and Chester and one in Cheshire East, the local authorities covering Mid-Cheshire constituency, as part of over 1000 projects across England. Individual schools in the programmes are published on GOV.UK.

It is up to the local authorities to allocate their annual school condition funding across their maintained schools, based on local knowledge of need, prioritising keeping schools safe and operational. The total allocated to Cheshire West and Chester and Cheshire East and their maintained schools from 2015, including School Condition Allocations and Devolved Formula Capital, as well as one-off capital funding allocations, including the Healthy Pupils Capital Fund, is available in the table below:

Table 2: Total capital funding allocated to Cheshire West and Chester and Cheshire East and their maintained schools from 2015 (including School Condition Allocations and Devolved Formula Capital, as well as one-off capital funding allocations, including the Healthy Pupils Capital Fund).

FINANCIAL YEAR	CHESHIRE EAST £MILLIONS	CHESHIRE WEST AND CHESTER £MILLIONS
2015/16	3.79	4.24
2016/17	3.36	4.21
2017/18	2.97	4.05
2018/19*	3.74	5.57
2019/20	2.23	3.76
2020/21*	2.18	5.21
2021/22	2.39	5.38
2022/23*	3.5	7.37
2023/24	2.2	5.66
2024/25	2.75	5.32

*includes additional one-off allocations.

Large academy trusts and voluntary aided school bodies with schools in the area will also have been allocated a school condition allocation, but allocations typically span constituency and local authority boundaries. Smaller and stand alone academy trusts and sixth form colleges have been able to bid for funding to the Condition Improvement Fund (CIF). Capital allocations and successful CIF projects are published on GOV.UK.

The annual condition funding for school buildings allocated by year across England, as well as one-off capital funding allocations, including the Healthy Pupils Capital Fund, is available in the table below:

Table 3: The annual condition funding for school buildings allocated by year across England (as well as one-off capital funding allocations, including the Healthy Pupils Capital Fund).

FINANCIAL YEAR	TOTAL £BILLIONS
2015/16	1.4
2016/17	1.4
2017/18	1.4
2018/19*	1.9

FINANCIAL YEAR	TOTAL £BILLIONS
2019/20	1.4
2020/21*	2
2021/22	1.8
2022/23*	2.2
2023/24	1.8
2024/25	1.8

*includes additional one-off allocations.

Furthermore, the department provides the Basic Need capital grant to support local authorities meet their statutory duty to provide sufficient mainstream school places for children in their area. Basic Need allocations for all years from 2011/12 to 2025/26 for: i) England; ii) Cheshire West and Chester Council; and iii) Cheshire East Council are published at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/basic-need-allocations>.

The department has also invested over £3 billion into school places for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities or who require alternative provision since 2018 when this funding began. Of that funding, Cheshire East has received £33,482,797 and Cheshire West and Chester has received £13,633,503. As funding is allocated to local authorities, there is no constituency level data for high needs capital. Special Provision Capital Fund allocations for 2018 to 2021 are published here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-provision-capital-funding-for-pupils-with-ehc-plans>. High Needs Provision Capital Allocation allocations for 2021 2025 are published here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/high-needs-provision-capital-allocations>.

■ Special Educational Needs

Priti Patel:

[12272]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an estimate of the number of Education and Health Care Plans that will be issued for qualifying young people (a) nationwide and (b) in Essex in each of the next five years.

Catherine McKinnell:

The number of education, health and care (EHC) plans issued in each local authority area per year is set out in published statistics on GOV.UK and is available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/150da0a4-2fef-4836-8c12-08dbe514ee42>.

The department does not make estimates of the number of EHC plans to be issued in each local authority in future years. However, as noted in the recent National Audit

Office (NAO) report into special educational needs and disabilities, the department does make estimates at a national level. Page 35 of the NAO report notes that the department's central estimate is that, without policy interventions, the number of EHC plans will nearly double from approximately 518,000 in 2022/23 to just over one million in 2032/33.

■ Special Educational Needs: Epilepsy

Siân Berry:

[12347]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will issue guidance to schools to make clear every child with epilepsy is entitled to have an Individual Healthcare Plan with (a) information about their epilepsy and (b) any support they need.

Catherine McKinnell:

Statutory guidance on supporting pupils at school with medical conditions recommends the use of individual healthcare plans as good practice, as they can help schools to support pupils with medical conditions by providing clarity about what needs to be done when and by whom. The school, healthcare professionals and parents should agree, based on evidence, when a healthcare plan would be appropriate.

This statutory guidance is available here:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5ce6a72e40f0b620a103bd53/supporting-pupils-at-school-with-medical-conditions.pdf>. The department will keep this statutory guidance under review as we take forward our commitment to delivering an inclusive mainstream system.

■ Special Educational Needs: Essex

Priti Patel:

[12270]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much funding will be allocated to support pupils with SEND in Essex in each of the next five years.

Priti Patel:

[12271]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 October 2024, HC 295, how much SEND funding she plans to allocate to local authorities to (a) cover existing DSG deficits and (b) for future spending pressures.

Catherine McKinnell:

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

The department is providing an increase of almost £1 billion for high needs budgets in the 2025/26 financial year, bringing total high needs funding for children and young people with complex SEND to £11.9 billion.

The department is providing this increase to high needs funding to help meet the increase in costs local authorities will be facing next year, as they in turn provide

support to schools and pupils with SEND. The impact on individual local authorities' deficits will be variable, and it remains important that every local authority looks at what it can do within the current system to manage its high needs budget while continuing to provide the support that children with SEND need.

The department is now in the process of calculating local authorities' indicative high needs funding allocations for the 2025/26 financial year, which it expects to publish before the end of November.

High needs budgets beyond the 2025/26 financial year are a matter for the next stage of the multi-year spending review.

■ **Special Educational Needs: Pupil Exclusions**

Kim Johnson:

[\[12497\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 14 October 2024 to Question 7596 on Special Educational Needs, how many and what proportion of children who had been excluded from school were then registered at special schools by (a) sex/gender, (b) ethnicity, (c) free school meal status and (d) region in each of the last 10 years.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department does not centrally hold statistics showing how many children who had been excluded from school were then registered at special schools. However, there are legal duties on schools and local authorities to provide suitable full-time education from the sixth day of a suspension or permanent exclusion.

The duties on schools and local authorities in relation to suspension and permanent exclusion are set out in statutory guidance, which is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-exclusion>.

■ **Students: Loans**

Shivani Raja:

[\[12774\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of increasing student maintenance loans in line with Consumer Price Index inflation.

Janet Daby:

The government recognises 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.

The 3.1% increase is based on the Retail Prices Index inflation forecast for the first quarter of 2026, as published by the Office for Budget Responsibility at Budget. Using the corresponding consumer price inflation forecast for the first quarter of 2026 would

have resulted in maintenance loans being increased by only 2.5% for the 2025/26 academic year.

■ Young Futures Hubs

Tom Hayes: [\[10297\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department has taken to deliver new Young Futures Hubs.

Janet Daby:

Young Futures Hubs will bring together services to help improve the way that children and young people can access opportunities and support in their local communities, in doing so, promoting their development, improving mental health, and preventing young people being drawn into crime.

Expertise has been brought together from across government departments to deliver on this manifesto commitment, and the government will be engaging with national and local partners, local communities and children and young people to co-design and explore options for the design and delivery of the hubs.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

■ Climate Change: Food Supply

Alex Mayer: [\[12527\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make it his policy to include food systems as a priority within Nationally Determined Contributions.

Kerry McCarthy:

The UK will announce a 1.5°C aligned 2035 Nationally Determined Contribution at COP29, followed by publication of the detail underpinning it - known as Information to facilitate Clarity, Transparency and Understanding (ICTU) - ahead of the February 2025 deadline. The UK's NDC is an economy-wide target, incorporating all greenhouse gas emissions and sectors, including from agriculture, waste and land-use. As a signatory of the COP28 UAE Declaration on Sustainable Agriculture, Resilient Food Systems and Climate Action, the UK is committed to integrating agriculture and food systems into our NDCs, National Adaptation Plans, and National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans.

■ Electric Cables

Mark Garnier: [\[12396\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has had discussions with the National Energy System Operator on pylon presumption.

Michael Shanks:

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

The National Policy Statement for electricity networks (NPS EN-5) sets out that overhead lines should be the strong starting presumption for electricity networks developments in general, except in nationally designated landscapes where undergrounding is the starting presumption.

■ Energy: Finance

Mark Garnier:

[\[12395\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has made an estimate of the number of unfinanced energy projects in the queue to be connected to the power grid.

Michael Shanks:

Data on financing of projects in the connections queue is not available. However, National Energy System Operator estimates that historically, 60-70% of transmission connection projects do not ultimately connect, including those that do not secure financing. NESO is currently consulting on proposals that would, if approved, ensure only viable projects are able to obtain and retain a connection agreement.

■ Energy: Housing

Fabian Hamilton:

[\[12383\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he is taking steps to support Property Linked Finance to help homeowners to install (a) domestic renewables and (b) energy efficiency measures.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

Green finance can play a key role in helping achieve our home decarbonisation ambitions. Through the Warm Homes Plan, the Department is exploring the role private financing can play in supporting homeowners to meet the upfront costs of installing domestic renewables and fabric energy efficiency improvements. As part of that work, Government is assessing the role novel finance models, including Property Linked Finance and Heat-as-a-Service, can play in addressing homeowner needs. Further details on the Warm Homes Plan, including future financing support for households, will be confirmed in due course.

■ Heating: Vegetable Oils

Jayne Kirkham:

[\[12847\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of taking steps to encourage rural off-grid households to switch to hydrogenated vegetable oil in heating.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

As sustainable biomass is a limited resource, the Government expects to prioritise its use in sectors like aviation, and potentially the small number of homes unsuitable for heat pumps, as these sectors have fewest options to decarbonise. The cost of renewable liquid heating fuels is currently much higher than other fuels available to

off grid customers. Before taking decisions on whether to support the use of renewable liquid fuels, like hydrotreated vegetable oil, in heating, the Government would require stronger evidence on their affordability for consumers, and the availability of sustainable feedstocks.

■ Local Area Energy Plans: Finance

Llinos Medi: [\[12793\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how much Local Power plan funding will be allocated between each of the UK nations.

Michael Shanks:

The Local Power Plan will be delivered through Great British Energy (GBE). GBE will benefit all four nations, creating jobs and building supply chains across the UK, while respecting the devolution settlements.

GBE's funding envelope provides a total amount to operate across all UK Nations. GBE will be capitalised with £125 million in 2025-26 to set up the company and begin delivery on its functions.

■ National Energy System Operator: Facsimile Transmission

Mark Garnier: [\[12394\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how many fax machines are in use by the National Energy System Operator; and whether his Department plans to provide funding to digitalise the energy grid.

Michael Shanks:

The Government does not hold any information on the number of fax machines in use at the National Energy System Operator (NESO).

Government, Ofgem and NESO are working to digitalise the energy system. In August the government published a response to the digital spine feasibility study, detailing how NESO and others are improving energy data sharing. Government funds digitalisation innovation, including the Automatic Asset Registration programme which aims to improve visibility of small-scale low carbon technologies. Ofgem approves funding for digitalisation through its decisions on price controls of licenced organisations, and delivers the Strategic Innovation Fund.

■ Oil and Natural Gas: Licensing

Andrew Bowie: [\[12465\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to incorporate the judgement in UKSC 2022/0064 into the decision-making process for oil and gas licences.

Michael Shanks:

The Supreme Court's Finch judgment relates to Environmental Impact Assessments associated with applications for development consent for offshore oil and gas projects

that have already secured a licence. On 30 October the Government launched a consultation on guidance that will help developers understand how to account for the Court judgment when undertaking Environmental Impact Assessments associated with those consent applications. The consultation will close on 8 January and the Government aims to have the finalised guidance in place in the Spring.

Andrew Bowie:

[\[12469\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of the judgement in UKSC 2022/0064 on the remaining (a) oil and (b) gas licence applications made under the 33rd licensing round.

Michael Shanks:

The Supreme Court's Finch judgment relates to Environmental Impact Assessments associated with applications for development consent for offshore oil and gas projects that have already secured a licence. On October 30th the Government launched a consultation on guidance that will help developers understand how to account for the Court judgment when undertaking Environmental Impact Assessments associated with those consent applications. The consultation will close on January 8th and the Government aims to have the finalised guidance in place in the Spring.

The North Sea Transition Authority (NSTA) has paused considering any further licences from the 33rd round pending the finalisation of the Government's consultation process into the future of licensing.

■ **Solar Power: Forced Labour**

Alicia Kearns:

[\[12595\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether the Solar Taskforce plans to take steps to (a) assess the prevalence of and (b) tackle the use of Uyghur forced labour in solar supply chains.

Michael Shanks:

No company operating in the UK should have forced labour in its supply chain. We are working with colleagues across Government to tackle the issue of Uyghur forced labour in supply chains.

The Solar Taskforce is focussed on identifying and taking forward the actions needed to develop supply chains that are resilient, sustainable and free from forced labour. This will support the significant increases in deployment of solar panels needed to meet our ambition of radically increasing solar deployment by 2030.

Recommendations from the Solar Taskforce will be contained in the Solar Roadmap, which will be published in due course.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ African Swine Fever**

Patrick Spencer: [\[12665\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the (a) likelihood of an African Swine Fever outbreak in the UK and (b) economic impact of such an outbreak.

Daniel Zeichner:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Epping Forest, on 28 October 2024 [PQ 10798](#).

■ African Swine Fever: Disease Control

Patrick Spencer: [\[12667\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to his Department's press release entitled Immediate measures to step up safeguards against African swine fever from Europe, published on 26 September 2024, to help prevent an outbreak of African Swine Fever in the UK, whether additional funding has been allocated to (a) Border Force and (b) Port Health Authorities to help implement the measures.

Daniel Zeichner:

Defra has made additional funding of £1.9 million available to Dover District Council for the Port Health Authority, for the remainder of this financial year (2024 to 2025), to support Border Force to conduct safeguarding checks on the illegal import of products of animal origin. This is in addition to the £1.2 million already committed. This total funding of £3.1 million is based on the existing staffing costs provided by Dover Port Health Authority. This funding is only for this financial year. Defra has also contributed operational equipment to support Border Force with relevant checks.

■ Agriculture: Subsidies

Dr Luke Evans: [\[12597\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department plans to extend the Fresh Fruit and Vegetables Aid Scheme after 2025.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Fruit and Vegetable Aid Scheme is an EU legacy scheme and legislation in place which will close it on the 31 of December 2025. The Government has committed to championing British farming, whilst protecting the environment, and is currently considering the best way to support our farming sectors in the future, including horticulture.

■ Animal Products: Smuggling

Patrick Spencer:

[\[12669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of the new Border Target Operating Model (a) generally and (b) at tackling the illegal import of products of animal origin.

Daniel Zeichner:

Defra continues to monitor and review the impact of the Border Target Operating Model (BTOM), including the Border Control Post at Sevington. We are working closely with industry, trade partners and enforcement agencies to minimise disruption and costs to trade, while continuing to protect our biosecurity. The effectiveness of the import controls has been demonstrated throughout September and October by the interception at Sevington of 34 consignments of plants infested with *Pochazia Shantungensis*, a fruit tree pest native to China but now present in mainland Europe. The consignments were destroyed, preventing the potential for a damaging outbreak for UK fruit growers.

The BTOM is designed to assure the biosecurity of legal, commercial imports. Illegal imports of products of animal origin are dealt with through intelligence led checks, conducted at the border by Border Force, in Border Force facilities, with the assistance of Port Health Authorities.

■ Bourne Wood: Parking

Gregory Stafford:

[\[12353\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps to encourage Forestry England to introducing disabled parking spaces in the Bourne Woods car park, Surrey.

Mary Creagh:

Parking in the nation's forests is an operational matter for Forestry England. Forestry England values accessibility for all visitors. It is not currently able to mark out designated spaces for disabled parking in some forests due to the location of these car parks within woodland environments and the unsuitability of the surfaces. This includes for Bourne Woods, Surrey. Forestry England is looking at alternative options to address this issue and will be trialling potential approaches across its car parks nationally.

■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Food

Rupert Lowe:

[\[11715\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an estimate of the percentage of food served in canteens in his Department that is British.

Daniel Zeichner:

Catering services at Defra are provided by our facilities management supplier, ISS. In the contract we require ISS to comply with Government Buying Standards (GBS) for

food and catering services and ISS is encouraged to meet the best practice criteria of the GBS for food and catering services. The supplier is required to comply with the aims of the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012. ISS has confirmed that:

- The percentage of British products purchased by ISS, for use across the Defra locations where food is served in the UK, is estimated at 57.20%.
- This figure is based on the total value of food purchased for use across the Defra locations since April 2024.

Data is only available from April 2024 from this supplier.

■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Telephone Services

Rupert Lowe:

[\[12207\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the average (a) waiting time for people calling and (b) time people spent on hold for his Department was in each of the last five years.

Daniel Zeichner:

The average waiting time for people calling the Defra General Helpline in each of the last five years is set out below:

REPORTING YEAR	AVERAGE WAIT TIME (MINUTES, SECONDS)
2024 / 2025	01:11
2023 / 2024	01:23
2022 / 2023	00:50
2021 / 2022	00:58
2020 / 2021	00:32
2019 / 2020	00:20

Please note, a reporting year runs 1 April to 31 March. Therefore, the data provided for 2024/2025 covers 1 April 2024 to 4 November 2025.

Defra does not hold data on the time people spent on hold to the Defra General Helpline after getting through to a call-handler in each of the last five years. Whilst Defra's call logging system records the length of the call from the second the call is answered by the call-handler to the second the customer hangs up, any periods on hold during that time, for instance whilst the call-handler searches for an answer to a question asked or whilst the call-handler transfers the person to another contact, are not measured.

■ Dogs: Smuggling

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[12593\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to tackle puppy smuggling.

Daniel Zeichner:

This Government was elected on a mandate to introduce the most ambitious plans to improve animal welfare in a generation. As outlined in our manifesto we will end puppy smuggling.

We are considering the most effective ways to deliver our commitments and will be setting out next steps in due course.

■ Environment Protection

Grahame Morris:

[\[12274\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether goals to improve (a) access to and (b) engagement with nature are part of the Rapid Review of the current Environmental Improvement Plan; and what plans he has to engage with stakeholders representing public access to the outdoors as part of this process.

Mary Creagh:

On the 30 July the Government announced a rapid review of the Environmental Improvement Plan to revise our plan for significantly improving the environment and enjoyment of it.

The Government is committed to enhancing public access to nature, as evidenced by our manifesto commitment to create nine new national river walks and three new national forests. We are currently considering how best to continue to drive forward our goals in this area and will be engaging with stakeholders as we do so.

■ Farms: Ownership

Steve Barclay:

[\[12708\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what information his Department holds on the proportion of farm holdings that are owned by a single person or entity.

Daniel Zeichner:

In 2021, the statistical estimates for the proportion of farmers in England who have financial and legal responsibility for an agricultural holding is shown below:

FINANCIAL AND LEGAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR A HOLDING	PROPORTION OF HOLDINGS
One person	46%
Two or more people who are close family members	49%
Two or more people who are not related	1%
An organisation (or a legal person)	4%

Sourced from the Defra June Survey of Agriculture

■ Fisheries: Territorial Waters

Rupert Lowe: [\[13102\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will (a) introduce a licence fee for access to UK (a) territorial and (b) exclusive economic zone waters to foreign vessels granted permission to catch fish and (b) use that fee to invest in the UK fishing industry in 2026.

Daniel Zeichner:

The licensing of UK vessels to fish in UK waters is a devolved matter. The licensing of foreign fishing vessels to access UK territorial waters and exclusive economic zone is reserved.

Defra has no plans to introduce licence fees, although has powers to do so. Any fee would have to be non-discriminatory and apply to all vessels. [Managing Public Money May 2023](#) would need to be taken into account. The general principle is that fees are to be used for cost recovery rather than investment.

Government funding schemes such as the Fisheries and Seafood Scheme in England, and the UK Seafood Fund, have provided investment and support for the fishing and seafood industry.

■ Forests: Regulation

Gareth Snell: [\[12443\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of the delay to the implementation of the European Union Deforestation Regulation; and what his planned timetable is for the UK Deforestation Regulation.

Gareth Snell: [\[12444\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to align the (a) scope and (b) implementation of the UK Deforestation Regulation (UKDR)

with the European Union Deforestation Regulation; and when he plans to publish the (i) scope and (ii) timeline for UKDR compliance.

Mary Creagh:

We recognise the need to take action to ensure that UK consumption of forest risk commodities is not driving deforestation and we will set out our approach to addressing this in due course.

■ **Hedgehogs: Conservation**

Alex Mayer:

[\[12529\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans his Department has for the (a) protection and (b) conservation of hedgehogs following the change to their conservation status on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List.

Mary Creagh:

The Government has no plans to provide additional legal protection to the hedgehog in England. While we are concerned about hedgehogs, there is no evidence to suggest legal protection will address the main causes of decline namely habitat loss, pesticide use and road traffic accidents.

However, the Government remains committed to restoring nature and we have wasted no time in announcing a rapid review of the Environment Improvement Plan to deliver on our legally binding environment targets, including reversing declines in our native species, such as hedgehog.

Measures such as Countryside Stewardship, Sustainable Farming Incentive Scheme, Biodiversity Net Gain and Local Nature Recovery Strategies will drive the creation and restoration of habitats, particularly hedgerows, that will benefit the conservation and recovery of hedgehogs as well as a range of other species.

■ **Import Controls: Port of Dover**

Dr Neil Hudson:

[\[12780\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 5 November to Question 11902 on Import Controls: Port of Dover, when checks on animals at Border Control Posts will begin.

Daniel Zeichner:

We are reviewing the date for implementing specific post-Brexit border checks set out in the Border Target Operating Model (BTOM) and will publish more information on these soon.

We continue to maintain essential border controls to protect our national biosecurity.

■ Marine Animals: Fishing Catches**Dr Beccy Cooper:** [\[12670\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure super trawlers report marine mammal by-catch to the Marine Management Organisation.

Daniel Zeichner:

This Government are committed to protecting our wildlife and putting nature on the road to recovery. Defra are working to improve monitoring and understanding of bycatch incidences as part of the Bycatch Mitigation Initiative. This includes continued annual estimates of marine mammal bycatch mortality through the Bycatch Monitoring Programme and work to look at barriers to bycatch reporting under the Clean Catch project.

■ Merchant Shipping Act 1995**Rupert Lowe:** [\[13100\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will amend the Merchant Shipping Act 1995 in line with the Merchant Shipping Act 1988.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Government is not planning to amend the Merchant Shipping Act 1995 in line with the repealed Merchant Shipping Act 1988.

■ Packaging: Recycling**Gareth Snell:** [\[12438\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of introducing the proposed extended producer responsibility scheme on the cost to consumers of (a) essential food products and (b) other packaged goods.

Mary Creagh:

The Department's impact assessment published online [here](#) has considered the impacts on grocery and non-grocery retail inflation from the introduction of extended producer responsibility for packaging (pEPR).

Gareth Snell: [\[12439\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the potential impact of the extended producer responsibility scheme on (a) creating a circular economy for recycled materials and (b) ensuring businesses can acquire the recycled content placed on the market.

Mary Creagh:

The Department's impact assessment, published [here](#), has considered the impacts on the UK materials reprocessing industry and the associated carbon savings from

increased recycling following the introduction of extended producer responsibility for packaging (pEPR).

No formal assessment has been made of pEPR's impact on the availability of recycled materials on the market.

■ **Pets: Tagging**

Andrew Rosindell:

[12693]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many people were fined for not microchipping their (a) cats and (b) dogs in each year since 2016.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Ministry of Justice currently collects and publishes data relating to the offence of not microchipping your dog in England and Wales.

The relevant offence code is 11126 and the latest data is available [here](#) :

As the compulsory microchipping of cats was only introduced in England in June 2024, these figures will relate to dogs only at this stage.

■ **Plastics: Coastal Areas and Rural Areas**

Edward Morello:

[12351]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help tackle plastic pollution in (a) rural and (b) coastal areas.

Mary Creagh:

This Government is committed to tackling all pollution, including plastic pollution. To reduce plastic pollution Defra has focused efforts on the most commonly used and littered plastic items. Bans and restrictions on single-use plastic cutlery, balloon sticks, straws, plastic-stemmed cotton buds, drink stirrers, expanded and extruded polystyrene takeaway containers, plates, bowls and microbeads have been introduced, as well as the single-use carrier bag charge.

To further reduce plastic pollution, this Government is committed to delivering the Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) for drinks containers in October 2027, as agreed with the devolved governments of the UK, and in accordance with the Joint Policy Statement published in April 2024. It is estimated that the DRS could lead to an 85% reduction in litter of in-scope items, which includes plastic drinks containers.

At this stage, the Government has not yet made an assessment of what further actions to take to address the specific challenges associated with rural plastic pollution. Any new policies will be announced in the ordinary manner.

■ Plastics: Waste**Edward Morello:**[\[12352\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking with (a) local authorities and (b) businesses to help reduce plastic waste.

Mary Creagh:

The Government is committed to moving to a circular economy. As a part of this transition, managing and reducing plastic waste and following the principles of the waste hierarchy – reduce, reuse, recycle – will be crucial.

Defra engages with and supports industry through the UK Plastics Pact to tackle plastic waste and pollution. The pact's membership represents two-thirds of all consumer packaging in the UK. Members have reduced their problematic and unnecessary plastic items by 84% since 2018.

On 24 October 2024, the Government laid the Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging and Packaging Waste) Regulations 2024 in Parliament. This statutory instrument shifts the costs of managing household packaging waste (including plastic packaging waste) from taxpayers and local authorities to those businesses who use and supply the packaging. This policy will generate over £1 billion annually to support local authority waste and recycling collection and disposal services – benefiting every household in the UK.

■ Salmon**Jim Shannon:**[\[12423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of salmon stocks in the last 12 months.

Daniel Zeichner:

The latest assessment of Atlantic salmon stocks in England and Wales, produced by the Environment Agency, Natural Resources Wales and the Centre for Fisheries, Environment and Aquaculture was published on 7 October and can be found [here](#).

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ Bangladesh and Myanmar: Rohingya****Jim Shannon:**[\[12726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help support (a) religious tolerance and (b) the Rohingya people in (i) Myanmar and (ii) Bangladesh.

Catherine West:

The UK is committed to supporting religious minorities in Myanmar and we continue to raise our concerns over discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities in

international fora. We are deeply concerned about the situation of the Rohingya. Since 2017, the UK has provided over £48 million in aid including cash assistance and water, sanitation and hygiene services to the Rohingya and other Muslim minorities in Rakhine State. In Bangladesh, we have provided £391 million in humanitarian assistance to support the Rohingya since 2017.

■ **BRICS Summit: United Nations**

Alicia Kearns:

[\[11175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made representations to the United Nations on the attendance of the UN Secretary General at the BRICS summit in Russia.

Stephen Doughty:

The Foreign Secretary spoke to the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres prior to the BRICS Summit in Kazan, where the UNSG reiterated his position that Russia's invasion of Ukraine had violated the United Nations Charter and international law. The meetings that the Secretary-General chooses are a matter for him, not the UK Government. The UK Government continues to bring economic and diplomatic pressure to bear on Russia, including through sanctions.

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[11551\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will raise with the UN the attendance of the UN Secretary General at the BRICS summit in Russia on 24 October 2024.

Stephen Doughty:

The Foreign Secretary spoke to the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres prior to the BRICS Summit in Kazan, where the UNSG reiterated his position that Russia's invasion of Ukraine had violated the United Nations Charter and international law. The meetings that the Secretary-General chooses are a matter for him, not the UK Government. The UK Government continues to bring economic and diplomatic pressure to bear on Russia, including through sanctions.

■ **British Indian Ocean Territory: Sovereignty**

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[\[12147\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the treaty on the transfer of sovereignty of the Chagos Islands to Mauritius will guarantee Chagossians (a) the right to return to the outer islands, (b) restitution of the islands and (c) an independent award of compensation after consultation with the Chagossian people.

Stephen Doughty:

We recognise the importance of the Chagos Archipelago to Chagossians and have worked to ensure the agreement with Mauritius reflects their interests. Under the terms of the agreement, Mauritius will be free to implement a programme of resettlement on the islands, other than Diego Garcia, and we will finance a new trust

fund for Mauritius in support of Chagossians. Separate to the agreement, we will increase our support to Chagossians in the UK and will work with Mauritius to restart visits to the islands at the earliest opportunity, including Diego Garcia, for Chagossians.

■ **China: Coronavirus**

Rupert Lowe: [\[12324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of seeking reparations from China for their alleged role in the (a) production and (b) release of covid-19.

Catherine West:

The UK government has been clear that a robust, transparent, and science-led investigation into the origins of COVID must be an important part of the international effort to understand how the pandemic started and how it spread. We continue to support the World Health Organisation (WHO) in its expert study of the origins of Covid-19. WHO Director-General Tedros has said that all hypotheses remain open, and the UK agrees. It is important that China and other countries cooperate fully with the researchers.

■ **China: Development Aid**

James McMurdock: [\[12626\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much aid his Department has provided to China in the last five years.

Catherine West:

Between 2019 and 2023, total Official Development Assistance (ODA) spend to China was £206.2 million, including on Chevening scholarships and British Council activity. In April 2021, the FCDO committed to cut ODA funded programmes in China by 95 per cent from the 2021-22 financial year. No funding goes to the Chinese authorities.

■ **Developing Countries: Food Poverty**

Rachael Maskell: [\[12737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the World Food Programme and Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations' report on Hunger Hotspots June to October 2024, published in June 2024, what steps his Department is taking to help tackle hunger in the countries included in the report.

Rachael Maskell: [\[12738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the World Food Programme and Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations' report on Hunger Hotspots June to October 2024, published in June

2024, what assistance he is providing to the (a) five countries and (b) territories on the highest level of alert at risk of famine.

Anneliese Dodds:

The UK is deeply concerned by the findings of the June-October 2024 Hunger Hotspots report. We are the second largest government donor to the World Food Programme (WFP) and to date in 2024 have contributed over \$360 million to WFP programmes, including in Palestine, Sudan, South Sudan and Haiti.

At the G20 Development Ministers Meeting in Brazil in July, I [the Minister for Development] announced the UK would join the Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty when it launches this month, to increase political support, unlock finance, share and learn, and work with partners to scale-up lasting solutions to tackle hunger and poverty.

■ **Food Poverty: Climate Change**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[12739\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the World Food Programme and Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations' report on Hunger Hotspots June to October 2024, published in June 2024, what assessment he has made of the implications for his Department's policies of the impact of La Niña weather phenomenon; and what assistance he is providing to the countries and territories which are most impacted.

Anneliese Dodds:

The UK is closely monitoring the potential development of La Niña conditions and in particular the risk of food security impacts in the Horn of Africa and Southern Africa.

The UK is a committed humanitarian donor, channelling over £277 million in humanitarian aid to African Countries in 2023 and is already operating humanitarian programmes in those countries of concern highlighted in the Hunger Hotspots report. Those programmes are standing by to adapt as required. On 22 August, I [the Minister for Development] announced an additional £15 million of vital assistance to Sudan, South Sudan and Chad.

■ **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Data Processing**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[12981\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps they are taking to use (a) artificial intelligence and (b) data to help increase their Department's productivity.

Catherine West:

Artificial Intelligence and data offer significant opportunities for the FCDO to enhance decision-making, productivity and increase the effectiveness of its interventions.

The FCDO is implementing a multi-year Digital, Data, and Cyber Security Strategy to transform its operational capabilities and ensure it has the digital backbone of

technology, data and expertise to enable these. A new team, FCDO.ai, has been established to lead on AI adoption and ensure its responsible use.

The FCDO is collaborating with partners across HMG and internationally, as well as with the private sector including start-ups and SMEs, to exploit shared opportunities and address the new and evolving security risks posed by these technological advances.

■ Gubad Ibadoghlu

Sir Iain Duncan Smith:

[\[12682\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will raise the detention in Azerbaijan of Dr. Gubad Ibadoghlu during COP29 climate conference in November.

Stephen Doughty:

I [Minister Doughty] raised the detention of prominent academic Dr Gubad Ibadoghlu with Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov during our call on 31 October, and with Presidential Representative Elchin Amirbayov on 29 October. The UK consistently advocates for Dr Ibadoghlu to receive all appropriate medical access and treatment, and for a fair legal process. We will continue to raise his case alongside wider human rights issues of concern.

■ India: Development Aid

James McMurdock:

[\[12826\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the level of foreign aid for India.

Catherine West:

Most of the FCDO's bilateral development funding for India is targeted at helping tackle climate change and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. This is primarily done through development investments in partnership with the Indian Government. We also provide expertise in areas such as offshore wind, in support of India's climate commitments.

Ministers are reviewing the FCDO's Official Development Assistance (ODA) budget to ensure it delivers on our priorities. We are committed to transparency and will publish ODA allocations for 2024-25.

■ Overseas Territories Joint Ministerial Council

Joe Powell:

[\[12334\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans he has to publish the results of the UK and Overseas Territories Joint Ministerial Council on 19-21 November 2024.

Stephen Doughty:

The conclusions of the Joint Ministerial Council will be published through a communiqué jointly agreed by the UK and the Overseas Territories. We will also make a Written Ministerial Statement.

Spain: Floods**Rachel Hopkins:**[\[12763\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assistance his Department has offered to the Spanish government, in the context of recent floods in that country.

Stephen Doughty:

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

St Helena: Asylum**Priti Patel:**[\[11853\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the interim arrangements set out in the memorandum of understanding between the UK Government and the Government of St Helena on migrant arrivals on (a) the number of migrants, (b) the cost per migrant and (c) the estimated time that migrants covered by this provision will stay on St Helena.

Stephen Doughty:

No new migrants have arrived on the British Indian Ocean Territory since 2022. The UK will support the Government of St Helena to care and process any potential migrants. Each case will be unique and the UK will provide the necessary support to the Government of St Helena.

Priti Patel:[\[11885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the memorandum of understanding with the Government of St Helena, agreed on 15 October 2024, if he will publish (a) the accounting officer's advice on the scheme, (b) the costings of the scheme, (c) the details of the accommodation that will be provided and (d) the assessment of the potential merits of using St Helena.

Stephen Doughty:

We do not routinely publish policy advice and assessments from officials. The UK Government has agreed to a one-off funding of £6.65million with the Government of St Helena for initiatives to improve public health and education outcomes, and also local IT systems. The UK Government will support the Government of St Helena to

care for and process any potential migrants. The St Helena Government will be responsible for determining what accommodation should be provided to any migrants transferred, with technical support from the UK Government.

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[12035\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has met with the administrators of (a) Tristan da Cunha and (b) Ascension Island since the Government's asylum agreement with St Helena was concluded.

Stephen Doughty:

The new arrangement with St Helena does not apply to Tristan da Cunha or Ascension Island. The Chief Islander from Tristan da Cunha and Councillors from Ascension Island will attend the UK Overseas Territories Joint Ministerial Council (JMC) in London later this month. I have also met virtually with the Chief Islander and members of the Ascension Islands Council.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Accident and Emergency Departments: Dental Services

Rupert Lowe:

[\[12572\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) attendances at accident and emergency departments and (b) emergency admissions there were for dentistry-related issues in each of the last 10 years.

Stephen Kinnock:

The following table shows how many attendances to accident and emergency departments there were for dentistry-related issues, specifically those with a first diagnosis code of dental abscess or dental caries, for each of the last four years:

YEAR	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Attendances	60,330	69,859	67,310	73,088

Source: the data is published on NHS Digital, and is available at the following link: <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/hospital-accident--emergency-activity/2023-24>

Note: due to changes in recording methods, data from the last ten years is not available.

In addition, the following table shows the number of emergency admissions for dentistry-related issues, specifically the number of Finished Admission Episodes for dental-related issues, for each of the last ten years:

YEAR	ADMISSIONS
2014/15	16,279
2015/16	16,749
2016/17	17,285
2017/18	18,744
2018/19	20,543
2019/20	22,129
2020/21	17,540
2021/22	19,340
2022/23	19,979
2023/24	23,109

Source: the data is published on NHS Digital, and is available at the following link: <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/hospital-admitted-patient-care-activity/2023-24>

■ Air Pollution

Mr Lee Dillon:

[12882]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the clean air policy addresses the risks of (a) carbon monoxide and (b) other indoor air pollutants.

Andrew Gwynne:

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) works in partnership with other organisations to develop advice and recommended actions which can improve detection of, and prevent accidental exposure to, carbon monoxide in homes. This includes participating in a cross-Government group on gas safety and carbon monoxide awareness, which promotes a joined-up approach to improving gas safety and reducing carbon monoxide poisoning risks.

The UKHSA Clean Air Programme includes efforts both to build the evidence base and raise awareness of indoor air quality and its health impacts. Furthermore, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence has published guidance on indoor air quality at home, designed to raise awareness of the importance of good air quality in people's homes and advise on how to achieve this.

Building regulations already require that carbon monoxide alarms are fitted alongside the installation of fixed combustion appliances of any fuel type, excluding gas

cookers, in all tenures. The ingress of outdoor air can affect indoor air quality, and the Government is committed to delivering a comprehensive and ambitious Clean Air Strategy.

■ Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia: Research

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[12420\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the progress of research on treatments for (a) Alzheimer's and (b) dementia.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Department funds research into dementia via the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). The Government is investing into research on treatments for dementia, such as the £49.9 million NIHR Dementia Trials Network (D-TN), which will deliver a coordinated network of early phase dementia trial sites, including for Alzheimer's disease. The work undertaken by the NIHR D-TN will be complemented by the £20 million Dementia Clinical Trials Accelerator, designed to position the United Kingdom as the destination of choice for late phase clinical trials in dementia and neurodegenerative diseases.

The Government is also funding the UK Dementia Research Institute (UK DRI), which conducts world-leading discovery science across neurodegenerative diseases and translates knowledge into tools and therapies that make a real, tangible difference. The NIHR is investing £20 million into the UK DRI over four years to enable discoveries to be taken out of the laboratory and into the lives of people that need them.

The NIHR welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health including dementia. These applications are subject to peer review and judged in open competition, with awards being made on the basis of the importance of the topic to patients, and health and care services, and its value for money, and scientific quality. In all disease areas, the amount of NIHR funding depends on the volume and quality of scientific activity.

■ Alzheimer's Disease: Medical Treatments

Joe Robertson: [\[12652\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has had recent discussions with (a) NHS England, (b) the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence and (c) the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency on access for patients to licensed treatments for Alzheimer's disease.

Karin Smyth:

Ministers have had a number of recent discussions with the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), and NHS England, about patient access to new, licensed treatments for Alzheimer's disease.

Recommendations on whether new licensed medicines should be routinely funded by the National Health Service are made independently by the NICE on the basis of an assessment of their costs and benefits. The methods and processes that the NICE uses are internationally respected and have been developed through extensive engagement with academics, industry, patients, and clinicians, to ensure that they reflect best practice and societal preferences. The NHS in England is legally required to fund medicines recommended in a NICE appraisal, usually within three months of final guidance.

The Dame Barbara Windsor Dementia Goals programme aims to speed up the development of new treatments for dementia and neurodegenerative conditions, and is working with the relevant partners to develop solutions around access for patients to licensed treatments for Alzheimer's disease.

■ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: Medical Treatments

Alex Easton:

[\[12663\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that people with ADHD receive the level of support set out in the guidelines by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence entitled Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder: diagnosis and management, published on 14 March 2018.

Stephen Kinnock:

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

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

Alongside the work of the taskforce, NHS England will continue to develop a national ADHD data improvement plan, carry out more detailed work to understand the provider and commissioning landscape, and capture examples from local health systems in England, which are trialling innovative ways of delivering ADHD services, to ensure best practice is captured and shared across the system.

■ Autism: Lincolnshire

Sir John Hayes:

[\[12363\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an estimate of the waiting times for (a) assessments for and (b) diagnoses of autism in (i) adults and (ii) children in (A) South Holland and the Deepings constituency and (B) Lincolnshire.

Stephen Kinnock:

The information requested is not held centrally, but may be held by individual providers or integrated care boards (ICBs). Some relevant information is available on autism assessment waiting times for the NHS Lincolnshire ICB. In the NHS Lincolnshire ICB in June 2024, the Autism Waiting Time Statistics show that there was a total of 1,455 patients with an open suspected autism referral. 55 of these patients were aged zero to 17 years old, and 1,405 of these patients were aged 18 years old and over. Since each metric is rounded to the nearest five in the published data, the number of adults and children do not add up to the total number of patients.

The median waiting time of all patients in this ICB with an open suspected autism referral, where their first care contact was in the quarter, was 232 days for over 18-year-olds. For zero- to 17-year-olds, the median number of days patients waited was not able to be provided, due to a small sample size of the number of children who had their first care contact in the most recent quarter.

Data on children and young people in this dataset is expected to be an underestimate and caution should be used when interpreting these statistics, since they are experimental rather than official statistics. The majority of children assessed for autism in the United Kingdom are seen in child development services, which are out of the scope of this dataset. This means the published figures will underestimate the volume of referrals or diagnoses and the associated impact on health services. NHS England continues to conduct exploratory analysis into the Community Services Dataset, with a view to including autism waiting times data from that dataset.

■ Brain: Tumours

Dr Ben Spencer:

[\[11654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has had recent discussions with the National Institute for Health and Care Research on support for research into the (a) care and (b) treatment for people with brain tumours.

Andrew Gwynne:

[Holding answer 4 November 2024]: Research is crucial in tackling cancer. The Department spends £1.5 billion each year on research through its research delivery arm, the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), with cancer being the largest area of spend, at over £121.8 million in 2022/23. The NIHR spends more on cancer than any other disease group, reflecting its high priority.

In September 2024 we announced new research funding opportunities for brain cancer research, spanning both adult and paediatric populations. This includes a

national NIHR Brain Tumour Research Consortium, to ensure the most promising research opportunities are made available to adult and child patients, and a new funding call to generate high quality evidence in brain tumour care, support, and rehabilitation. Further information is available at the following link:

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

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

Brain tumour research will continue to be a priority into the future, and the Department, through the NIHR, will continue to fund high-quality science to expand lifesaving and life-improving research.

Andrew Rosindell:

[12372]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what funding he is providing for people with brain tumours in financial year 2024/25.

Karin Smyth:

As part of the November 2021 Budget and Spending review, the Department allocated £14 billion to NHS England from 2022/23 to 2024/25 specifically for the National Health Service in England to recover elective and cancer care, including for brain tumours. This comprised of £8 billion of resource funding and £5.9 billion of capital funding, as described in the November 2021 Budget and Spending Review.

As set out in the recent October Budget, we are providing an additional £1.8 billion to directly support elective recovery and activity in 2024/25, which includes cancer care. This funding is being provided to reduce waiting times and support the NHS to deliver 40,000 additional appointments each week.

To support delivery of the operational priorities for cancer, including early diagnosis, NHS England is providing over £250 million in cancer service development funding to Cancer Alliances.

Further to this, in September 2024, the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) announced new research funding opportunities for brain cancer research, spanning both adult and paediatric populations. This includes a national NIHR Brain Tumour Research Consortium, to ensure the most promising research opportunities are made available to adult and child patients, and a new funding call to generate high quality evidence in brain tumour care, support, and rehabilitation.

Lord Darzi's report has set out the scale of the challenges we face in fixing the NHS in England, and the need to improve cancer waiting time performance and cancer

survival. The report will inform the Government's 10-Year Health Plan to reform the NHS in England, including further detail on how we will improve outcomes for cancer.

■ Breast Cancer: Nurses

Clive Jones: [\[12587\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to ensure that people with triple negative breast cancer have access to a clinical nurse specialist at the point of diagnosis.

Clive Jones: [\[12588\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that there are sufficient breast cancer clinical nurse specialists.

Karin Smyth:

We are committed to training the staff we need, including clinical nurse specialists, to ensure patients are cared for by the right professional, when and where they need it.

We will ensure that the number of medical specialty training places, including those involved in diagnosing and treating cancer, meets the demands of the National Health Service in the future. NHS England will work with stakeholders to ensure that any growth is sustainable and focused in the service areas where need is greatest.

The Government has set out plans to publish a ten-year plan to reform the National Health Service. The plan will be informed by Lord Darzi's report and will include further details on how we will improve cancer diagnosis, treatment, and outcomes, including for breast cancer.

■ Cancer: Children and Young People

Abtisam Mohamed: [\[12234\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help improve cancer outcomes among children and young people.

Abtisam Mohamed: [\[12235\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that children and young people diagnosed with cancer receive adequate mental health support.

Karin Smyth:

We are committed to getting the National Health Service diagnosing cancer earlier and treating it faster so that more patients survive this horrible set of diseases. This includes children and young people.

In Spring 2024, the Department ran workshops with colleagues in the health system which identified a range of options to improve outcomes for this group. We are committed to further exploring these areas, including by considering the wider support available to children and young people with cancer and their families.

We are in the process of considering next steps for taking forward this important area of work and will share further information in due course.

■ Cancer: Health Services

Rachael Maskell:

[\[12437\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a 10-year national cancer plan.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Health Mission sets the objective of building a National Health Service fit for the future. As part of that work, and in response to Lord Darzi's report, we have launched an extensive programme of engagement to develop a 10-Year Health Plan to reform the NHS. The plan will set out a bold agenda to deliver on the three big shifts from hospitals to the community, from analogue to digital, and from sickness to prevention.

In addition, following publication of the 10-Year Health Plan, we will develop a new national cancer plan, which will include further details on how we will improve outcomes for cancer patients.

We are now in discussions about what form that plan should take, and what its relationship to the 10-Year Health Plan and the Government's wider Health Mission should be, and will provide updates on this at the earliest opportunity.

■ Cancer: Young People

Abtisam Mohamed:

[\[12543\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce waiting times for the (a) diagnosis and (b) treatment of cancer in (i) teenagers and (ii) young adults.

Abtisam Mohamed:

[\[12544\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the priorities of (a) children and (b) young people with cancer are included in the ten-year plan.

Karin Smyth:

We are committed to getting the National Health Service diagnosing cancer earlier and treating it faster so that more patients survive this horrible set of diseases. This includes children, teenagers, and young adults.

The Department is taking steps to improving waiting times for cancer diagnosis and treatment, across all cancer patient groups in England. We will start by delivering an extra 40,000 scans, appointments, and operations each week to ensure that patients are seen as quickly as possible.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence has set out detailed guidance for general practitioners on the symptoms of cancer in children and young people,

recommending referral within 48 hours for those presenting with a range of potential cancer symptoms.

To support timely investigation after referral, we are working with the NHS to maximise the pace of the roll-out of additional diagnostic capacity, delivering the final year of the three-year investment plan for establishing community diagnostic centres, with capacity prioritised for cancer.

Lord Darzi's independent investigation into the NHS highlighted that there is more to be done to increase the speed at which patients are diagnosed with and treated for cancer. His report will inform our 10-Year Health Plan to reform the NHS, which will include further details on how we will improve cancer diagnosis, treatment, and outcomes.

On 21 October 2024, the Department launched a national engagement exercise to inform the plan. We encourage people and organisations who would like to share their views on the priorities of children and young people with cancer to do so. People can share their views at the following link:

<http://change.nhs.uk/>

Following the engagement exercise, the Department will carefully consider how the priorities of this group should be reflected in the plan and any subsequent work.

■ Cardiovascular diseases: Research

Sonia Kumar: **[11674]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is taking steps to commission research into new cardiovascular treatments.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Government, through the National Institute of Health and Care Research (NIHR) is committed to funding high quality, timely research that leads to improved outcomes for patients and the public and makes the health and social care system more efficient, effective, and safe. Research evidence is vital for improving treatments and outcomes for people, including those with cardiovascular disease.

The Department is proud to invest £1.5 billion per year on health research through the National Institute for Health and Care Research. Over the past five financial years between 2019/20 and 2023/24, the NIHR has invested £145.4 million on cardiovascular disease and stroke research directly through NIHR research programmes. Our wider investments in NIHR infrastructure, including strengthening specialist facilities, workforce, and support services to enable research in the health and care system, have enabled significant cardiovascular disease (CVD) and stroke research funded by other funders to take place.

The NIHR welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including CVD. As with other Government funders of health research, the NIHR does not allocate funding for specific disease areas.

■ Colonoscopy: Waiting Lists

Jim Shannon:

[12425]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people were on waiting lists for colonoscopies in each year between 2020 and 2024 by trust.

Jim Shannon:

[12426]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much was spent to (a) outsource and (b) insource additional resource to manage colonoscopy procedures in each of the last five years by trust.

Jim Shannon:

[12427]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to reform colonoscopy services.

Karin Smyth:

A table showing the number of people on a waiting list for a colonoscopy each year between 2020 and 2024, broken down by acute National Health Service trust, is attached. Monthly activity and waiting list data for diagnostics is published monthly, and is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/diagnostics-waiting-times-and-activity/monthly-diagnostics-waiting-times-and-activity/>

Validated data collections on the breakdown of insourced and outsourced activity by NHS trusts, including for individual procedures such as a colonoscopy, are not maintained at a national level, so we do not hold information on how much was spent to outsource or insource additional resources to manage colonoscopy procedures in each of the last five years, by trust.

The Government is committed to transforming diagnostic services, including for colonoscopies, and will support the NHS to increase capacity to meet the demand for these services.

The NHS is delivering on a number of specific steps to reduce waiting times for gastrointestinal (GI) endoscopy services, including colonoscopy procedures. This includes the establishment of a national transformation project to recover GI endoscopy services, investment in an additional 80 dedicated endoscopy rooms to expand capacity, as well as a number of Community Diagnostic Centres offering endoscopy services.

NHS England has also established GI endoscopy networks across the country. Whilst many are still in their infancy, one of the key functions of these networks is to address unwarranted variation in timely access to care. GI endoscopy training academies have also been established in each region to enable the training and education of the required workforce.

At the 2024 Autumn Budget, my Rt Hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced £1.5 billion of capital funding for new surgical hubs and diagnostic scanners. This will build capacity for over 30,000 additional procedures and over 1.25

million diagnostic tests, as well as new beds which will create more treatment space in emergency departments, reduce waiting times, and help shift more care into the community.

Attachments:

1. Colonoscopy Waiting List [TABLE for 12425, 12426, 12427 Colonoscopy Waiting List Size.xlsx]

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Rupert Lowe: [12550]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many social care staff (a) were dismissed and (b) resigned due to mandatory Covid-19 vaccination regulations.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Government does not hold this data.

Esther McVey: [12927]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 31 October 2024 to Question 11248 on Coronavirus: Vaccination, what discussions the MHRA has had with industry safety regulators on the potential implications of the Pfizer study abstract entitled Post Conditional Approval Active Surveillance Study Among Individuals in Europe Receiving the Pfizer-BioNTech Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Vaccine dated 12 March 2024 on an assessment of individuals' medical fitness to operate safety critical systems.

Andrew Gwynne:

The study abstract has been reviewed by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), as part of its continuous post approval safety monitoring procedures for the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine (Comirnaty). The abstract is available at the following link:

https://catalogues.ema.europa.eu/system/files/2024-06/C4591021%20Interim%205%20Study%20Report%20Abstract%20_0.pdf

The MHRA does not consider that any regulatory action is warranted at this time, therefore has not discussed this study abstract with industry safety regulators. The MHRA will review the final study report, when it is made available by Pfizer, as part of safety monitoring procedures.

The MHRA continues to closely monitor the safety of all COVID-19 vaccines and will take any regulatory action necessary should any new safety concerns be identified.

Ian Sollom: [13044]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of the updated 2024-2025 Nuvaxovid™ COVID-19 Vaccine.

Andrew Gwynne:

All vaccines in the United Kingdom must be authorised by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) before they can be placed on the UK market. The MHRA assesses all applications for authorisations of vaccines promptly, to ensure their safety, quality, and efficacy.

The updated 2024-2025 Nuvaxovid COVID-19 Vaccine has not been authorised by the MHRA. We are unable to confirm whether the MHRA has or has not received an application for Novavax's updated 2024-2025 Nuvaxovid COVID-19 Vaccine, as this information is considered commercially sensitive.

Pharmaceutical companies can decide to make information regarding the status of their Marketing Authorisation Applications publicly available, and the MHRA advocates that companies publish information on medicines in their pipelines, where and when it is reasonable to do so.

■ Defibrillators: Rural Areas**Stuart Anderson:**[\[12777\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase the availability of automated external defibrillators in rural areas.

Andrew Gwynne:

The treatment and prevention of cardiovascular disease is a priority for the Government. We want people to have the best chance of survival from cardiac arrest, and rapid intervention is central to improving outcomes. This is why the Government increased the number of publicly accessible automated external defibrillators (AEDs).

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

■ Dementia: Lincolnshire**Sir John Hayes:**[\[11545\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve the dementia diagnosis rate in (a) South Holland and the Deepings constituency and (b) Lincolnshire.

Stephen Kinnock:

The national target for dementia diagnosis is that 66.7% of the prevalent population has a diagnosis of dementia. Lincolnshire is at 67.8% because of prioritising improvements in diagnosis rates.

Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (LPFT) have set up a Dementia Diagnosis Rate (DDR) working group established with action plan to drive forward DDR recovery. This includes improving LPFT data and using the Population Health Management tool to identify any discrepancies with practice dementia registers.

To support recovery of the dementia diagnosis rates and implementation of the Dementia Care Pathway, NHS England has developed a dashboard for management information purposes. The aim is to support commissioners and providers of memory services with appropriate data.

Sir John Hayes:

[\[12683\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the average waiting time is for a dementia assessment in (a) South Holland and the Deepings constituency and (b) Lincolnshire.

Stephen Kinnock:

The constituency in question is split across two Older People Community Mental Health Teams (CMHT), Stamford and Spalding CMHTs. Whilst this does not map exactly with the constituency area, the average wait for the first appointment across the two CMHTs is 11.62 weeks.

Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (LPFT) has received funding to introduce a specific pathway for memory assessments, which will help tackle local waiting times for assessment and diagnosis of conditions such as dementia. Work is underway to finalise the model of care and to launch it towards the end of the financial year.

There has been continued LPFT recruitment funding for dedicated Memory Assessment Practitioners with increased assessment and diagnostic output, as well as recruitment for additional, dedicated Memory Assessment Service Consultants to increase diagnostic capacity.

■ Dementia: Reading West and Mid Berkshire

Olivia Bailey:

[\[12677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people are waiting for an appointment with a Memory Assessment Service for a dementia assessment in Reading West and Mid Berkshire constituency as of 4 November 2024.

Olivia Bailey:

[\[12678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the average waiting time for a dementia assessment is in Reading West and Mid Berkshire constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

NHS England does not hold this information centrally. Lord Darzi's independent review showed that a timely diagnosis is vital to ensuring that a person with dementia can access the advice, information, care, and support that can help them to live well and remain independent for as long as possible.

The Government is committed to transforming diagnostic services, including the detection and diagnosis of dementia, and will support the National Health Service to increase capacity to meet the demand for diagnostic services.

NHS England is committed to recovering the dementia diagnosis rates to the national ambition of 66.7%. This commitment is included in the current NHS priorities and operational planning guidance, reinforcing the importance of dementia as a key priority for the NHS, and providing a clear direction for integrated care boards.

To further reduce waiting times for diagnosis, NHS England has funded an evidence-based improvement project to fund two trusts in each region, 14 sites in total, to pilot the Diagnosing Advanced Dementia Mandate tool to improve the diagnosis of dementia and provision of support in care homes. All pilots completed at the end of May 2024, and it is anticipated that learning will be shared by end of the third quarter of 2024/25.

Olivia Bailey:

[\[12679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of people living with dementia in Reading West and Mid Berkshire constituency received a (a) care plan review and (b) new care plan in financial year 2023/24.

Stephen Kinnock:

NHS England does not hold this information centrally. NHS England is committed to delivering high quality care and support for every person with dementia, and central to this is the provision of personalised care and support planning for post diagnostic support.

To support the quality of dementia care planning by primary care providers, the Dementia: Good Personalised Care and Support Planning guide sets out how to ensure personalised care and support planning is undertaken consistently and reliably, and offers a quality assurance framework to ensure care planning is responsive to needs and preferences. The guide was developed with input from a diverse range of people living with dementia, their carers, and health and social care professionals.

The Quality and Outcomes Framework incentivises the annual review of care plans for patients diagnosed with dementia in general practice.

■ Eating Disorders

Dr Scott Arthur:

[\[11753\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to respond to the report by Beat Eating Disorders entitled *There's no place like home- the case for intensive community and day treatments for eating disorders*.

Stephen Kinnock:

We are aware of the report by Beat Eating Disorders entitled *There's no place like home - the case for intensive community and day treatments for eating disorders*. We

are not planning to formally respond to this report, however we are carefully considering its findings.

We recognise the devastating impact an eating disorder can have on someone's life, and the earlier treatment is provided, the greater the chance of recovery. NHS England is continuing to expand community-based eating disorder services capacity, including crisis care and intensive home treatment. By improving care in the community, the NHS can improve outcomes and recovery, reduce rates of relapse, or prevent eating disorders continuing into adulthood and, if admission is required as a very last resort, reduce lengths of stay.

■ Fractures: Health Services

James Wild:

[\[13008\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to expand Fracture Liaison Services in England.

Andrew Gwynne:

More than 500,000 fragility fractures occur every year, and up to 40% of fracture patients will suffer another fracture. I am pleased to reiterate the Government's commitment to expanding access to Fracture Liaison Services.

The Department is working closely with NHS England to develop plans to ensure better quality and access to these important preventive services. This includes exploring ways to best support systems, as Fracture Liaison Services are commissioned by integrated care boards, which make decisions according to local need.

■ General Practitioners

Rupert Lowe:

[\[12562\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on (a) the number of GP appointments available and (b) excess demand for those appointments in each of the last five years.

Stephen Kinnock:

The 12-month rolling sum of appointments in each of the last five years, excluding COVID-19 vaccination appointments, is as follows:

- 284,800,000 as of September 2020;
- 302,910,000 as of September 2021;
- 325,100,000 as of September 2022;
- 351,758,870 as of September 2023; and
- 376,460,990 as of September 2024.

We know that patients are finding it harder than ever to see a general practitioner (GP) and we are committed to fixing the crisis in GPs. Our plan to restore GPs will require both investment and reform, and we have already invested £82 million to

recruit 1,000 newly qualified GPs in 2024/25, which will increase the number of appointments delivered in GPs and take pressure off those currently working in the system.

■ **General Practitioners: Complaints**

Rupert Lowe:

[\[12563\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on complaints about GPs, broken down by GP nationality, in each of the last five years.

Stephen Kinnock:

Data is not collected or held on the nationality status of general practitioners (GPs) when undergoing a complaints procedure. Under the GP contract, practices must establish and operate a complaints procedure to deal with complaints made in relation to the provision of services. This includes practices making available to their patients a leaflet with details on how they may make a complaint or comment on the provision of services. Patients may either choose to complain to their healthcare provider, for instance a GP, or their local National Health Service commissioner.

■ **General Practitioners: Finance**

Laurence Turner:

[\[12560\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 31 October 2024 to Question 11046 on General Practitioners: Finance, when he plans to determine the overall GP contract investment in the 2025-26 financial year.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Department will confirm funding for general practices (GPs) for 2025/26 as part of the usual GP contract process later in the year, including through consultation with the sector.

■ **Gynaecology: Waiting Lists**

Angus MacDonald:

[\[12345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking with the devolved Administrations to help (a) reduce waiting times for gynaecological services and (b) address menstrual health inequalities.

Karin Smyth:

Whilst health is a devolved issue, we intend to work closely with our partners across the devolved administrations in providing support and sharing best practice, to reduce waiting lists and fix the National Health Service. Cutting waiting lists, including for gynaecology, is a key part of our Health Mission and a top priority for the Government. The Government is committed to putting patients first, which means making sure that they are seen on time and have the best possible experience during their care, no matter where they are treated in the United Kingdom.

The Government is also committed to prioritising women's health, as we build an NHS fit for the future, and women's equality will be at the heart of our missions. Department officials have met and continue to meet with counterparts across the four nations to share learning across a range of women's health policy issues, including menstrual health. Together we aim to deliver faster, improved, and more equitable health outcomes for all patients across the UK, and to strengthen our collaboration in achieving these common goals.

■ Health Professions: Complaints

Rupert Lowe:

[\[12564\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many complaints there were about the standard of English of (a) GPs, (b) consultants and (c) other health care professionals in the NHS in each of the last 10 years.

Stephen Kinnock:

No such data is collected. Many of the statutory health regulatory bodies have adopted the use of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) to assess workers for the health care setting. The overall IELTS English language test score of 7.0 has been set, which is the equivalent of C1 of the Common European Framework for Reference of Languages.

A public authority must also operate a complaints procedure so that if a member of the public feels that a public-facing public authority worker has insufficient proficiency in spoken English for the performance of their role, they can make a formal complaint to the public authority which is then investigated, and a response provided.

■ Health Professions: Rural Areas

Lee Anderson:

[\[12108\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department plans to take to increase the number of healthcare professionals in rural areas.

Karin Smyth:

The recent annual reports from the Chief Medical Officer for England set out the clear healthcare challenges patients face when living in remote, rural, and coastal areas.

It is clear that the National Health Service has faced chronic workforce shortages across all communities for years, and fixing this will take time. We have commissioned the 10-Year Health Plan, and a central and core part of this will be our workforce, and how we ensure we train and provide the staff, technology, and infrastructure the NHS needs to care for patients across our communities.

Plans and policies will align with the strategic objectives set out in the 10-Year Health Plan, and will support its delivery.

■ Health Services: Women

Chris Bloore:

[\[10306\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to implement the policies in the policy paper entitled Women's Health Strategy for England, published on 20 July 2022.

Karin Smyth:

This government is committed to prioritising women's health as we build an NHS fit for the future, and women's equality will be at the heart of our missions. We are considering how to take forward the Women's Health Strategy for England, and work continues to improve health outcomes for women. For example, the Department is continuing to work with NHS England to support the establishment of at least one pilot women's health hub in every integrated care system, following a £25 million investment. As of September 2024, 36 of the 42 ICBs reported to NHS England that their pilot women's health hub was open. Additionally, on 9th October, during Baby Loss Awareness Week, the Department launched an extension to the Baby Loss Certificate Service, meaning the service is now available for all historic losses, with no backdate, as well as future losses.

Blair McDougall:

[\[12156\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to (a) reduce waiting times for gynaecological procedures and (b) help support women's health.

Karin Smyth:

Nearly 600,000 women are on gynaecology waiting lists. It is unacceptable that patients are waiting too long to get the care they need. Cutting waiting lists, including for gynaecology procedures, is a key part of our Health Mission and a top priority for the Government.

We have committed to achieving the NHS Constitutional standard that 92% of patients should wait no longer than 18 weeks from Referral to Treatment by the end of this Parliament, including those waiting for gynaecology treatment. Funding has been confirmed to support the delivery of an extra 40,000 operations, scans, and appointments per week. Capital investment of £1.5 billion for new surgical hubs and scanners has been announced, alongside £70 million for new radiotherapy machines.

We are considering how to take forward the Women's Health Strategy for England, and work continues to improve health outcomes for women. For example, the Department is continuing to work with NHS England to support the establishment of at least one pilot women's health hub in every integrated care system, following a £25 million investment. As of September 2024, 36 of the 42 integrated care boards reported to NHS England that their pilot women's health hub was open. The Government is committed to prioritising women's health as we reform the National Health Service and will put women's equality at the heart of our missions.

■ Healthy Start Scheme

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck: [\[12732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will take steps to automatically enrol eligible families in the NHS Healthy Start programme.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Healthy Start scheme was introduced in 2006 to encourage a healthy diet for pregnant women, babies and young children under four from very low-income households. It can be used to buy, or put towards the cost of, fruit, vegetables, pulses, milk and infant formula. Healthy Start beneficiaries have access to free Healthy Start Vitamins for pregnant women and children aged under four.

Healthy Start now supports over 355,000 beneficiaries. This figure is higher than the previous paper voucher scheme.

The NHS Business Services Authority (NHS BSA) operates the Healthy Start scheme on behalf of the Department. All applicants to the Healthy Start scheme, where they meet the eligibility criteria, must accept the terms and conditions of the prepaid card at the point of application. As the prepaid card is a financial product and cannot be issued without the applicant accepting these terms, NHS BSA is not able to automatically provide eligible families with a prepaid card. However, the Healthy Start scheme is kept under review we are exploring all viable routes to improve uptake.

■ Hospitals: Milton Keynes

Chris Curtis: [\[12860\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the cost of the new Women's and Children's Hospital in Milton Keynes.

Chris Curtis: [\[12862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much funding the Women's and Children's Hospital in Milton Keynes has received up to the end of the 2023/24 financial year.

Karin Smyth:

I refer the Hon. Member for Milton Keynes North to the answer I gave on 6 November 2024 to the Question [11470](#).

■ Long Covid

David Smith: [\[11718\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what research his Department has commissioned on (a) the effects of and (b) treatment for long covid.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Department funds research on health and social care through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR).

Over the last five years, the Government, through NIHR and the Medical Research Council (MRC), has invested over £57 million in long COVID research, with almost £40 million of this through two specific research calls on long COVID. The NIHR specifically has invested £42.7 million towards research funding for long COVID. The projects funded aim to improve our understanding of the diagnosis and underlying mechanisms of the disease and the effectiveness of both pharmacological and non-pharmacological therapies and interventions, as well as to evaluate clinical care. Further information on the research into long COVID commissioned through the NIHR can be found at the following link:

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

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

■ **Maternity Services: Lincolnshire**

Sir John Hayes:

[11828]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve maternity services in Lincolnshire.

Karin Smyth:

The Department is supporting the National Health Service to deliver the three-year delivery plan for maternity and neonatal services across England, to make care safer, more personalised, and more equitable for women and babies.

In Lincolnshire, there have been recent improvements to perinatal pelvic health services, as well as implementation of the updated Saving Babies Lives Care Bundle, a package of interventions to reduce stillbirths, neonatal brain injury, neonatal deaths, and preterm birth.

The Midlands Heatmap Data, a tool for assessing maternity and neonatal care safety and quality, has shown a significant improvement, with Lincolnshire being the best performing in the region in August 2024.

■ **Medical Treatments**

Joe Robertson:

[12651]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will hold discussions with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence on the potential merits of considering the potential impact of new treatments on caregivers when determining the cost-effectiveness of those treatments.

Karin Smyth:

We have no plans to hold such discussions. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) develops its guidance independently and in line with its established methods and processes, which have been developed through extensive

engagement with interested parties to ensure that they reflect best practice and societal preferences.

In its evaluations of new medicines, the NICE considers National Health Service and publicly funded personal social services (PSS) costs and, when relevant, the health impact of treatments on carers. Any changes to the NICE's methods to include a wider economic perspective to, for example, account for productivity benefits to carers, would be methodologically and ethically challenging and could have unintended consequences. There is a risk that such a change could result in fewer treatments being recommended for populations that are disproportionately older, economically inactive, or have greater care needs. It is crucial that the NICE's methods remain fair, consistent, and provide the most health benefit for society.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Freddie van Mierlo:

[\[12620\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the letter of 22 July 2024 from the hon. member for Henley and Thame about step down beds at Chiltern Court, Henley on Thames.

Karin Smyth:

I received the hon. Member's letter and replied on 6 November 2024.

■ **Mental Health Services: Buckinghamshire**

Callum Anderson:

[\[11422\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the availability of community mental health services in Buckinghamshire.

Stephen Kinnock:

We recognise that too many people in places like Buckinghamshire are not receiving the mental health care they need.

The Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Berkshire West Integrated Care Board is responsible for providing health and care services, including community mental health services, to meet the needs of the people of Buckinghamshire.

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.

There are currently approximately 65 locally-funded early support hubs across England, offering early easy access mental health interventions to thousands of children and young people. The Department is running an £8 million Shared Outcomes Fund project throughout 2024/25 to boost and evaluate the impact of 24 of these existing early support hubs, which includes one based in High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, run by the Youth Enquiry Service.

In addition, work is ongoing across Government to deliver our commitment to set up Young Futures hubs in every community, offering open access mental health services for young people.

■ Mental Health Services: Children

Yasmin Qureshi: [\[9422\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to increase funding for children's mental health to (a) reduce waiting times for and (b) increase access to support.

Stuart Andrew: [\[9441\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to increase investment into the children's mental health system to (a) reduce waiting times for and (b) increase access to support.

Charlotte Nichols: [\[9672\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to increase funding for the children's mental health to (a) reduce waiting times for and (b) increase access to support.

Karl Turner: [\[9706\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to increase investment in the children's mental health system to (a) reduce waiting times and (b) ensure that more (i) children and (ii) young people can access support.

Neil Duncan-Jordan: [\[9855\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to increase investment in the children's mental health system to (a) reduce waiting times and (b) ensure that more (i) children and (ii) young people can access support.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 23 October 2024]: It is unacceptable that too many children and young 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. We are discussing our future investment in children and young people's mental health services.

The Department of Health and Social Care is working with the Department for Education to consider how to deliver our manifesto commitment of accessing a specialist mental health professional in every school. We need to ensure 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 toward rolling out Young Futures hubs in every community, offering open access mental health services for young people.

The Mental Health Bill currently before Parliament will deliver the Government's commitment to modernise the Mental Health Act 1983, so that it is fit for the 21st century. The Bill will amend the Act, which applies to England and Wales, and give patients detained under the Act greater choice, autonomy, rights, and support.

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

Luke Akehurst:

[\[12536\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps with local partners to ensure the availability of (a) parenting and (b) other programmes to improve the mental health of (i) infants, (ii) children and (iii) young people mental health.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Government has a bold new ambition to raise the healthiest generation of children ever. Launched in August 2022, the three-year Family Hubs and Start for Life programme provides approximately £300 million to 75 local authorities in England with high levels of deprivation, to improve outcomes for families with babies. This includes £100 million for bespoke perinatal mental health and parent-infant relationship support, laying the foundations for cognitive, emotional, and physical development.

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 to deliver support for teenagers at risk of being drawn into crime or facing mental health challenges.

■ **Mental Health Services: Farmers**

Rupert Lowe:

[\[12312\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department plans to take to improve mental health provision for farmers.

Stephen Kinnock:

We plan to recruit an additional 8,500 mental health workers across children and adult mental health services in England to reduce delays and provide faster treatment. Integrated care boards are responsible for providing health and care services to meet the needs of their local populations.

The Suicide prevention strategy for England: 2023 to 2028, published September 2023, sets out an ambition to conduct and commission research and data linkage projects, including supporting the Department for Environment, Food and Rural

Affairs to look at agricultural workers to understand the unique challenges in that occupational group and respond appropriately.

Through its Farming and Countryside Programme, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs is working with a range of farming charities, including the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution and the Yellow Wellies charity, which have highlighted mental health challenges for farming communities.

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 hospital admission.

■ **Mental Health Services: Schools**

Mohammad Yasin:

[\[12471\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress his Department has made on delivering specialist mental health professionals in every school.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Department of Health and Social Care is working with the Department for Education and NHS England to consider how to deliver our manifesto commitment of providing access to a specialist mental health professional in every school. We need to ensure 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.

■ **Mental Health Services: Slaughterhouses**

Laurence Turner:

[\[12008\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will (a) make an assessment of the adequacy of access to mental health support provisions for abattoir workers and (b) take steps to ensure that workers in this industry have access to such support.

Stephen Kinnock:

There are no plans to make such an assessment. Access to mental health services in the National Health Service is based on clinical need, including for abattoir workers.

Too 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 we give mental health the same attention and focus as physical health and that people can be confident of accessing high quality mental health support when they need it, regardless of the sector in which they work.

Workers can also get help with their mental health from the NHS by speaking to their general practitioner, by self referring to local NHS Talking Therapies services, by calling NHS111 and selecting option two, or consulting the NHS or Every Mind Matters websites, or from the many voluntary, community or social enterprise organisations that provide support for people's mental health.

■ Mental Health Services: Waiting Lists

Mary Glendon:

[6227]

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

Stephen Kinnock:

The latest data for July 2024 show 90.7% of people completing treatment for talking therapies waited less than 6 weeks for their first appointment, against a target of 75%.

More broadly 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 we give mental health the same attention and focus as physical health and that people can be confident of accessing high quality mental health support when they need it.

We will recruit an additional 8,500 mental health workers to reduce delays and provide faster treatment.

By cutting mental health waiting lists and intervening earlier with more timely mental health support, we can get this country back to health and back to work, helping to grow the economy.

■ NHS: Employers' Contributions

Dr Caroline Johnson:

[R] [11938]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to paragraph 2.40 of the Autumn Budget 2024, HC 295, published on 30 October 2024, what estimate he has made of the increased cost to the NHS (a) directly and (b) indirectly of the increase in employer national insurance contributions.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 4 November 2024]: We have taken tough decisions to fix the foundations in the public finances at Autumn Budget, this enabled the SR settlement of £22.6 billion increase in resource spending for the Department of Health and Social Care from 2023-24 outturn to 2025-26.

The Employer National Insurance rise will be implemented April 2025, the Department of health and Social Care will set out further details on allocation of funding for next year in due course.

■ NHS: Finance

Rupert Lowe:

[\[12311\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to paragraph 2.70 of Autumn Budget 2024, HC 295, published on 30 October 2024, what estimate he has made of the proportion of additional funding for the NHS that will be spent on (a) staff, (b) equipment and (c) services directly involved in the care of patients.

Karin Smyth:

The Budget set out the Revenue Departmental Expenditure Limit (RDEL) for the Department, which is increasing by £22.6 billion for day-to-day spending, including staff, compared to 2023/24, and the Capital Departmental Expenditure Limits (CDEL), which is increasing by £3.1 billion, including for equipment spending.

Exact breakdowns of RDEL and CDEL plans for staff, equipment, and services directly involved in the care of patients will be known once the planning round for 2025/26 has concluded, following the publication of system allocations and planning guidance for the next financial year.

■ Nutrition: Obesity

Gareth Snell:

[\[12440\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is taking steps with the food and drink industry to help tackle (a) poor diets and (b) obesity.

Andrew Gwynne:

From data collected through the National Diet and Nutrition Survey, the Government knows that, compared to dietary recommendations, people are generally consuming too much sugar, saturated fat, salt, too many calories, and not enough fruit, vegetables, or fibre. This contributes to many people having poor diets and the high levels of obesity seen in both children and adults.

The prevention of ill health is a priority for the Government, as is creating the healthiest generation of children. As the providers of the food and drink we eat, it is clear that the food industry has a key role in helping to improve the nation's diet. For this reason, the Government has already published its response to the consultation on restricting junk food advertising on television and online, putting the legislation on track, and is committed to banning the sale of high caffeine energy drinks to under 16-year-olds.

Other existing policies such as the legislated restrictions on the locations in supermarkets in which foods and drinks that are high in saturated fat, sugar, or salt can be promoted, and the voluntary reformulation programme, aim to encourage the food industry to make everyday food and drink healthier. Voluntary industry guidelines to reduce levels of salt and sugar in, and improve the marketing and labelling of, commercially available food and drink aimed at babies and young children aged up to 36 months, that form an additional workstream for the reformulation programme, are also expected to be published in the next month. The

Department continues to review the balance between mandatory and voluntary incentives to help tackle poor diets and reduce obesity.

■ **Pancreatic Cancer: Health Education**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[12712\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to increase public awareness of pancreatic cancer symptoms.

Andrew Gwynne:

NHS England is already taking steps to deliver a range of interventions to improve awareness of pancreatic cancer symptoms. NHS England runs Help Us Help You campaigns to increase knowledge of cancer symptoms and address barriers to acting on them, to encourage people to come forward as soon as possible to see their general practitioner. The campaigns focus on a range of symptoms, including symptoms of pancreatic cancer, as well as encouraging body awareness, to help people spot symptoms across a wide range of cancers at an early point.

NHS England is also working with Pancreatic Cancer UK to develop a public-facing Family History Checker, which enables people, and their families, affected by pancreatic cancer to self-assess if they have inherited risk. People identified of being at risk are referred directly to the European Registry of Hereditary Pancreatic Diseases research trail, which aims to understand inherited conditions of the pancreas. Referrals to the trail can be made by any healthcare professional across all health sectors, or by individuals via self-referral.

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

■ **Prostate Cancer: Blood Tests**

Dr Neil Hudson:

[\[12577\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to encourage GPs to proactively discuss (a) prostate cancer risk and (b) the option to have a prostate-specific antigen test with (i) Black men aged 45 and over and (ii) men aged 45 and over with a family history of prostate cancer.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Prostate Cancer Risk Management Programme (PCRMP) provides general practitioners (GPs) with information and guidance to counsel men who have no symptoms, but who wish to have a Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) test. It highlights the potential benefits and harms of PSA testing so that men, including those at higher risk, can make an informed decision about whether to have the test.

Based on the current evidence, the PCRMP's guidance is for GPs not to proactively offer a PSA to men without symptoms. This is because of the high level of inaccuracy of the PSA test, which could lead to unnecessary tests and treatments that carry risks

of life-changing harm such as urinary and faecal incontinence, sexual dysfunction, as well as a smaller but serious risk of sepsis. Additionally, some prostate cancers may not produce elevated PSA levels, leading to false-negative results that provide deceptive reassurance.

■ Prostate Cancer: Screening

Alistair Strathern:

[\[12805\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential benefits of making prostate cancer screening mandatory.

Andrew Gwynne:

Screening for prostate cancer is currently not recommended by the UK National Screening Committees (UK NSC). This is because of the inaccuracy of the current best test, called the Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA). A PSA-based screening programme could harm some men as many would be diagnosed with a cancer that would not have caused them problems during their life. This would lead to additional tests and treatments which can also have harmful side effects, such as sexual dysfunction and incontinence.

The UK NSC regularly reviews its recommendations, and the evidence review for prostate cancer screening is underway and plans to report within the UK NSC's three-year work plan.

The evidence review includes modelling the clinical effectiveness and cost of several approaches to prostate cancer screening, including different potential ways of screening the whole population from 40 years of age onwards, and targeted screening aimed at groups of people identified as being at higher than average risk, such as black men or men with a family history of cancer.

■ Protective Clothing: Coronavirus

Rupert Lowe:

[\[12325\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much and what proportion of personal protective equipment (PPE) purchased to respond to covid-19 was incinerated; and what the value was of the incinerated PPE.

Rupert Lowe:

[\[12326\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the cost to the public purse was of storing personal protective equipment in China since the outbreak of the covid-19 pandemic.

Karin Smyth:

As of the end of September 2024, approximately 1,049,700 pallets, or 23%, of personal protective equipment (PPE) has been recycled through energy from waste and recycling. The original cost to purchase was £8.644 billion, and all stock categorised as excess has no residual market value.

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the total cost of storing PPE in China was £60.6 million. PPE has not been stored outside of the United Kingdom since June 2023.

■ Psychiatric Hospitals

Tom Hayes:

[\[10327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve mental health hospitals.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Health Services Safety Investigations Body (HSSIB) is currently conducting an investigation into mental health inpatient settings to identify ways we can improve mental health care for people with severe mental illness, protect patients and the public, and create a safe working environment for staff. The HSSIB's findings will be published on a rolling basis from the autumn to drive improvements in patient safety and National Health Service mental health services, and the investigation is expected to conclude by the end of March 2025.

Additionally, NHS England is taking forward a new Mental Health, Learning Disability and Autism Inpatient Quality Transformation Programme to support cultural change and a reimagined model of care for the future across all NHS-funded mental health, learning disability, and autism inpatient settings. Local health systems are currently developing three-year plans to localise and realign inpatient care in line with this vision.

To improve the mental health estate, over £400 million has been spent between 2020/21 and 2023/24 to replace dormitories in mental health facilities with single ensuite bedrooms. 41 schemes had been completed by May 2024 replacing 657 beds out of 1355.

As part of phase 1 of the Spending Review £26 million of capital investment has been announced to open new mental health crisis centres.

Our 10-Year Health Plan will set out a bold agenda to deliver on the three big shifts needed to move healthcare from hospital to the community, from analogue to digital and from sickness to prevention and we are currently gathering views from members of the public, staff and organisations on their experiences and ideas to reform the NHS and make it fit for the future.

■ Rare Diseases: Medical Treatments

Steve Darling:

[\[12498\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions his Department has had with NICE on reducing the time taken for patients to access treatment for very rare diseases in cases when there is uncertainty on the (a) incidence and (b) prevalence of the disease.

Karin Smyth:

The Department has regular discussions with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) about a range of issues, including in relation to timelines for appraisals. The NICE aims to issue draft guidance on new medicines, including for rare diseases, as close to the time of licensing as possible.

■ Respite Care: Disability**Mrs Elsie Blundell:**[\[12576\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to provide funding for respite care for people with disabilities away from their care setting.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Government is providing at least £600 million of new grant funding for social care, as part of the broader estimated real-terms uplift to core local government spending power of approximately 3.2%. Local authorities are responsible for how they use the available funding to fulfil their duties under the Care Act (2014).

■ Smoking: Health Services**Rachael Maskell:**[\[12435\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to (a) maintain and (b) increase funding for local authority smoking cessation services; and if he will take steps to raise public awareness of those services.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Government has invested an additional £70 million in 2024/25 to support local authority-led stop smoking services to help smokers quit smoking, and this funding is being used to build capacity and demand. We encourage local authorities to invest in marketing and promoting local interventions to quit smoking. The Department will confirm the settlement for different programmes for future years in due course.

■ Social Workers**Satvir Kaur:**[\[12668\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to support social workers.

Stephen Kinnock:

We support social workers through our existing initiatives such as bursaries, which is the main funding route to support students studying Higher Education Institute courses, and the Assessed Supported Year in Employment, which provides support and assessment for newly qualified social workers.

■ Surgical Hubs: Orthopaedics

Ayoub Khan: [\[12615\]](#)

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, whether any of the new surgical hubs will focus solely on orthopaedic procedures.

Dr Beccy Cooper: [\[12650\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to paragraph 2.71 of the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 October, how many new surgical hubs will focus solely on orthopaedic procedures.

Karin Smyth:

The Department, in collaboration with NHS England, will outline details of the funding allocation for surgical hubs at the earliest opportunity. This will include the number of hubs to be established, and their specialty focus. Each hub will be developed based on the needs of patients and the current waiting list pressures in the areas that they cover.

■ Vorasidenib

Andrew Rosindell: [\[12370\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of vorasidenib for treatment of low-grade gliomas.

Andrew Rosindell: [\[12371\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the MHRA is considering the approval of vorasidenib for the treatment of low grade gliomas.

Karin Smyth:

It is critical that medicines used in the United Kingdom are safe and effective and as such, medicines cannot be marketed in the UK without a marketing authorisation. These are granted by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) which assesses all medicines with regard to their quality, safety, and efficacy. Vorasidenib, sold under the brand name Voranigo, has not been licensed by the MHRA as a treatment for low-grade gliomas. It is the responsibility of the company to apply to the MHRA for the relevant marketing authorisation. Should an application for it be received, the MHRA will consider this accordingly.

In England, newly licensed medicines are also appraised by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) to determine whether they represent a clinically and cost-effective use of National Health Service resources. If the manufacturer of vorasidenib seeks a licence from the MHRA for the treatment of low-grade gliomas, then the NICE will consider it through the Technology Appraisal programme.

HOME OFFICE**■ Asylum: Sri Lanka****Nick Timothy:**[\[12545\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an estimate of the number and proportion of Sri Lankan nationals located on Diego Garcia that will be eligible to claim asylum in the UK.

Dame Angela Eagle:

This Government inherited a deeply troubling situation that remained unresolved under the last administration for years after the migrants' arrival on Diego Garcia.

Arrangements are being made for the temporary relocation, subject to entry clearance applications and biometrics being submitted and there being no adverse information found as result, of 61 individuals located in Diego Garcia, given serious welfare and safeguarding concerns including for children on the island. Those with criminal convictions or under investigation will be excluded.

Any asylum claims made in the UK and admitted to the UK asylum system, will be carefully considered in line with our international obligations.

Nick Timothy:[\[12547\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum claims of Sri Lankan nationals located on Diego Garcia are being considered by her Department.

Dame Angela Eagle:

None. I refer the Hon Member to PQ 12545.

■ Equipment: Theft**Rebecca Smith:**[\[12189\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her timetable is for bringing forward the secondary legislation under the Equipment Theft (Prevention) Act 2023 to define the minimum standards for (a) immobilisers and (b) forensic markings required at point of sale.

Dame Diana Johnson:

We are committed to implementing the Equipment Theft (Prevention) Act 2023, which aims to prevent the theft and re-sale of high-value equipment, particularly for use in an agricultural setting.

The necessary secondary legislation to implement the Act will set out the detail, which will include minimum required standards.

I met with Ruth Bailey, CEO of Agriculture Association on the 5th November 2024 . I am currently considering the views of those who may be affected by the legislation and its regulations, to understand the potential implications and determine the scope of the legislation. I will be in contact with the industry during the process and hope to make a decision shortly.

■ Gender Based Violence

Alex McIntyre:

[\[12659\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking with Cabinet colleagues to help tackle violence against women and girls.

Jess Phillips:

This Government has set out an unprecedented ambition to halve violence against women and girls (VAWG) within a decade. Achieving this mission will require a transformation in the way we work together on this issue across Government, public services, charities and the private sector.

We have already taken significant steps to improve the policing and criminal justice response to these heinous crimes, including the introduction of domestic abuse specialists in 999 control rooms and the belated roll-out of Domestic Abuse Protection Orders. The Home Office is also working with the NPCC and the College of Policing on the use of data-led tools to pursue the most prolific perpetrators.

To drive progress on the mission, we have established a violence against women and girls ministerial group, which will drive activity across Government departments, ranging from prevention work in schools to sustained support for victims and survivors.

■ Hate Crime: LGBT+ People

Alex McIntyre:

[\[12660\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on the effectiveness of legislation in preventing hate crime offences against LGBT+ people in Gloucester constituency.

Dame Diana Johnson:

This Government is absolutely committed to tackling all forms of hate crime across England and Wales, and I will continue to work with ministerial colleagues across relevant Government departments on how to strengthen the effectiveness of hate crime legislation.

■ Home Office: Civil Servants

Sir Ashley Fox:

[\[9276\]](#)

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

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Home Office has 24,311 desks occupied by 38,775 staff across its core office estate.

The Home Office does not disclose the locations of each of its office buildings for security reasons, so cannot provide a breakdown of the number of desks at each location.

■ **HOPE not hate: Finance**

Sir John Hayes:

[\[12248\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has provided funding to Hope Not Hate since 5 July 2024.

Dame Diana Johnson:

I refer the Hon Member to my response to PQ 10945.

■ **Immigration Controls: Pakistan**

Gregory Stafford:

[\[12333\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department taking steps to prevent (a) members of Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan and (b) others involved in violent incidents against Ahmadi Muslims in Pakistan from entering the UK.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Home Office does not comment on individual cases.

The Immigration Rules provide for the refusal of entry clearance, permission to enter and permission to stay on general grounds, regardless of the category in which an individual makes an application.

A person will usually be refused on general grounds if there is any evidence in their background, immigration history, criminal records or past behaviour which shows that they should not be allowed to enter or stay in the UK.

■ **Immigration: EU Nationals**

Chris Murray:

[\[12643\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many EU migrants transferred from pre-settled status to settled status and were resident in Scotland in 2023.

Chris Murray:

[\[12644\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many EU migrants (a) transferred from pre-settled status to settled status and (b) were resident in Scotland in 2022.

Seema Malhotra:

The Home Office publishes data on the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) in '[Immigration System Statistics](#)'. However, data of people moving from pre-settled status to settled status is not broken down by place of residence or UK nation or region.

The published statistics can be found in the [EU Settlement Scheme](#) data tables.

Information on how to use the dataset can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbook. The latest data relate to 2024 Q2.

■ Intimate Image Abuse: Artificial Intelligence

Samantha Niblett:

[\[12602\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the safety of (a) women and (b) children online in light of the use of AI in the creation of indecent images; and what discussions she has had with cabinet colleagues on this issue.

Jess Phillips:

Women and children receive a disproportionate amount of online abuse, and the exponential rise of AI has further exacerbated this threat. That is why tackling child sexual abuse and violence against women & girls (VAWG), including when these crimes take place online, remains a top priority for this government.

Under the Online Safety Act 2023, it is an offence to share or threaten to share intimate images without consent and this includes "deepfake" images. In September 2024, this Government made the sharing of intimate images without consent a 'priority offence' - the most serious class of online crime under the Online Safety Act. Companies in scope of the Act's duties will now be required to proactively tackle this content on their platforms. This Government has also committed to banning the creation of sexually explicit "deepfake" images and is working at pace to identify a suitable legislative vehicle.

With regards to child sexual abuse imagery, UK law is very clear that it is an offence to produce, store, share or search for any material that contains or depicts child sexual abuse. This prohibition also includes pseudo-imagery that may have been generated by artificial intelligence.

Possession of indecent photographs or pseudo-photographs of children carries a maximum sentence of 5 years' imprisonment. In addition, the offence of taking, making, distribution and possession with a view to distribution of any indecent photograph or pseudo-photograph of a child under 18 carries a maximum sentence of 10 years' imprisonment.

Technology companies, including those developing generative artificial intelligence products, have a duty to ensure their products are designed with robust guardrails in place that prevent them from being misused by offenders to create artificially generated child sexual abuse material. This Government is fully committed to tackling the creation of CSAM online and will use every lever possible to prevent it.

■ Knives: Amnesties

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[12464\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many surrender bins there were during the knife amnesty between 26 August 2024 and 23 September 2024.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Between 26 August 2024 and 23 September 2024, the Government ran a surrender and compensation scheme to allow owners of zombie-style knives and zombie-style machetes to surrender them and claim compensation before these weapons became prohibited by law on 24 September 2024.

All police force areas in England and Wales designated specific police stations where weapons could be surrendered, and a list of the designated police stations was published at:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66c8a1f099faef7c8c117834/Zombie-Style-Knives-List-of-Designated-Police-Stations.pdf>

This Government is working with its new Coalition to tackle knife crime on the design of future surrender and compensation schemes.

The scheme required those surrendering a weapon to attend a designated police station where a staff member or police officer would take control of the weapon, and if the person was claiming compensation, their details would be taken.

■ Knives: Crime**Manuela Perteghella:****[12348]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to tackle knife crime in late night venues.

Dame Diana Johnson:

This Government is taking action to prevent knife crime across the country. Halving knife crime over the next decade is a key part of the Government's mission to take back our streets. We are taking steps to realise this ambition and ensure all our community venues are kept safe. For example, we have banned Zombie style knives and zombie style machetes. The manufacture, supply, sale and possession of zombie-style knives and machetes was outlawed on 24 September 2024.

We will also create a new Young Futures programme - intervening earlier to stop young people being drawn into crime. It is vital we have a system that can identify and support those young people who need it most and we will be introducing Prevention Partnerships and Young Futures Hubs to help deliver this.

■ Nature Conservation: Crime**Tracy Gilbert:****[12535]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to make wildlife crimes notifiable.

Dame Diana Johnson:

This Government recognises the importance of tackling wildlife crime, which is why, along with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Home Office directly funds the National Wildlife Crime Unit to help tackle these crimes.

There are currently no plans to make wildlife crimes notifiable. Any non-notifiable wildlife crime reported to the police can still be investigated where appropriate, as Chief Constables have operational independence to tackle the crimes that matter most to their communities.

■ Neighbourhood Watch Schemes

Andrew Rosindell: [\[12381\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to support existing neighbourhood watch organisations.

Andrew Rosindell: [\[12398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much funding her Department has provided to neighbourhood watch organisations in each of the last five years.

Dame Diana Johnson:

This Government hugely values the work of local Neighbourhood Watch groups and the role they play in making our communities feel safe.

The Home Office has provided funding for Neighbourhood Watch for the last 20 years, including providing £280,000 in funding per year in each of the last five years.

■ Offenders: Sexual Offences

Sir Ashley Fox: [\[12883\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what data her Department holds on the number of times that registered sex offenders have (a) attempted to change and (b) been prevented from changing their name by legal means in the last 12 months.

Sir Ashley Fox: [\[12884\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what data her Department holds on the number of registered sex offenders subject to restrictions on internet use who have obtained unrestricted internet access in the last two years.

Jess Phillips:

The notification requirements in Part 2 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 are an automatic consequence of a conviction for a sexual offence in Schedule 3 to that Act. Offenders subject to the notification requirements must notify the police of (among other things) any new name within three days of using it.

In addition to the notification requirements, courts may make civil orders (upon application by the police) to place restrictions (including on internet use) and/or requirements on individuals to prevent sexual harm to the public.

- Sexual harm prevention orders (SHPOs) can be applied to anyone convicted or cautioned for a sexual or violent offence, including where offences are committed overseas; and

- Sexual risk orders can be applied to any individual who poses a risk of sexual harm in the UK or abroad, even if they have never been convicted.

Data on the number of registered sex offenders, the number of breaches of notification requirements, and the number of civil SHPOs made is published annually in the Ministry of Justice's Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements. The most recent statistics, published on 31 October showed 6,093 SHPOs were made in 2023/4. Data is not currently collected centrally on specific restrictions in civil orders other than foreign travel restrictions.

As part of our mission to halve violence against women and girls in a decade, we will help ensure the police relentlessly pursue and manage those perpetrators who pose the greatest risk to women. Data is not collected centrally on the volume of sex offenders that change their name.

■ Police: Deployment

Lisa Smart:

[12303]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what percentage of police officers are currently classified as deployable; and what the primary reasons are for officers being deemed non-deployable.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Home Office does not have an official measure of 'deployable'.

The Home Office collects and publishes data annually on the number and proportion of police officers available for duty as at 31 March each year in the 'Police Workforce, England and Wales' statistical bulletin, available here:

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

Table H1 of the data tables accompanying the publication provides the number and proportion of police officers available for duty, by Police Force Area, as at 31 March 2024. The number of police officers available for duty is calculated by excluding those on long-term absence (that has lasted for more than 28 calendar days). Long-term absence includes career breaks, compassionate leave, maternity or paternity leave, sickness, special leave, study leave and suspension.

The number of police officers available for duty includes police officers that are on recuperative (duties falling short of full deployment, undertaken by a police officer following an injury, accident, illness or medical incident) or adjusted (duties falling short of full deployment, in respect of which workplace adjustments have been made to overcome barriers to working) duties. The Home Office does not collect data on the reason for recuperative or adjusted duties.

Table W5 and W6 of the data tables accompanying the publication provide the number and proportion of police officers on recuperative and adjusted duties, by Police Force Area, as at 31 March 2024.

The Home Office does not collect data on officers that are non-deployable due to management restricted duties.

■ Police: Labour Turnover and Recruitment**Lisa Smart:** [\[12304\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment her Department has made of trends in the level of (a) recruitment and (b) retention in police forces.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The latest Home Office statistics for the overall Police Workforce show a 1.2% increase when compared to the previous year. The total paid police workforce in the 43 territorial police forces in England and Wales was 236,588 full-time equivalents (FTE) as at 31 March 2024; an increase of 2,752 FTE, compared to 233,836 FTE as at 31 March 2023. This includes 147,746 FTE police officers (up 0.2% on 147,434 in March 2023); and 81,303 FTE police staff and designated officers (up 3.4% on 78,596 in March 2023).

This Government is committed to ensuring police forces are supported to tackle crime effectively. As part of the Government's Safer Streets mission, the Home Secretary has made a clear commitment to strengthen neighbourhood policing through the introduction of a Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee. This includes getting thousands of additional neighbourhood police officers and PCSOs back on the beat in communities across the country.

■ Prisoners' Release: Foreign Nationals**Mr Gregory Campbell:** [\[12694\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many foreign nationals released from prison in 2023 and deported have subsequently returned to the UK.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The information requested on the number of returning foreign national offenders is not available from published statistics.

A deportation order requires a foreign national offender to leave the UK and prohibits them from entering the UK while it remains in force. Anyone discovered at the border attempting to do so will be automatically denied entry or detained. Entering in breach of a deportation order is a criminal offence under section 24(1)(a) of the 1971 Act, so if an individual who was previously deported is found again in the UK, other than at the border, they will again be liable to be detained and returned to prison.

Section 40 of the Nationality and Borders Act 2022 increased the statutory maximum sentence for breach of a deportation order from 6 months to 5 years.

■ Undocumented Migrants: Costs**Rupert Lowe:** [\[12328\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an estimate of the cost to the public purse of irregular migration in the next five years.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The costs of the asylum system are kept under constant review and are published on an annual basis.

Decisions made by this government since being in office are estimated to save £7 Billion in Net Present Value (NPV) over the next 10 years.

■ Visas: Digital Technology**Kim Johnson:**[\[12514\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has made an equalities impact assessment on the transition from Biometric Resident Permits to eVisas.

Kim Johnson:[\[12515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has made a human rights impact assessment of the transition from Biometric Resident Permits to eVisas.

Seema Malhotra:

An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was completed on the first phase of the roll out of eVisas to EEA nationals on 9 November 2020, which built on the Policy Equality Statement (PES) for the EUSS which was produced in 2017 and published on the gov.uk website on 18 November 2020:

[Policy equality statement: EU Settlement Scheme \(accessible version\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\).](#)

A separate EIA considering equalities issues in relation to the use of digital only right to work and rent checks was published on gov.uk in June 2022:

[Digital only right to work and rent checks: equality impact assessment \(accessible\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

We are also in the process of reviewing our eVisas EIA, setting out further analysis of the equalities issues to reflect the current stage in the roll out of eVisas. We plan to publish an up-to-date version of this EIA on gov.uk in due course, and we will continue to keep the issue under review.

Human rights impacts on those with protected characteristics are part of the EIA consideration.

■ Visas: Hong Kong**David Pinto-Duschinsky:**[\[12317\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the accessibility of Cantonese-language guidance to Hongkongers applying for eVisa to replace their Biometric Residence Permit.

Seema Malhotra:

We have ensured that the wording used to explain how to create a UVKI account and get access to an eVisa is simple and can be easily translated using various free online services. In consultation with stakeholders, we are also considering providing information about the transition to eVisas in other languages.

We are also working closely with our partner agency in delivering engagement activity with community groups, as they will be producing guidance materials translated into key languages.

We will continue to work with British Embassy communications teams at Post to explore the need for translations in specific regions. Where appropriate, we can provide editable social media assets that can be translated to support customer awareness of the changes to the immigration system in local languages.

We have engaged with, among others, the education sector, employers, local authorities and voluntary sector organisations to reach those affected by the transition to eVisas, including vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups. Many thousands of people have attended our calls.

People can nominate a 'helper' and give them limited access to their account, so that they can assist with creating a UKVI account, completing details to access an eVisa, and with any immigration application.

Where a person is unable to manage their own affairs due to, for example, age or disability, a 'proxy', who is authorised to act on their behalf, can create and manage the account on their behalf.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**■ Buildings: Safety****Mike Amesbury:**[\[12118\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department is taking to secure contributions towards the costs of building safety remediation from cladding manufacturers.

Alex Norris:

This Government agrees that manufacturers should be held to account for their role in the Grenfell tragedy. The Prime Minister has committed to writing to all companies, including product manufacturers, found by the Inquiry to have been part of these horrific failings, as the first step to stopping them being awarded government contracts. This process is being led by the Minister for the Cabinet Office. Initial letters have now been sent to all 49 organisations named in the report, each of which bear different levels of responsibility for the failings that led to the Grenfell tragedy, including those that are construction product manufacturers.

This Government is also committed to tackling the significant issues in relation to construction products identified in the Grenfell Inquiry, and reviews by Dame Judith

Hackitt and Paul Morrell and Anneliese Day. We will bring forward proposals for systemwide reform of the construction products regulatory regime to give consumers confidence and underpin supply chains and housing delivery.

■ **Community Ownership Fund**

James Cartlidge:

[\[11941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if it is her Department's policy to continue the Community Ownership Fund beyond March 2025.

Alex Norris:

Communities will rightly be seeking clarity regarding the future of the Community Ownership Fund.

This Government was elected on a manifesto that stressed its commitment to the communities' sector and community ownership through empowering communities to own and run those local assets which mean the most to them.

We recognise uncertainty is challenging for groups seeking to save vital community assets; the Government is carefully considering all available options and will confirm plans in due course.

■ **Constituencies: British Nationals Abroad**

Kirith Entwistle:

[\[12816\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing overseas constituencies for elections to the House of Commons.

Rushanara Ali:

The Government has no plans at this time to introduce overseas constituencies for elections to the House of Commons. We are focused on delivering on our manifesto commitments to strengthen our democracy and encourage participation – including by giving 16- and 17- year olds the right to vote in all elections

■ **Dedicated Schools Grant**

Priti Patel:

[\[12295\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to extend the statutory override on the treatment of deficits to the dedicated schools grant after the 2025-26 financial year.

Jim McMahon:

We will work with the sector when considering how we can help councils manage the impacts of Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficits on their finances.

This Government recognises the vital work that local councils do for their communities, and we stand ready to speak to any council that is experiencing financial difficulties.

■ Empty Property: Shops

Sir John Hayes:

[\[11827\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to reduce the number of unoccupied shops in town centres in South Holland and the Deepings constituency.

Alex Norris:

This Government is committed to supporting our high-street businesses. At Autumn Budget, the Government announced that it is retaining and reforming the Long-Term Plan for Towns, with Spalding being one of 75 towns to receive up to £20 million in extra support for local growth.

High Street Rental Auctions (HSRA), a new power for English local authorities, introduced through the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 (LURA), will provide local authorities with a tool to tackle vacancy, promote minimum letting standards for commercial units and flexible rents.

More generally, the English Devolution Bill will introduce a strong new 'right to buy' for valued community assets which will help safeguard our high streets. More details will be announced in due course.

■ High Rise Flats: Fire Prevention

Mike Amesbury:

[\[12119\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment her Department has made of the effectiveness of the Fire Safety Reinsurance Facility.

Alex Norris:

The Government will monitor the impact of the industry-led Fire Safety Reinsurance Facility on buildings insurance premiums and competition in the market.

We understand the financial and emotional impact that extreme insurance premiums are having on leaseholders, and will review how to better protect leaseholders from costs and push for fair premiums for leaseholders in buildings with fire safety issues.

■ Local Government Finance: Greater Manchester and West Midlands

David Simmonds:

[\[11927\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to paragraph 2.98 of Autumn Budget 2024, HC 295, published on 30 October 2024, which new funding streams will be placed into the single pots for (a) Greater Manchester and (b) the West Midlands Combined Authorities.

Alex Norris:

Delivering integrated settlements in Greater Manchester and the West Midlands will provide meaningful control over funding and improve the fragmented funding landscape for Mayoral Combined Authorities with a flexible single pot.

The funds in scope, formulae and final allocations for the West Midlands and Greater Manchester will be published in due course and commence at the start of the 2025-26 financial year.

■ Local Plans

Clive Jones: [\[12338\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 31 October 2024 to Question 11148 on Local Plans, if she will write to leaders of local authorities to ask for Local Growth Plans.

Alex Norris:

As places with the leaders with the widest range of powers, functions, and funding, we are working with each of the Mayoral Combined Authorities and the Greater London Authority to produce a Local Growth Plan. But everywhere has an important role to play in driving local growth, with many local authorities having or developing local economic strategies, and we will set out the role of these strategies in supporting growth shortly.

■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Official Cars

Charlie Dewhirst: [\[11975\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answers of 16 October 2024 to Questions 7018 and 7019 on Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Official Cars, which senior officials have access to a government car; and whether those officials had that access before the general election.

Charlie Dewhirst: [\[11976\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 16 October 2024 to Question 7018 on Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Official Cars, how many of those allocated two vehicles are electric cars.

Alex Norris:

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.

■ Parks: Urban Areas

Paula Barker: [\[12216\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department is taking to support local authorities in maintaining parks in cities.

Alex Norris:

The Government supports local authorities in the maintenance of urban parks and green spaces in many ways. The Government's Green Flag Awards scheme helps to increase access to quality green spaces and sets the standard for those spaces to meet the needs of the communities they serve. Furthermore, the Green Infrastructure Framework launched by Natural England in January 2023 will help local authorities and developers incorporate green infrastructure into development plans to improve access to nature on our doorsteps and build resilience to climate change.

The £2.6 billion UK Shared Prosperity Fund provides funding for investment in local growth, and a further £900 million for 2025-26 was announced at the Autumn Budget. Local authorities can decide how to use funding to best serve their communities, including investing in improving and developing their parks. This Government will also support local authorities by moving towards multi-year funding settlements, ending competitive bidding for pots of money and reforming the local audit system.

Railway Stations: Cheadle**Tom Morrison:**[\[12302\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department has allocated funding towards the future of Cheadle Train Station.

Alex Norris:

My department approved the business case confirming £8.3 million of funding for Cheadle Train Station in 2022. This project forms part of the broader £13.9 million Cheadle Town Deal agreed in March 2021. I am pleased to confirm we will continue to honour existing Town Deal commitments. Officials will continue to work closely with Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council and the Department for Transport to progress the delivery of the Cheadle Train Station project.

Regeneration: Fylde**Mr Andrew Snowden:**[\[12180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what funding is available for the redevelopment of town centres in Fylde constituency.

Alex Norris:

The Government will set out its long-term vision for local growth at the multi-year spending review in the Spring. This will end the approach of Local Authorities and MCAs bidding against each other for growth funds, targeting funding where it is needed most and empowering local leaders. The Government will also set out more detail on its strategy for regional growth alongside, and integrated with, plans for infrastructure, investment, and the Industrial Strategy.

This being said, Fylde Council will continue to receive the departments full support in delivering £5.8 million of Getting Building Fund which was allocated to Fylde Council to deliver the M55 Heyhouses link and improve connectivity around The Fylde coast including St Annes.

Likewise, Kirkham has received £6.3 million of Future High Street Funding towards regeneration of the town including an educational and employment skills centre.

■ UK Shared Prosperity Fund: Northern Ireland

Sorcha Eastwood:

[\[12169\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to make changes to funding levels of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund in Northern Ireland.

Alex Norris:

The Autumn Budget announced that the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, for which the previous government made no plans beyond March 2025, will be extended for 2025-26 at a reduced level of £900 million.

With this transitional arrangement, Northern Ireland will continue to benefit from investment next year in local growth, providing certainty of funding in advance of wider local growth funding reforms.

My department will update the fund prospectus and confirm the Northern Ireland funding allocation for 2025-26 as soon as possible.

Alex Easton:

[\[12321\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how much funding her Department plans to provide through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to projects in Northern Ireland in the 2024-25 financial year; and if she will take steps to ensure that further allocations are used to help tackle economic inactivity.

Alex Norris:

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund provides £67.5 million for projects in Northern Ireland this financial year.

The Autumn Budget announced that the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, for which the previous government made no plans beyond March 2025, will be extended for 2025-26 at a reduced level of £900 million.

With this transitional arrangement, Northern Ireland will continue to benefit from investment next year in local growth, providing certainty of funding in advance of wider local growth funding reforms. This will provide the flexibility to deliver the most important local projects for Northern Ireland, including projects helping those at risk of being left behind.

My department will update the fund prospectus and confirm the Northern Ireland funding allocation for 2025-26 as soon as possible.

■ Voting Rights: British Nationals Abroad**Kirith Entwistle:**[\[12748\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent assessment she has made of the potential impact of the Elections Act 2022 on overseas voting.

Rushanara Ali:

The Electoral Commission and the Office for National Statistics review and publish statistics on electoral registration and participation in elections. The Government will examine and reflect on this data when it is available following the 2024 general election.

JUSTICE**■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Liz Saville Roberts:**[\[12430\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people were released and later recalled to prison under the (a) End of Custody Supervised Licence, (b) Home Detention Curfew , and (c) SDS40 scheme (i) since the scheme was implemented and (ii) in the most recent period for which data is available.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The number of people released under the End of Custody Supervised Licence scheme (ECSL) that have been recalled since the scheme was first implemented forms a subset of data on recalls intended for future publication.

The number of people released under ECSL that have been recalled in the most recent period for which data is available could only be obtained at a disproportionate cost.

The Home Detention Curfew scheme (HDC) has been in operation since 1999. HDC recall data is available from 2002 onwards. The relevant annual releases tables for 2002-2014 can be found at the tab Table 3_leg_12:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66293eaa3b0122a378a7e727/Prison-releases-2002-to-2015.ods>.

Data for 2015-2022 at the tab Table 3_A_17:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66293e533b0122a378a7e725/Prison-releases-2023.ods>.

Data for 2023 at the tab Table 3 Q17:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67218b7b3aa14203d06ef452/prison-releases-Apr-to-June-2024.ods>.

Data on SDS40 recalls forms a subset of data intended for future publication.

Liz Saville Roberts:

[\[12432\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people released under the End of Custody Supervised Licence scheme have been (a) recalled, (b) released homeless, (c) died under supervision and (d) committed a serious further offence (i) since the scheme was first implemented, and (ii) in the most recent period for which data is available.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

On 31 October 2024, we published a full set of data showing the number of prisoners released on End of Custody Supervised Licence (ECSL) which can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/end-of-custody-supervised-licence-ecsl-detailed-data>.

Recall data is published quarterly and data on deaths and homelessness are published annually. We are working to ensure further updates are provided in due course.

The disclosure of Serious Further Offences (SFO) conviction figures beyond 31 March 2023 is prohibited by the Statistics and Registration Services (SRS) Act 2007 and the Pre-release Access to Official Statistics Order 2008. SFO conviction figures form a subset of data on general SFO figures intended for future publication.

Overall, SFOs are rare. Fewer than 0.5% of offenders under statutory supervision are convicted of SFOs. Nonetheless, every single SFO is taken extremely seriously, and in all cases a review is carried out to identify any improvements that need to be made in the management of future cases.

■ Crime: Victims

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[12569\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will bring forward legislative proposals to put the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime in England and Wales on a statutory basis.

Alex Davies-Jones:

The Victims' Code, which sets out the minimum level of service that victims and survivors of crime should receive, is already a statutory code of practice, that primary legislation requires the Secretary of State to issue. This means agencies must act in accordance with the Code unless they have good reasons not to do so. Part 1 of the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024, once implemented, will put the obligation to comply with the Code on a clear statutory footing. It will also keep the Victims' Code as a statutory code of practice, which allows the flexibility for future amendments to be made to the Code to better serve the changing needs of victims, without requiring amendments to primary legislation. We will consult on a new version of the Code next year.

We will go further as we consider the best ways to scrutinise compliance once the new Code is in place, including by increasing the powers of the Victims' Commissioner, to ensure there is more accountability where the needs of victims are not being met.

■ HM Courts and Tribunals Service: Civil Servants**Sir Ashley Fox:** [\[9267\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many civil servants are assigned to work in each of HM Courts and Tribunals Service's (a) courts and (b) offices; and how many desks are available in each office.

Alex Davies-Jones:

This information could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

■ Marriage: Relatives**Mr Richard Holden:** [\[12787\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of placing restrictions on marriage between first cousins.

Alex Davies-Jones:

Part 1 of Schedule 1 to the Marriage Act 1949 sets out prohibited degrees of relationship for marriage. Section 1 of the Marriage Act 1949 sets out that any marriages that take place within prohibited degrees of relationship are void. Under the legislation, prohibited degrees of relationship for marriage include marriages to a sibling, parent or child, but not marriages between first cousins. The Sexual Offences Act 2003 also makes sexual activity with the above family members, amongst others, a criminal offence, but this does not include first cousins. Placing restrictions on first cousin marriage would require changes to the Marriage Act 1949 and potentially the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

We are aware that all aspects of weddings, including first cousin marriage, are important issues. We will take the time as a new Government to properly consider our marriage law, including the Law Commission's 2022 wedding report, before publicly setting out our position.

■ Ministry of Justice: Civil Servants**Sir Ashley Fox:** [\[9265\]](#)

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

Alex Davies-Jones:

This information could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

■ Offenders: Foreign Nationals**Rupert Lowe:** [\[12193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 25 October 2024 to Question 9762 on Offenders: Foreign Nationals, if her Department will commit to publishing a breakdown of foreign national offenders by nationality for (a) rape, (b) murder, (c) drug trafficking and (d) sexual offences for each of the last five years.

Rupert Lowe:

[\[12199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many foreign criminals were granted temporary release in each of the last five years.

Rupert Lowe:

[\[12201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, for a breakdown by nationality of how many people of what nationality were found guilty of stalking involving fear of violence in each of the last five years.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The Department currently has no plans to publish a breakdown of foreign national offenders by nationality and detailed offence type (which would include the requested information for rape, other sexual offences, murder and drug trafficking). However, we keep all our publications under review in line with the three key pillars of the Code of Practice for Statistics: trustworthiness, quality and value.

The requested data on the number of foreign criminals granted temporary release in each of the last 5 years can be found in the attached table.

The Ministry of Justice publishes information on the number of defendants convicted for stalking offences in the [Outcomes by Offence data tool: December 2023](#).

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.

Foreign national offenders who commit crime should be in no doubt that the law will be enforced and, we will work with the Home Office to pursue their deportation. We are currently on track to remove more FNOs this year than at any time in recent years. We are working across government, to explore the ways that we can accelerate this further.

Attachments:

1. PQ table [2024-11-08 PQ 12193 12199 12201 table.xlsx]

■ **Prison Accommodation: Repairs and Maintenance**

Rupert Lowe:

[\[12203\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of prison cells were not in use due to (a) disrepair and (b) poor estate conditions in October 2024.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

This Government has inherited a prison system in crisis, with infrastructure crumbling, dangerous jails and our hardworking staff under immense pressure. We have taken difficult, but necessary action to urgently reduce capacity pressures and save prisons from the point of collapse. We continue to invest in the estate to ensure that prisons are safe, decent and secure.

As of 28 October, there were around 2,200 places out of use to enable planned maintenance, refurbishment or repair. This equates to 2% of all available prison

places and we are working at pace to bring these places back online. This total cannot be broken down into the categories requested given that HMPPS does not record data in this way.

■ Prisoner Escorts

Karl Turner:

[\[12397\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the contractual penalties are for the late transfer of prisoners to court; and at what point the penalty starts if a prisoner is transferred late to court.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The contracts for the Prisoner Escort and Custody Service set out the penalties, referred to as “service credits”, applied to suppliers found culpable for late delivery of a prisoner to court, where this has the effect of delaying the hearing. The delay is calculated from the point at which proceedings are ready to commence, provided this is within the agreed court start times and the delay is greater than 15 minutes.

Service credits are calculated using a points system. After the first 15 minutes, five service points are applied in the Crown Court for each 15 minutes of delay, or part thereof, and in magistrates courts, three service points.

A single service point is currently set at £121.53. The penalty for each applicable 15-minute delay (or part thereof) in the Crown Court is therefore £607.65, and in magistrates’ courts £364.59.

■ Prisons: Construction

Rupert Lowe:

[\[12313\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many new prison places are scheduled to be built in the next 12 months.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

This Government is committed to continuing the prison build programmes, which include the construction of four further new prisons, as well as the expansion and refurbishment of the existing estate.

I can confirm that HMP Millsike will deliver c.1,500 places in spring 2025.

Construction is well underway on new houseblocks at HMP Fosse Way and HMP Rye Hill, delivering c.700 places between them, alongside the rollout of hundreds more Rapid Deployment Cells.

The Lord Chancellor has committed to publishing a 10-year capacity strategy this year, which will set out the steps we will take to ease capacity pressures, as well as an annual statement on prison capacity.

■ Prisons: Staff

Cat Smith: [\[12090\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether she plans to implement the new fair deal policy for pensions for prison education staff employed by further education colleges.

Cat Smith: [\[12091\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will make it her policy that contracts for the provision of prison education should include requirements to implement the new fair deal policy for pensions for affected staff.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The guidance on the New Fair Deal is currently being reviewed by HM Treasury. The impact of this review is explained in the Invitations to Tender for the current procurement for prisoner education services. Further information can be found using the following links: [Prisoner Education Services Panel \(Inc. Core Education\) - Find a Tender \(find-tender.service.gov.uk\)](#) and [Procurement for the Provision of Prisoner Education Services \(Careers Information, Advice and Guidance \(CIAG\)\) - Find a Tender](#).

Relevant Treasury guidance will be followed in the delivery of prison education, including any updates on the application of New Fair Deal pensions policy. If New Fair Deal is extended to apply to further education colleges, this will apply to further education college staff working in prisons.

■ Reoffenders: Foreign Nationals

Rupert Lowe: [\[12200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the reoffending rate of foreign national offenders was in each of the last five years.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The requested data on the reoffending rate of foreign national offenders can be found in the attached table. The proven reoffending rate for all adult offenders released from custody or starting a court order, in the April 21 to March 22 annual cohort, was 32.5%.

We refer all foreign national offenders in receipt of custodial sentences to the Home Office. Those sentenced to 12 months, or more are automatically considered for deportation.

Foreign national offenders who commit crime should be in no doubt that the law will be enforced and, where appropriate, we will work with the Home Office to pursue their deportation. This will help to manage prison pressures, keep the public safe and reduce crime. We are currently on track to remove more foreign national offenders this year than at any time in recent years and we are working across government to explore the ways we accelerate this work further.

Attachments:

1. table [2024-11-08 PQ 12200 table.xlsx]

■ Sexual Offences Act 2003**Dr Simon Opher:**[\[12493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will make it her policy to amend the Sexual Offences Act 2003 to classify driving instructors as a position of trust.

Alex Davies-Jones:

This Government is committed to protecting children and young people from sexual abuse. We have robust legislation in this area, and “position of trust” offences were reviewed and updated in 2022. We continue to keep this important area of law under review.

■ Sexual Offences: Victim Support Schemes**Sir Ashley Fox:**[\[12885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what support is available for victims of repeated sexual offences by the same perpetrator.

Alex Davies-Jones:

The Ministry of Justice funds a range of support services for victims and survivors of sexual violence, regardless of the identity of the perpetrator.

The Ministry of Justice commissioned 24/7 Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Line provides victims access to vital help and information whenever they need it. Free and confidential emotional and listening support is available to all victims of rape and sexual abuse, aged 16 and over. Where appropriate, the service will signpost victims to longer-term support services, including therapeutic support.

Further, direct grant funding is provided to organisations (such as those funded via the Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Fund) and through funding to Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs). These services, and those commissioned by PCCs are aligned to local need and offer tailored support to victims to help them cope with their experiences and move forward with their lives. These services complement the wider support system across Government, such as NHS England funded Sexual Assault Referral Centres.

NORTHERN IRELAND**■ Murder of Patrick Finucane Independent Inquiry****Alex Burghart:**[\[12472\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, with reference to paragraph 4.140 of the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 October 2024, HC 295, how much has been allocated to the Finucane inquiry.

Hilary Benn:

The settlement in the Autumn Budget for the Northern Ireland Office includes funding for priorities related to the legacy of the Troubles, including making provision for the establishment of the Inquiry into the death of Patrick Finucane. The bulk of the costs of the Inquiry will fall in the next Spending Round. It is the Government's expectation that the Inquiry will avoid unnecessary costs given all the previous reviews and investigations, and the large amount of information and material that is already in the public domain.

Alex Burghart:[\[12473\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, when he plans to publish the terms of reference of the Finucane inquiry.

Hilary Benn:

I am keen that the Inquiry is able to begin its work without undue delay. The Inquiries Act 2005 sets out clear steps to follow in setting up an inquiry, including the appointment of the Chair, agreement on the Terms of Reference, working through the necessary logistics such as facilities and services procurement, and setting up the Inquiry secretariat.

I will provide an update on the Terms of Reference once it has been agreed with the Chair.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY**■ Artificial Intelligence: Economic Growth****Samantha Niblett:**[\[12197\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on artificial intelligence and its role in economic growth.

Feryal Clark:

Artificial Intelligence (AI) offers great economic potential for the whole of the UK.

The UK's AI Sector was valued at £72.3bn in 2024 - larger than any country in Europe. Forecasts suggest it could eventually be worth over £800 billion by 2035. The AI Opportunities Action Plan will outline recommendations for Government, to harness AI's potential, including boosting economic growth, productivity, and job quality through widespread AI adoption.

DSIT's Secretary of State collaborates closely with cabinet colleagues on AI-related matters.

■ Communications Ombudsman: Powers

Alistair Strathern:

[\[12567\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he has made a recent assessment of the potential merits of reviewing the Communications Ombudsman's powers to increase the accountability of telecommunications providers.

Chris Bryant:

The Communications Ombudsman is one of two Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) schemes accredited by Ofcom, the independent regulator of services, in the telecoms sector.

Ofcom launched a [review](#) of ADR in November 2023 which examines the extent to which schemes are working effectively, whether customers are receiving an accessible and fair service; and the potential need for changes to the monitoring of performance. Ofcom expect to provide an update on their review by the end of the year.

The government will consider any potential next steps once Ofcom's review has concluded.

■ Digital Technology: Public Sector

Lisa Smart:

[\[12306\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if he will make it his policy to require (a) unused and (b) decommissioned (i) laptops, (ii) mobile phones and (iii) other public sector devices to be donated to device banks.

Chris Bryant:

Digital inclusion is a priority for the Government and the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology is committed to extending the life of its equipment and devices, to reduce our environmental impact and provide more people with access to devices. Device donation is one of the issues we shall be looking at as we develop our approach on digital inclusion.

■ Digital Technology: Training

Samantha Niblett:

[\[12195\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he is taking to widen access to digital skills training.

Chris Bryant:

Digital skills are a priority for the Government's missions to kickstart economic growth and break down barriers to opportunity. We are working across government departments to widen access to digital skills training as part of our wider approach to digital inclusion. We are also engaging with key industry partners through the Digital Skills Council to ensure the digital skills system is joined up and comprehensive, and that it meets the needs of both employers and individuals, across the UK.

■ Mobile Phones: Greater London

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[\[12431\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether his Department is taking steps with private mobile network operators to improve (a) mobile phone signal and (b) 5G coverage in London.

Chris Bryant:

The Government wants all areas of the UK, including London, to benefit from reliable and good quality mobile coverage. Our ambition is for all populated areas to have higher-quality standalone 5G by 2030, and to increase 4G coverage to 95% of the UK landmass by the end of 2025.

Vodafone, Virgin Media O2 and BT/EE have all launched standalone 5G services in London.

We work closely with the mobile industry and are committed to ensuring we have the right policy and regulatory framework to support investment and competition in the market.

■ New Businesses: Women

Samantha Niblett:

[\[12196\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he is taking to increase investment in women-led start up technology businesses.

Feryal Clark:

This Government is committed to strengthening diversity in the tech sector, including supporting female-led start-ups, and has made breaking down barriers to opportunity one of our five national missions.

Programmes like DSIT's £12m Digital Growth Grant and Innovate UK's Women in Innovation Awards are supporting female-led businesses through grants and wider business support.

In September, the Chancellor announced Government support for the Invest in Women Taskforce. The Taskforce aims to establish a funding pool of more than £250 million for female-founded businesses through private capital, making it one of the world's largest investment funding pools aimed solely at female founders.

■ Pornography: Gower

Tonia Antoniazzi:

[\[12094\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps his Department is taking to tackle the harmful effects of pornography in Gower constituency.

Feryal Clark:

Under the Online Safety Act, platforms must proactively tackle the most harmful illegal content including extreme pornography. The Act requires services in scope to understand risks from illegal content online and take mitigating action.

Separate to provisions in the Online Safety Act, the Independent Pornography Review, led by Independent Lead Reviewer Baroness Gabby Bertin will explore the effectiveness of regulation, legislation and the law enforcement response to pornography. The government expects the Review to present its final report by the end of the year.

■ Technology

Samantha Niblett:

[\[12603\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he is taking to help ensure benefits of technological development are felt by all demographics.

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. I know that digital exclusion disproportionately impacts certain demographics, including older people, those with disabilities and people from lower socio-economic backgrounds, creating new inequalities and exacerbating existing ones. As we develop our approach on tackling this issue we will be working closely with the third and private sector and local authorities to ensure interventions are targeted to individual needs.

■ UK Research and Innovation: Ageing

Helen Morgan:

[\[12798\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Healthy Ageing Challenge in helping companies scale up projects.

Feryal Clark:

An independent evaluation of the Healthy Ageing Challenge has been published on UKRI's website. The evaluation found that the Challenge has:

- Contributed to firm-level growth, as evidenced by increased turnover, R&D expenditure, and staff numbers among participating companies.
- Largely achieved its short- to medium-term outcomes. Even against a backdrop of a global pandemic and cost of living crisis
- Supported research and innovation across the entire innovation pipeline from early-stage research to adoption and scaling research, and commercialisation.

The medium- to long-term outcomes are likely to be achieved over the next 3 to 5 years.

TRANSPORT**■ Bus Services: Fares****Laurence Turner:**[\[12516\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate she has made of the cost to the public purse of capping single bus fares at £3 in 2025.

Simon Lightwood:

On Monday 28 October, the Prime Minister confirmed that the government will introduce a new £3 cap on single bus fares in England outside London from 1 January 2025 through to 31 December 2025. The government will provide funding of over £150 million to deliver the £3 cap.

Mr Paul Kohler:[\[12676\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the report entitled £2 bus fare cap evaluation: interim report, published on 17 May 2023, if her Department will publish the final report.

Simon Lightwood:

The Department has published two interim reports setting out emerging trends in key outcomes from the first two months of the national bus fare cap scheme, and further updates will be provided in due course. These reports are available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evaluation-of-the-2-bus-fare-cap>.

On Monday 28 October, the Prime Minister confirmed the government will introduce a new £3 cap on single bus fares from 1 January 2025 until the end of 2025. The £2 cap on single bus fares had been due to come to an end on 31 December 2024. This will be replaced by the £3 cap to help millions access better opportunities, and promote greater bus use by passengers.

■ Driving Tests: South Basildon and East Thurrock**James McMurdock:**[\[12854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to reduce waiting times for driving tests in South Basildon and East Thurrock constituency.

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 (DTC), 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.

As part of recent recruitment at DTCs that serve the South Basildon and East Thurrock constituency, DVSA has made offers to five potential new DEs. This is made up of two DEs at Basildon DTC and three at Southend DTC.

As part of ongoing recruitment, DVSA is aiming to fill a further three vacancies at Tilbury DTC, three at Basildon DTC and one at Southend DTC.

■ **Driving Tests: St Neots**

Ian Sollom: [\[13083\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of opening a driving test centre in St Neots.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) is committed to providing its customers with the best service possible. DVSA continually reviews its estate to ensure it represents good value for money and is efficient.

■ **Driving Tests: Waiting Lists**

James MacCleary: [\[13099\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to reduce waiting times for driving tests in (a) rural areas and (b) urban areas.

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 (DTC), 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.

■ **Electric Vehicles: Charging Points**

Dr Luke Evans: [\[12445\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answers of 10 September 2024 to Questions 3805 and 3806 on Electric Vehicles: Charging Points, if she will hold discussions with (a) public and (b) private bodies on taking steps to ensure that new charging points offer guaranteed high speed chargers for electric vehicles.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Government communicates regularly with chargepoint operators, trade associations and industry to discuss the rollout of fast and reliable chargepoints.

■ M25: A3**Dr Ben Spencer:**[\[12557\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she ask the Office of Road and Rail to undertake enforcement action against National Highways over ongoing disruption in the (a) Painshill roundabout and (b) local area due to the M25/A3 works.

Lilian Greenwood:

Under the Infrastructure Act 2015, it is for ORR to determine whether National Highways is compliant with its directions and guidance and the road investment strategy (RIS) issued by government, and whether to take enforcement action.

■ Railways: East of England**Peter Prinsley:**[\[12864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will (a) approve and (b) deliver rail infrastructure upgrades (i) in the Ely area and (ii) at Haughley Junction.

Lilian Greenwood:

This government is committed to delivering economic growth, and projects such as the Ely Area Capacity Enhancement and upgrades to Haughley Junction have the potential to contribute to this. While the previous government made public statements of support for both projects, no funding was provided to allow either to progress.

The Chancellor has been clear about the state of the nation's finances and has launched a multi-year Spending Review. Decisions and timescales about individual projects will be informed by the review process and confirmed in due course.

■ Railways: Repairs and Maintenance**Grahame Morris:**[\[12251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of Network Rail's management of railway adhesion in Control Period 6 between 2019 and 2024.

Grahame Morris:[\[12262\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of Network Rail's targets to improve railway adhesion in Control Period 7 between 2024 and 2029.

Simon Lightwood:

Network Rail (NR) takes track adhesion extremely seriously. Its approach to managing adhesion risk across the system is focused on the tools, processes and skills required to run a safe service through autumn.

NR has implemented the GB Rail Industry Approach to Railhead Adhesion Management policy, which sets out all proven and practical control measures for adhesion risk. This includes infrastructure, train operations and trainborne risk

controls. The Office of Rail and Road, as the safety and economic regulator for the railways, ensures that the work undertaken is fit for purpose.

■ Roads: Essex

James McMurdock:

[\[12830\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to reduce the number of fatalities on roads in Essex.

Lilian Greenwood:

This Government takes road safety very seriously and reducing those killed and injured on our roads is a key priority. The Department is currently considering policy options in this area.

Local authorities are responsible for the management of local roads, within the rules set by Government, including setting local speed limits where the national limit would not be appropriate.

The Safer Roads Fund is an innovative, non-competitive programme that provides funding for the most high risk 'A' roads in England. Essex County Council received funding of £4.96m as part of the Safer Roads Fund for the A113 and A104.

■ Roads: Repairs and Maintenance

Rupert Lowe:

[\[13121\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much funding her Department has provided for the repair of potholes (a) in Great Yarmouth constituency and (b) nationally in each of the last ten years.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Government takes the condition of local roads very seriously and is committed to maintaining and renewing the local highway network. Norfolk County Council is the local highway authority for the Great Yarmouth 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.

The funding the Department has provided for local highway maintenance, including but not limited to the repair of potholes, in Norfolk and nationally in each of the last ten years is in the table below:

YEAR	HIGHWAYS MAINTENANCE FUNDING - NORFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL (£M)	TOTAL HIGHWAYS MAINTENANCE FUNDING - ENGLAND (£M)
2015/16	28.637	1,156
2016/17	29.474	1,026
2017/18	33.812	1,222
2018/19	42.338	1,346
2019/20	29.592	1,051
2020/21	50.073	1,626
2021/22*	35.757	1,125*
2022/23*	35.757	1,125*
2023/24*	46.623	1,475*
2024/25*	40.267	1,275*

*Includes equivalent funding within areas in England receiving City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements.

■ Roads: Rural Areas

Dr Allison Gardner:

[\[12895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to improve safety on rural roads.

Lilian Greenwood:

This Government takes road safety very seriously and reducing those killed and injured on our roads is a key priority. We do recognise that the majority of road fatalities (according to the latest statistics) occurred on rural roads (60%) with fewer fatalities on urban roads (35%) and motorways (5%).

The Department's Safer Roads Fund has awarded local authorities £185.8 million of funding between 2017 and 2024 to improve the safety of England's most high risk 'A' roads. To date, it has funded 445.3 miles of safety improvements on rural roads, making up 62.4% of all funded routes.

■ Rolling Stock

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[12278\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to paragraph 4.72 of the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 October 2024, HC 295, whether she plans to publish a consultation on the proposed rolling stock strategy.

Simon Lightwood:

Once Great British Railways is established then it will be making integrated decisions on Rolling Stock, bringing together track and train. This will include a Rolling Stock Strategy which will include considerations around the timelines for new build, refurbishments, and provide more visibility to the rolling stock market.

West Coast Main Line**Charlotte Nichols:**[\[12279\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to paragraph 3.19 of the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 October 2024, HC 295, when she plans to publish further information on her plan to increase capacity on the West Coast main line.

Simon Lightwood:

The delivery of High Speed Two (HS2) is expected to nearly double seat capacity between London and Birmingham, which is the most congested section of the West Coast Main Line. We are taking into consideration the recent proposal from the Mayors of Greater Manchester and the West Midlands for enhancing rail connectivity between the Midlands and the North West, and will set out a clear plan to address capacity and connectivity issues in due course.

Jodie Gosling:[\[12289\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to paragraph 3.19 of the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 October 2024, HC 295, when she plans to publish further information on her plan to increase capacity on the West Coast main line.

Simon Lightwood:

The delivery of High Speed Two (HS2) is expected to nearly double seat capacity between London and Birmingham, which is the most congested section of the West Coast Main Line. We are taking into consideration the recent proposal from the Mayors of Greater Manchester and the West Midlands for enhancing rail connectivity between the Midlands and the North West, and will set out a clear plan to address capacity and connectivity issues in due course.

TREASURY**Agriculture: Inheritance Tax****Sir John Hayes:**[\[12249\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will list which external organisations her Department consulted before the change in policy on inheritance tax for agricultural properties.

James Murray:

The Government has published information about the reforms to agricultural property relief and business property relief at

www.gov.uk/government/publications/agricultural-property-relief-and-business-property-relief-reforms.

The Government takes into account all representations made ahead of the Budget, and meets with stakeholders on a regular basis.

Sir John Hayes: [12250]

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

James Murray:

The Government has published information about the reforms to agricultural property relief and business property relief at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/what-are-the-changes-to-agricultural-property-relief>.

Around 500 estates across the UK are expected to be affected each year from 2026-27.

Tim Farron: [12407]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many meetings Ministers in her Department have had with farming stakeholders on changes to Agricultural Property Relief in the last four months.

Tim Farron: [12408]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she has had discussions with the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee on the potential impact of changes to Agricultural Property Relief.

Tim Farron: [12409]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 2.51 of the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 October, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of changes to Agricultural Property Relief on family farms.

Ben Lake: [12479]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 October 2024, HC 295, what assessment has she made of the potential impact of changes to (a) inheritance tax, (b) agricultural property relief and (c) business property relief on the number of agricultural tenancies in Wales.

James Murray:

The Government has published information about the reforms to agricultural property relief and business property relief at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/what-are-the-changes-to-agricultural-property-relief>.

In accordance with standard practice, a tax information and impact note will be published alongside the draft legislation before the relevant Finance Bill.

The Government takes into account all representations made ahead of the Budget, and meets with stakeholders on a regular basis.

Daisy Cooper: [12453]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate she has made of forecast revenue from changes to Agricultural Property Relief in each financial year from 2024-25 to 2029-30.

James Murray:

The Government has published information about the reforms to Agricultural Property Relief (APR) and Business Property Relief (BPR) at www.gov.uk/government/publications/agricultural-property-relief-and-business-property-relief-reforms. These reforms are forecast to raise an additional £230m in 2026-27, £495m in 2027-28, £520m in 2028-29, and £520m in 2029-30.

Ben Lake: [12480]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 October 2024, HC 295, what estimate she has made of the number of owners of working farms in Wales by (a) marital and (b) residency status who will be liable to pay inheritance tax following changes to (i) inheritance tax, (ii) agricultural property relief and (iii) business property relief.

James Murray:

The Government has published information about the reforms to agricultural property relief and business property relief at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/what-are-the-changes-to-agricultural-property-relief>.

In accordance with standard practice, a tax information and impact note will be published alongside the draft legislation before the relevant Finance Bill.

The Government takes into account all representations made ahead of the Budget, and meets with stakeholders on a regular basis.

■ Cohabitation: Inheritance Tax and Pensions

Dame Harriett Baldwin: [12710]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to point 28 of Table 5.1 of the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 October 2024, HC 295, whether unmarried couples will be liable for inheritance tax on Death-in-Service benefits over £325,000 payable on a death before retirement age.

James Murray:

As announced at Autumn Budget 2024, from 6 April 2027 most unused pension funds and death benefits will be included within the value of a person's estate for Inheritance Tax purposes.

The inheritance tax treatment of death-in-service depends on where the relevant funds are held and how they are paid out. Some types of schemes make death-in-service payments from a group life insurance policy held in trust and therefore not

within the scope on that basis. Whilst other (often defined benefit) schemes will make death in service payments as a pension lump sum, which will be in scope.

This change will ensure that there is consistent tax treatment, regardless of whether the scheme is discretionary or non-discretionary. For example, benefits from non-discretionary defined benefit schemes, such as the NHS, are already within the scope of inheritance tax.

All estates have a minimum nil-rate band of £325,000. In addition to this, an estate may qualify for up to £175,000 of residence nil-rate band, where the deceased is passing on a qualifying residence to their direct descendants. This means that qualifying estate can pass on up to £500,000 before any Inheritance Tax will be due, regardless of whether the deceased was married or unmarried when they died.

■ Corporation Tax: International Cooperation

Priti Patel: [\[12266\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate she has made of the revenue raised as a result of the OECD Pillar 2 measures in each of the next five years.

James Murray:

The UK's implementation of the Multinational Top-up Tax and Domestic Top-up Tax was scored at Autumn Statement 2022, and updated Spring Budget 2023 in 'table 4.2'. This can be found on gov.uk at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/spring-budget-2023>.

The UK's implementation of the Undertaxed Profits Rule was scored at Autumn Statement 2023, and updated at Autumn Budget 2024 in 'table 5.2'. This can be found on gov.uk at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/autumn-budget-2024>.

Taken together, the latest estimate is that all three rules will raise more than £15bn over the upcoming scorecard period.

Priti Patel: [\[12267\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the OECD Pillar 2 measures on businesses.

James Murray:

Pillar 2 is a significant reform to international corporate tax rules that will impact large multinational enterprises headquartered around the globe.

Following the implementation of Pillar 2, the government is committed to considering opportunities for simplification or rationalisation of the UK's rules for taxing cross-border activities.

A Tax Information and Impact note for the Multinational Top-up Tax and Domestic Minimum Tax was published in March 2023, and a Tax Information and Impact note on the Undertaxed Profits rule was published in October 2024. These notes include detail on expected business impact and can be accessed on gov.uk at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/tax-information-and-impact-notes-tiins>.

■ Employers' Contributions

Daisy Cooper: [\[12746\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 21 October 2024 to Question 9564 on Employers' Contributions: Small Businesses, if she will publish any impact assessment for the raise to employer National Insurance contributions.

Daisy Cooper: [\[12768\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she made a socio-economic impact assessment of the increase to employer national insurance contributions.

James Murray:

A Tax Information and Impact Note will be published in due course alongside the legislation when it is introduced to Parliament.

■ Employers' Contributions: General Practitioners

Colum Eastwood: [\[12760\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 2.40 of the Autumn Budget 2024, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of changes to employer National Insurance contribution rates on GPs in Northern Ireland; and whether she plans to take steps with Cabinet colleagues to provide additional support to GP practices affected by those changes.

Darren Jones:

Raising the revenue required to fund public services and restore economic stability requires difficult decisions on tax, which is why we are asking employers to contribute more. A Tax Information and Impact Note will be published in due course alongside the legislation when it is introduced to Parliament.

The UK Government will provide support for departments and other public sector employers for additional employer National Insurance contributions costs. This funding will be allocated to UK Government departments, with the Barnett formula applying in the usual way for the devolved governments.

This funding will be in addition to the £1.5 billion in Barnett consequentials the NIE is receiving in 2025-26 as a result of decisions taken at Autumn Budget. The NIE's settlement for 2025-26 delivers a real-terms increase and is the largest in real terms of any settlement since devolution.

■ Employers' Contributions: Government Departments

Priti Patel: [\[12265\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 October 2024, HC 295, what estimate she has made of the cost to the public purse through (a) third party spend and (b) contracts as a result of changes to employers National Insurance Contributions in each of the next five years; and if she will publish any modelling undertaken on this.

James Murray:

The Chancellor made an announcement at the Autumn Budget setting out that the rate of Employer National Insurance Contributions will increase from 13.8% to 15% from 6 April 2025. Raising the revenue required to fund public services and restore economic stability requires difficult decisions on tax, which is why the Government is asking employers to contribute more. At the Autumn Budget, the Chancellor also agreed departmental spending allocations for 2024-25 and 2025-26. It is the responsibility of contracting authorities to prioritise these budgets effectively and make assessments on the costs of procurement.

Employers' Contributions: Hospices**Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown:**[\[12360\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will take steps to ensure that the rise in employer National Insurance contributions does not apply to hospices.

Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown:[\[12361\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will take steps to ensure that the rise in employer National Insurance contributions does not apply to general practices.

Dr Luke Evans:[\[12552\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 2.40 of the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 October, what recent discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on the potential impact of changes to National Insurance contributions on (a) hospices, (b) GPs and (c) care homes.

Neil Duncan-Jordan:[\[12815\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 October 2024, HC 295, if she will make it her policy to exempt hospices from the increase in employers' National Insurance Contributions.

Tracy Gilbert:[\[12848\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she plans to provide additional funding to GPs for the cost of the increase in employers' National Insurance Contributions.

James Murray:

Resource spending for the Department of Health and Social Care is set to increase by £22.6 billion in 2025-26 compared to 2023-24 outturn, providing a real-terms growth rate of 4% for the NHS, the largest since before 2010 excluding Covid-19 years. The Government will support local authority services through a real terms increase in core local government spending power of around 3.2%, including at least £600 million of new grant funding to support social care.

The government recognises the need to protect the smallest businesses and charities, which is why we have more than doubled the Employment Allowance to £10,500, meaning more than half of businesses with NICs liabilities either gain or see no change next year. Our tax regime for charities, including exemption from paying

business rates, is among the most generous of anywhere in the world with tax reliefs for charities and their donors worth just over £6 billion for the tax year to April 2024.

The Budget will provide support for government departments and other public sector employers for additional Employer NICs costs only. Private sector firms or charities including hospices or social care providers that are contracted by central or local Government will not be exempt from these changes. General Practitioners are independent contractors and therefore will not be exempt from these changes.

This is consistent with the approach to previous Employer NICs changes, as was the case with the previous Government's Health and Social Care Levy.

DHSC will confirm funding for General Practice for 25/26 as part of the usual GP contract process later in the year, including through consultation with the sector.

■ **Employers' Contributions: Public Sector**

Priti Patel: [\[12263\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to line 26 of Table 5.1 of the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 October 2024, HC 295, which public sector organisations will be funded to cover the additional costs of the changes to employers National Insurance Contributions; and how much funding will be provided to each of them in the next five years.

Priti Patel: [\[12264\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 October 2024, HC 295, what the Resource DEL provided to each Department in respect of the impact of the changes to employers National Insurance Contributions will be.

James Murray:

The Government will provide support for departments and other public sector employers for additional Employer National Insurance Contributions costs only. This funding will be allocated to departments, with the Barnett formula applying in the usual way.

This is in line with the approach taken under the previous Government's Health and Social Care Levy.

The Government plans to update Parliament on allocations by department in the usual way as soon as possible.

Neil O'Brien: [\[12749\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the note entitled Allowance for impact on public sector organisations in Table 5.1 on page 118 of Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 October 2024, HC 295, if she will publish this information by Department.

Darren Jones:

The Government will provide support for departments and other public sector employers for additional Employer National Insurance Contributions costs only. This

funding will be allocated to departments, with the Barnett formula applying in the usual way.

This is in line with the approach taken under the previous Government's Health and Social Care Levy.

The Government plans to update Parliament on allocations by department in the usual way as soon as possible.

■ **Government Departments: Employers' Contributions**

Daisy Cooper:

[\[12451\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 October 2024, HC 295, whether the Departmental settlements include funding for public sector employers for the cost of increases to employer National Insurance contributions.

Darren Jones:

The Government will provide support for departments and other public sector employers for additional Employer National Insurance Contributions costs only. This funding will be allocated to departments, with the Barnett formula applying in the usual way.

This is in line with the approach taken under the previous Government's Health and Social Care Levy.

The Government plans to update Parliament on allocations by department in the usual way as soon as possible.

■ **Import Duties: UK Trade with EU**

David Smith:

[\[12310\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she plans to reduce import duties on businesses spending less than £10,000 on goods in Europe on a single trip.

James Murray:

The UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement governs goods trade between the UK and EU and provides that all goods can be traded tariff-free subject to rules of origin requirements being met. The Government is committed to working with European partners to improve the UK's trade and investment relationship across a range of areas. Further information on trading tariff-free under the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement is available on GOV.UK here: [Introduction to rules of origin and claiming duties when trading between the UK and EU - GOV.UK](#)

■ **Infrastructure**

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[12277\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when she plans to publish the timetable for the consultation on the proposed infrastructure strategy.

Jodie Gosling: [\[12288\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 1.30 of the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 October 2024, HC 295, when she plans to publish a consultation on the proposed Infrastructure Strategy.

Darren Jones:

Investment in Infrastructure is crucial for delivering the government's missions, which is why the government is fundamentally reforming how it delivers infrastructure through a 10-year infrastructure strategy, establishing the National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority (NISTA), and delivering ambitious planning reform.

The 10-year infrastructure strategy will be published next spring, alongside the 2025 Spending Review. Government is developing the strategy working closely with the National Infrastructure Commission and Infrastructure and Projects Authority. The government will engage extensively with businesses, industry bodies and other stakeholders.

■ Inheritance Tax: Earley and Woodley**Yuan Yang:** [\[12322\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many estates in Earley and Woodley constituency were subject to inheritance tax in tax years (a) 2019/20, (b) 2020/21 and (c) 2021/22.

James Murray:

The parliamentary constituency of Earley and Woodley is a newly configured constituency that was created after the completion of the [2023 Periodic Review of Westminster constituencies](#). Therefore, data for the number of estates subject to IHT in this constituency for the tax years 2019/20-2021/22 is not available.

■ Music Venues: Business Rates**Alex Sobel:** [\[12457\]](#)

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 business rates relief on grassroots music venues.

James Murray:

The Government is committed to supporting the creative industries, which play a key role in driving economic growth, contributing £124.6bn GVA in 2022 and supporting over 2 million jobs.

At the 2024 Autumn Budget, the Chancellor set out plans to transform the business rates system over the parliament, including an intention to introduce permanently lower tax rates for high-street Retail, Hospitality and Leisure properties – like grassroots music venues - from 2026-27. Permanently lower tax rates will provide certainty for RHL properties, ending the cliff-edge created by the temporary 1-year RHL relief that has been repeatedly rolled over since the pandemic.

In the interim period, for 25-26, the government has extended RHL relief at 40% and frozen the small business multiplier. This is a package worth over £1.6 billion in 2025-26, aimed at supporting the smallest properties.

■ Overseas Trade

David Smith:

[12307]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will take steps to simplify the (a) commodity code system, (b) requirements to weigh items and (c) other administrative requirements for businesses operating cross-border trade.

James Murray:

The UK's commodity code nomenclature forms the core structure for delivering the UK's international trade policy. Derived from the World Custom's Organization's Harmonized System, for which HMRC represents and promotes UK interests, the commodity codes used in the UK provide critical granularity to enable the delivery of key UK policy required to support UK growth. As such, there are no plans to fundamentally change or reduce the UK commodity code structure; the current system is designed to both facilitate cross border trade and help maintain the UK's compliance programme to protect UK businesses. HMRC offers guidance and a significant support service to help people in determining the correct commodity code for their goods.

The weighing of goods for customs duty and declarations is required to operate an effective tariff system and is in line with recognised international trade practices. We are therefore unlikely to make any significant changes to weight requirements for the types of goods covered.

The government is committed to facilitating legitimate UK trade and HMRC has set out a package of measures to simplify customs import and export processes for traders, while upholding the UK's high regulatory and security standards at the border. Details of this can be found at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/customs-simplification-measures-december-2023/summary-of-customs-simplification-measures-december-2023>.

Whilst working within a global customs framework, HMRC's strategic aim of 'making it easy to get tax right and hard to bend or break the rules' ensures that HMRC has an ongoing interest in balancing the need for facilitations, to reduce administrative burdens, and the right compliance activities to support and protect UK businesses.

■ Pensioners: Social Security Benefits

Alison Hume:

[12639]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many people of state pension age were in receipt of (a) Working and (b) Child Tax Credit in (a) Scarborough and Whitby constituency and (b) North Yorkshire on 4 November 2024.

James Murray:

The information requested is not available for 4 November 2024.

The latest relevant statistics, “Child and working tax credits statistics: provisional awards, April 2024” were published in July based on available data on 1 April 2024. These statistics can be found here: [Child and Working Tax Credits Statistics: Provisional Awards - April 2024 - GOV.UK](#)

From further analysis of these statistics, the numbers requested are:

	WORKING TAX CREDITS	CHILD TAX CREDITS
Scarborough and Whitby	40	30
North Yorkshire	220	80

These numbers have been rounded to the nearest 10 and include those recipients who are claiming both Working and Child Tax Credits.

■ Religious Buildings: VAT

Manuela Perteghella: [\[12865\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she plans to allow (a) churches and (b) other religious buildings to continue to recover VAT.

James Murray:

The Chancellor has now set out departmental budgets and the spending priorities for Phase 1 of the Spending Review. The outcome of individual programmes, such as the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme, will now be assessed during the departmental Business Planning process.

■ Roads: Wales

Ben Lake: [\[12470\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 3.19 of Autumn Budget 2024, HC 295, published on 30 October 2024, what amount of consequential funding the Welsh Government will receive from the money allocated to local roads maintenance in England in 2025-26; and what comparability factor was used to calculate this level of consequentials.

Darren Jones:

The Welsh Government’s Spending Review settlement for 2025-26 is the largest in real terms of any Welsh Government settlement since devolution. The Welsh Government is receiving at least 20% more funding per person than equivalent UK Government spending in England. That translates into over £4 billion more in 2025-26 and includes £1.7 billion through the operation of the Barnett formula.

At Spending Reviews, the Barnett formula is applied to changes to each UK Government department’s overall DEL budget, rather than to individual programmes.

As set out in the addendum to the Statement of Funding Policy published on 30 October, a comparability factor of 33.5% was applied to changes to the Department

for Transport's budget to calculate Barnett consequential funding for the Welsh Government in 2025-26.

The Block Grant Transparency publication breaks down all changes in the devolved governments' block grant funding from the 2015 Spending Review up to and including Main Estimates 2023-24. The most recent report was published in July 2023. An update to Block Grant Transparency to include Autumn Budget 2024 changes will be published in due course:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/block-grant-transparency-july-2023>

■ Stamp Duties

Shivani Raja:

[\[12775\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of a phased approach to stamp duty increases for those in pre-agreed property transactions.

James Murray:

The increase of the Stamp Duty Land Tax (SDLT) Higher Rates for Additional Dwellings (HRAD) by two percentage points at the Autumn Budget 2024, will impact transactions on or after 31 October 2024.

The rate increase will not apply to transactions where contracts have been exchanged prior to 31 October but have not yet completed. This means that those who have already committed to a purchase, by exchanging contracts, won't pay more tax than they were expecting to pay when they agreed to buy the property.

The timing of implementation of tax increases is a balanced judgement which requires a comprehensive evaluation of a variety of factors including, but not limited to, complexity, fairness, and simplicity for the taxpayer. The Government keeps all taxes under review as part of the usual tax policy making process and welcomes representations to help inform future decisions on tax policy.

■ Tax Avoidance

Andrew Cooper:

[\[12606\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when her Department plans to set out details of the independent Loan Charge Review.

James Murray:

The Government will commission a new independent review of the Loan Charge to help bring the matter to a close for those affected whilst ensuring fairness for all taxpayers. Further details about the review will be set out in due course.

■ UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland

Jim Allister:

[\[12899\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when the export procedures required in relation to the movement of goods from Northern Ireland to Great Britain under the areas

specified by Section 45B (1) of the United Kingdom Internal Market Act 2020 come into effect.

Jim Allister: [12903]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what export procedures will apply to goods moving from Northern Ireland to Great Britain in relation to each of the areas where export procedures are mandated by Section 45B (1) of the United Kingdom Internal Market Act 2020.

Jim Allister: [12904]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, (a) where and (b) how the checks on goods moving from Northern Ireland to Great Britain under the export procedures mandated by Section 45B (1) of the United Kingdom Internal Market Act 2020 will take place.

Jim Allister: [12905]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate her Department has made of the proportion of goods moving from Northern Ireland to Great Britain subject to the export procedures mandated by Section 45B (1) of the United Kingdom Internal Market Act 2020.

Jim Allister: [12906]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment her Department has made of the potential economic impact of the export procedures mandated by Section 45B (1) of the United Kingdom Internal Market Act 2020.

James Murray:

The Windsor Framework guarantees our commitment to unfettered access, removing the requirement for export procedures, except in extremely limited exceptions (such as the movement of endangered species). Traders moving this limited range of goods can access support from the free-to-use Trader Support Service.

Under the unfettered access protections, which the Government is committed to on a permanent basis, qualifying Northern Ireland goods can move to Great Britain – either directly or via Ireland – without undergoing customs or SPS processes or controls.

The vast majority of goods move from Northern Ireland to Great Britain without any records being asked for or collected by any Government departments or agencies. Given the limited and specific requirements in place for export procedures, the proportion of goods moving which are subject to them is minimal.

Traders moving this limited range of goods may need to follow certain procedures prior to departure in Northern Ireland and further information can be found at [Movement of goods from NI to GB - Northern Ireland Customs and Trade Academy \(nicustomstradeacademy.co.uk\)](https://www.nicustomstradeacademy.co.uk)

Detailed guidance on the movement of qualifying Northern Ireland goods to Great Britain is available on GOV.UK at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/moving-qualifying-goods-from-northern-ireland-to-the-rest-of-the-uk>.

■ UK Trade with EU

David Smith:

[\[12309\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will take steps to reduce the administrative requirements for businesses spending less than £10,000 on a single trip in Europe.

James Murray:

Passengers bringing in accompanied commercial goods into Great Britain can benefit from Merchandise in Baggage arrangements such as making a simple online declaration, rather than a full electronic customs declaration, and not being required to make a Safety and Security declaration. This applies where the goods are under £2,500, weigh less than 1,000kg and are not restricted or excise goods. The government is committed to facilitating legitimate UK trade and HMRC has set out a package of measures to simplify customs import and export processes for traders, while upholding the UK's high regulatory and security standards at the border. Details of this can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/customs-simplification-measures-december-2023/summary-of-customs-simplification-measures-december-2023>.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ Disability

Steve Darling:

[\[13037\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Equality Act 2010 in improving services for people with disabilities.

Anneliese Dodds:

It is crucial that we ensure everyone is treated fairly when accessing services, so that they can thrive and reach their full potential, including people with disabilities.

We believe that the Equality Act 2010 is effective in ensuring service providers make anticipatory reasonable adjustments to facilitate access for people with disabilities and where they do not, it offers a means of redress. The way it operates is kept under review, and the EHRC's Code of Practice for services, public functions and associations, is under consultation currently.

■ Equality: Public Sector

John Glen:

[\[12417\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, with reference to Recommendation 3 of the report entitled An inspection into activism and impartiality in policing, published by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services on 10 September 2024, what plans the Government Equalities Office has to (a) update the Public Sector Equality Duty guidance for public authorities and (b) make recommendations for legislative amendments to the Equality Act 2010.

Anneliese Dodds:

Equality is at the core of this government's mission. We are committed to upholding Britain's long-standing record of protecting the rights of individuals against unlawful discrimination, and ensuring the Equality Act 2010 protects everyone.

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires public authorities, and those carrying out public functions, to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between different people. We will uphold the Public Sector Equality Duty and ensure that all parties exercising public functions comply with its provisions. This includes ensuring guidance for these parties and updating it if legislative amendments to the duty are made.

WORK AND PENSIONS■ **Childcare****Dr Allison Gardner:**[\[12898\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the Universal Credit reimbursement processes on claimants having to pay childcare fees upfront in a lump sum.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Universal Credit customers can claim up to 3 months of future childcare costs at a time with these costs reimbursed month by month.

Universal Credit childcare element, when claimed together with upfront childcare costs, means that customers receive up to 185% of the first month of childcare costs to ease them into the Universal Credit childcare costs payment cycle.

■ **Jobcentres: Digital Technology****Lisa Smart:**[\[12305\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of requiring the Jobcentre Plus to signpost people to digital inclusion services.

Alison McGovern:

Jobcentre work coaches will consider the range of barriers faced by claimants to best support them into work and to progress in their careers. Digital inclusion is amongst the challenges that some claimants may experience and work coaches are encouraged to take action to address issues relating to poor digital skills and/or digital connectivity (access).

Where claimants have poor Essential Digital Skills, work coaches will consider referral to locally available skills provision to help them address these needs.

Where claimants are digitally excluded due to issues relating to access to digital equipment or connectivity, work coaches are able to use the Flexible Support Fund to procure devices, internet dongles, talk time, and broadband in the home on the basis that this will support labour market progression.

DWP has also ensured that all operational staff in Jobcentres, Universal Credit service centres, Pension Centres, and partnership managers who engage with claimants and stakeholders are able to signpost to information promoting broadband social tariffs.

■ Pension Credit

Sarah Olney: [\[12099\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people were waiting to be assessed for pension credit on 29 July 2024.

Sarah Olney: [\[12100\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people were waiting to be assessed for pension credit on 28 October 2024.

Emma Reynolds:

As of 29th July, there were 33,883 claims outstanding and as of 28th October, there were 76,569 claims outstanding.

Since the announcement to means test Winter Fuel payments, to date we have increased the resource in Pension Credit claims by around five hundred more staff through a combination of internal redeployments, use of external providers and external recruitment. This is in line with the overall resourcing plan for Pension Credit claims and Winter Fuel payments.

Please note, the claims outstanding figures do not include Advanced claims. This data is sourced from the Pension Credit system and for internal departmental use only. As such, they have not been quality assured to the same extent as Official Statistics.

Sarah Champion: [\[12286\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the current average processing time is for a new claim for Pension Credit from initial application to determination.

Emma Reynolds:

The table below shows Average Actual Clearance Times (AACT) from the end of week commencing 2nd September to the end of week commencing 21st October, in working days.

DWP currently works to a planned timescale of 50 working days to clear Pension Credit claims.

	02/09/24	09/09/24	16/09/24	23/09/24	30/09/24	07/10/24	14/10/24	21/10/24
Pension Credit Claims AACT	26	26	26	25	33	37	44	52

Please note.

- The data shown is unpublished management information, collected and intended for internal departmental use and has not been quality assured to National Statistics or Official Statistics publication standard.
- These figures will not align to previous PQ responses due to retrospective updates as the data is sourced from live systems.

If a claim is made by 21 December, Pension Credit can be backdated for three months if the entitlement conditions have been met throughout that period, and if the claimant was eligible, they would also receive a Winter Fuel Payment.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[12424\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to ensure timely responses to Pension Credit applications.

Emma Reynolds:

The Department has secured funding for additional staffing to assist with the processing of the additional Pension Credit claims being made. The Department is significantly increasing the resource on Pension Credit to ensure it processes claims as quickly as possible, with approximately 500 additional staff to support the increase in applications generated from the successful Pension Credit take-up campaign.

■ Pension Credit: Carers

Jim Shannon:

[\[11582\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of raising the Carer Addition in Pension Credit on low-income pensioner carers.

Emma Reynolds:

The Government appreciates how much society relies on unpaid carers and the vital contribution made by carers every day in providing significant care and continuity of support to family and friends.

We recognise the challenges they are facing, and we are determined to provide unpaid carers with the help and support they need and deserve.

The rates of Pension Credit are reviewed annually as part of the Secretary of State's statutory review of State pension and benefit rates. The review for 2025/26 has been

completed and its conclusions announced to Parliament: [Written statements - Written questions, answers and statements - UK Parliament](#).

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

Grahame Morris: [\[12695\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what information her Department holds on the level of compliance with the Immediate Prohibition Notices issued to (a) SSE Renewables and (b) Petrofac Facilities Management on 6 September 2024 by the Health and Safety Executive for breach of provisions in the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015 in relation to the Seagreen offshore wind farm.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Seagreen Wind Energy Limited and Petrofac Facilities Management Limited have both taken appropriate action to comply with the Immediate Prohibition Notices on the provision of trained first aiders and adequate equipment.

Both companies have assured the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) that they are also working to remedy the underlying safety management system failings that led to this situation.

■ **Social Security Benefits: Children**

Mr Lee Dillon: [\[12881\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of lifting the two-child benefit cap on funding for local authorities.

Sir Stephen Timms:

No such assessment has been made.

■ **Social Security Benefits: North Yorkshire**

Alison Hume: [\[12638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people were in receipt of (a) income-related Employment and Support Allowance, (b) income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, (c) Income Support, (d) Pension Credit and (e) Universal Credit in (i) Scarborough and Whitby constituency and (b) North Yorkshire on 4 November 2024.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Official statistics for the number of people in receipt of [Employment and Support Allowance](#), [Jobseeker's Allowance](#), [Income Support](#), [Pension Credit](#) and [Universal Credit](#) 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. 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.

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](#).

■ State Retirement Pensions: British Nationals Abroad

Mr Richard Holden: [\[12518\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of freezing state pensions on British citizens living overseas.

Emma Reynolds:

No assessment has been made.

The UK's policy on the up-rating of the UK State Pension for recipients living overseas is a longstanding one. The UK state pension is payable worldwide without regard to nationality and is uprated abroad where we have a legal requirement to do so.

■ State Retirement Pensions: Women

Stuart Anderson: [\[11905\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what information her Department holds on the number of women impacted by changes to the State Pension Age in South Shropshire constituency; if she will take steps to establish a compensation scheme; and if she will make a statement.

Emma Reynolds:

All women born since 6 April 1950 have been affected by changes to State Pension age, through changes brought in by the Pensions Acts 1995, 2007, 2011 and 2014. As State Pension age is now the same for men and women, following equalisation, all men born since the 6 December 1953 have also been affected by changes to State Pension age, through the 2007, 2011 and 2014 Pensions Acts. The oldest of the women affected by changes to State Pension age would now be 74 years old, the oldest of the men affected by changes to State Pension age would now be 70 years old.

ONS population estimates suggest that in 2021 there were 41,095 females aged 74 or below currently resident in the South Shropshire constituency.

The Courts have considered the effect of the equalisation and increase of the State Pension age and found that there was no discrimination. Separately the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman investigated complaints into how the changes were communicated to 1950s born women. The Ombudsman published its final report: Women's State Pension age: our findings on injustice and associated issues on 21 March this year, which we are now considering.

■ Universal Credit

Mary Glendon:

[\[12734\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will take steps to (a) advise claimants migrating to Universal Credit from legacy benefits to check whether their eligibility for NHS Help with Health Costs will change and (b) include this advice in migration letters.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Jobcentre staff recognise that not all customers are aware of other financial help they may be entitled to. In such cases staff will signpost customers to online financial support.

We do not have plans to include this advice in migration letters. User research suggests that customers can feel overwhelmed with the volume of information in the migration notice, so we are careful about how much we include, focusing on the most relevant information and signpost people to services to support them with making their claim.

■ Universal Credit: Care Leavers

Steve Darling:

[\[12806\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she an estimate of the cost of providing all care leavers in England with the over 25 rate of Universal Credit.

Sir Stephen Timms:

No such estimate has been made.

■ Universal Credit: Farmers

Dr Neil Hudson:

[\[12795\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the accessibility of Universal Credit for farmers.

Sir Stephen Timms:

We have engaged with the National Farmers' Union (NFU) and farmers to raise awareness on how they can access services through various channels including partnering with NFU at county shows, providing NFU an informative toolkit and continuation of inviting NFU to our regular stakeholder events.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

■ UK Priorities for COP29

Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero (Ed Miliband): [\[HCWS201\]](#)

We are halfway through the critical decade for tackling climate change, but the world is off-track from limiting global warming to 1.5C. We are facing a triple planetary crisis of climate, biodiversity loss and pollution posing critical threats to the UK's national interests across security, resilience, health, the economy and partnerships with other countries.

With global temperatures continuing to rise, the impacts of the climate and nature crises—storms, floods, droughts, food and water insecurity, displaced communities—will be a profound source of global disorder. To engage only with the effects of climate change, war, poverty, pandemics or irregular migration when they arrive on our doorstep is to set ourselves up to fail. This is why the UK needs to re-establish itself as a climate leader on the global stage.

Taking on the challenge of climate change is also an incredible opportunity for jobs and growth all across the country. It will improve our health, our quality of life and our overall prosperity.

The Government has already begun work to deliver on this opportunity, through our mission to achieve clean power by 2030 and accelerating our transition to net zero. We have lifted the de facto ban on onshore wind in England, consented significant amounts of solar, introduced legislation to switch on Great British Energy, created the UK's first carbon capture clusters, and held the most successful renewables auction to date.

We have put clean energy at the heart of our mission-driven Government, because we know that boosting homegrown, renewable energy is the best way to reduce our exposure to volatile fossil fuel markets, protect bill payers, and strengthen our energy independence. The UK will restore its position as a global leader on climate action, building on the power of example to encourage other nations to follow its lead, and working with international partners to support decarbonisation globally.

COP28 in Dubai saw the first Global Stocktake under the Paris Agreement which illustrated the scale of the challenge; by 2030, emissions need to fall by 43% versus the 2% currently projected and climate finance must increase at least fivefold, drawing on all sources.

The 29th conference of the parties under the UNFCCC (COP29) will be hosted by Azerbaijan in Baku from 11 to 22 November. It presents the first opportunity in 15 years to agree a new finance goal to replace the current \$100 billion target. At the same time, countries must demonstrate progress towards delivering on existing commitments including those in the Global Stocktake – to transition away from fossil fuels, triple renewables, double energy efficiency, and halt and reverse nature and forest loss.

The UK will work with the COP29 presidency and other partners to push for progress in the following three key areas:

- Scaling up finance from all sources to accelerate global transitions. We need to agree an ambitious New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) on climate finance, for the period after 2025. The UK is committed to working with countries to design a climate finance goal that is fit for purpose and supports those most vulnerable to climate impacts, crowding in private finance while recognising the constraints on the public finances in the UK. Outside the negotiations, we need to accelerate reform of the global financial system to address the transition and resilience finance gaps and barriers that countries face.
- Scaling up ambition and action to keep 1.5 Paris Agreement goal within reach ahead of COP30. As agreed at COP28, countries must come forward with ambitious, all-economy, 1.5C-aligned Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) for 2035 by next February to bridge the emissions gap. As the Prime Minister announced at the United Nations General Assembly in September, the UK will come forward with our own ambitious, 1.5 aligned NDC at COP29 and will support others to do the same. Globally, we need to accelerate the global transition in energy and other sectors and the UK will show progress on this through initiatives such as the Breakthrough Agenda and the Global Clean Power Alliance, a progressive alliance of developed and developing countries working together to accelerate the deployment of clean power globally and mobilise public and private finance to support clean energy. The Alliance will help to bridge the financing gap with the Global South and enable more countries to secure the benefits of clean, cheap power.
- Building resilience to current and future climate impacts. The UK is committed to achieving a climate-resilient and nature positive world, supporting the most vulnerable and marginalised who are experiencing the worst impacts of the climate and nature crises. Within the NCQG process, we will work for an ambitious outcome on adaptation finance that maximises nature co-benefits. We would also like to see progress on both the Global Goal on Adaptation and the operationalisation of the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD).

Across all these areas, we must recognise the crucial, often overlooked role of high ambition action on nature including forests in mitigating and adapting to climate change. This means aligning UNFCCC outcomes with the targets of the Global Biodiversity Framework and joining up approaches to tackling climate, biodiversity, and pollution across NDCs, National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) all in the broader context of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. It includes protecting the ocean through the Ocean and Climate Change Dialogue and restoring forests through the Forest and Climate Leaders' Partnership.

The Prime Minister, along with other ministers will attend COP over the two weeks and I will be leading the UK's delegation during the negotiations.

We are determined to do everything in our power to accelerate global action to reduce emissions this decade and keep within reach the 1.5C goal in the Paris Agreement.