



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 13 November 2024 and the information is correct at the time of publication (07:17 P.M., 13 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

■ Board of Trade

Clive Jones:

[10261]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make it his policy to require the Board of Trade to produce an annual trade report which assesses the UK's trade policy developments.

Gareth Thomas:

The Department for Business and Trade is currently reviewing the Board of Trade and a decision on appointments and future direction of the Board will be made soon.

■ Business: Young People

Paula Barker:

[12211]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to incentivise businesses to employ young people.

Gareth Thomas:

The Government's plan to Make Work Pay is a core part of the mission to grow the economy, raise living standards across the country and create opportunities for all, including young people.

In addition, the Department for Education has established Skills England to sit at the heart of a system that provides young people with the skills required to thrive in life.

Skills England has set out a package of financial support to businesses which provide apprenticeships for young people to help drive up participation among this group.

■ Colombia: Trade Agreements

Stephen Gethins:

[12967]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what recent assessment he has made of the potential impact of the investor-state dispute settlement measures in the Colombia-UK Bilateral Investment Treaty on the upholding of (a) environmental and (b) human rights protections in Colombia.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

I refer the Hon. Member for Arbroath and Broughty Ferry to my response to Question 12968 on 12th November 2024: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-11-06/12968>

■ Department for Business and Trade: Data Processing**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[12779\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps he taking to help increase productivity within his Department through the use of (a) artificial intelligence and (b) effective use of data.

Justin Madders:

The Department for Business and Trade is committed to improving its productivity, including through artificial intelligence and effective use of data.

For example, we are participating in the trial of Microsoft Copilot Pro, making secure AI tools available for staff, and continue to use machine learning in internal and external products and services. Work with the Alan Turing Institute produced a governance framework to manage and monitor AI use.

Staff have access to a range of data services under continual review including CRM, central data catalogue and a data environment with dashboards and data analysis tools along with training packages.

■ Food: Overseas Trade**Gareth Snell:** [\[12442\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to promote UK-based food businesses to international markets.

Gareth Thomas:

DBT offers a wide range of export support for F&D businesses looking to expand overseas. This includes our extensive overseas network, with trade advisors promoting UK food in over 100 countries. We work with partners and industry across the UK to deliver a programme of trade shows, missions and events. In October, we held a high-profile showcase at the British Residence in Paris, promoting the quality, heritage and innovation of UK F&D to a wide audience of global buyers. In September, as part of our Dairy Export programme, we held a showcase, promoting UK dairy to more than 40 countries.

We are considering what further steps we can take to increase the exports of British food and sell products to international markets.

■ Horizon IT System**Jerome Mayhew:** [\[10487\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how many and what proportion of her Department's full time equivalent staff have been allocated to working on its response to failures of the Horizon Post Office IT system in each month of the last two years.

Gareth Thomas:

The table below shows the number and proportion of the Department's Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) staff over the last 2 years working solely on its response to the Post

Office Horizon Scandal. The figures do not include a further 15 vacant roles for which recruitment is under way and expert cases assessment teams which are contracted by DBT and are not civil servants. Also, further recruitment will follow as the Department implements plans to create an appeals mechanism for the Horizon Shortfall Scheme, as announced in September.

FTE STAFF

2022

November 14.75

December 14.75

2023

January 17.6

February 21.6

March 21.6

April 21.6

May 24.6

June 25.6

July 26.6

August 22.6

September 20.6

October 20.6

November 20.6

December 21.6

2024

January 27.6

February 34.6

March 34.6

April 46.6

May 50.6

June 56.6

FTE STAFF

July	65.6
August	67.6
September	67.6
October	68.6

■ **Imports: National Security**

Liam Byrne: [\[13175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment his Department has made of the impact of US Executive Order 14105, entitled Executive Order on Addressing United States Investments in Certain National Security Technologies and Products in Countries of Concern, implemented on 9 August 2023, on UK businesses.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

The Department for Business and Trade continues to engage closely with the US Government on potential national security risks posed by Outward Direct Investment. It will have an extra territorial impact, which may impact some UK businesses. The Department for Business and Trade is engaging with UK businesses and financial stakeholders to ensure they are considering the extra territorial impact of such regulations before the Executive Order 14105 comes into effect on 2 January 2025.

■ **Living Wage**

Lee Anderson: [\[13225\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to paragraph 5.141 of the Autumn Budget 2024, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of increasing the National Living Wage on the economy.

Justin Madders:

We will publish an Impact Assessment alongside the legislation that implements the increase to the National Minimum Wage and National Living Wage in April 2025.

■ **Overseas Investment: USA**

Liam Byrne: [\[13167\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to section 1.3 2. of the UK-US Atlantic Declaration, what discussions his Department has had with US counterparts on the coordination of UK and US outbound investment controls.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

The United Kingdom and United States have a shared objective in preventing our companies' capital and expertise from fuelling technological advances that will enhance the military and intelligence capabilities of countries of concern. The

Department for Business and Trade continues to engage with the US Government on potential national security risks posed by Outward Direct Investment.

■ Overseas Trade: Wokingham

Clive Jones:

[12171]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether UK Export Finance is taking steps to support companies in Wokingham constituency sell their goods and services overseas.

Gareth Thomas:

In its role as the UK's export credit agency, UK Export Finance has a range of products designed to support exporters or businesses with export potential. In 2023/24, UKEF provided £8.8 billion in support for UK exports, including the extension of a £200,000 General Export Facility for a company based in Wokingham. UKEF's full product suite can be found at: www.ukexportfinance.gov.uk/products-and-services/.

UKEF also has a network of export finance managers around the whole country who are valuable points of contact for local businesses and can provide information on the range of support available. Contact details for the EFMs can be found at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/find-an-export-finance-manager.

Businesses in Wokingham and across the country seeking to sell overseas can also access support from the Department and Business and Trade, such as our network of International Trade Advisors and guidance on GREAT.GOV.UK

CABINET OFFICE

■ 10 Downing Street: Equipment

John Glen:

[12080]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if the Prime Minister will re-install the customer experience machines at 10 Downing Street.

Georgia Gould:

No.

■ Cabinet Office: Public Appointments

John Glen:

[6095]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what (a) direct ministerial and (b) other public appointments to (i) his Department, (ii) the Government Equalities Office and (iii) 10 Downing Street have (A) been (1) removed from their posts and (2) asked to resign and (B) been made since 4 July 2024.

Georgia Gould:

The Cabinet Office does not routinely record and collect the reasons why appointees leave their positions.

The following direct ministerial and public appointees have left their post since 5 July 2024:

Michael Jary, Government Lead Non Executive

Anand Aithal, Cabinet Office Lead Non Executive

Henry de Zoete, Cabinet Office Non Executive

Bernard Hogan-Howe, Cabinet Office Non Executive

Jenni Miles, Cabinet Office Non Executive

Janette Beinart, Cabinet Office Non Executive

Marcus Boyle, Cabinet Office Non Executive

Stephen Gordan-Dando, Cabinet Office Non Executive

Lottie Moore, Policy Fellow to the former Minister for Women and Equalities.

Details of direct ministerial and public appointments that have been made by Cabinet Office Ministers since 4 July 2024 are publicly available and can be found on gov.uk.

■ Civil Servants: Pay

John Glen:

[\[9161\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 16 September 2024 to Question 4683 on Civil Service: Equality, what the average salary is of civil servants in the (a) Government Equalities Office and (b) his Department working in roles relating to diversity, equality and inclusion.

Georgia Gould:

Cabinet Office does not routinely collate information on specific words within job titles and collating this information would come at a disproportionate cost.

■ Civil Servants: Public Appointments

John Glen:

[\[12925\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments considers direct ministerial appointments from the civil service.

Georgia Gould:

The Advisory Committee on Business Appointments (ACOPA) provides advice on applications from former ministers and the most senior Crown servants taking up appointments or employment outside of government. As was the case under the previous administration when the Rt Honourable member was a Minister in the Cabinet Office, direct ministerial appointments are not roles outside of government, and do not require an application under the Business Appointment Rules.

■ Civil Service: Surveys

John Glen: [\[12079\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether his Department has conducted a Civil Service people survey since 4 July 2024.

Georgia Gould:

The Cabinet Office ran a Civil Service wide people survey from 10 September to 8 October 2024.

■ Council of the Nations and Regions

John Glen: [\[12078\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, who has line management responsibility for the Envoy for the Nations and Regions.

Georgia Gould:

There is no further information to that given in my Named Day Written Answer on 16 October (PQ 8163).

■ Government Departments: Advertising

Max Wilkinson: [\[13117\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much funding the Government has allocated for spending on advertising (a) in total and (b) by Department over the next Parliament.

Max Wilkinson: [\[13118\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much funding the Government allocated to spend on advertising in each year since 2015, broken down by Department.

Georgia Gould:

The Cabinet Office operates spend control on behalf of HMT on an annual basis. During this process departments and ALBs submit an overview of any spend (including marketing and advertising) planned for the next financial year.

Historical data on advertising spend is listed by department on the Government efficiency, transparency and accountability [page](#) on GOV.uk.

■ Government Departments: Communication

Mr Richard Holden: [\[12483\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the announcement on freeports in October 2024 at the Commonwealth visit, what processes are in place to coordinate policy announcements between Departments and the Prime Minister's office.

Georgia Gould:

The Budget announced five custom sites within Freeports will be opening, meaning that there will now be eight operational Freeports. I will not comment on internal Government processes.

■ Government Departments: Sick Leave

Helen Morgan:

[\[10531\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Answer of 2 February 2024 to Question 11521 on Government Departments: Sick Leave, if he will make an estimate of the number of staff days lost to long term sick absences in each Department in 2023.

Georgia Gould:

The table below provides the estimates requested, number of long term sick days lost per department, along with our preferred measure, Average Working Days Lost (AWDL) per staff year which accounts for workforce size and composition. Data is provided for the main Ministerial Departments consistent with the answer of 2 February 2024 to Question 11521.

Long term sickness absence by Main Department, days lost and average working days lost per staff year, 2023

	2023 (YEAR ENDING 31 MAR 2023)	
Department	Long Term Sick Days Lost	Average Working Days Lost
Cabinet Office	24,260	2.3
Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities	8,360	2.0
Department Culture Media and Sport	3,370	1.4
Department for Environment	25,560	2.1
Department for Education	19,790	2.5
Department for Transport	75,190	4.8
Department for Health and Social Care	34,180	3.3
Department for Work and Pensions	367,360	4.7
HM Customers and Revenue	305,190	4.5
HM Treasury	4,230	1.5
Home Office	139,980	3.8
Ministry of Defence	173,050	3.2
Ministry of Justice	580,740	6.9
Scottish Government	151,000	5.8

2023 (YEAR ENDING 31 MAR 2023)

Welsh Government	21,560	3.9
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■ Order of the British Empire**Mr Richard Holden:**[\[12486\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 10 October 2024 to Question 7430 on the Committee on the Grant of Honours, Decorations and Medals, if he will make an assessment of the current merits of The Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, as a British order of chivalry.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

There is no further update to my answer of 10 October 2024, Official Report, PQ 7430.

■ Parliament: Publicity**Stuart Anderson:**[\[12105\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps his Department is taking to help increase participation in UK Parliament Week.

Georgia Gould:

The Parliamentary Capability Team within the Cabinet Office designs and delivers training for civil servants on all aspects of parliamentary procedure. Parliament Week is an important part of the training calendar every year. This year a programme of events will take place each day designed to improve the awareness and understanding of Parliament across the Civil Service. This will include discussions with the right honourable Leaders of both houses, officials and members. These events are advertised across all departments and open to all to attend.

■ Prime Minister's Chief of Staff: Workplace Pensions**John Glen:**[\[9163\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 17 September 2024 to Question 4682 on Prime Minister: Special Advisers, which public authority under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 holds information on the Cash Equivalent Transfer Value of the civil service pension of the Prime Minister's former Chief of Staff.

Georgia Gould:

I refer the Right Hon. member to my previous answer of 17 September 2024, Official report, 4682. The Cash Equivalent Transfer Value of an individual's civil service pension is a matter for the scheme administrator, MyCSP.

■ Public Appointments**Ellie Chowns:** [\[12807\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what his expected timetable is for the publication of an updated list of significant public appointments; and whether this will include the Chair of the Office for Environmental Protection.

Georgia Gould:

The list of significant public appointments is updated by the Cabinet Office, in consultation with individual departments and the Commissioner for Public Appointments. A refreshed list will be updated in due course.

As set out by the previous government, the role of Chair of the Office for Environmental Protection is considered to be a significant appointment.

■ Senior Civil Servants: Pay**Rupert Lowe:** [\[12344\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he has made an assessment of introducing performance related pay reviews on all senior leadership positions in the Civil Service.

Georgia Gould:

The performance management process for Senior Civil Servants already provides the opportunity for performance related pay to recognise high performance.

■ UK Commission on Covid Commemoration: Costs**Rupert Lowe:** [\[12355\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the cost to the public purse is of the UK Commission on Covid Commemoration.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

The UK Commission on Covid Commemoration was established on 21 July 2022 to secure a broad consensus from across the whole of the United Kingdom on how to commemorate the COVID-19 pandemic and mark this distinctive period in our history at a UK and community level. The Commission submitted its report to the Government in March 2023 and came to a close on 31 March 2023. Eleven Commissioners were appointed to serve on the Commission. The Commissioners were not remunerated.

The Commission spent £9,942 excl VAT. In addition to this, the Commission was supported by a team of four Cabinet Office officials, who were the Secretariat to the Commission and managed its budget.

■ UK Trade with EU

Liam Byrne:

[\[13176\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of the EU Economic Security Strategy on UK businesses.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

The Government continues to follow the EU's Economic Security Strategy closely and engages regularly with the EU on these matters, including through the relevant committees under Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ BBC: Royal Charters

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[13181\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will take steps to ensure the upcoming charter review of the BBC considers the transparency around the deployment of staff to cover overseas events including future US Presidential elections.

Stephanie Peacock:

The BBC is operationally and editorially independent from the Government and decisions about its coverage of US Presidential elections are therefore a matter for the BBC.

The BBC has a duty to deliver impartial and accurate news coverage and content under its Royal Charter. The Charter also specifically sets out that the BBC must observe high standards of openness and seek to maximise transparency and accountability.

The existing Charter is due to expire on 31 December 2027. We are in the early stages of preparation for the upcoming Charter Review which we expect to launch in 2025. We will ensure we take all relevant views into account as part of the review.

■ Gambling: Video Games

Alex Mayer:

[\[12525\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to help ensure that the Advertising Standards Authority upholds standards in relation to pre-watershed online gambling adverts in mobile gaming apps that may be used by children.

Stephanie Peacock:

As part of the UK Advertising Codes, issued by the Committees for Advertising Practice (CAP) and Broadcast Committees of Advertising Practice (BCAP), sister organisations of the Advertising Standards Authority, adverts must not be placed in children's media, for instance a game mainly intended for children, and advertisers must take all reasonable steps to ensure that under-18s are excluded from their

targeted marketing. There are also a range of robust rules and restrictions which apply to gambling adverts, wherever they appear, including online. As the statutory regulator for gambling in Great Britain, the Gambling Commission requires all licensed operators to abide by the Advertising Codes.

We are considering the best available evidence, including on advertising, from a wide range of sources to inform decisions on how best to fulfil the manifesto commitment to reducing gambling-related harm. We will provide further updates to the House soon.

■ Inland Waterways and Outdoor Recreation: Youth Services

Deirdre Costigan:

[\[13270\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the social value of the use of (a) outdoor areas and (b) waterways for (i) the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and (ii) other youth services.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Government recognises the importance of providing access to the outdoors for people's health and wellbeing, including that of young adults, and is working to ensure this is safe and appropriate. This is why we have set out our ambitious manifesto commitments to create nine new national river walks and three new national forests in England, expanding access to the great outdoors. We will make further announcements on plans to develop policy on access to nature in due course.

In addition the Government is providing funding to deliver a second phase of Generation Green, to help more disadvantaged children and young people experience the benefits of the great outdoors.

This Government also recognises the importance of youth services to help young people live safe and healthy lives. Youth services, including the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, utilise outdoor areas and waterways to provide young people with opportunities to take part in activities such as hiking, canoeing, kayaking, cycling and climbing, as well as a range of volunteering opportunities. These experiences help build participants' core skills for life and work and support their mental and physical well-being.

Use of inland waterways specifically for the Duke of Edinburgh's Award or other youth services, and any assessment of their social value for these purposes specifically, are matters for local arrangement with navigation authorities or other waterway owners.

■ Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme

Steve Barclay:

[\[12699\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what is the cost of the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme; and when she plans to make a decision on the renewal of that scheme.

Chris Bryant:

The Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme providing grants towards Vat paid on reports and maintenance is a demand-led programme and operates with a total budget of up to £42m per year, funded jointly by DCMS and HMT reserve. In the financial year 23/24 a total of £29,161,870 was granted to listed places of worship.

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.

■ Sports: Women**Samantha Niblett:**[\[13130\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the availability of changing and bathroom facilities for women at grassroots sporting venues.

Stephanie Peacock:

We are dedicated to supporting every aspect of women's sport and ensuring all women and girls, no matter their background, are able to participate in sport and physical activity.

Karen Carney OBE's Review of Women's Football included a recommendation on meaningful access to facilities. I recently met Karen to discuss implementation of her review which is relevant across women's sport. I am clear that action is needed to drive all of the recommendations outlined in the Review. I look forward to convening the Implementation Group for Women's Football before the end of this year to understand progress following Karen's Review.

The Football Foundation, the charity funded by the Government, the Football Association and the Premier League, has committed to implementing recommendations from an independent review to ensure new minimum standards for women and girls at funded sites. This includes guaranteeing a share of priority slots to women's and girls' teams, setting up a new small grants programme, specifically targeted at creating female-friendly facilities off the pitch, and ensuring refreshed Local Football Facility Plans reflect the growth in women and girls' football.

Sport England's 'Accessible and Inclusive Sports Facilities' guidance also supports grassroots sporting venues to provide well designed spaces for female users.

■ Tourism Industry Council**Jayne Kirkham:**[\[13317\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, when her Department plans to re-establish the Tourism Industry Council; and whether she plans to include representatives from the cruise industry within its membership.

Chris Bryant:

DCMS is keen to hear the views of and work with all parts of the visitor economy, including the cruise sector. Details of how Ministers will engage in this Parliament with stakeholders across what is a diverse and broad sector will be published shortly.

DEFENCE■ **Ministry of Defence: Public Expenditure****Mr Mark Francois:**[\[11834\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will outline the UK's defence budget for (a) this and (b) the next two financial years expressed as a (i) total cash amount and (ii) percentage of gross domestic product, excluding expenditure related to Ukraine.

Maria Eagle:

Total Defence spending, in line with NATO definitions, is expected to be £64.4 billion in 2024-25 and £67.7 billion in 2025-26. This equates to 2.29% of GDP in 2024-25 and 2.30% in 2025-26.

Excluding expenditure on support to Ukraine, Defence spending in line with NATO definitions would be £61.4 billion in 2024-25 and £64.7 billion in 2025-26. This equates to 2.18% of GDP in 2024-25 and 2.19% in 2025-26.

Future financial years' figures are subject to the outcome of the second phase of the Spending Review.

EDUCATION■ **Apprentices: Warwickshire****Rachel Taylor:**[\[13059\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many apprenticeship schemes are operating in (a) North Warwickshire and Bedworth constituency, (b) North Warwickshire and (c) Nuneaton and Bedworth.

Janet Daby:

So far in the 2023/24 academic year from August to April there have been 1,310 apprenticeship participants in North Warwickshire and Bedworth constituency, 910 in North Warwickshire local authority district and 1,890 in Nuneaton and Bedworth local authority district. In the 2022/23 full academic year there were 1,470,990 and 2,110 participants respectively.

Note:

(1) Figures for 2023/24 are provisional and cover the first three quarters (August 2023 to April 2024). All other years are final, full-year figures.

(2) Volumes are rounded to the nearest 10.

(3) Participation is the count of learners that participated at any point during the year. Learners undertaking more than one course will appear only once in the grand total.

(4) Figures are based on learner home postcode.

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

■ **Armed Forces: Cadets**

Neil O'Brien:

[12801]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 5 November 2024 to Question 11294 on Armed Forces: Cadets, what discussions she had with the Minister for Veterans and People on the School staff instructor grant.

Stephen Morgan:

The department works closely with the Ministry of Defence on delivery of the Cadet Expansion Programme (CEP). The CEP is run jointly by the departments and funding decisions are discussed and shared with ministers from both departments in that context.

The government, through the Ministry of Defence, provides in the region of £180 million to support cadet schemes. The CEP will continue to be delivered and receive £3.6 million in government funding for this academic year and through to the 2033/34 financial year. This goes to the single Service (i.e. Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force) cadet organisations, to provide funding for cadet expansion in schools.

■ **Children: Carers**

Ian Byrne:

[13015]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to support children in kinship care.

Janet Daby:

Through the Autumn Budget 2024, the government announced £40 million to trial a new kinship allowance in up to ten local authorities. This will test whether paying an allowance to cover certain costs, such as supporting a child to settle into a new home with relatives, can help increase the number of children taken in by family members and friends.

In October 2024, the department announced the appointment of the first National Kinship Care Ambassador, to advocate for kinship children and their carers, and to work directly with local authorities to help improve services whilst sharing good practice across areas. We also published new Kinship Care statutory guidance for local authorities, which sets out the support and services local authorities should provide to kinship families.

From September 2024, the role of Virtual School Heads has been expanded to include championing the education, attendance and attainment of children in kinship care.

The government is extending the delivery of over 140 peer support groups across England, and the department is also delivering a package of training and support for all kinship carers across England. In addition, the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund continues to provide therapeutic support for some children in kinship care.

The government recognises the challenge that many kinship carers face in continuing to work alongside taking in and raising a child. The department is introducing kinship leave for its own employees and are dedicated to keeping this area under review to ensure working kinship families receive the support they need.

■ Pre-school Education

Fabian Hamilton: [\[13172\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to release an Early Years strategy.

Stephen Morgan:

The department's long term intention is to reform the early years system as the foundation of opportunity and life chances for children. We will set out our vision for reforming the early years sector next year.

■ Primary Education: Teachers

Sir John Hayes: [\[12685\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to improve the recruitment of male primary school teachers.

Catherine McKinnell:

High quality teaching is the factor that makes the biggest difference to a child's education with teachers helping shape the lives of young people.

There are now 468,693 full-time equivalent teachers in state-funded schools in England, but the government must do more to ensure we have the workforce needed to provide the best possible education for every child in all parts of the country. This is why the government has set out the ambition to recruit 6,500 new expert teachers.

The first crucial step towards achieving this is to ensure teaching is once again an attractive and respected profession. As part of this, it is important that teachers get the pay they deserve, which is why this government has accepted in full the School Teachers' Review Body's recommendation of a 5.5% pay award for teachers and leaders in maintained schools from September.

The department is committed to making teaching and teacher recruitment as inclusive as possible. This includes the Get Into Teaching marketing campaign, which provides inspiration and support to explore a career in teaching and directs people to

the Get Into Teaching Service, which exists to make teaching a career of choice and support candidates to apply for teacher training in the most effective and efficient way possible.

The service supports the department's overall aim to improve teacher sufficiency and quality by boosting teacher recruitment and retention. The department's Apply for Teacher Training digital service gives it more data and greater insight into the behaviour of male candidates and schools and universities that offer initial teacher training. This is helping the department identify and address barriers for different groups, including men.

The department offers a range of training pathways into teaching that appeals to the widest range of candidates. These include routes funded through student finance and, in some subjects, bursaries or employment-based training where trainees will earn a salary while they train, including teaching apprenticeships.

■ Schools: Finance

Mr Lee Dillon:

[12876]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the report entitled Budget 2024 Briefing, published by Tech First in October 2024, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of levels of child poverty on resource allocation in schools.

Catherine McKinnell:

The schools national funding formula (NFF) targets funding to schools which have pupils with additional needs. In the 2024/25 financial year, over £4.4 billion (10.2%) of the formula is allocated according to deprivation factors in the NFF, including free school meals (FSM) for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, and over £7.8 billion (17.8%) is allocated for additional needs overall.

The department has recently published provisional factor values for the 2025/26 NFF, including the increases to the deprivation factors within the formula. This is published at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pre-16-schools-funding-local-authority-guidance-for-2025-to-2026>.

The core schools budget grant (CSBG), announced earlier this year to support schools with the costs of the 2024 pay awards for support staff and teachers, likewise includes a deprivation factor. This means pupils who have been eligible for FSM at any point over the past six years attract additional funding to their schools through the CSBG.

On top of this funding through the NFF and CSBG, the department also provides additional funding to schools through the pupil premium to improve the attainment and wider outcomes of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. In the 2024/25 financial year, total pupil premium funding is worth over £2.9 billion.

■ Schools: Transport

Lee Barron:

[\[12857\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has had discussions with North Northamptonshire Council on school transport fees.

Catherine McKinnell:

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

Local authorities may not charge a fee for transport for eligible children. Some authorities choose to arrange transport for children who are not eligible, but they are not required to do so. They may also charge for such transport, but this is a matter for the local authority.

The department is keen to understand how well home to school transport supports children to access educational opportunities and will be working with our officials on this.

■ Special Educational Needs

James McMurdock:

[\[12833\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department plans to allocate new (a) funding and (b) resources to support children with special educational needs and disabilities in schools.

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 to pupils with SEND.

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.

■ Special Educational Needs: Employment

James McMurdock:

[12853]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made an assessment of the (a) adequacy of and (b) potential merits of undertaking a review of provider access legislation for students with SEND to assist them with acquiring employment.

Janet Daby:

The Provider Access Legislation places a duty on all schools to provide at least six opportunities for all their pupils to meet providers of approved technical education qualifications or apprenticeships during school years 8 to 13.

The delivery of provider encounters may need to be adapted for some audiences, for example special schools and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Schools should involve parents/carers, the Special Educational Needs Coordinator and other relevant staff to identify any specialist support needed, and tailor each encounter appropriately.

Schools can access resources for Provider Access Legislation in SEND settings through The Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) here:

<https://resources.careersandenterprise.co.uk/resources/provider-access-legislation-pal-send-settings>, as well as by contacting their local Careers Hub for support.

Data published by the CEC outlines that the majority of specialist settings are offering meaningful provider encounters for their pupils. In the 2023/24 academic year, 89% of special schools reported that most students had meaningful encounters with further education colleges. 78% of special schools reported that the majority of students had meaningful encounters with independent training providers.

The department will continue to monitor and review the level of compliance with the Provider Access Legislation, the support in place and the impact on young people.

■ Special Educational Needs: Epilepsy

Liz Jarvis:

[12759]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that children with with epilepsy have individual healthcare plans.

Catherine McKinnell:

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

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

■ Teaching Aids

James McMurdock:

[\[12852\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to ensure parents have access to the materials used to teach their children in (a) relationships, sex and health education, (b) religious education and (c) other lessons.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department agrees that parents should be able to see what their children are taught, and that schools should be responsive to parents who request to see specific curriculum materials.

Schools are required to share information concerning their curriculum with parents, including for relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) and religious education.

Guidance on what maintained schools must or should publish online is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/what-maintained-schools-must-publish-online>.

Guidance on what academies and further education colleges must or should publish online is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/what-maintained-schools-must-publish-online>.

Schools are also required to consult parents in advance on their relationships and sex education policies. The statutory guidance is clear that this should include sharing examples of the materials they plan to use.

If a parent feels that a school is failing to comply with its legal requirements relating to the provision of the curriculum, or that a school is acting unreasonably in the way it complies with them, they can make a formal complaint by following the school's statutory complaints procedures.

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

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

■ Biofuels: Electricity Generation

Rebecca Smith:

[\[12850\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he plans to publish a response to the consultation entitled Transitional support mechanism for large-scale biomass electricity generators, published on 18 January 2024.

Michael Shanks:

Yes, the Government plans to publish a response to the consultation in due course.

■ **British Coal Staff Superannuation Scheme**

Lee Anderson:

[\[12767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing surpluses to the British Coal Staff Superannuation Scheme in line with the Mineworkers' Pension Scheme.

Sarah Jones:

I am open to considering options put forward by the Trustees for changes to the British Coal Staff Superannuation Scheme.

■ **Business: Berkshire**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[12971\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to support local businesses in (a) Slough constituency and (b) Berkshire to access (i) funding and (ii) incentives for local net-zero projects.

Kerry McCarthy:

Businesses have a vital role to play in the transition to net zero, from decarbonising their own operations, to working across their sectors and supply chains.

Small and medium-sized businesses can visit the UK Business Climate Hub, which is run in partnership with government, for advice and sources of finance or support on reducing emissions.

Climate Change Agreements provide tax discounts for businesses reducing their emissions, and the Industrial Energy Transformation Fund supports industrial sites with high energy use to transition.

■ **Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: Data Processing**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[12972\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps they are taking to use (a) artificial intelligence and (b) data to help increase their Department's productivity.

Michael Shanks:

DESNZ is committed to improving its productivity, including through the use of artificial intelligence and effective use of data.

All DESNZ staff have access to Copilot for the web, a work-safe generative AI tool that helps summarise and draft text. In addition, as part of a large-scale, cross-government experiment led by the CDDO, around a third of all DESNZ staff have been given a Microsoft 365 Copilot licence, which allows them to utilise generative AI within tools such as Word, Excel and Outlook, and can base responses on their own data (documents, emails, and messages). The experiment began on 30 September and runs through to 29 December and will conclude with a report from the CDDO to set out the case for adopting a tool like M365 Copilot in the longer-term.

We are also building our inhouse capability to develop AI tools at DESNZ. For example, our Advanced Analytics team are currently exploring multiple use cases that allow DESNZ staff to retrieve key information needed for their work more efficiently, including information from past impact assessments, lessons learnt logs and statistics from our Digest of UK Energy Statistics (DUKES) publications.

DESNZ has an internal adoption of AI working group which leads on supporting the development of departmental use-cases for Artificial Intelligence, as well as the guardrails, rules and playbooks that govern the safe, secure and ethical use of this technology, ensuring alignment to the Central Digital and Data Office' Generative AI Framework for Government.

DESNZ's Data Strategy and Governance team are currently developing a data strategy for DESNZ that sets out our strategic ambition for how we collect, manage and use data as a Department. This includes time-saving measures around making it easier for DESNZ staff to locate and access data, making it easier for data to be shared across organisational boundaries, reducing the time taken to ingest, process and cleanse it, and introducing standards that make it easier to aggregate and compare across policies and programmes.

We will continue to regularly review our usage of AI and data to maximise productivity benefits.

■ Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: Motor Vehicles

Mr Toby Perkins:

[\[12932\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how many (a) petrol, (b) diesel, (c) hybrid and (d) electric (i) cars, (ii) vans and (iii) other vehicles his Department hired in each of the last five years.

Michael Shanks:

This information is not held centrally and can only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

■ Electric Cables

Sir John Hayes:

[\[12912\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what estimate his Department has made of how many miles of pylons and power lines will need to be built in England to meet the 2030 clean power target.

Michael Shanks:

The Government does not design or develop the electricity network, and it is for the National Energy System Operator (NESO) to assess and recommend high-level reinforcements to the electricity network. Transmission Owners then develop the network on the basis of those recommendations. The NESO recently published advice on possible pathways to achieve clean power by 2030, which includes an assessment of required transmission reinforcements. Using this advice, Government will publish its Clean Power 2030 Action Plan later this year.

■ Energy: Billing

Ian Byrne:

[\[13029\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to help support low income households with their energy bills.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government believes the only way to protect billpayers permanently is to speed up the green transition towards homegrown clean energy. The creation of Great British Energy will help us harness clean energy and have less reliance on foreign, volatile energy markets and will help in our commitment to be a clean energy superpower by 2030.

In the short-term, we are continuing to deliver the Warm Home Discount which provides a £150 annual rebate on energy bills for eligible low-income households. I am also having regular discussions with energy suppliers to ensure that consumers are supported this winter, especially the most vulnerable.

■ GB Energy: Power Failures

Alistair Strathern:

[\[13251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of GB Energy providing temporary back-up sources of power for homes impacted by long power cuts.

Michael Shanks:

The Government works closely with electricity networks to improve and maintain energy infrastructure resilience. In the event of a disruption, electricity network operators have well practiced response plans in place to minimise disruption to customers. Great British Energy (GBE) will speed up the deployment of technologies to support Government's aim of decarbonising our electricity system, whilst ensuring we can meet future demand and provide energy security. The GBE Bill outlines that activities for ensuring security of energy supply are within GBE's scope, which could include supporting energy storage projects. As GBE will be operationally independent, the exact mix of technologies it chooses to invest in will be determined in due course, influenced by available opportunities and alignment with the strategic priorities that government sets out.

■ Heat Batteries

Jayne Kirkham:

[\[12337\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of introducing incentives on the use of heat batteries similar to those on heat pumps.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

Heat batteries are a promising electric heating technology, which can be charged off-peak to utilise cheaper electricity. However, they are less efficient than heat pumps

and if a battery has insufficient storage capacity, it may need to draw electricity at peak times which can add to the burden on the electricity network. Consequently, policies like the Boiler Upgrade Scheme, are currently focused on supporting heat pumps. However, my Department is exploring, through studies like the Homes for Net Zero trial, the role heat batteries could play in the future.

■ Incentives

Sir Bernard Jenkin: [\[12681\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, when he plans to implement a British jobs bonus scheme; and how much he plans to allocate to each year of the scheme.

Michael Shanks:

The Government has launched the Clean Industry Bonus, an addition to Contract for Difference (CfD) payments for fixed and floating offshore wind developers who invest in their supply chains. The budget for the Bonus will be £27m per gigawatt of offshore wind capacity that applies to the 2025 CfD round. Policy on future rounds will be communicated in due course.

■ Joint European Torus

Adam Thompson: [\[12754\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what discussions he has had with the UK Atomic Energy Authority on ensuring that expertise gained through the Joint European Torus (JET) experiment is (a) retained and (b) used by the UK STEP project; and what assessment he has made of the potential impact of closing the JET site.

Michael Shanks:

The UKAEA has developed world-leading fusion expertise having hosted JET for 40 years. A decision was made to cease operations at the end of 2023 as major upgrades to JET's ageing infrastructure would offer only limited scientific value.

Most of the staff linked to JET are now a part of JET decommissioning or other UKAEA programmes. JET decommissioning will provide a unique opportunity to develop knowledge in the decommissioning of a fusion device and will inform the design of STEP. Furthermore, the repurposing of the estate will support ongoing growth of the cluster of fusion organisations based at the Culham campus.

■ Wind Power: Seas and Oceans

Mike Amesbury: [\[12996\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of an industrial strategy for offshore wind.

Michael Shanks:

As set out in the recent Invest: 2035 Green Paper, clean energy industries are a priority growth sector for the UK. The Government will set out its full Industrial Strategy in the spring to deliver the certainty and stability businesses need to invest in the high-growth sectors that will drive our growth mission.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ Agriculture: Derbyshire****Samantha Niblett:**[\[13134\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the economic contribution of farming to (a) Derbyshire and (b) South Derbyshire constituency.

Daniel Zeichner:

Defra does not produce constituency level estimates of the economic contribution of farming. Regional estimates are produced at international territorial levels (ITL) 1, 2 and 3, with ITL3 being the most granular geographical breakdown.

In 2023, total income from farming for the three Derbyshire ITL3 regions was £0.13 million for Derby, £11.84 million for East Derbyshire and £36.69 million for South and West Derbyshire. Full details are available [here](#).

■ Animal Welfare**Alex Mayer:**[\[12526\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to paragraph 2.3.2 of the report of the Strategic Dialogue on the Future of EU Agriculture, published on 4 September 2024, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of the recommendation that on trade rules the Commission should ensure (a) coherence between EU animal welfare standards and (b) that the EU livestock production model and EU Animal Welfare legislation are not undermined.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Strategic Dialogue of the Future of EU Agriculture provided a mechanism for EU stakeholders to make suggestions to the European Commission to help inform its work shaping its Vision for Agriculture and Food. As this report represents those stakeholder recommendations to the commission, it is too early to say what potential implications it may have on current or future Government policies. This will depend on the positions developed by the Commission in response to the report.

The UK and EU have shared ambitions and challenges in our agricultural sectors, including supporting farmers in the context of climate and food security demands, strengthening the position of farmers in supply chains, and exploring innovation and Agri-Tech to support production.

The President of the European Commission and the Prime Minister have agreed to strengthen the relationship between the EU and UK. The UK and EU are like-minded partners with similarly high standards. The Government has already committed to seek to negotiate a veterinary/sanitary and phytosanitary agreement to help boost trade and deliver benefits to businesses and consumers in the UK and the EU.

■ Marine Protected Areas

Dr Al Pinkerton: [\[13322\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of increasing the number of highly protected marine areas in the UK.

Emma Hardy:

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

The Government is committed to effectively protecting 30% of our land and sea by 2030. There are 181 Marine Protected Areas, including three Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMAs), covering over 40% of English waters.

We are currently focusing on implementing management measures to ensure these three HPMAs receive the high level of protection needed and will consider next steps on HPMAs in due course.

■ Marine Protected Areas: Fishing Vessels

Dr Al Pinkerton: [\[13315\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if his Department will take steps to ban bottom trawling in marine protected areas.

Emma Hardy:

It is essential to manage bottom trawling in our Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) appropriately due to the significant damage it can have on protected seabed habitats. 60% of England's MPAs have bottom trawling restrictions already. The department is considering next steps in the context of our domestic and international nature conservation obligations and how we consider, and work with, the fishing industry as part of this.

■ Plastics: Health Hazards

Ruth Jones: [\[12999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of endocrine-disrupting chemicals in plastic (a) products and (b) packaging on human health.

Mary Creagh:

Defra has been working with other government Departments and researchers to address evidence gaps and to inform potential action relating to the risks from

endocrine-disrupting chemicals. Regulatory action can and has been taken to address these risks, including those associated with plastics and packaging.

■ **Public Footpaths: River Thames**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[12048\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has had recent discussions with the Chief Executive of the Environment Agency on closures to parts of the Thames Path.

Emma Hardy:

No such discussions have taken place.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ **Afghanistan: Human Rights**

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[\[13003\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his department has plans to increase funding for (a) NGOs and (b) human rights defenders operating in Afghanistan who are promoting the human rights of (i) women, (ii) girls, (iii) LGBTQ+ people and (iv) religious and (v) non-religious minorities.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

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. We are planning £161 million in aid this financial year (2024-25), with 50 per cent targeted for women and girls. UK funding supports several NGOs who promote human rights in Afghanistan, including those of women and minorities. We also contribute to an Afghanistan Resilience Trust Fund project that supports civil society, particularly women-led organisations.

■ **Afghanistan: Women**

Samantha Niblett:

[\[13129\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans he has to support Afghan women (a) in Afghanistan and (b) living as refugees (i) in the UK and (ii) around the world.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK remains one of the most significant donors to Afghanistan. The FCDO is planning £161 million in aid this financial year (2024-25) with 50 per cent targeted towards women and girls. In the first year after the Taliban takeover, the UK provided £17 million to support Afghan people in neighbouring countries, primarily Tajikistan, Iran and Pakistan. We have repeatedly condemned Taliban restrictions on women and girls' rights, including through UN Security Council and Human Rights Council resolutions. The Home Office is responsible for the support of refugees in the UK.

■ Australia: Culture and Sports**Samantha Niblett:**[\[13132\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to take steps to strengthen bilateral cooperation with Australia on matters relating to the (a) sports and (b) cultural sectors.

Catherine West:

The UK maintains a strong and modern partnership with Australia across sporting and cultural fields, fostering mutual understanding and people-to-people ties. Over the next year, significant sporting events, including the England Women's Cricket and British Lions tours to Australia, will showcase our enduring sporting links. The British Council collaborates closely with Australian institutions as exemplified by the 2022 UK-Australia Season of Culture. We remain committed to deepening these connections, including when looking ahead to Australia's hosting of the Brisbane Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2032. There are several major UK contemporary visual arts and museum exhibitions touring to Australia in 2025.

■ Climate Change: Children**Steve Yemm:**[\[13373\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans he has to show climate leadership for children at COP29.

Anneliese Dodds:

Children are disproportionately at risk from the effects of climate change, and children and young people will be at the forefront of shaping a resilient, sustainable future. The UK-led Glasgow Climate Pact urges Parties and stakeholders to ensure meaningful youth participation and representation in multilateral, national and local decision-making processes. We have championed this approach at COP29, with the Minister of State for Development meeting with youth climate activists from developing countries, and UK Special Representative for Climate Rachel Kyte attending events alongside universities and the UN Youth Office to highlight the critical role of youth in climate action.

■ Climate Change: Minority Groups**Ruth Jones:**[\[13006\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government plans to take at COP29 to help mitigate the impact of climate change on global religious minorities.

Anneliese Dodds:

Representing over 80% of the world's population, faith and spiritual groups have an important perspective on climate change. We are committed to supporting vulnerable and marginalised groups who are experiencing the worst impacts of the climate crisis, including religious minorities, women and girls, disabled people and indigenous peoples.

■ Iran: Nuclear Weapons

Nick Timothy:

[\[12561\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he made of the potential implications for his policies of Iran's (a) compliance with United Nations Security Council resolutions, (b) attempts to develop its military nuclear programme and (c) deployment of missiles against civilian targets in Israel before the vote in the UN General Assembly on draft decision A/C.1/79/L.32 on missiles.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK supported draft decision A/C.1/79/L.32 alongside international partners to ensure missiles remained on the agenda of the 81st session of the UN 1st Committee. We are clear that Iran continues to destabilise the region through its political, financial, and military support for its proxies and partners - in direct contravention of multiple UNSCRs. Iran also continues to escalate its nuclear programme, which has no credible civilian justification. We will continue to tackle this destabilising behaviour by holding Iran to account at the UN and in other multilateral fora. The UK is also prepared to use all diplomatic levers to ensure that Iran never develops a nuclear weapon.

■ Taipei Representative Office in the UK

Alicia Kearns:

[\[12300\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether (a) he and (b) any Ministers from his Department held meetings with Representative Vincent Yao from the Taipei Representative Office in the UK in (i) September and (ii) October.

Catherine West:

The Foreign Secretary and other FCDO ministers did not hold any meetings with Representative Vincent Yao in September or October.

■ Travel Information: LGBT+ People

Nadia Whittome:

[\[13025\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of providing a list of LGBTQ+ friendly travel destinations in travel guidance to British citizens.

Anneliese Dodds:

FCDO travel advice provides information to help British nationals, including those who are LGBT+, make informed decisions about their foreign travel.

No travel is completely safe. We try to make objective judgements and we will advise against travel when we judge that the level of risk is unacceptably high.

We recognise, however, that LGBT+ people can face particular risks and challenges due to the stigma, discrimination and even violence that they can experience around the world. This is why the FCDO, in addition to country-specific advice, has worked

with LGBT+ people and organisations to develop specific gov.uk guidance for LGBT+ people travelling abroad: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/lesbian-gay-bisexual-and-transgender-foreign-travel-advice>.

■ USA: Northern Ireland

Mr Gregory Campbell: [\[11831\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to make representations to the next US President on appointing a US Special Envoy to Northern Ireland for Economic Affairs.

Stephen Doughty:

We continue to work constructively with Joe Kennedy III, the current US Special Envoy, and look forward to his upcoming visit to Northern Ireland. Economic growth is a key component of our foreign policy agenda and the central mission of this Government. The UK has a thriving trading and investment relationship with the US that encourages mutual growth across the whole of the UK. The Chancellor announced that the Northern Ireland Executive will be provided with a £18.2 billion settlement in 2025/26 - the largest in real terms in the history of devolution.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Alcoholic Drinks: Consumption

Dr Danny Chambers: [\[13336\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help reduce levels of alcohol consumption in the context of alcohol mortality rates.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Department is working with partners in the devolved administrations to develop the first ever clinical guidelines on alcohol treatment for the United Kingdom, which will promote and support good practice and improve the quality of service provision, resulting in better outcomes for people experiencing alcohol dependence and alcohol related harms.

Through our Health Mission, the Government has committed to prioritising preventative public health measures to support people to live longer, healthier lives. The Department will continue to work across Government to understand how best to reduce alcohol-related harms.

■ Ambulance Services: Lincolnshire

Sir John Hayes: [\[12684\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help improve ambulance response times in (a) South Holland and the Deepings constituency and (b) Lincolnshire.

Karin Smyth:

The Government has committed to supporting the National Health Service to improve performance and achieve the standards set out in the NHS Constitution, including for ambulance response times. This will improve the level of service nationally, in Lincolnshire and in South Holland and the Deepings.

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

Ahead of this winter, NHS England has set out the priorities for the NHS to maintain and improve patient safety and experience, including actions to support patient flow and ensure ambulances are released in a timely way. NHS England's winter letter is available at the following link: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/winter-and-h2-priorities/>

■ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: Drugs**Mary Glendon:****[12405]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will take steps to improve the communication of the real-time availability of ADHD medications in pharmacies to patients.

Karin Smyth:

The Department monitors and manages medicine supply at a national level so that stocks remain available to meet regional and local demand. Information on stock levels within individual pharmacies is not held centrally.

To aid attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) service providers, prescribers, and pharmacies, we have widely disseminated our communications and continually update a list of currently available and unavailable ADHD products on the Specialist Pharmacy Service website, helping ensure that those involved in the prescribing and dispensing of ADHD medications can make informed decisions with patients. Further information is available at the following link:

<https://www.sps.nhs.uk/articles/prescribing-available-medicines-to-treat-adhd/>

The team also regularly engages with patient groups to provide information on supply issues pertinent to them and their patients, and supports them with any patient communications they may wish to develop.

■ Brain: Tumours**Mr Gregory Campbell:****[13182]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what funding he plans to allocate for brain tumour research in the 2025-26 financial year.

Andrew Gwynne:

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.

Brain cancer remains one of the hardest to treat cancers in both adults and children and we urgently need more research to inform our efforts, which is why in September, the NIHR announced new research funding opportunities for brain cancer research, spanning both adult and paediatric populations. This includes a national NIHR Brain Tumour Research Consortium, to ensure that 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 on the new research funding opportunities is available at the following link:

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

The NIHR continues to encourage and welcome applications for research into any aspect of human health, including brain tumours. Applications are subject to peer review and judged in open competition, with awards made on the basis of the importance of the topic to patients and health and care services, value for money, and scientific quality.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Data Processing**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:****[12977]**

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

Karin Smyth:

The Department is committed to improving its productivity, including through artificial intelligence (AI), and effective use of data. To make AI and data work, the Department has focused on establishing the enablers for adopting AI responsibly, ethically, and at low cost, to ensure a high return on investment via productivity gains while also maintaining or improving process outcomes. Specifically, implementing governance and delivery structures that pool internal experts from across the Department and bring the consideration of ethics, information governance, cyber security, data science, analysis, and technology in line with guidance offered by the Central Digital and Data Office.

The Department has developed proof-of-concept projects to test these structures, including a Parliamentary Intelligence tool that saves 40 hours per week of staff time and improves the quality of insights, and a partially automated approach to consultation analysis that reduces the cost and time to analyse large consultations, while respecting The Gunning Principles.

The Department draws on a range of resources, published on GOV.UK, to inform our AI and data usage. For example, the Generative AI Framework, the Data Maturity Assessment, the Ethics, Transparency and Accountability Framework, the Data Ethics Framework, and the Algorithmic Transparency Recording Standard. The Department of Health and Social Care also has access to the Central Digital and Data Office, based in the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, for expert advice.

Underpinning the Department's approach to AI is shaping a data driven culture in the Department to support and enhance data science and data analysis capabilities, providing high quality data and data products in a secure, safe, legal, and ethical way. The Department has a large and mature analytical function who put data and insights at the heart of decision making and policy development. For example, the Data Hub that collates nearly 500 metrics in 27 dashboards across 13 topic areas, providing data and insights on-demand to inform decisions. The Department does not currently have any plans to implement automated decision-making systems, and people remain in full control of decision making, with AI augmenting their work.

The Department will continue to regularly review usage of AI and data to maximise productivity benefits for staff and the public.

■ **Department of Health and Social Care: Official Cars**

Charlie Dewhirst:

[\[11770\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 17 October 2024 to Question 7005 on Department of Health and Social Care: Official Cars, if he will name which specific senior officials have access to a Government car; and whether those senior officials had access to a Government car before the 2024 general election.

Charlie Dewhirst:

[\[11771\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 18 October 2024 to Question 7004 on Department of Health and Social Care: Official Cars, whether any of the three vehicles are electric cars.

Karin Smyth:

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.

■ **Drugs and Medical Equipment: Cost Effectiveness**

James McMurdock:

[\[13127\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help ensure value for money in (a) medicines and (b) medical supplies in the NHS.

Karin Smyth:

Processes are in place to ensure that new medicines represent a clinically and cost-effective use of resources before they are routinely funded by the National Health Service in England. New licensed medicines are evaluated by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), which makes recommendations for the NHS on whether they should be routinely funded based on an assessment of their costs and benefits. The NICE aims, wherever possible, to issue its recommendations close to the point of licensing, and the NHS in England is legally required to fund medicines recommended by the NICE, normally within three months of the publication of final guidance.

Furthermore, the United Kingdom has had controlled spend on branded medicines through a series of voluntary agreements since 1957. The new Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing, Access, and Growth is expected to generate the NHS approximately £14 billion in savings over five years in medicines expenditure that can be made available to provide the best possible treatment and care for NHS patients, grow the workforce, and cut waiting lists.

Regarding value for money in medical supplies for the NHS, the sourcing, delivery, and supply of healthcare products is managed by NHS Supply Chain. Their aim is to leverage the collective buying power of the NHS to drive savings and provide a standardised range of clinically assured, quality products at the best value. The Department is committed to realising the full potential of NHS Supply Chain to deliver greater savings and efficiencies alongside a broader value proposition focussing on supply chain resilience, product safety, enabling access to innovation, social value, sustainability, and ethical considerations. NHS Supply Chain is continuing to work together with the Department, NHS England, NHS trusts, suppliers, and other system partners across the country to improve procurement in the NHS. This will be achieved through ongoing collaboration, partnership working, and innovation.

■ Health Services and Social Services: Public consultation**Sir Julian Smith:**[\[11874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to his Department's consultation entitled Health and social care statistical outputs which closed on 5 March 2024, when he plans to respond to that consultation; and if he will publish a timeline for implementing the recommendations of that consultation.

Karin Smyth:

The Department expects to publish a response to the consultation this year. Work is ongoing across the Department, the UK Health Security Agency, NHS England, and the Office for National Statistics to agree and align proposals following the feedback from users.

Any resulting changes to statistical publications will be made in line with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. The timings of each of these will vary by publication.

■ Health Services: Statistics

Sir Julian Smith:

[\[11875\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to (a) ensure regular public data releases and (b) improve the timeliness of data available.

Karin Smyth:

The Department is strongly committed to upholding the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, and its three constituent pillars of trustworthiness, quality, and value. As such, the Department is committed to releasing timely data at a frequency that meets the needs of users, as far as practicable.

For example, over the winter, NHS England increased the frequency of its publications of data on urgent and emergency care, in response to the increased need for this data at this time.

The Heads of Profession for Statistics in the Department and its arm's-length bodies ensure that statistical producers continually review their products and improve the quality and frequency of publication, in line with the needs of the users of data and statistics.

■ Health: Charities

Helen Morgan:

[\[12993\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with health charities on the potential impact of increases in levels of employers' national insurance contributions on those charities.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 12 November 2024]: Ministers and officials meet regularly with health and care charities to discuss a variety of issues.

To repair public finances and help raise the revenue required to increase funding for public services, the Government has taken the difficult decision to increase employer National Insurance. On the impact on charities in particular, 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.

■ Maternity Services: Berkshire

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[12984\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve maternity services in (a) Slough constituency and (b) Berkshire.

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, personalised, and more equitable for women and babies. Improvement in the Slough

and East Berkshire maternity services includes aligning with the three-year delivery plan, and involves:

- the recruitment of more midwives to significantly reduce vacancies and to have minimal shortages by 2025;
- increased access to services through a new maternity hub in Crowthorne;
- listening to women's voices through the maternity and neonatal voices partnership, with additional funding for targeted engagement with parents with a baby admitted to a neonatal unit;
- implementing an updated Saving Babies Lives Care Bundle, which is a package of interventions to reduce stillbirths, neonatal brain injury, neonatal deaths, and preterm birth; and
- piloting a perinatal pelvic health service that provides women with information about pelvic health risks, signs of pelvic floor dysfunction, and prevention strategies.

The Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust has focused on addressing inequalities by improving access to perinatal mental health services, interpreter availability, and antenatal and preconception information, with an increase in folic acid uptake in Slough.

■ **Maternity Services: Equality**

Chris Bloore:

[\[13088\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions his Department has had with NHS England on (a) renewing the national maternity safety ambitions beyond 2025 and (b) amending those ambitions to include reducing inequalities.

Karin Smyth:

The Government is committed to ensuring that all women and babies received safe, personalised, equitable, and compassionate care. I am urgently considering, with my officials and NHS England, the immediate action needed across maternity and neonatal services to improve outcomes and address the stark inequalities that persist for women and babies, including what targets are needed.

This includes consideration of what comes beyond the national maternity safety ambition, ensuring that we take an evidence-based approach, and that any targets set are women and baby-centred and focused on tackling inequalities.

■ **Medical Records: Classification Schemes**

John McDonnell:

[\[12357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how codes are created for the SNOMED CT classification system in primary care.

John McDonnell:

[\[12359\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will ensure that a code is created for myalgic encephalomyelitis in the SNOMED CT classification system in primary care.

Karin Smyth:

Codes are created for SNOMED CT by one of the following organisations:

- UK National Release Centre (NRC), hosted by the Technology and Information Standards (TIS) group in NHS England;
- SNOMED International, a not-for-profit organisation that owns, administers and develops SNOMED CT;
- any other NRC in any other SNOMED CT member country.

All requests made to NHS England must be compliant with the Editorial Policy and are processed in accordance with the SNOMED CT UK Edition Governance and Change Request Process. Concepts are added or changed in SNOMED CT by NHS England terminologists in line with International and UK Editorial Principles as defined by SNOMED International at the recommendation of international clinical advisory groups. The authoring process includes a technical quality assurance and peer review. Once the authoring process has been completed and quality assured, the files are published on the Terminology Reference data Update Distribution website.

There is currently a code in SNOMED CT for myalgic encephalomyelitis. The Fully Specified Name (FSN) is 'Chronic fatigue syndrome (disorder)'. The FSN for a code is not intended for use by a clinician. Instead, a clinician is expected to make use of the synonyms for the code, which include myalgic encephalomyelitis.

Clinical systems usually display a 'preferred term', deemed to be the most clinically appropriate way of expressing a concept. The preferred term for the code 'Chronic fatigue syndrome (disorder)' is 'Chronic fatigue syndrome'.

NHS England is reviewing the preferred term to align it with the current most clinically appropriate term for the UK, with the preferred term 'ME/CFS - myalgic encephalomyelitis/ chronic fatigue syndrome' being considered.

■ Menopause: Health Services

Nick Timothy:

[\[12788\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of training for GPs to (a) diagnose and (b) treat women experiencing the menopause.

Karin Smyth:

The curricula for postgraduate medical specialty training is set by individual Royal Colleges and faculties. The Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) sets the curriculum that all general practitioners (GPs) must cover before they are able to pass the examination to become a member of the RCGP and to work independently

as a GP. The curriculum includes a specific section on women's health, including the menopause. As a result, the menopause is a core area of knowledge for all qualified GPs.

■ NHS: Drugs

Paul Davies: [13382]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an estimate of the projected net NHS spend on medicines (a) before and (b) after accounting for forecast rebates due via the (i) Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing, Access and Growth and (ii) Branded Health Service Medicines (costs) Regulations 2018 for the next five years.

Karin Smyth:

Annex 3 of the document titled Annexes to the 2024 Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing, Access and Growth outlines the forecasts of measured sales and payments from branded medicines. This document is available at the following link:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/657b2993254aaa00d050de1/Annexes-2024-voluntary-scheme-for-branded-medicines-pricing-access-and-growth.pdf>

■ Prescriptions: Fees and Charges

Ian Byrne: [13024]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to review the prescription charge exemption list.

Karin Smyth:

There are no current plans to review the list of prescription charge exemptions.

Approximately 89% of prescription items are dispensed free of charge in the community in England, and there are a wide range of exemptions from prescription charges already in place, for which those with the greatest need may be eligible. Eligibility depends on the patient's age, whether they are in qualifying full-time education, whether they are pregnant or have recently given birth, whether they have a qualifying medical condition, or whether they are in receipt of certain benefits or a war pension.

People on low incomes can apply for help with their health costs through the NHS Low Income Scheme. Prescription prepayment certificates (PPCs) are also available. PPCs allow people to claim as many prescriptions as they need for a set cost, with three-month and 12-month certificates available. The 12-month PPC can be paid for in instalments.

■ Primary Health Care: Capital Investment

Dr Beccy Cooper: [13311]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to Lord Darzi's Independent investigation of the NHS in England, published on 12 September 2024, what

steps his Department is taking to support integrated care boards to increase capital expenditure in the primary care estate.

Karin Smyth:

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

At the Autumn Budget, we established a dedicated capital fund of £102 million to deliver approximately 200 upgrades to general practice surgeries across England, supporting improved use of existing buildings and space, boosting productivity, and enabling delivery of more appointments. This funding represents a first step in delivering the additional capital the primary care sector needs. It responds directly to issues highlighted by Lord Darzi's independent review of the NHS and is the first dedicated national capital fund for primary care since 2020.

The Department and NHS England are working with integrated care boards to prioritise high-impact projects where investment can unlock significant productivity gains and additional usable space from existing buildings. Capital budgets for 2026/27 onwards will be considered through Phase 2 of the Spending Review process, concluding in Spring 2025.

■ **Surgical Hubs: Injuries and Orthopaedics**

Ayoub Khan:

[\[12614\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the potential impact of surgical hubs on waiting times for (a) trauma and (b) orthopaedic treatment.

Dr Beccy Cooper:

[\[12649\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the impact of surgical hubs on waiting times for (a) trauma and (b) orthopaedic treatment.

Karin Smyth:

No formal assessment has been made on the impact of surgical hubs on waiting times for trauma and orthopaedic treatment.

Surgical hubs enable trusts to increase resilience for elective procedures and minimise cancellations during periods of high pressure. This can reduce uncertainty for patients around last-minute cancellations, maximise the use of available capacity, and helps to reduce waiting times. In the Budget, we committed additional funding to set up new surgical hubs to help with our commitment to get the waiting lists down.

HOME OFFICE**■ Undocumented Migrants**

Rupert Lowe: [\[12585\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, the locations of how many irregular migrants processed by the authorities and believed to be in the UK are unknown to her Department.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Home Office does not hold or detain asylum seekers in asylum accommodation, and individuals are free to leave their accommodation if they no longer require support. The Home Office does maintain records of where supported asylum seekers are accommodated, and updates these records in the event the Department is informed a person moves address.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**■ Council Housing: Finance**

Siân Berry: [\[2676\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing councils with grants to buy homes from the market to convert the tenure of these homes to council housing.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government will support councils and housing associations to build their capacity and make a greater contribution to affordable housing supply. As a first step, we have given councils the ability to combine Right to Buy receipts with section 106 contributions and removed the caps on the percentage of replacements delivered as acquisitions and the percentage cost of a replacement home that can be funded using Right to Buy receipts. These flexibilities will be in place for an initial 24 months, subject to review. We encourage councils to make the best use of these flexibilities and to achieve a good balance between acquisitions and new builds. We have also confirmed the third round of the Local Authority Housing Fund will be going ahead, with £450 million to councils to acquire and deliver homes for families at risk of homelessness.

■ Empty Property

Dr Simon Opher: [\[13268\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department is taking to bring empty homes back into use.

Matthew Pennycook:

I refer my Hon Friend to the answer given to Question UIN [6686](#) on 14 October 2024.

■ Fire Extinguishers

Nadia Whittome: [\[13271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of requiring the installation and retrofitting of sprinklers in (a) all buildings regularly used by vulnerable people and (b) warehouses.

Alex Norris:

Building owners are required to ensure that existing care home buildings or warehouses have a suitable and sufficient fire risk assessment. As part of this process, some owners may choose to retrofit sprinklers as part of their overall fire strategy, while others may opt for alternative measures. Recent changes to the Building Safety Act 2022 defined new roles and responsibilities all stakeholders involved in a construction project, including building owners. This ensures that safety is prioritized throughout the lifecycle of a building. Retrofitting sprinklers is not always the best option, and other fire safety measures might be more appropriate for specific buildings.

■ Local Government Finance: Employers' Contributions

Daisy Cooper: [\[12452\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to provide additional funding to local authorities for the cost of increases to employer National Insurance contributions.

Jim McMahon:

I refer the Hon Member to the answer to Question UIN [11851](#) on 8 November 2024.

■ Planning: Urban Areas

Steve Darling: [\[12743\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when her Department plans to publish the prospectus on the Long-Term Plan for Towns.

Alex Norris:

The Chancellor confirmed at the Budget on 30 October that the Long-Term Plan for Towns will be retained and reformed as part of a new regeneration programme.

A revised prospectus for the programme will be published in due course, confirming the associated timelines and a new set of strategic objectives aligned to this government's missions.

■ Right to Buy Scheme

Siân Berry: [\[2677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an estimate of the real-terms value of the total of discounts claimed under Right to Buy in each local authority in England and Wales in each year since 1989.

Matthew Pennycook:

The total amount of Right to Buy discounts per local authority from 2011-12 onwards is available in Section B of the Local Authority Housing Statistics (LAHS) available here [Local authority housing data - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/local-authority-housing-data), with the latest data included in the LAHS open data [Local Authority Housing Statistics open data - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/datasets/local-authority-housing-statistics-open-data).

Discounts data prior to 2011-12 are not available by local authority. At England level, the average discount from 1998-99 is available in live table 682 [Live tables on social housing sales - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/tables/live-tables-on-social-housing-sales)

Figures are not available for earlier periods.

JUSTICE■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Shaun Davies:****[13277]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether she plans to use remote court hearings to ease the burden on the courts system.

Heidi Alexander:

The decision to hold a hearing remotely, or enable participants to attend remotely, rests with the judiciary. HM Courts and Tribunal Service continues to support and enable remote hearings by optimising the courts and tribunals estate and building technological capability. This empowers the judiciary to conduct remote and hybrid hearings at their discretion, allowing for increased accessibility and flexibility in the day-to-day business of courts and tribunals.

■ **Employment Tribunals Service: Disclosure of Information****Bell Ribeiro-Addy:****[13245]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of naming parties involved in employment tribunal cases on those people; and if she will make an assessment of the potential merits granting anonymity to parties involved in employment tribunal cases by default.

Heidi Alexander:

The Employment Tribunals Act 1996 and the Employment Tribunals Rules of Procedure 2013 ("the Rules") govern how cases are handled in employment tribunals. Orders for anonymity are primarily governed by rule 50 of the Rules. This provides the employment tribunals the power to make an order restricting or preventing the disclosure of any aspect of proceedings, this may include an order that a party's identity should not be disclosed to the public. Employment tribunals may only make such an order, where it is 'necessary in the interests of justice' and having regard to the principle of open justice and to the Convention right to freedom of expression. As such, the question of whether such an order should be granted is a

judicial decision balancing the interests of justice with the need for transparency, and is taken on a case-by case basis.

■ Ministry of Justice: Data Processing

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[12979]

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

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The Ministry of Justice is committed to improving its productivity, including through artificial intelligence and effective use of data.

For example, our Prison Network App built by our Data Science and AI teams link up multiple sources of administrative data to help detect prisoners involved with drug smuggling, gang violence and organised crime. This has reduced administrative burdens for more than 500 intelligence staff who use the app to identify connections between individuals in the prison population.

Better Outcomes through Linked Data (BOLD) is an ambitious data-linking project, joining data from the Ministry of Justice, the Department of Health and Social Care, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, among others. BOLD has produced a tool for probation staff which cuts down the duplication of data entry and significantly reduces the need for probation officers to search for data, freeing up their time to allow more offender management to reduce reoffending.

Additionally, we have worked in partnership with the Alan Turing Institute to develop a framework for the Department to build and embed our ethical approach to the use of AI and data science, so that we can be confident that we understand the choices we make are ethically sound, with principles we can stand by as this area develops quickly. Most recently, the Ministry of Justice, in partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions, ran a unique collaboration between government and businesses to co-create innovative AI solutions to tackle some of the most complex challenges facing citizens today. The result of these collaborations will be communicated in due course.

Additionally, we are developing guidance, training and learning opportunities for our staff to safely use AI tools. We draw on a range of resources, published on GOV.UK, to inform our AI and data usage. For example, the Generative AI Framework, the Data Maturity Assessment, the Ethics, Transparency and Accountability Framework, the Data Ethics Framework, and the Algorithmic Transparency Recording Standard.

We will continue to regularly review our usage of AI and data to maximise productivity benefits for staff and the public.

■ Prison Officers: Labour Turnover and Recruitment**Sir John Hayes:**[\[12688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prison officers have (a) been recruited and (b) left their roles since 2014.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The quarterly HMPPS workforce statistics publication covers staffing information, including number of staff in post as well as the number of joiners and leavers, by different grades and structure etc.

The number of HMPPS joiners and leavers by grade is publicly available in table 8 of the HMPPS Workforce Statistics publication which can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-offender-management-service-workforce-statistics>.

Once you have chosen your respective quarterly report, navigate to HMPPS Workforce Statistics Bulletin: **** tables, tab 8 will provide you with table 8 information.

NORTHERN IRELAND**■ Northern Ireland Office: Domestic Visits****Robin Swann:**[\[13304\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what his policy is on notifying an hon. Member before visiting their constituency.

Hilary Benn:

The policy is to notify Members of Parliament in advance of visiting their constituency.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY**■ Artificial Intelligence: Health Services****Samantha Niblett:**[\[13131\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the potential use of Artificial Intelligence in the health sector to improve patient outcomes.

Feryal Clark:

DSIT is working closely with Departments, including DHSC, to support better adoption of AI. For example, through the £21m AI Diagnostics fund, DHSC is supporting the deployment of technologies in high-demand areas such as chest X-Ray and chest CT scans to enable faster diagnosis and treatment of lung cancer in over half of acute trusts in England.

At the recent International Investment Summit, over £24 billion of investment was pledged to harness the opportunity AI offers. DSIT will continue working closely with Cabinet colleagues to ensure AI is safely deployed to deliver service enhancements, earlier diagnostics and improved patient outcomes.

■ **Digital Technology: Disadvantaged**

Nadia Whittome:

[\[13284\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps his Department is taking to help tackle digital exclusion among Arab women in the UK.

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. Digital exclusion disproportionately impacts certain demographics, creating new inequalities and exacerbating existing ones. As we develop our approach on tackling this issue we will be working closely with local communities, local authorities, businesses and charities to ensure everything we do is well targeted. We hope to announce more on this in the near future.

■ **Horizon Europe: Investment Returns**

Chi Onwurah:

[\[13201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to paragraph 4.94 of the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 August 2024, HC 295, whether he has made an estimate of the return on investment in Horizon (a) this year and (b) in the future.

Feryal Clark:

We expect to contribute over £8bn to Horizon Europe between 2024-2027, and are aiming for UK researchers to be awarded the maximum amount possible through successful funding bids. Our priority is to boost UK application and success rates to maximise this return. As we re-joined the programme in January of this year, and there is a lag between applications and awards, it is too early to properly assess UK success in the programme.

We have secured financial protections that ensure the UK can clawback funds if contributions to Horizon Europe exceed receipts that go to UK researchers and businesses and researchers by 16%.

■ **Project Gigabit and Shared Rural Network**

Chi Onwurah:

[\[13205\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to paragraph 4.96 of the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 October 2024, HC 295, by what process the figure of £500 million to invest in Project Gigabit and the Shared Rural Network was arrived at; and what that funding is expected to achieve.

Chris Bryant:

The Autumn Budget set out funding of over £500m in 2025/26 for Project Gigabit and the Shared Rural Network. This only referred to the capital funding for these programmes, resource is allocated separately.

The funding allocation is based on estimated delivery for the two programmes. For Project Gigabit this is based on the contracts we have signed and have planned. We remain committed to delivering gigabit connections to at least 99% of premises by 2030. Funding for the Shared Rural Network is based on agreements with the mobile industry to roll out new and upgraded masts to meet our target of hitting 95% geographic 4G coverage next year.

■ Research: Finance**Chi Onwurah:**[\[13200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to paragraph 4.94 of the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 August 2024, HC 295, whether this applies to all UK universities; and what metric she will use to assess whether a university is world leading.

Feryal Clark:

The Autumn Budget 2024 announces at least £6.1 billion of funding for core research, growing this allocation at least in line with inflation. Core research funding directly and indirectly supports universities through a range of programmes, including competitive research grants through UKRI's research councils, investment in PhDs and fellowships, and Quality-Related research funding provided through Research England, informed by the outcomes of the Research Excellence Framework (REF). DSIT will work closely with the sector to effectively prioritise our R&D settlement, and will announce further details on funding allocations in due course.

■ UK Research and Innovation: Finance**Helen Morgan:**[\[12797\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of UKRI funding in helping innovative projects scale-up.

Feryal Clark:

Criteria assessing the impact and effectiveness of UKRI funding to support scale-up of innovative projects are consistently tracked through the UKRI Commercialisation Monitoring Framework, as well as Innovate UK's Impact Management Framework.

All evaluations are published on UKRI's website and are used to inform future approach and investments.

TRANSPORT**■ Airports: Parking****Mr Toby Perkins:**[\[12935\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what information her Department holds on the number of (a) car rental car parking spaces and (b) car rental car parking spaces with electric charging points at each airport.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Information requested is not held by the department.

■ Department for Transport: Data Processing**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[12975\]](#)

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

Mike Kane:

The Department for Transport has established an Organisational AI programme to effectively explore the potential of artificial intelligence to enhance the efficiency and accuracy of our work. It is structured to ensure safe, effective and appropriately targeted adoption, to deliver the greatest possible productivity benefits. We are collaborating with the Alan Turing Institute and the Office for National Statistics to measure the opportunities for productivity gains and prioritise the introduction of AI tools where they can bring the most benefit.

■ Department for Transport: Ministers' Private Offices**Sir Ashley Fox:**[\[12892\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 22 October 2024 to Question 9281 on Department for Transport: Ministers' Private Offices, if she will publish the invoices for the work done.

Mike Kane:

The information is not held by the Department for Transport in the form requested as the costs were included in consolidated invoices covering a range of building charges.

■ Department for Transport: Motor Vehicles**Mr Toby Perkins:**[\[12916\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many (a) petrol, (b) diesel, (c) hybrid and (d) electric (i) cars, (ii) vans and (iii) other vehicles her Department hired in each of the last five years.

Mike Kane:

The Department for Transport's vehicle hire contract provides hire services for the core department, agencies and some arms-length bodies for cars, vans and other

vehicles. Over a period of 5 years (Jan 2020 – Oct 24) on average 28,087 are hired a year, however, we don't centrally record information on fuel or engine type.

■ High Speed 2 Line: Construction

Rachel Taylor: [\[13063\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to mitigate (a) noise, (b) dust and (c) traffic disruption relating to HS2 works.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Secretary of State is committed to mitigating the environmental effects of the construction of HS2 and binding Environmental Minimum Requirements (EMRs) are in place that HS2 Ltd and its contractors must follow to limit the impacts of noise, dust and traffic impacts as far as reasonably practicable. The EMRs include a code of construction practice, which sets out a range of control measures, which shall be applied throughout the construction period to ensure effective planning and management is in place to minimise the potential impacts of construction upon communities, businesses and the natural and historic environment.

A copy of the code of construction practice is available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a80104d40f0b62305b88f3b/Code_of_Construction_Practice.pdf

HS2 Ltd also provides a responsive community engagement operation which ensures that residents have quick and simple routes to raise concerns if they feel that the effects of construction are not being managed as they should be, including a 24-hour helpdesk, and quick turnaround times for addressing complaints and queries. The HS2 Construction Commissioner can also intervene if construction issues are not being properly resolved through the HS2 complaints process.

■ Minibuses: Inspections

Sarah Edwards: [\[12761\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many (a) school and (b) other minibuses have failed inspections under Section 19 of the Transport Act 1985 in the last 10 years.

Sarah Edwards: [\[12762\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many roadside inspections on Operator License Operated Mini Buses have been undertaken in each of the last 10 years.

Simon Lightwood:

The table below shows volumes of roadside inspections the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) has carried out for public service vehicle (PSV) minibuses that had an operator licence recorded. DVSA only holds records for this data as far back as 2019:

YEAR	PSV MINIBUS OPERATOR LICENCE ENCOUNTERS
2019/20	1330
2020/21	145
2021/22	898
2022/23	1009
2023/24	862
2024/25	654
Grand Total	4898

DVSA does not record if any school or other type of minibus it inspects, whether at the side of the road or at annual MOT tests for PSVs, are subject to a section 19 permit.

TREASURY

■ Banking Hubs: Rural Areas

Adam Dance:

[\[13092\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps she is taking to increase the number of banking hubs in rural communities.

Tulip Siddiq:

The Government understands the importance of face-to-face banking to communities and is committed to championing sufficient access for all as a priority. This is why the Government is working closely with industry to roll out 350 banking hubs across the UK. The UK banking sector has committed to deliver these hubs by the end of this parliament. Over 80 banking hubs are already open and Cash Access UK, who oversee banking hub rollout, expect 100 hubs to be open by Christmas.

The specific location of these hubs is determined independently by LINK, the operator of the UK's largest ATM network. Criteria that LINK considers includes whether another bank branch remains nearby, the local population, the number of cash-accepting businesses and the financial vulnerability of the community.

An alternative option for accessing face-to-face banking services in rural areas is via the Post Office. The Post Office Banking Framework allows personal and business customers to withdraw and deposit cash, cash cheques, and check their balance at 11,500 Post Office branches across the UK.

■ Development Aid

Shockat Adam: [\[13267\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when she plans to restore development spending to 0.7% of national income.

Darren Jones:

The government remains committed to restoring ODA spending to 0.7% of GNI as soon as fiscal circumstances allow. As set out at Budget, the OBR's latest forecast shows that the ODA fiscal tests are not due to be met within the Parliament. The government will continue to monitor future forecasts closely, and each year will review and confirm whether a return to spending 0.7% GNI on ODA is possible against the latest fiscal forecast. We will remain one of the most generous donors amongst the G7.

■ Employers' Contributions: Public Sector

Neil O'Brien: [\[13234\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the cost of employer National Insurance Contributions was for (a) central Government, (b) local government and (c) the whole of government in each of the last five financial years; what estimate she has made of those costs for the (i) 2025-26 financial year and (ii) subsequent four financial years; and what proportion of the total public sector pay bill Employer National Insurance accounted for in each of last five financial years.

Darren Jones:

The Treasury does not collect spending information on this basis. However, as set out in the Autumn Budget, the government has set aside funding to support the public sector with employer National Insurance Contributions. The amounts are £4.7bn in 2025-26, £4.7bn in 2026-27, £4.8bn in 2027-28, £4.9bn in 2028-29 and £5.1bn in 2029-30.

■ Living Wage

Mr Gregory Campbell: [\[13178\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate she has made of the the amount of increased taxation generated by the increase in the National Living Wage in 2025-26.

James Murray:

The latest forecasts for tax revenues were published alongside the Office for Budget Responsibility's (OBR) October Economic and Fiscal Outlook. These forecasts are based on economic determinants, including wage growth and employment levels. Detailed tax receipts forecasts can be found here: [Economic and fiscal outlook – October 2024 - Office for Budget Responsibility](#)

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ Conversion Therapy

Olivia Bailey:

[\[901200\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps she is taking to ban conversion practices.

Dame Nia Griffith:

Conversion practices are abuse - they have no place in society and must be stopped.

My ministerial colleagues and I are working hard to bring forward legislation to deliver a full trans-inclusive ban that offers protection from these abusive practices while preserving the freedom for individuals to explore their identity, and also respects the important roles of those supporting them.

■ Disadvantaged: Income

Dr Beccy Cooper:

[\[901201\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps she is taking with Cabinet colleagues to help reduce the potential impact of socio-economic disadvantage on future earnings.

Bridget Phillipson:

Through the Opportunity Mission and the Child Poverty Taskforce we will build opportunity for all by giving every child the best start in life, helping them achieve and thrive, building skills for opportunity and growth; and ensuring family security, so background is no barrier to success.

■ Immigration: Windrush Generation

Adam Thompson:

[\[901202\]](#)

What steps she is taking with Cabinet colleagues to support victims of the Windrush scandal.

Seema Malhotra:

Justice and change that victims of the Windrush Scandal deserve has not been delivered.

Recently, I met with the WNO and Windrush Cymru Elders as part of this Government's fundamental reset, and am proud that since taking office, we have re-established the Windrush unit in the Home Office; improved our caseworking with the introduction of a single named caseworker; committed to appointing a Windrush Commissioner; and are bringing in £1.5mil in grants to fund additional advocacy and support for claimants.

I am also pleased to hear about the excellent work of the Long Eaton Settlers Legacy Association in your constituency. Campaign groups like them do very important work in the local community, supporting victims of the Windrush Scandal to access the compensation they deserve. I will ensure that the Windrush Engagement Team is

aware of their work as they continue reaching out to organisations and communities across the country.

This Government is determined to right the wrongs of the Windrush Scandal.

■ Period Poverty

Mr Jonathan Brash: [\[901194\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps she is taking to tackle period poverty.

Bridget Phillipson:

The Department for Education runs a scheme providing free products in education settings, so periods aren't a barrier to learning for young women. There are similar schemes to ensure that hospital patients and those in police detention have access to the products they need.

This Government is tackling the root causes of poverty through measures to make work pay, boosting the living wage, and investing in public services; so no one has to go without the essentials.

■ Police: Equality

John Glen: [\[12702\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what assessment she has made of the implications for her Department's policies of recommendation 3 of His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services' report on An inspection into activism and impartiality in policing, published on 10 September 2024.

Anneliese Dodds:

Equality and opportunity are at the core of this government's work. We have pledged to uphold Britain's long-standing record of protecting individuals against unlawful discrimination, and ensuring the Equality Act 2010 continues to provide strong protection for 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 preserve and promote the Public Sector Equality Duty and ensure that all bodies exercising public functions comply with its provisions. This includes ensuring effective guidance is available for those exercising the duty.

■ Women: Health

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[901199\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps she is taking with Cabinet colleagues to help improve women's health.

Karin Smyth:

I would like to thank my Hon. Friend for her continued interest in women's health.

Women's health is a priority for this government, and we are considering how to take forward the Women's Health Strategy.

Work continues to improve health outcomes for women, for example through the £25 million women's health hubs pilot, and recent extension of the Baby Loss Certificate Service to all historic losses.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Children: Maintenance

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[13285\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what data her Department holds on the number of people eligible for child maintenance who are not claiming it.

Andrew Western:

It is estimated that at the financial year ending 2023, there are 2.4 million separated families in Great Britain and 3.8 million children in those families. 41% of these did not have either a statutory arrangement with the Child Maintenance Service or a private arrangement.

At the end of June 2024, the Child Maintenance Service was managing 744,000 arrangements for 675,000 Paying Parents, the number of arrangements has increased by 10% since the end of June 2023.

Legislation to remove the £20 application fee was introduced in February 2024, removing a financial barrier to parents wishing to access the CMS.

Get Help Arranging Child Maintenance is an online service that provides free information and support to help parents make decisions about CM and make a CMS application if they choose to.

Chris Bloore:

[\[13633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will take steps to abolish all Child Maintenance Service for parents with care who are victim-survivors of domestic abuse.

Andrew Western:

The Department has recently concluded a public consultation on policy changes. This included proposals to remove the Direct Pay service (where parents pay each other directly) and managing all CMS cases in one service to allow the CMS to tackle non-compliance faster.

The consultation also sought views on how victims and survivors of domestic abuse can be better supported to use CMS and whether removing Direct Pay completely would benefit victims and survivors of domestic abuse. This follows the Child Support Collection (Domestic Abuse) Act receiving Royal Assent in June 2023, which recognised that Direct Pay may not always be appropriate for victims and survivors of domestic.

Removing Direct Pay would mean all maintenance payments would be monitored and transferred within the scheme. As all payments would flow via CMS, the CMS would be able to automatically identify any that were missed, late or partial and immediately take action to re-establish compliance. This would also reduce the ability for perpetrators of domestic abuse to exploit the communication channel needed for direct pay to function for the purposes of abuse; and prevent abusers from inflicting economic control and coercion through withholding CM payments.

Feedback from the consultation is being considered and a Government response will be published in due course.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Buildings

Sir Ashley Fox:

[\[13145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 23 October 2024, to Question 9286, on Civil Servants, how many civil servants are assigned to work in her Department's headquarters in London; and how many individual desks are available in the headquarters office.

Andrew Western:

As of 31st October 2024, there are 2,357 paid members of staff with Caxton House – London recorded as their place of work.

There are 1,050 desks allocated to DWP in Caxton House.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Data Processing

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[12976\]](#)

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

Andrew Western:

DWP is committed to improving its productivity, including through artificial intelligence and effective use of data.

The department is safely accelerating our use of AI to make a real difference for both employees and citizens. We test the feasibility of using AI technology to address business problems using an iterative, test-and-learn approach. We are exploring how AI and innovation can improve DWP's ability to respond at pace and provide a more personalised and seamless experience for customers. An AI Delivery Board oversees DWP's use of AI, assuring that it is safe, ethical, and transparent.

The DWP Data Strategy sets out the department's vision, principles, and priorities, to provide a clear path to enable us to become a data-driven organisation for the greater public good. Aligned with organisational goals, it focuses on delivering excellent services, improving outcomes, reducing costs, and building trust. It will enable DWP to:

- Improve the quality, availability, and accessibility of our data.

- Enhance our data capabilities, skills, and culture.
- Strengthen our data governance, ethics, and security.
- Promote data collaboration and innovation.
- Leverage data assets for informed decision-making and policy.

With improved access to data and products, DWP will be able to make better and faster decisions. Using data to make better automated and human decisions will improve efficiency, effectiveness and our citizens' experiences. Increased accuracy of data will support faster local decision making, based on insight on local operational pressures and local citizens' needs. This will support DWP to reduce fraud and error incidents and improve and modernise citizen services. Business areas will be able to use data to better support citizens by making the right decision quickly and reducing burden.

Within the work of the Department's Service Modernisation Programme, opportunities to harness the potential of AI and maximise our use of data will form central parts of wider activity aimed at modernising and improving the service we provide.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Mel Stride:

[\[10684\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when she plans to respond to the letter from the Chair of the Social Security Advisory Committee entitled The Social Fund Winter Fuel Payments Regulations 2024: letter to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, published on 17 October 2024.

Emma Reynolds:

[Holding answer 28 October 2024]: We welcome the observations and recommendations in the letter from the chair of the Social Security Advisory Committee, and the decision not to take the Regulations on formal reference. The Secretary of State replied to the SSAC letter and recommendations which can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-social-fund-winter-fuel-payments-regulations-2024/the-social-fund-winter-fuel-payments-regulations-2024-secretary-of-state-for-work-and-pensions-reply-to-ssac>

■ **Social Security Benefits: Fraud**

Rupert Lowe:

[\[13346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how much her Department has attributed to fraud and error in each of the last ten years.

Andrew Western:

The Department publishes estimates of the levels of fraud and error in the benefit system by financial year. These statistics are available for the past ten financial years and can be found at: [Fraud and error in the benefit system - GOV.UK](#)

■ Winter Fuel Payment

Mel Stride:

[\[10685\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she made a request to the Social Security Advisory Committee to expedite their consideration of the Social Fund Winter Fuel Payments Regulations 2024 before she invoked the urgency provision.

Emma Reynolds:

[Holding answer 28 October 2024]: The urgency procedure was invoked as a means of making the necessary Exchequer savings in the current financial year, as the Regulations needed to come into force on 16 September 2024 (in time for the qualifying week for Winter Fuel Payments this winter).

DWP officials met the Social Security Advisory Committee (SSAC) in August to discuss the Regulations, and the Committee had the opportunity to raise matters of interest to them, prior to formal scrutiny. The regulations were formally considered by SSAC on 11 September.

We welcome the observations and recommendations in the letter from the SSAC chair, and the decision not to take the Regulations on formal reference. The Secretary of State replied to the SSAC letter and recommendations which can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-social-fund-winter-fuel-payments-regulations-2024/the-social-fund-winter-fuel-payments-regulations-2024-secretary-of-state-for-work-and-pensions-reply-to-ssac>

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

■ Carbon Capture, Usage and Storage Track 1 - Contingent Liabilities

Minister of State (Minister for Industry) (Sarah Jones):

[\[HCWS211\]](#)

Introduction

Today, I am pleased to have laid a Departmental Minute setting out the details of a series of contingent liabilities associated with the Carbon Capture Usage and Storage Track-1 clusters. Carbon Capture Usage and Storage is a critical component of the UK meeting its 2050 net zero commitment particularly via ensuring energy and supply chain security and enabling hard-to-abate sectors to decarbonise.

The taking of these liabilities directly will address issues which have hampered previous attempts at a Carbon Capture Usage and Storage programme, in particular investor confidence and the risk of CO2 store leakage. This support and the rapid launch of the programme fulfils the government's aim to make the UK a global leader in Carbon Capture Usage and Storage, and ultimately creating a self-sustaining sector which supports not only UK business but also provides international opportunities.

Treasury approval has been granted and subject to satisfaction of conditions, we anticipate arrangements will begin to be implemented by the end of this month.

Context and rationale

Carbon Capture Usage and Storage is the only feasible method for decarbonising many hard-to-abate sectors such as cement production, and is currently the most cost-effective method of decarbonising others such as dispatchable power. Whilst there is growing interest worldwide, a programme of this nature is first of a kind and consequently there are multiple market barriers which inhibit the development of a Carbon Capture Usage and Storage market in the UK.

Government support is necessary to address these challenges and enable Carbon Capture Usage and Storage deployment at scale. HMG is reducing investor risk in these technologies by bearing some of the initial risk inherent in developing a Carbon Capture Usage and Storage market, as well as the cross-chain risk existing across the participants in the network.

Whilst the liabilities are in principle for the entire project duration it is expected that in practice government exposure will decrease as users come on to the system, insurers become more comfortable with the 'first-of-a-kind' risks and the depth of the market increases.

Details of the Contingent liabilities

There are 5 contingent liabilities associated with the various Track-1 contracts related to the following arrangements:

1. The Supplemental Compensation Agreement is a long-term mechanism within the Government Support Package, which enables the management of leakage risks at the geological store during operations and the post closure period.
2. The Revenue Support Agreement addresses demand-risks by providing for payments to CO2 transport & storage companies if their allowed revenue is not covered by user fees.
3. The Discontinuation Agreement provides a right for the SoS to discontinue support to the transport and storage companies and entitles investors to be compensated for their investment.
4. The Decommissioning Shortfall Agreement covers potential decommissioning fund shortfall which might arise if decommissioning is required before the fund has been fully built-up.
5. The Discontinuation of Capture Project Contracts allows for payment of compensation to capture projects for any losses due to a qualifying change in law or prolonged CO2 transport and storage unavailability.

Exposure

The table below sets out the HMG's maximum exposure for each of the programme associated contingent liabilities. These concern the five projects that were part of the October announcement: two transport and storage networks, Net Zero Teesside, Protos, and EET Hydrogen – we will notify Parliament of additional contingent liabilities when other projects reach financial close. It is important to note that whilst the table represents the maximum possible exposure, the probabilised exposures and likely crystallisations are far lower. There are robust risk management frameworks in place. Our assessments indicate that there no liabilities that are likely to be realised and the vast majority are very remote.

	CONTINGENT LIABILITY	MAXIMUM EXPOSURE (£M) ACROSS BOTH TRACK-1 CLUSTERS	REASONABLE WORST-CASE (£M) ACROSS BOTH TRACK-1 CLUSTERS
1	The Supplementary Compensation Agreement	9,034	400
2	The Revenue Support Agreement	9,804	5,739
3	Stranded Asset (discontinuation)	9,715	5,739
4	Decommissioning Shortfall	590	100-333

	CONTINGENT LIABILITY	MAXIMUM EXPOSURE (£M) ACROSS BOTH TRACK-1 CLUSTERS	REASONABLE WORST- CASE (£M) ACROSS BOTH TRACK-1 CLUSTERS
5	The Discontinuation of Capture Project contracts	5,302	2,055

The contingent liabilities are necessary as it provides confidence in this first of a kind sector. Carbon Capture, Usage and Storage will enable us to accelerate to Net Zero whilst maintaining energy security and delivering growth to our industrial heartlands.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Flood Resilience

Minister for Water and Flooding (Emma Hardy):

[\[HCWS214\]](#)

The Government extends its deepest sympathies to the citizens of Valencia and more widely across Spain, where recent floods have had devastating impacts on communities including the tragic loss of more than 200 lives. These events are a stark reminder of the challenges we face in a changing climate.

This Government set up the first ever Floods Resilience Taskforce, on 12 September. The Taskforce marks a new approach to preparing for flooding, and working between national, regional and local government. It brings together Ministers and stakeholders, including Defra, MHCLG, Home Office, Cabinet Office, Mayoral Offices, the Environment Agency, the Met Office, devolved administrations, Local Resilience Forums, emergency responders, and the National Farmers Union, among others.

As announced at the Autumn Budget 2024, the Government will invest £2.4 billion over two years to improve flood resilience and better protect communities across the country, including from coastal erosion.

But this Government inherited an outdated funding formula for allocating money to proposed flood defences. Established in 2011, the existing formula slows down the delivery of new flood schemes through a complex application process, and also neglects more innovative approaches to flood management such as nature-based approaches and sustainable drainage.

To speed up the delivery of new defences and ensure that the challenges facing businesses and rural and coastal communities are adequately taken into account, a consultation will be launched in the new year which will include a review of the existing formula. We also want to ensure that floods funding policy drives close partnership working and brings in wider financial contributions to flood schemes, to make government funding go further.

Additional financial support will also be provided to rural communities, recognising the significant impact of flooding on farmers. £50 million will be distributed to internal drainage boards (IDBs), the public bodies responsible for managing water levels for agricultural and environmental needs in a particular area.

This transformational investment will put IDBs on a firm footing to deliver their vital role in flood and water management for years to come. IDBs that submit successful bids will be able to spend the £50 million on projects over the next two years. This will benefit projects that will improve, repair or replace IDB assets – including flood barriers, embankments and maintenance of watercourses. The funding will support projects which reduce risks and impacts from flooding to farmer and rural communities across England. The Environment Agency has begun work with IDBs to distribute the funding from today.

This follows confirmation of payments to farmers impacted by last year's severe weather through the Farming Recovery Fund. A total of £60 million will be distributed to eligible farmers, via recovery payments of between £2,895 and £25,000 to around 13,000 farm businesses. Payments are expected to land in farmers' accounts from 21 November.

Taken together, the measures announced today will deliver meaningful change for communities across the country. They represent a significant package of funding and a promise of reform which show that this Government will continue to act to ensure people are better protected from flooding right across the country.

HOME OFFICE

■ Consultation on legal definition and defences for Ninja Swords

The Minister of State for Policing, Fire and Crime Prevention (Dame Diana Johnson):

[\[HCWS213\]](#)

As part of the Government's aim to halve knife crime within a decade, we have a manifesto commitment to ban Ninja swords and we will be making the relevant changes in secondary legislation. In preparation for this, today we are launching a public consultation to seek views on the legal definition of Ninja swords and any associated defences to help with the planned legislation.

The consultation will run for a 4-week period and provides an opportunity for the public to have their say.

A copy of the consultation and related options assessment will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses and published on [Gov.UK](#).

■ Consultation on personal liability on senior executives of online platforms and marketplaces regarding illegal content on weapons

The Minister of State for Policing, Fire and Crime Prevention (Dame Diana Johnson):

[\[HCWS212\]](#)

As part of this Government's aim to halve knife crime within a decade, the Government has a manifesto commitment to establish personal liability measures on senior executives

of online platforms and marketplaces, which fail to take action to remove illegal content relating to knives and offensive weapons. Today we are launching a consultation to test views on how this commitment will be implemented in new legislation.

The consultation will run for a 4-week period and provides an opportunity for the public to have their say.

A copy of the consultation and related options assessment will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses and published on [Gov.UK](https://www.gov.uk).