



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 14 November 2024 and the information is correct at the time of publication (07:03 P.M., 14 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

■ Amy Lamé

John Glen:

[\[11599\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether (a) officials, (b) Ministers and (c) special advisers in his Department have (a) met and (b) corresponded with the Mayor of London's Night Czar on the issue of London's night-time economy since 4 July 2024.

Gareth Thomas:

Since the General Election, officials, special advisers, or Ministers, in their ministerial roles have not specifically met or corresponded with the Mayor of London's Night Czar Amy Lamé, before she formally left her post on 31 October. We do however have regular contact with the Mayor of London and his staff, as we do with other Mayors across England.

■ Beer and Public Houses: Wokingham

Clive Jones:

[\[12819\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to increase competition in the (a) pub and (b) breweries sector in Wokingham constituency.

Gareth Thomas:

The Government recognises that competition drives better consumer outcomes, productivity, innovation and, ultimately, economic growth. The Competition and Markets Authority is the UK's independent competition authority charged with upholding and promoting competition.

The Government wants to work with the hospitality industry, including the pub sector, to identify the barriers to small brewers accessing their local markets, particularly where there is consumer demand, for example in tourist areas, and to look at options for overcoming those barriers. The Government will also consult on ways to encourage small brewers to retain and expand their access to UK pubs, maximising drinkers' choice and local economies, including through provisions to enable more 'guest beers'

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

■ Beer: Pulic Sector

Clive Jones:

[\[12820\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make it his policy to increase the variety of ownership amongst large breweries in the public sector.

Gareth Thomas:

The Government recognises that competition drives better consumer outcomes, productivity, innovation and, ultimately, economic growth. The Competition and Markets Authority is the UK's independent competition authority charged with upholding and promoting competition.

The Government wants to work with the hospitality industry, including the pub sector, to identify the barriers to brewers accessing their local markets, particularly where there is consumer demand, for example in tourist areas, and to look at options for overcoming those barriers.

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

■ Consumer Goods: Sales**John McDonnell:**[\[13389\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if his Department will take steps to prevent third-party sellers from selling dangerous goods to consumers.

Justin Madders:

UK product safety law is clear: all products must be safe. Third-party sellers have clear obligations under legislation where they are either producers or distributors.

The Office for Product Safety and Standards carries out a range of regulatory actions to reduce the risk of unsafe products being sold online by third-party sellers. This includes test purchasing, taking enforcement action, providing guidance to sellers, and working with Local Authority Trading Standards and Border Force to undertake co-ordinated interventions.

In addition, the Product Regulation and Metrology Bill will provide powers to update the responsibilities of online supply chain actors, including third-party sellers.

■ Disclosure of Information**Phil Brickell:**[\[13094\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will expand the list of prescribed people for whistleblowing to include (a) job applicants, (b) trustees, (c) independent contractors and (d) trade union representatives.

Justin Madders:

The whistleblowing framework enables workers to seek redress if they are dismissed or suffer detriment because they have made a 'protected disclosure'. The standard employment law definition of worker has been extended to provide whistleblowing protections to NHS job applicants and other categories of worker such as trainees, agency workers and certain NHS workers. The government has no plans to extend the protections more generally but to qualify for protection, the worker must make their disclosure in accordance with the Employment Rights Act 1996, which can

include making it to a 'prescribed person'. DBT regularly updates the list of prescribed persons.

■ **Disclosure of Information: Reviews**

Phil Brickell:

[\[13093\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what his planned timetable is for the review of the whistleblowing framework.

Justin Madders:

The Employment Rights Bill delivers on the government's commitment to strengthening protections for whistleblowers, by updating protections for women who report sexual harassment at work.

The Government is keen to work with organisations and individuals who have ideas on how to strengthen the whistleblowing framework and we will consider options to review the whistleblowing framework in due course.

■ **Horizon IT System: Compensation and Public Inquiries**

Jerome Mayhew:

[\[12142\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to paragraph 4.91 of the Autumn Budget 2024, what proportion of the additional funding will be used to (a) administer the compensation scheme and (b) fund the public inquiry.

Gareth Thomas:

Of the additional funding set out in the Autumn Budget 2024 for financial years 2024/25 and 2025/26, over £150m will be used to administer the various compensation schemes. Over £100m has been set aside to continue to fund DBT and Post Office's participation in the public inquiry.

The Budget also set out that around £1.8 billion has been set aside for redress costs for the victims of the Horizon IT Scandal from 2024-25.

■ **Internet: Sales**

John McDonnell:

[\[13393\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will take steps to ensure that market surveillance authorities are adequately resourced to manage new requirements for online marketplaces.

Justin Madders:

The Product Regulation and Metrology Bill will provide Government with enabling powers to introduce new requirements on online marketplaces. The Office for Product Safety and Standards and local authorities already carry out a range of regulatory actions to reduce the risk of unsafe products being sold online.

Government will consider any changes to resourcing requirements for OPSS within the Spending Review and departmental business planning processes. Local authority

budgets are set by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and allocated by local authorities according to their priorities.

■ Overseas Investment: USA

Liam Byrne:

[\[13166\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to section 1.3 2. of the UK-US Atlantic Declaration, what progress his Department has made on engaging with (a) business and (b) financial stakeholders to develop an evidence base to (i) assess and (ii) inform the Government's response to the risks associated with outbound investment.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

The Department for Business and Trade is engaging with businesses and financial stakeholders to better understand the potential national security risk posed by outward direct investment in sensitive sectors. In May, the Cabinet Office issued public guidance on how the existing National Security and Investment Act powers allow the Government to intervene in certain outward direct investment transactions. In addition, the National Protective Security Agency and National Cyber Security Centre are updating their Secure Business campaign to include advice on risks relating to ODI.

■ Products: Regulation

John McDonnell:

[\[13391\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will (a) list the product regulations that will be reviewed under the Product Regulation and Metrology Bill and (b) make an assessment of the effectiveness of current legislation in protecting consumers from the sale of dangerous toys sold on online marketplaces.

Justin Madders:

The Product Regulation and Metrology Bill will provide Government with enabling powers to update regulations. The main regulations are listed in the recently published Government response to the Product Safety Review.

The Office for Product Safety and Standards runs a national programme to reduce the risk of non-compliant products sold online. Through monitoring and evaluating marketplaces, including purchasing and testing products, we assess the prevalence of unsafe toys and take appropriate enforcement action.

While UK regulations are clear that toys must be safe, the Bill will enable regulations to be updated to better reflect modern supply chains, including online marketplaces.

■ **Small Businesses: Minimum Wage**

Lee Anderson:

[\[12111\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of increasing the minimum wage on SMEs; and whether she plans to provide additional support to SMEs.

Gareth Thomas:

This Government remains committed to helping small businesses thrive and will be publishing our Small Business Strategy next year. This will set out our vision for all small businesses, from boosting scale-ups to growing the co-operative economy. It will address key policy areas such as creating thriving high streets, making it easier to access finance, opening overseas and domestic markets, building business capabilities, and providing a strong business environment.

We will publish an Impact Assessment alongside the legislation that implements the increase to the National Living Wage. We estimate that over 3 million workers will receive a pay rise due to the increase in the National Living Wage in April 2025.

■ **Small Businesses: North Warwickshire and Bedworth**

Rachel Taylor:

[\[13060\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how many small and medium-sized businesses in North Warwickshire and Bedworth constituency closed between 2010 and 2024; and what steps he is taking to ensure small and medium sized businesses in North Warwickshire and Bedworth constituency receive support.

Gareth Thomas:

This Government remains committed to helping small businesses thrive and will be publishing our Small Business Strategy next year. This will set out our vision for all small businesses, from boosting scale-ups to growing the co-operative economy. Support is also available via the Business Support Service, Gov.uk and the network of local Growth Hubs across England.

ONS does not provide business demography data at the parliamentary constituency level. Therefore, the most relevant data is from two lower tier local authorities, North Warwickshire, and Nuneaton and Bedworth.

Within North Warwickshire, Nuneaton and Bedworth, according to data from ONS, there were 4,855 registered business births and 4,665 registered businesses which ceased to trade between 2017 and 2022. There was an overall gain of 190 businesses within this five-year period. (Source: [ONS Business demography](#))

■ **UK Export Finance: Newbury**

Mr Lee Dillon:

[\[11952\]](#)

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

Gareth Thomas:

Businesses based in Newbury can take advantage of the range of products that UK Export Finance provides to facilitate exporting, including loan guarantee and insurance facilities.

In 2023/24 alone, UKEF provided £8.8 billion support to help UK businesses sell their goods and services overseas.

Businesses in Newbury and across the country may also want to consider other support for exporting that is available from the Department for Business and Trade, such as our network of International Trade Advisers and guidance on GREAT.GOV.UK.

To obtain further information about the range of support available, businesses in Newbury can reach out to their local Export Finance Manager, for whom contact details are available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/find-an-export-finance-manager.

CABINET OFFICE■ **Crawford Falconer**

Andrew Griffith: [\[13639\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will set out the (a) terms of reference and (b) duration of the appointment of Crawford Falconer KCMG to his Department as Second Permanent Secretary and Chief Trade Negotiation Adviser.

Georgia Gould:

In accordance with the Civil Service policy for Permanent Secretary roles, the DBT Second Permanent Secretary was appointed for a period of five years (August 2017 - August 2022). The period of appointment was subsequently extended to December 2024.

■ **Foreign Investment in UK: National Security**

Liam Byrne: [\[13189\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the written statement of 18 April 2024 on Economic Security, HCWS415, when he plans to consult on updates to (a) the mandatory areas and (b) how these are defined under the National Security and Investment Act 2021.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

The previous government published a Call for Evidence in November 2023 and a response in April 2024. The Call for Evidence sought feedback from a wide range of stakeholders on the scope of the regime, the notification process and government guidance and communications. The Government is currently considering its next steps, drawing on responses received.

The Government will also review and produce a report on the Notifiable Acquisition Regulations 2021, which set out the areas of the economy in scope of the National Security and Investment Act's mandatory notification requirements, as required by section 4 of the Notifiable Acquisitions Regulations.

■ **Government Departments: Directors**

John Glen:

[\[9162\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 17 September 2024 to Question 4655 on Public Sector: Directors, if he will list those Non-Executive Directors by Department.

Georgia Gould:

Pursuant to the Answer of 17 September 2024 to Question 4655 on Public Sector, details of Non-Executive Directors who have left government departments are published in the relevant Annual Report and Accounts for the respective department and can be found on gov.uk.

■ **Members' Interests**

Neil Coyle:

[\[9721\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Ethics and Integrity Commission will examine donations to MPs from any individual or company that is sanctioned either by the UK or by any other state.

Georgia Gould:

I refer the honourable member to the answer given to PQ 1251 on 31 July 2024.

■ **Ministers: Official Residences**

John Glen:

[\[10698\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 31 July 2024 to Question 1214 on Ministers: Official Residences, whether the Prime Minister has allocated the remaining official residences.

Georgia Gould:

The following official residences have been allocated by the Prime Minister since the Answer of 31 July 2024 to Question 1214: Chequers, Chevening, Dorneywood, Hillsborough Castle, 1 Carlton Gardens; and a flat in Admiralty House on a time limited basis.

■ **Nuclear Power Stations: Construction**

John Glen:

[\[9160\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Office for National Statistics (a) has a role in and (b) has made representations to Government on the public sector classification of (i) Hinkley Point C and (ii) Wylfa.

Georgia Gould:

The information requested falls under the remit of the UK Statistics Authority.

A response to the Rt. Hon. Gentleman Question of 15/10/2024 is attached.

Attachments:

1. Letter from the National Statistician [PQ9160.pdf]

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS**■ Church of England: Legal Costs****Lee Anderson:**[\[12112\]](#)

To ask the Member for Battersea, representing the Church Commissioners, if the Commissioners will publish the legal costs of defending bishops against claims that they failed to act appropriately in safeguarding matters in each of the last five years.

Marsha De Cordova:

The Church Commissioners have a discretion under the Episcopal Endowments and Stipends Measure 1943, assessed on a case by case basis, to pay the costs of a bishop's office, including costs in connection with legal claims. Such claims include those which may allege that the office of a serving bishop is liable for the wrongdoing of a previous holder of the office or a person for whom in law the office of the bishop may be responsible.

Requests to the Church Commissioners for assistance with legal costs are subject to scrutiny by the First Church Estates Commissioner and the KC Commissioner, assisted by officers, to ensure that costs are reasonable in the circumstances.

It is not the practice of the Church Commissioners to disclose expenditure on the costs of legal proceedings of this kind (they are not required to do so under s.5 Episcopal Endowments and Stipends Measure 1943)

■ Public Buildings: Rural Areas**Stuart Anderson:**[\[12103\]](#)

To ask the Member for Battersea, representing the Church Commissioners, what steps the Commissioners are taking to help churches in rural areas undertake renovations in (a) parish halls and (b) other assets that can serve the wider community.

Marsha De Cordova:

Church buildings are community assets as well as places of worship and almost 80% of churches are involved in 35,000 social action projects annually. Church Halls are able to apply for support from our [Net Zero Carbon programme](#)'s Quick Wins Fund (currently £2.4 million total), which can help church halls become more sustainable and energy efficient. Through the Archbishops' Council, the Church Commissioners funded the [Buildings for Mission project](#), which has so far provided £6.2 million to all 41 dioceses across England for grants for repairs to churches. A further £3.2 million has funded over 30 Church Buildings Support Officers to help parishes most in need

in rural and urban areas to keep their church buildings in good repair and extend their use by the wider community. St Michael and All Angels in Lydbury North, which is within the South Shropshire constituency, has received Buildings for Mission funding for urgent roof repairs and heritage at risk. St John the Evangelist in Newcastle on Clun has also received funding for urgent ceiling plastering work restoration, supported by the Buildings Support Officer in the Diocese of Hereford.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Department for Culture, Media and Sport: Data Processing

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[12790\]](#)

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

Stephanie Peacock:

DCMS is committed to improving its productivity, including through artificial intelligence and more effective use of data, with projects across our science, analytical and digital functions.

We have a number of initial small-scale AI pilots taking place, to assess potential use cases across the organisation to identify benefits of scaling such tools in the future; for example developing a model to analyse free-text responses to public consultations.

We have also used data analytics to gain insights into spend and outcomes across our sectors and public bodies, helping to better evaluate the effectiveness of our interventions. We are building our data capability to enhance our evidence base, standardise our architecture and infrastructure to expand our ability to use data to generate efficiencies and achieve more impactful outcomes.

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 government data quality framework, the Code of Practice for Statistics and the Algorithmic Transparency Recording Standard. The department also has access to the Central Digital and Data Office (CDDO), now based in the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, for expert advice.

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

■ Gambling: Crime

Jim Shannon:

[\[12713\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make an estimate of the amount of money (a) spent and (b) lost on illegal gambling sites in each of the last five years.

Stephanie Peacock:

The issue of illegal gambling is a concern for this Government and we are committed to working closely with the Gambling Commission, the statutory regulator for gambling in Great Britain, to ensure that illegal gambling, in all its forms, is addressed. The Commission continues to monitor this area closely and take action against unlicensed operators where needed.

Estimating the size of the illegal gambling market is difficult due to the changing nature of the sites and channels through which customers are able to access illegal activity. While research in this space is improving, further research is required to confidently estimate the extent of illegal gambling within Great Britain, who is engaging with it, and the impact that it is having. The Gambling Commission is working to improve its evidence base around the unlicensed gambling market, using web traffic data and gambling behaviour data to estimate the size of the online unlicensed market and conducting qualitative research to understand consumer motivations for participation in illegal gambling. The Commission published a [blog](#) outlining its approach in October 2024.

Gambling regulation is a devolved matter in Northern Ireland, where it falls under The Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 and The Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (Amendment) Act 2022.

■ Music: Tickets

Ian Byrne:

[\[13026\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what recent assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of dynamic pricing on the accessibility of music gigs.

Chris Bryant:

We will soon launch a call for evidence on pricing practices for live events tickets, which will include dynamic pricing, alongside a consultation on new protections for consumers on the resale of tickets.

■ Sports: Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy

Chris Evans:

[\[12923\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions her Department has had with stakeholders on helping to reduce the prevalence of chronic traumatic encephalopathy amongst sportspeople.

Chris Evans:

[12924]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department has undertaken research into the prevalence of chronic traumatic encephalopathy in (a) professional athletes and (b) recreational players of sport.

Stephanie Peacock:

The safety, wellbeing and welfare of everyone taking part in sport is absolutely paramount. National Governing Bodies are responsible for the regulation of their sports, and for ensuring that appropriate measures are in place to protect participants from harm. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport continues to engage with relevant stakeholders to help ensure the safety of all participants in sport.

The Sports Concussion Research Forum, established by DCMS and chaired by the Medical Research Council, part of UK Research and Innovation, published its independent report into the key research questions in this important area in September 2024 - <https://www.ukri.org/publications/concussion-in-sport/>

The Government remains committed to working with sports stakeholders to build on the positive work that is already taking place to mitigate the causes and effects of concussion in sport.

■ Voluntary Work

Steve Darling:

[13035]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department plans to take support community-based volunteering opportunities.

Stephanie Peacock:

Volunteering is critical to a vibrant and resilient civil society; it benefits volunteers and the organisations involving them and has transformational impacts on local communities. Government undertakes a range of policy work to enable as many people to volunteer as possible, from developing the wider volunteering ecosystem to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to take part, to supporting the sustainability of the voluntary, community, and social enterprise sector.

This Government recognises the vital role that civil society plays in supporting volunteering, and is committed to resetting the relationship with civil society. Government understands the need to treat civil society as an equal, expert partner who is integral to the delivery of the Government's vision for national renewal. The first step in rebuilding that relationship is going to be the co-creation of the recently announced Civil Society Covenant.

We currently support people to volunteer nationally through a range of programmes. These include the Know Your Neighbourhood (KYN) Fund, an up to £30 million funding package running until March 2025, designed to widen participation in volunteering and tackle loneliness in 27 disadvantaged areas across England.

We also provide funding to the #iwill Fund, a £66 million joint investment between DCMS and the National Lottery Community Fund, running since 2016, which

supports the creation of new opportunities to engage young people in volunteering and community engagement in their local areas.

DEFENCE

■ Armed Forces: Private Education

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[13595]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost to his Department was of the Continuity of Education Allowance in the latest period for which data is available; and what recent estimate his Department has made of the impact of making independent school fees subject to VAT on the cost to his Department of the Continuity of Education Allowance in the next financial year.

Al Carns:

For Academic Year 2023-24, the Ministry of Defence (MOD) paid £88.6 million for Continuity of Education Allowance (CEA) to support the education of 4,005 children for 2,666 Service personnel. Following the Budget statement by the Chancellor on 30 October, the MOD confirmed that it would carry out an in-year re-rating of CEA. The increased cost of the allowance to MOD is unknown until the exercise completes in early December.

■ Army

David Reed:

[R] [13657]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to ensure that the technological capabilities of combat brigades are effectively improved.

Luke Pollard:

The Army is currently undergoing a combined programme of work to ensure that our manoeuvre forces will have the lethality, protection and mobility to fight and win against any adversary. Whilst the Army's modernisation will continue over the next decade with a programme of investment worth billions of pounds, the future capability development priorities will be guided by the Strategic Defence Review.

As part of this modernisation, Brigade Combat Teams are set to receive ground capabilities, such as the combination of AJAX, BOXER and Challenger 3, and air capabilities, such as the wider Joint Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance (ISTAR) capability and the Boeing AH-64E. In the longer term, the Army will experiment with multiplying crewed aviation mass and lethality whilst enhancing its survivability through Launched Effects.

The strength of the British Army comes not just from its platforms and capabilities, but from its people, and the new Government is working to address challenges in recruitment we inherited. We have made some announcements on this area and plan to make further announcements in due course.

■ British Indian Ocean Territory: Sovereignty

James Cartlidge: [\[13506\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, on what date he agreed his Department's contribution to the Chagos Island settlement.

James Cartlidge: [\[13507\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department will receive additional funding to cover any additional costs arising from the Chagos Island settlement.

James Cartlidge: [\[13510\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his answer to Urgent Question on 11 November 2024 from the Hon. Member for South Suffolk, when he first became aware of the costs to be borne by his Department arising from the agreement with Mauritius on sovereignty of the Chagos Islands.

Luke Pollard:

Negotiations between the UK and Mauritius on the exercise of sovereignty over the British Indian Ocean Territory/Chagos Archipelago were opened in 2022 under the previous Government.

The lead Department for the negotiations was the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence was closely updated and engaged in all the key aspects of the negotiations. The agreement secured with Mauritius protects the effective operation of the joint UK/US base on Diego Garcia for at least the next 99 years.

Details of the Treaty agreed between the UK and Mauritius will come before Parliament for scrutiny in the usual manner following its signature. It would be inappropriate to release further details at this stage.

■ F-35 Aircraft: Procurement

Mr Gregory Campbell: [\[13417\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he expects all F-35 aircraft to be delivered by the end of 2025.

Maria Eagle:

The Prime Contractor of the F35, Lockheed Martin, has confirmed its intention to deliver the 48 UK aircraft ordered so far (Tranche 1) by the end of 2025.

■ Veterans: Homelessness

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[13594\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how he determined the level of funding to be provided to the Reducing Veterans Homelessness Programme in 2026.

Luke Pollard:

The £3.5 million announced by the Prime Minister will fund an additional round of the Reducing Veteran Homelessness programme and Op FORTITUDE, ensuring that support will be there into 2026 for veterans at risk of homelessness.

The funding has been allocated in line with previous successful programme levels.

EDUCATION**■ Children: Cerebral Palsy****Dr Danny Chambers:****[13715]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of children with cerebral palsy attend mainstream schools.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department does not hold statistics on how many children with cerebral palsy attend mainstream schools.

■ Class Sizes**Rupert Lowe:****[13087]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what data his Department holds on the average class size at (a) primary and (b) secondary schools in (i) Great Yarmouth constituency and (ii) England in each of the last twenty years.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department holds data on average class sizes in the 'Schools, pupils and their characteristics' publication, which is available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics>. This publication holds average class size at national level, local authority and school level. School level data from before 2010 is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-pupil-and-their-characteristics-2002-to-2009-data>.

Parliamentary constituencies are based on their boundaries at the time of the January school census each year. Therefore, the 2024 parliamentary boundaries do not reflect the changes made in the summer of 2024.

Where statistics were published prior to the changes in parliamentary constituency boundaries, they will be updated to reflect the new boundaries in the next publication of statistics. This is expected to be in June 2025 for the 'Schools, pupils and their characteristics' publication.

Class size data is published at school level. This can be combined with information from the Get Information About Schools (GIAS) website to identify parliamentary constituency, which is available here: <https://get-information-schools.service.gov.uk/>. GIAS currently reflects the changes made following the general election

parliamentary constituency changes. Updates to geographical data are made on a quarterly basis using data published by the Office for National Statistics.

■ Commonwealth and Monarchy: Education

James McMurdock:

[\[13120\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to promote awareness of the (a) Commonwealth of Nations, (b) Monarchy and (c) Commonwealth realms in (i) schools in England.

Catherine McKinnell:

The national curriculum for citizenship includes content on local, regional and international governance, as well as the UK's relations with the rest of Europe, the Commonwealth, the United Nations and the wider world.

Citizenship also covers the development of the political system of democratic government in the UK, including the roles of citizens, Parliament and the Monarch. There is also scope within the history curriculum for pupils to be taught about these topics across key stages 1 to 3, as well as within geography, where appropriate.

■ Curriculum and Assessment Review

Sarah Hall:

[\[13149\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of ensuring that the Curriculum and Assessment Review focuses on the provision of (a) inclusive and (b) nurturing approaches to education.

Catherine McKinnell:

The Curriculum and Assessment Review is being independently conducted by a group of education leaders and chaired by Professor Becky Francis CBE. The terms of reference were published in July and are available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/curriculum-and-assessment-review>.

The review has been asked to consider how to remove both barriers to learning and ceilings to achievement. It will support the innovation and professionalism of teachers, enabling them to adapt how they teach the curriculum to their students' lives and life experiences. It will also ensure that the curriculum appropriately balances ambition, excellence, relevance, flexibility and inclusivity for all children and young people.

The role of the review group is to consider the evidence, the responses to the call for evidence and widespread engagement with the sector, and then make recommendations for the government to consider.

The review group will publish an interim report early in 2025 setting out their interim findings and confirming the key areas for further work. The final review with recommendations will be published in autumn 2025.

The government will consider changes in light of the recommendations of the review.

■ Cycling: Curriculum

Pippa Heylings:

[\[13070\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department plans to introduce Bikeability training to the national curriculum.

Catherine McKinnell:

Schools have the flexibility and discretion to decide on the activities they provide to deliver a rounded and enriching education, which includes programmes such as Bikeability. In 2023/24, £20 million in funding from Active Travel England supported nearly 500,000 training places, reaching 55% of year 6 students across 67% of primary schools. An additional £30 million has been committed for 2024/25.

The government has established an independent Curriculum and Assessment Review, covering ages 5 to 18. The review will seek to deliver a curriculum that ensures children and young people leave compulsory education ready for life and ready for work, building the knowledge, skills and attributes young people need to thrive.

■ Financial Services: Education

Rachel Taylor:

[\[13061\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has commissioned research on the potential impact of financial skills training on the ability of young people to manage their finances; and if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of including such training in the curriculum.

Catherine McKinnell:

I refer my hon. Friend, the Member for North Warwickshire and Bedworth, to the answer of 14 October 2024 to Question [7255](#).

■ Gender Identity Services for Children and Young People Independent Review: Schools

Aphra Brandreth:

[\[13135\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to ensure local authorities implement the recommendations of the Cass review in schools they oversee.

Catherine McKinnell:

The Cass Review was an independent review of gender identity services for children and young people, so did not make any specific recommendations in respect of schools and local authorities. However, the final report highlighted the importance of what happens in school, and that guidance for schools should utilise the principles and evidence from the review.

It is crucial that schools and colleges receive guidance on these matters, which is why the government is looking carefully at the consultation responses for the draft

guidance on gender questioning children, discussing with stakeholders and considering the evidence, including the Cass Review, before setting out next steps.

■ Pupil Premium

Mr Lee Dillon:

[\[13045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of increasing the pupil premium for (a) primary and (b) secondary schools.

Catherine McKinnell:

Every child, regardless of background, deserves the opportunity to progress and succeed in school and beyond. This government is committed to breaking the link between young people's backgrounds and their future success. That is why removing barriers to opportunity and raising school standards are at the heart of the department's mission to transform life chances and ensure all children can achieve and thrive.

The department is providing over £2.9 billion of pupil premium funding in 2024/25 to improve the educational outcomes of disadvantaged pupils in England.

The department is taking time to consider the various funding formulae going forward, recognising the importance of establishing a fair funding system that directs funding where it is needed. We will consider the pupil premium as part of that process, and decisions on pupil premium funding for 2025/26 will be taken later this year.

The department will continue to support schools to achieve maximum impact from the pupil premium.

■ Pupils: Health

Deirdre Costigan:

[\[13634\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department plans to take steps to require schools to make an assessment of the social, emotional and behavioural needs of pupils.

Catherine McKinnell:

Schools and further education colleges are required to identify and address the special educational needs (SEN) of the children and young people they support. In the case of mainstream settings, they must use their best endeavours to make sure that a child or young person who has SEN gets the support they need.

Schools report on the pupils they identify with social, emotional and mental health needs through the School Census. In 2024, 316,327 pupils were identified as having a social, emotional and mental health need as a primary type of need.

■ Schools: Inspections

Sarah Hall: [\[13150\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what information her Department holds on the metrics by which the new Ofsted report cards will judge their inclusion criterion.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department is working closely with Ofsted on inspection reform. Schools should be held accountable for their approach to inclusion so that all children are given the high quality support they need to learn and thrive. Report cards are currently in development and will be consulted upon in the new year.

Sarah Hall: [\[13151\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, Education what steps her Department is taking to ensure Ofsted inspections assess the steps schools take to ensure children's wellbeing on the school estate.

Catherine McKinnell:

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

■ Special Educational Needs

Mr Lee Dillon: [\[12878\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to ensure that teachers have the (a) classroom support and (b) equipment needed to support pupils with SEND.

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.

High quality teaching is central to ensuring that pupils with SEND are given the best possible opportunity to achieve in their education. To support all teachers, the department is implementing a range of teacher training reforms to ensure teachers have the skills to support all pupils to succeed, including those with SEND.

On 1 September 2024, the government introduced a new mandatory leadership level National Professional Qualification (NPQ) for special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCOs). The NPQ will play a key role in improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND by ensuring SENCOs consistently receive high quality, evidence based training. This is crucial given the central role SENCOs play in supporting pupils with SEND.

A new Initial Teacher Training and Early Career Framework (ITTECF) is due to be implemented from September 2025, which contains significantly more content related to adaptive teaching and supporting pupils with SEND, such as developing an

understanding of different pupil needs and learning how to provide opportunities for success for all pupils.

The availability of training and career progression opportunities for teaching assistants helps ensure schools have the skilled staff they need to deliver high quality education. The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education has recently approved a new Level 5 Specialist Teaching Assistant apprenticeship, allowing teaching assistants to specialise in one of three areas: SEND, Social and Emotional Wellbeing, or Curriculum Provision. The apprenticeship will be available for candidates to undertake in 2025.

In addition, assistive technology (AT) can break down barriers to opportunity for students with SEND. The department is broadening the effective use of AT for teachers through research, training and guidance.

■ **Special Educational Needs: Teachers and Classroom Assistants**

Baggy Shanker:

[12858]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many (a) specialist support teaching assistants and (b) teachers of sensory impairment with a full mandatory qualification in sensory impairment are employed in (i) England, (ii) Derbyshire County Council area and (iii) Derby City Council area; and what information on these roles is collected as part of the annual School Workforce Census.

Catherine McKinnell:

Information on the school workforce in England is collected as part of the annual School Workforce Census each November and published in the 'School workforce in England' statistical publication, which is available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england>.

Information on staff roles is collected in the annual census. The role categories collected do not identify specialist support teaching assistants or teachers of sensory impairment.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

■ **Heat Pumps: Housing**

Colum Eastwood:

[13577]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of support arrangements for the installation of domestic heat pumps.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government is taking a range of action to support the transformation of the low-carbon heating market. Further detail on the government's approach to support the transition to cleaner, energy-secure homes and buildings will be set out in the government's Warm Homes Plan.

The Boiler Upgrade Scheme is the Government's flagship heat pump scheme. Installers participating in the scheme must be MCS or equivalent certified as well as being a member of an appropriate consumer code. MCS, the Microgeneration Certification Scheme, is a nationally recognised quality assurance scheme for renewable technologies setting high standards for products and installations.

■ Utilities: Billing

Nadia Whittome: [\[13527\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether his Department plans to take steps to (a) protect consumers who receive inaccurate bills from utility companies and (b) prevent utility companies from enforcing high usage bills without case investigation.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

As a priority, the Government will support Ofgem to review the rules around billing accuracy and supplier billing practices to understand where improvement is needed and whether compliance action is required. Ofgem is also considering new rules to improve and incentivise better billing accuracy and debt support, including default monthly bills for households and reviewing the back billing rules to reduce how far back a supplier can bill a customer where the error was the supplier's fault.

We believe that when things go wrong, suppliers should successfully resolve issues as quickly as possible. Ofgem will work to review and improve the current complaint handling standards regulations to ensure that suppliers take ownership to manage and resolve complaints effectively and efficiently. It will also ensure there is better automatic customer compensation for failure to deter poor service and drive improvements. Under the guaranteed standards of performance (GSOPs), suppliers are required to make automatic compensation payments to customers if they fail to meet specific customer service standards.

■ Wind Power: Seas and Oceans

Mike Amesbury: [\[12995\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of continuing grant funding to the offshore wind supply chain investment.

Michael Shanks:

The Government has just 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 Government has capitalised the National Wealth Fund with £27.8bn, which will mobilise billions of pounds of investment in the UK's world-leading clean energy and growth industries, and support the delivery of the Industrial Strategy.

£8.3bn has also been announced for the newly created Great British Energy which will work in lockstep with the National Wealth Fund.

Karl Turner:

[13440]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how many offshore wind turbines were installed at locations within (a) UK territorial waters and (b) the UK Exclusive Economic Zone in each year between 2017 and 2023.

Michael Shanks:

The Crown Estate's Offshore Wind Report 2023 states there were 2,776 operational offshore wind turbines in UK waters at the end of 2023.

The Department does not hold data on the number of installed turbines over time or whether they are located in UK Territorial Waters or the UK Exclusive Economic Zone, but does publish estimates of total installed generating capacity. These show that capacity grew by 7.8GW between 2017 and 2023.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Agriculture: Inheritance Tax

Steve Barclay:

[12709]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of changes to Inheritance Tax announced in the Autumn Budget 2024 on levels of production of the five key crops by tonnage in the next five years.

Daniel Zeichner:

The level of crop production is always subject to factors such as weather conditions and prevailing prices. Beyond such normal factors, the Government does not expect the inheritance tax changes to have a material impact on crop production.

We have robust domestic production, which alongside stable trade routes and diverse supply chains ensures the country continues to benefit from high food security. With the largest ever investment in sustainable food production, through our Environmental Land Management schemes, we are securing long term food security.

■ Butterflies

Jim Shannon:

[13457]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of recent trends in the level of butterfly numbers, in the context of the results from the recent Big Butterfly Count 2024.

Mary Creagh:

The recently published *Butterflies in the United Kingdom and in England: 2023* provides statistics on UK butterfly abundance and includes an assessment of population trends for different groups of species, and habitat type as well as the major drivers of decline. The detailed report is published on GOV.UK ([Butterflies in the United Kingdom and in England: 2023 - GOV.UK](#)). It contains data up to and including 2023; robust data for estimates of change in abundance of butterflies for

2024 will be available to Defra in summer 2025. In summary, on average the abundance of butterflies across the UK continues to show a long-term decline. This is due to a range of factors including weather patterns, habitat loss, pollution and the use of pesticides.

■ Coastal Areas

Rachel Gilmour: [\[13287\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of the University of Exeter's report entitled Resilience of Coastal Communities, Work Package 1: Responding to recent changes, Survey and Interview, Results Summary, published on 9 October 2024.

Emma Hardy:

Defra welcomes the publication of the report, which is an output of work funded by UK Research and Innovation. We consider a number of policy initiatives already align with many of the work's findings, and will continue to consider their implications in the further development of policy related to the management of fisheries and the marine environment.

■ Coastal Erosion

Sir John Hayes: [\[12245\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to protect the coastline of the Wash from erosion.

Emma Hardy:

Protecting all communities around the country from flooding is one of the Secretary of State's five core priorities and we will work closely with the new Flood Resilience Taskforce to improve resilience and preparation across government and local authorities, providing oversight of UK flood and coastal resilience.

The Wash has a Shoreline Management Plan (SMP4) to manage coastal erosion and flood risk sustainably.

In January 2025, a new National Coastal Erosion Risk Map will be released. It will guide the Environment Agency and coastal authorities in making investment and planning decisions.

We are committed to supporting coastal communities and ensuring flood and coastal erosion risk management is fit for the challenges we face now and in the future.

■ Countryside: Access

Grahame Morris: [\[13418\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to publish an Access to Nature White Paper.

Mary Creagh:

We will make further announcements on plans to develop policy on access to nature in due course.

■ Deposit Return Schemes**Phil Brickell:**[\[13535\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what progress his Department has made on implementing a deposit return scheme.

Mary Creagh:

This Government is committed to delivering the Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) for drinks containers in October 2027, as agreed with the devolved Governments of the UK, and in accordance with the Joint Policy Statement published in April 2024.

We plan to lay the DRS regulations for England/Northern Ireland before Parliament in late 2024 and for them to come into force in early 2025 (assuming parliamentary time allows) and for the Deposit Management Organisation (DMO), who will run the scheme, to be appointed in April 2025 as planned.

■ Fisheries: UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement**Rupert Lowe:**[\[13113\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department has taken to prepare for the expiration of the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement provisions on fishing on 30 June 2026.

Daniel Zeichner:

The UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement provides reciprocal access for UK and EU vessels during the fisheries adjustment period. The adjustment period ends in June 2026 after which access becomes a matter for annual negotiation as is typical between coastal states.

■ Flood Control: Fylde**Mr Andrew Snowden:**[\[12183\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much funding his Department plans to provide for flood defences in Fylde constituency in the 2025-26 financial year.

Emma Hardy:

Across England, we will invest £2.4 billion over the next two years to improve flood resilience, by maintaining, repairing and building flood defences. The list of projects to receive Government funding in 2025/26 will be consented over the coming months in the usual way through Regional Flood and Coastal Committees, with local representation.

■ Flood Control: Hemsby**Rupert Lowe:**[\[12005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to paragraph 3.82 of Autumn Budget 2024, HC 295, published on 30 October 2024, if he will provide funding for flood defences in Hemsby.

Emma Hardy:

To ensure we protect the country from the devastating impacts of flooding, we will invest £2.4 billion over the next two years to improve flood resilience, by maintaining, repairing and building flood defences. The list of projects to receive government funding in 2025/26 will be consented over the coming months in the usual way through Regional Flood and Coastal Committees, with local representation. We are committed to supporting coastal communities and ensuring flood and coastal erosion risk management is fit for the challenges we face now and in the future. Defra will consult in the new year on a new simpler and more flexible approach to floods investment that maximises value for the taxpayer and supports nature-based solutions. This will include a review of the floods funding formula.

■ Flood Control: Rural Areas**Edward Morello:**[\[12350\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much funding his Department plans to provide to help manage the increased flood risk for rural areas prone to (a) river and (b) surface flooding in the 2025-26 financial year.

Emma Hardy:

Across England, we will invest £2.4 billion over the next two years to improve flood resilience, by maintaining, repairing and building flood defences. The list of projects to receive Government funding in 2025/26 will be consented over the coming months in the usual way through Regional Flood and Coastal Committees, with local representation.

■ Flood Re: Cities of London and Westminster**Rachel Blake:**[\[13350\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what data his Department holds on the number of residences that are ineligible for Flood Re support due to qualifying policy five in Cities of London and Westminster constituency.

Emma Hardy:

The department does not hold data on the number of residences that are ineligible for Flood Re support due to qualifying policy five in Cities of London and Westminster constituency. Tenants and leaseholders can however, obtain contents insurance supported by Flood Re, regardless of the size of the block.

■ Floods: Rural Areas

James Cartlidge: [\[12957\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the formula used to allocate flood funding to rural areas.

Emma Hardy:

Defra will consult in the new year on a new simpler and more flexible approach to floods investment that maximises value for the taxpayer and supports nature-based solutions. This will include a review of the floods funding formula.

■ Food: Exports

Gareth Snell: [\[12441\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps to widen the scope for exporters to (a) licence and (b) use Government-generated brand identities for food and drink products.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Government is proud of the high-quality British food and drink exports from all regions of the UK which were valued at nearly £25 billion last year. There are currently no plans to licence government-generated brand identities. The GREAT food and drink campaign, led by Defra, has been successfully promoting UK food and drink exports products using the government generated GREAT Campaign brand since 2017. In the last fiscal year (23/24) the GREAT food and drink campaign promoted over 600 UK food and drink brands in international markets under the GREAT campaign branding.

Defra will continue to champion British food and drink exports under the GREAT brand so that these products can benefit from the recognition and familiarity that this impactful nation branding brings.

■ Food: UK Trade with EU

Gareth Snell: [\[12725\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to reduce regulatory requirements for food exporters trading with the EU.

Daniel Zeichner:

The UK and EU are like-minded partners with similarly high standards. The Government has committed to seek to negotiate a veterinary/sanitary and phytosanitary agreement to help boost trade, reduce trade friction and deliver benefits to businesses and consumers in the UK and the EU. The Government has been clear that there will be no return to the customs union or single market. The Government is ambitious and wants to move forward at pace, but delivering new agreements will take time.

Additionally, Defra has recently posted two new agri-food attachés to the British Embassies in Paris and Madrid, who will help reduce regulatory requirements for food exporters to Europe. Their primary role will be to improve market access for UK producers to Europe. They will work directly with Member States across the EU to reduce trade frictions by identifying and resolving barriers faced by UK exporters.

■ Incinerators: Construction

Matt Rodda:

[\[13033\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department plans to re-introduce the moratorium on allowing the development of incinerators to go ahead; and what his policy is when an incinerator project has received planning permission but work hasn't commenced.

Mary Creagh:

The Government is committed to transitioning to a circular economy, which will support economic growth, deliver green jobs, promote the efficient and productive use of resources, minimise negative environmental impacts and help us accelerate to Net Zero. There will, however, still be a need for the safe and sanitary management of residual waste. In accordance with the Waste Hierarchy, sending residual waste that cannot currently be prevented, prepared for reuse, or recycled to Energy from Waste plants is preferable to disposal in landfill.

We are clear that we do not support incineration overcapacity. Local authorities act independently of central Government, and Ministers have limited remit to intervene in the day-to-day affairs of local authorities. Once planning permission is granted the default time limit within which to begin construction is three years from the moment of the grant of planning permission. However, local planning authorities may vary this if there are good planning reasons for doing so.

■ National Parks: Government Assistance

Tim Roca:

[\[901153\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support national parks.

Mary Creagh:

Labour introduced National Parks 75 years ago, and introduced the Rights of Way Act that secured public access and preserved natural beauty.

This Labour Government is committed to empowering Protected Landscapes to become greener, wilder and more accessible to all.

We are actively considering options to ensure Protected Landscapes bodies like National Park Authorities have the tools and powers they need to deliver for people and nature, including through regulation and guidance.

■ Packaging: Recycling

Pippa Heylings:

[\[13250\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will bring forward his planned implementation of the (a) packaging and (b) other aspects of the Extended Producer Responsibility Scheme.

Mary Creagh:

This Government is committed to creating a circular economy that: uses our resources as efficiently and productively as possible, minimises environmental impacts, accelerates our progress on Net Zero, supports economic growth, and creates new jobs. The draft Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging and Packaging Waste) Regulations 2024 were recently laid before Parliament and, subject to Parliamentary processes, will be coming into force from 2025.

The Secretary of State has asked his department to convene a taskforce of experts to develop a Circular Economy Strategy for England. The Taskforce will consider the evidence for action right across the economy, and as such will evaluate what interventions may be needed, including other Extended Producer Responsibility Schemes.

■ River Rom

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[12692\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps to support Havering Council to enhance (a) the River Rom's environmental health, (b) maintenance of river-based infrastructure and (c) development of projects aimed at increasing the River Rom as a community resource.

Emma Hardy:

The Government's Water (Special Measures) Bill is the first important step in enabling wide, transformative change across the water sector, reducing pollution and cleaning up our waterways. The Government has also launched an Independent Commission into the water sector regulatory system, anticipated to form the largest review of the industry since privatisation.

The Environment Agency (EA) is working collaboratively with partners within the Roding, Beam, and Ingrebourne Catchment Partnership to deliver environmental improvement projects that enhance the water quality and biodiversity of the River Rom.

The EA has been working with Thames Water's Surface Water Outfall Programme and the local authority to identify and sort out misconnected properties that are discharging untreated effluent into the River Rom. AMP7, the seventh Asset Management Period planned by the UK water industry, runs from 2020 – 2025.

■ UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland**Alex Easton:** [\[12673\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what data his Department holds on the number of lorries turned away at Northern Ireland ports for carrying cargo incorrectly listed on their manifests.

Daniel Zeichner:

In line with the commitments we have made, as we move to our new UK internal market system we will ensure that the only checks when goods move within the UK internal market system are those conducted by UK authorities as part of a risk-based or intelligence-led approach to tackle criminality, abuse of the scheme, smuggling and disease risks. But in order not to undermine that approach, as is the case across the UK we do not disclose the specific number or nature of interventions made by UK authorities.

■ Water Supply**Melanie Onn:** [\[12958\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Environment Agency's paper entitled, A summary of England's revised draft regional and water resources management plans, published on 21 March 2024, whether he has issued a deadline to water companies for the (a) design, (b) planning and (c) building of new water supplies.

Emma Hardy:

Water companies are required to publish a statutory water resource management plan (WRMP) every 5 years. If the need for new water supplies is identified as a result of the assessments carried out to develop the WRMP, the company will set out the timescales within which the proposed schemes will be delivered in order to meet the forecast need. The detailed design, planning and building of these schemes is managed by the individual water companies to deliver the schemes within the timescales set out in the WRMP. The water companies report on the progress with delivery of their statutory WRMPs to Defra every year via the WRMP Annual Review process.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ Afghanistan: Hazara****Ruth Jones:** [\[13500\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent progress he has made on providing support to the Hazara Muslim community in Afghanistan.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The Government continues to call for the human rights of all Afghans to be protected, including those of Hazara communities, most recently in our statement at the UN Human Rights Council on 27 September. We condemn recent attacks against Hazaras. In line with The Hazara Inquiry report's recommendations, we continue to monitor and document discrimination and abuses against Hazaras, including through our support for the UN Special Rapporteur. Officials from the UK Mission to Afghanistan regularly press the Taliban on human rights abuses and the rights of minorities in Afghanistan.

■ BBC Monitoring and BBC World Service: Finance**Sir Julian Lewis:**[\[12909\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to paragraph 4.44 of the Autumn Budget 2024, HC 295, published on 30 October 2024, whether any of the additional funding allocated to the BBC World Service will go towards BBC Monitoring; and whether his Department plans to take steps to scrutinise the distribution of this funding.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The Autumn Budget 2024 announced a government grant funding uplift for the BBC World Service in 2025-26. The uplift is for the BBC World Service only, ensuring it can continue to operate in 42 languages and helping to maintain its crisis response capability. The BBC is operationally and editorially independent and sets its own budgets.

■ British Indian Ocean Territory: Fishing Vessels**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[12399\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure that no fishing boats operate within the British Indian Ocean Territory Marine Protected Area.

Stephen Doughty:

The Blue Belt Ocean Shield Programme provides maritime domain awareness capabilities to tackle Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing activities within BIOT. This includes extensive, risk-based, remote satellite surveillance, tasking of satellite imagery to detect illegal activity, frequent intelligence support and providing training for fisheries patrols. The Programme also provides regional coordination to tackle IUU fishing through relevant Regional Fisheries Management Organisations and Flag States (including bilateral engagement with relevant Flag States), and comprehensive compliance and enforcement frameworks to deter IUU activity.

■ British Overseas Territories: Companies

Phil Brickell:

[\[13153\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 18 October 2024 to Question 8363, what minimum requirements his Department set out as being an expectation in any legitimate interest access regime for public registers of beneficial ownership in the Overseas Territories.

Stephen Doughty:

Tackling illicit finance in the UK, as well as in our Overseas Territories (OTs) and Crown Dependencies (CDs) is a priority for this Government. We consider publicly accessible registers of beneficial ownership (PARBOs) a vital tool for combatting financial secrecy. I have been clear to OT leaders that full PARBOs are our ultimate expectation. Where a legitimate interest access regime is implemented as an interim step, I have set out minimum requirements, and the UK's belief that any legitimate interest registers should be delivered with the maximum degree of access and transparency. I was delighted Montserrat joined Gibraltar in launching a full PARBO on 11 October. We are continuing to engage with OTs, and I will discuss this with leaders at the Joint Ministerial Council next week. I am looking forward to further progress on this by other OTs in the very near future.

■ British Overseas Territories: Fisheries

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[12400\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure a sustainable approach to fishing in the Overseas Territories.

Stephen Doughty:

Working together with the Overseas Territories, the UK Government is supporting the development of sustainable marine management practices within the OTs through the Blue Belt Programme. Since 2016, this support has included development of appropriate monitoring and enforcement frameworks to manage fishing activities; scientific monitoring and advice to provide precautionary catch limits; development of risk management tools to ensure fisheries are managed sustainably with minimal impact on associated or dependent ecosystems; training and capacity building within OTs to effectively manage fisheries; remote monitoring and surveillance to tackle potential illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing activities; and ensuring OTs meet requirements of relevant Regional Fisheries Management Organisations. I recently discussed these issues on my visit to OTs in the Caribbean and will discuss them again with Leaders at the upcoming Joint Ministerial Council.

■ Colombia: Trade Agreements

Stephen Gethins:

[\[12966\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Colombian counterpart on the UK-Colombia Bilateral Investment Treaty.

Catherine West:

The UK has consistently been one of the leading international investors in Colombia. UK investors are protected by the Bilateral Investment Treaty and use it to inform their investment decisions. Since the formation of the new government, FCDO and DBT officials have discussed the content and provisions of the Treaty with the Colombian Government, including impact on various sectors. The Colombian Government has committed to working with us to ensure the agreement can continue to deliver benefits for UK businesses and Colombia.

■ Diego Garcia: Migrants

Nick Timothy:

[\[12549\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what information his Department holds on whether any Sri Lankan nationals on Diego Garcia hold criminal records.

Stephen Doughty:

The FCDO does not have any information about Sri Lankan migrants' criminality that pre-dates their arrival on British Indian Ocean Territory. Any criminality on BIOT has been dealt with and recorded as appropriate by the BIOT police and BIOT Courts.

■ Diplomatic Service: British Nationals Abroad

Emily Thornberry:

[\[13427\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Answer of 20 March 2023 to Question 165277 on Diplomatic Service: British Nationals Abroad, how many UK nationals were provided with consular assistance after reporting that they had been a victim of (a) domestic violence or abuse and (b) rape or other sexual assault in calendar year 2023.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

Between 1 January and 16 October 2023, The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) provided consular assistance in 214 new victim of crime cases related to domestic violence and 355 new victim of crime cases related to rape and sexual assault.

The FCDO introduced a new consular case management system in October 2023. A transition phase is in progress and therefore we are currently unable to provide the data requested between 16 October 2023 and 31 December 2023.

Emily Thornberry:[\[13428\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Answer of 20 March 2023 to Question 165278 on Diplomatic Service: British Nationals Abroad, how many UK nationals were provided with consular assistance after reporting that they had been a victim of (a) assault and (b) theft in calendar year 2023.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

Between 1 January and 16 October 2023, The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) provided consular assistance in 228 new victim of crime cases related to assault and 260 new victim of crime cases related to theft.

The FCDO introduced a new consular case management system in October 2023. A transition phase is in progress and therefore we are currently unable to provide the data requested between 16 October 2023 and 31 December 2023.

Lebanon: BBC World Service**Blair McDougall:**[\[11611\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of Russian-backed media transmitting on the radio frequency previously occupied by the BBC World Service's Arabic station in Lebanon on British influence in the region.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The BBC is editorially and operationally independent and makes its own decisions about where to broadcast, audiences to reach and content. The BBC Arabic language service continues to operate and reaches a weekly average audience of 35 million people across the Middle East and North Africa and more widely.

Russia's disinformation tactics are well-documented. It is using disinformation and other malign tactics to advance its influence, sow discord and undermine global rules and norms worldwide.

HMG works with diverse media outlets that represent different perspectives across MENA aiming to mitigate Russia's influence. This also includes working with digital and traditional media platforms as well as radio, ensuring all media are covered.

Turks and Caicos Islands: Crime**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[12401\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of levels of crime in the Turks and Caicos islands.

Stephen Doughty:

The UK is committed across government to supporting the Overseas Territories to reduce crime levels affecting their residents. I visited the Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI) in early November to understand better the security situation there, and I am in

regular contact with colleagues in other UK Government departments on how best we can support the Overseas Territories. The FCDO support in TCI this year includes: deploying privately contracted Authorised Firearms Officers; continuing to embed serious crime investigators within the police; and strengthening border security by procuring new marine assets, delivering advanced coastal sensors, and funding the accommodation of US air crews based in TCI to improve maritime surveillance.

■ **Turks and Caicos Islands: Immigration**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[12402\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what information his Department holds on how many citizens of (a) Haiti and (b) the Dominican Republic are resident in Turks and Caicos.

Stephen Doughty:

The FCDO does not hold this data. In line with the Turks and Caicos (TCI) Constitution, immigration is a devolved matter for the TCI Government, and therefore the FCDO does not hold details on any nationalities. However, the FCDO is aware of the ongoing pressure of inward immigration, including irregular migration, on TCI including from Haiti and is supporting its authorities to strengthen its border security. This support includes procuring new marine assets for its police force; delivering the rollout of advanced coastal sensors; and funding the accommodation of US air crews based in TCI to improve maritime surveillance.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ **Accident and Emergency Departments: Torbay Hospital**

Steve Darling:

[\[13568\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve accident and emergency services at Torbay Hospital.

Karin Smyth:

The Government has committed to supporting the National Health Service to improve performance across the country, including in Torbay. This includes returning to the standard set out in the NHS Constitution, that 95% of patients attending accident and emergency departments are admitted, transferred, or discharged within four hours.

Torbay hospital is part of the New Hospital Programme, with plans including delivery of a new emergency department at the hospital.

■ **Alan Milburn**

Esther McVey:

[\[9444\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, on what dates Alan Milburn has attended Departmental meetings.

Karin Smyth:

Central Government Corporate Transparency Commitments require Government Departments to publish details of Ministers and Senior Officials meetings with external individuals or organisations on a quarterly basis. We will be publishing the meetings that Alan Milburn attended, in accordance with the transparency guidelines.

Alcoholic Drinks: Misuse**Dr Danny Chambers:**[\[13335\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that (a) GPs and (b) hospital staff receive adequate training to support those suffering from alcohol dependence.

Andrew Gwynne:

[Holding answer 13 November 2024]: The Government is committed to ensuring that those with alcohol dependence can access high quality help and specialist clinical support. General practitioners (GP) are responsible for ensuring their own clinical knowledge remains up-to-date and for identifying learning needs as part of their continuing professional development. This activity should include taking account of new research and developments in guidance, such as that produced by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, to ensure that they can continue to provide high quality care to all patients.

All United Kingdom registered doctors are expected to meet the professional standards set out in the General Medical Council's (GMC) Good Medical Practice. In 2012 the GMC introduced revalidation, which supports doctors in regularly reflecting on how they can develop or improve their practice, gives patients confidence that doctors are up to date with their practice, and promotes improved quality of care by driving improvements in clinical governance.

The training curricula for postgraduate trainee doctors is set by the Royal College of General Practitioners and has to meet the standards set by the GMC. Whilst curricula do not necessarily highlight specific conditions for doctors to be aware of, they instead emphasise the skills and approaches that a doctor must develop in order to ensure accurate and timely diagnoses and treatment plans for their patients.

The Department will soon be publishing the first ever UK clinical guidelines on alcohol treatment. The guidelines include good practice recommendations for GPs and their teams, and for hospital clinicians. The guidelines can be used to inform training for staff working with people with alcohol dependence.

Additionally, the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, and NHS England's 10-year strategic plan for the drug and alcohol treatment and recovery workforce (2024–2034), outlines actions to be taken over the next decade to improve recruitment, training, skills, and career development and retention of specialist GPs working in the local authority-commissioned drug and alcohol treatment and recovery workforce. The strategic plan is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/10-year-strategic-plan-for-the-drug-and-alcohol-treatment-and-recovery-workforce>

■ Bowel Cancer

Deirdre Costigan:

[13537]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the average overall cost for bowel cancer patients was in each of the last five years.

Karin Smyth:

Information on the average overall cost for bowel cancer patients is not specifically recorded.

My Rt Hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer has set out how the Department will receive an additional £22.6 billion in resource spending in 2025/26, compared to 2023/24, which will support the National Health Service to deliver 40,000 additional elective appointments a week, to help bring down waiting lists, which includes appointments for cancer patients.

■ Bowel Cancer: Artificial Intelligence

Deirdre Costigan:

[13538]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to support the implementation of Artificial Intelligence in the diagnosis of bowel cancer; and whether he has made an assessment of the barriers to effective adoption of that implementation.

Andrew Gwynne:

We recognise the importance of innovation and artificial intelligence (AI) in improving cancer diagnosis. We are supportive of the use of AI to support the diagnosis of many types of cancer, including bowel cancer. New AI technologies are being developed with the potential to accelerate the diagnosis and treatment for diseases such as cancer. The NHS AI Lab has provided £113 million, through the NHS AI Health and Care Awards, to 86 AI technologies, which are live in 40% of National Health Service acute trusts in England, and hundreds of Primary Care Networks across the United Kingdom. Many of these AI technologies are being tested to support with cancer diagnosis.

The Department is carrying out work to assess the barriers to effective adoption and improve the way AI tools are deployed across the NHS through a number of initiatives. The NHS AI Lab's Ethics Initiative invests in research and practical interventions that could strengthen the ethical adoption of AI within health and care, and addresses risks and concerns over their use. Additionally, the NHS AI and Digital regulations service, in partnership with healthcare regulators, gives innovators and health and care providers a one-stop-shop for support, information, and guidance on the regulation and evaluation of AI technologies.

■ Bowel Cancer: Diagnosis

Clive Jones: [\[13374\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential implications for his policies of the proportion of bowel cancers diagnosed at each stage in the last five years.

Clive Jones: [\[13375\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to encourage earlier diagnosis of bowel cancer in the Berkshire, Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire Integrated Care Board region.

Karin Smyth:

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

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

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

We are committed to getting the NHS diagnosing cancer earlier and treating it faster, so that more patients survive this horrible set of diseases. This includes bowel cancer patients in Berkshire, Oxfordshire, and Buckinghamshire.

■ Cancer and Respiratory Diseases

Shaun Davies: [\[13619\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress his Department has made on reducing waiting times for patients with (a) cancer and (b) respiratory conditions.

Andrew Gwynne:

Tackling waiting lists is a key part of our Health Mission and a top priority for the Government, as we get the National Health Service back on its feet, including for those suffering from cancer and respiratory conditions.

We have committed to getting back to the NHS Constitutional standard, that 92% of patients should wait no longer than 18 weeks from Referral to Treatment. As a first step to achieving this, we will deliver an additional 2 million operations, scans, and

appointments during our first year in Government, or the equivalent to 40,000 per week. We will also increase the number of computed tomography, magnetic resonance imaging, and other tests that are needed to reduce elective and cancer waits. As of August 2024, 62.5% of respiratory medicine patients are seen within this standard, compared to 60.7% in August 2023. This is compared to 58% of the total waiting list for planned procedures.

■ **Cancer: Health Services**

Chris Bloore:

[\[13580\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish a cancer strategy which includes measures on tackling (a) pancreatic and (b) other less survivable cancers.

Andrew Gwynne:

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

In addition, following publication of the 10-Year Health Plan, we will develop a new national cancer plan, which will include further details on how we will improve outcomes for cancer patients, including those with pancreatic and other less survivable cancers.

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

NHS England is delivering a range of interventions that are expected to improve early diagnosis and treatment for patients with suspected and diagnosed pancreatic cancer. This includes providing a route into pancreatic cancer surveillance for patients at inherited high-risk, to identify lesions before they develop into cancer, and diagnose cancers sooner.

In March 2024, NHS England published guidance for providers and systems to implement a timed Hepato-Pancreato-Biliary cancer pathway with the aim of ensuring that patients with some suspected tumour types, including suspected pancreatic cancer, receive a diagnosis or have cancer ruled out within 28 days of urgent referral.

■ **Carers: Runcorn and Helsby**

Mike Amesbury:

[\[12120\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an estimate of the number of unpaid carers in Runcorn and Helsby constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

The 2021 Census found that there are approximately 4.7 million people of all ages in England who said they provided unpaid care. In the Runcorn and Helsby constituency, the Census showed that there were approximately 10,000 people of all ages who said they provided unpaid care.

Following the budget announcement on 31 October 2024, the Government announced that from April 2025 it will increase the Carer's Allowance weekly earnings limit from £151 a week to £196, which is the equivalent of 16 hours at the National Living Wage. This means carers can earn up to £10,000 a year whilst still retaining Carer's Allowance; this is approximately an additional £2,000 a year and represents the largest increase in the earnings limit since Carer's Allowance was introduced in 1976.

This will reduce work disincentives for those who are able to combine their family caring responsibilities with some paid work.

■ Cerebral Palsy: Children**Dr Danny Chambers:**[\[13714\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help improve the understanding of first-line healthcare professionals of atypical motor development in children.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Royal College of General Practitioners has produced an e-learning module, Motor development in children: assessment and red flags. This module is designed to help general practitioners (GPs) assess children's motor development. It identifies opportunities to perform a brief developmental assessment, describes an approach to assessing children of different ages, and highlights what typical and atypical motor development looks like, including important red flags. It also advises GPs on what steps to take if they do have concerns about a child's motor development. Further details about the module are available at the following link:

<https://elearning.rcgp.org.uk/course/info.php?id=601>

The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health has also produced an e-learning module on neuromuscular disorders, which includes guidance to clinicians on how to apply a clear, structured approach to assessing motor development in children aged zero to five years old, and how to use their skills and knowledge to recognise atypical motor development. Further details about the module are available at the following link:

<https://www.rcpch.ac.uk/resources/recognising-neuromuscular-disorders-online-learning>.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has published guidance on developmental follow-up of children and young people born preterm, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng72>

The NICE guidance recognises that children who are born preterm are at an increased risk of developmental problems, including motor function problems and cerebral palsy.

The NICE has also produced a quality standard on cerebral palsy in children and young people and the guidance, Cerebral palsy in under 25s: assessment and management. The NICE quality standard includes specific reference to referral for children with delayed motor milestones. Further information on the quality standard on cerebral palsy in children and young people and the guidance on cerebral palsy in under 25-year-olds is available, respectively, at the following two links:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/qs162>

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng62>

The NICE guidance also recommends using the General Movement Assessment during routine neonatal follow-up assessments for children between zero and three months who are at increased risk of developing cerebral palsy. It recommends that all children with delayed motor milestones should be referred to a child development service for further assessment. Additionally, the guidance states that clinicians should recognise that the most common delayed motor milestones in children with cerebral palsy are:

- not sitting by eight months, corrected for gestational age;
- not walking by 18 months, corrected for gestational age; and
- early asymmetry of hand function, hand preference, before one year, corrected for gestational age.

Dr Danny Chambers:

[13716]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of access to (a) sporting and (b) physical activities for (i) children and (ii) young people with cerebral palsy.

Andrew Gwynne:

We have not made such an assessment. However, the Government's new mission-led approach puts health, and children and young people at the heart of our priorities. The Government aims to provide all children, including disabled children and disabled young people, with opportunities to access high-quality sport and physical activity, especially those who are less likely to be active.

The Chief Medical Officer's physical activity guidelines for disabled children highlights the importance of tailoring activities to meet individual needs, breaking an activity into chunks and making everyday movement enjoyable. Providing these inclusive opportunities for disabled children is a core principle of the Department of Education's Inclusion 2024 programme, and the Government funded School Games Network, which works with organisations, including Cerebral Palsy Sport, to create inclusive environments in sport and physical activity for children with cerebral palsy.

■ Colonoscopy

Deirdre Costigan:

[\[13536\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the average waiting time was between referral for and receipt of a colonoscopy in each trust in each year between 2020 and 2024.

Karin Smyth:

Data is not held centrally on the average waiting time between referral for and receipt of a colonoscopy in each National Health Service trust, each year between 2020 and 2024.

Data is published on the median waiting times nationally for colonoscopies. The median waiting times value represents the point at which 50% of people have been in the waiting list for more than this value, and 50% of people have been in the waiting list, waiting less than this value. It does not directly capture the time from the referral to the test.

The following table shows the median waiting time measured in weeks, in August, which is the latest published month of data, each year from 2020 to 2024.

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Median waiting time	8.5	4.5	4.3	4.2	3.1

Source: monthly activity and waiting list data for diagnostics is published by NHS England, and is available at the following link:

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

■ Colonoscopy: Health Services

Deirdre Costigan:

[\[13539\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of colonoscopy procedures in each of the next five years.

Karin Smyth:

The Department does not publish data on future projections for colonoscopy procedures, including projections over the next five years. However, demand modelling is a routine part of our work.

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

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Rupert Lowe:

[13076]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many yellow card reports there have been on Covid-19 vaccines.

Andrew Gwynne:

As of 4 November 2024, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency has received a total of 489,991 spontaneous, suspected adverse reaction reports for COVID-19 vaccines in the United Kingdom.

However, it is important to note that reporters are encouraged to submit Yellow Card reports even if they only have a suspicion that the vaccine may have caused the adverse reaction. Therefore, the existence of an adverse reaction report does not necessarily mean that the vaccine has caused the reaction.

Mark Swards:

[13321]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will allow individuals with a history of anaphylaxis to receive Novavax Covid-19 booster vaccinations.

Andrew Gwynne:

Novavax was not purchased for the Autumn 2024 COVID-19 vaccination programme, as sufficient pre-procured COVID-19 doses of the Moderna mRNA (Spikevax) and Pfizer-BioNTech mRNA (Comirnaty) vaccines were available.

The COVID-19 chapter of the publication Immunisation against infectious diseases, also known as the Green Book, details that there are very few individuals who cannot receive the COVID-19 vaccines approved in the United Kingdom. The Green Book Chapter 14a is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-the-green-book-chapter-14a>

Published advice recommends that anyone with a prior allergic reaction to COVID-19 vaccines should be seen by an expert allergist and, after a review of the individual's risks and benefits of vaccination, where vaccination is indicated, they could then be vaccinated in hospital under clinical supervision. NHS England will continue to follow this clinical guidance and offer mRNA vaccination under expert supervision in a hospital setting. This advice is available at the following link:

<https://www.nhs.uk/vaccinations/COVID-19-vaccine/>

■ Dental Services: Finance

Adam Dance:

[12011]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance his Department has issued to integrated care boards on ringfencing dental budgets in the 2025-26 financial year.

Stephen Kinnock:

NHS England is responsible for issuing guidance to integrated care boards (ICBs) on dental budgets, including ringfencing. NHS England will publish planning guidance in due course.

Responsibility for commissioning primary care dentistry to meet the needs of the local population has been delegated to ICBs across England. For Yeovil, this is the NHS Somerset ICB.

Helen Morgan:[\[12992\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of an increase in employers national insurance contributions on dental practices' finances.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 12 November 2024]: No assessments have been made yet on the potential impact of an increase in employers National Insurance Contributions on dental practices' finances.

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

■ Dental Services: Romford**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[12691\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the average waiting time for an NHS dental practice is in Romford constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

Patients in England are not registered with an NHS dental practice and there is no single waiting list, although many NHS dental practices do tend to see patients regularly and may operate local waiting list arrangements.

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

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Institute for Public Policy Research**Saqib Bhatti:**[\[11922\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 29 October 2024 to Question 10785 on Department of Health and Social Care: Institute for Public Policy Research, whether NHS England has awarded any contracts to the IPPR since the general election.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 4 November 2024]: NHS England has not awarded any contracts to the Institute for Public Policy Research since 4 July 2024.

■ Diets: Health Education

Dr Beccy Cooper:

[13305]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the provision of advice on plant-based diets by clinicians in primary care settings on (a) achieving the aim in the NHS Long Term Plan of supporting patients to adopt improved healthy behaviours and (b) the cost of health care.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) discussed the topic of plant-based diets at its horizon scan meetings in 2022 and 2024. The SACN concluded it is an important topic and will continue to grow in interest, particularly from a sustainability viewpoint. The SACN agreed to keep the topic on its watching brief. Meeting papers are available on the SACN's website, at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/scientific-advisory-committee-on-nutrition#sacn-meetings>

Government advice on a healthy, balanced diet is encapsulated in the United Kingdom's national food model, the Eatwell Guide. The Eatwell Guide depicts a diet that is based on fruit, vegetables, and higher fibre starchy carbohydrates. It divides the foods and drinks we consume into five main groups and illustrates that both animal products and plant-based products can be part of a healthy balanced diet. Further information on the Eatwell Guide is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-eatwell-guide>

These Eatwell Guide nutrition principles underpin the Government Buying Standards for Food and Catering Services (GBSF). Hospitals, the Government, and their agencies are required to apply the GBSF, with other public sector settings also encouraged to follow. Further information on the GBSF is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sustainable-procurement-the-gbs-for-food-and-catering-services>

Adherence to the Eatwell Guide has been shown to significantly improve both health and environmental outcomes, as per the 2020 Scheelbeek et al. study, with appreciably lower environmental impact than the current UK diet, as noted in 2016 by the Carbon Trust. Further information on the Scheelbeek et al. study and the Carbon Trust's analysis is available, respectively, at the following two links:

<https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/10/8/e037554>

<https://www.carbontrust.com/our-work-and-impact/guides-reports-and-tools/the-eatwell-guide-a-more-sustainable-diet>

Given that most people in the UK do not currently follow a diet in line with Government's dietary recommendations, moving the population to dietary intakes in line with the Eatwell Guide remains the priority.

The Government recognises the valuable contribution that plant-based foods and drinks can make to people's diets, alongside the contribution that fish and animal-based foods and drinks can make. Health care professionals in primary care settings are expected to provide a wide range of advice and support to patients that is based around their clinical needs. This advice should be based on robust clinical evidence and should allow patients freedom of choice over the way their care is planned and delivered, which includes individual dietary requirements and preferences where appropriate.

■ Health Services: Information

Peter Prinsley: [\[13104\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of compliance with the Accessible Information Standard in the NHS.

Peter Prinsley: [\[13111\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure compliance with the Accessible Information Standard across the NHS.

Stephen Kinnock:

National Health Service organisations and publicly funded social care providers must comply with the Accessible Information Standard (AIS), to meet the communication needs of patients and carers with a disability, impairment, or sensory loss. The AIS conformance criteria, published in 2016, set out how organisations should comply with the AIS, with further information available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/about/equality/equality-hub/patient-equalities-programme/equality-frameworks-and-information-standards/accessibleinfo/resources/assess-conformance/>

The responsibility for monitoring compliance with the AIS sits with the commissioner of the service.

NHS England is responsible for the AIS, and has completed a review of the AIS to help ensure that the communication needs of people with a disability, impairment, or sensory loss are met in health and care provision. One of the aims of the review was to strengthen assurance of implementation of the AIS, and a self-assessment framework has been developed to support providers of NHS and social care services to measure their performance against the AIS, and develop improvement action plans to address gaps in implementation. The AIS self-assessment framework is designed to enable enhancements around assurance, and allows organisations, commissioners, and the Care Quality Commission to judge performance and compliance.

A revised AIS is being reviewed with a view to publication, and in the meantime NHS England is continuing to work to support implementation with awareness raising, communication and engagement, and a review of the current e-learning modules on

the AIS. The intention is to ensure that staff and organisations in the NHS are aware of the AIS and the importance of meeting the information and communication needs of disabled people using these services.

■ Health Services: Waiting Lists

Shaun Davies:

[\[13549\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) children and (b) adults are waiting for outpatient appointments by (i) their average wait time and (ii) the appointment required in the NHS Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Integrated Care Board.

Karin Smyth:

Patients have been let down for too long whilst they wait for the care they need. The Government will ensure that 92% of patients return to waiting no longer than 18 weeks from Referral to Treatment within our first term, a standard which has not been met consistently since September 2015. Outpatients make up most of the waiting list, so transforming outpatient services is a key part of the Government's approach to cutting waiting times.

The overall mean average waiting time for children waiting for an outpatient appointment in the NHS Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Integrated Care Board (ICB) is 23.3 weeks, with the median being 21.4 weeks, and the overall mean waiting time for adults waiting for an outpatient appointment is 21.2 weeks, while the median is 18.4 weeks.

The number of cases where children are waiting in the NHS Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin ICB for a first outpatient appointment is 4,471, and for a follow up outpatient appointment is 715. The number of cases where adults are waiting in the NHS Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin ICB for a first outpatient appointment is 45,272, and for a follow up outpatient appointment is 12,500.

■ HIV Infection

Neil O'Brien:

[\[10768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 22 October 2024 to Question 9646 on HIV Infection: Diagnosis, how many people living with diagnosed HIV infection there were whose country of birth was (a) in the UK and (b) not in the UK by region in each year since 2014.

Andrew Gwynne:

The information is not available in the format requested, however HIV data are publicly accessible from the HIV data tables published on GOV.UK at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hiv-annual-data-tables>.

Neil O'Brien:

[\[10769\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people there were in each region with a newly diagnosed HIV infection whose country of birth was (a) in the UK and (b) not in the UK in each year since 2014.

Andrew Gwynne:

[Holding answer 1 November 2024]: The number of new diagnoses for each year between 2014 and 2023, presented by region of residence and by whether country of birth was UK or not, is publicly available from the following GOV.UK link: <https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view>

Hospices: Children**Clive Lewis:**[\[10744\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 21 October 2024 to Question 8935 on Hospices: Children, what his planned timetable is for a decision on the future of that funding.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 30 October 2024]: While 2023/24 marked the final year of the Children's Hospice Grant in its previous format, in 2024/25, NHS England continued to provide an additional £25 million of funding for children and young people's hospices, maintaining the level of grant funding from 2023/24. For the first time, this funding was distributed by integrated care boards (ICBs), on behalf of NHS England, rather than being centrally administered as before.

The Department and NHS England are aware that the shift to ICB distributed funding in 2024/25 has not been as smooth a transition as we would have hoped. However, we are working closely with NHS England to resolve any remaining issues with the 2024/25 funding. Furthermore, I am working very closely with NHS England to get the funding arrangements for 2025/26 confirmed as a matter of urgency.

I recently met NHS England, Together for Short Lives, and one of the co-chairs of the Children Who Need Palliative Care All-Party Parliamentary Groups, Lord Balfe, to discuss children's palliative and end of life care, and this funding stream was discussed at length at that meeting.

Lead: Contamination**Sir Julian Smith:**[\[13213\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate the Food Standards Agency has made of the risk of lead contamination in (a) silage and (b) animal feed produced on floodplains downstream of historical lead mining sites.

Sir Julian Smith:[\[13214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Food Standards Agency is taking to (a) assess and (b) mitigate the risk of lead contamination in (i) allotments and (ii) other food growing areas located on floodplains downstream of historical lead mines.

Sir Julian Smith:

[\[13215\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Food Standards Agency's planned review of dietary lead will consider the extent of contamination up to 100 kilometres downstream of historical lead mining sites.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) is planning to review dietary lead as part of its rolling programme of risk analysis of environmental contaminants in food. This will include consideration of areas where exposure is likely to be higher. Scoping work has started, including considering what, if any, additional evidence and data may be required.

The FSA has not undertaken a specific estimation of the risk of lead contamination in silage or animal feed. However, in conjunction with the National Farmers Union, the FSA has provided advice to farmers to mitigate against lead entering the food chain, and how to avoid lead contamination. In addition, maximum levels for undesirable substances in products intended for animal feed have been established in Schedule 4 of the Animal Feed (Composition, Marketing and Use) (England) Regulations 2015, with further information on the regulations available at the following link:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2015/255/schedule/4>

This includes levels for lead in feed materials and forage, which includes hay and silage. Any product which exceeds these limits is not permitted to be placed on the market. These regulations are enforced by local authorities. Under animal feed legislation, feed businesses, which include farmers, are responsible for making sure the feed they produce is safe for the animals it is intended for.

The impact of flooding on areas of land with historical levels of lead contamination is a matter for local councils to consider under Part 2A of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. They have the duty to inspect their areas to identify contaminated land. This would cover situations where lead is washed from rivers or sediments onto floodplains or where existing lead contamination on land is impacted by flooding. Lead may be discharged into rivers from abandoned metal mines and the Environment Agency is working with the Coal Authority under the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs' Water and Abandoned Metal Mines Programme to identify and tackle the priority discharges.

■ **Life Expectancy: Gateshead Central and Whickham**

Mark Ferguson:

[\[13262\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the average life expectancy is in (a) Gateshead Central and Whickham constituency and (b) each ward of that constituency.

Andrew Gwynne:

Life expectancy estimates for Parliamentary constituencies are not available. Life expectancy estimates for local authorities in England are produced by the Office for

National Statistics (ONS). The latest available figures from the ONS are for the three-year period 2020 to 2022. In that period, life expectancy at birth for the Gateshead local authority, which includes the constituency of Gateshead and Whickham, was 76.7 years for males, and 81.4 years for females.

LIFE EXPECTANCY ESTIMATES FOR ELECTORAL WARDS ARE PRODUCED BY THE OFFICE FOR HEALTH IMPROVEMENT AND DISPARITIES (OHID). THE FOLLOWING TABLE SHOWS THE LATEST AVAILABLE ESTIMATES OF LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH, SEPARATED BY SEX, FOR THE FIVE-YEAR PERIOD OF 2016 TO 2020, IN THE ELECTORAL WARDS WITHIN THE GATESHEAD CENTRAL AND WHICKHAM CONSTITUENCY:

Electoral ward name	Sex	Life expectancy in years
Bridges	Male	73.7
Chowdene	Male	77.8
Deckham	Male	74.1
Dunston and Teams	Male	73.0
Dunston Hill and Whickham East	Male	79.0
High Fell	Male	74.5
Lobley Hill and Bensham	Male	74.7
Low Fell	Male	80.8
Saltwell	Male	76.5
Whickham North	Male	77.9
Whickham South and Sunnyside	Male	82.3
Bridges	Female	78.6
Chowdene	Female	83.1
Deckham	Female	77.8
Dunston and Teams	Female	81.1
Dunston Hill and Whickham East	Female	83.8
High Fell	Female	78.6
Lobley Hill and Bensham	Female	78.6

LIFE EXPECTANCY ESTIMATES FOR ELECTORAL WARDS ARE PRODUCED BY THE OFFICE FOR HEALTH IMPROVEMENT AND DISPARITIES (OHID). THE FOLLOWING TABLE SHOWS THE LATEST AVAILABLE ESTIMATES OF LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH, SEPARATED BY SEX, FOR THE FIVE-YEAR PERIOD OF 2016 TO 2020, IN THE ELECTORAL WARDS WITHIN THE GATESHEAD CENTRAL AND WHICKHAM CONSTITUENCY:

Low Fell	Female	83.8
Saltwell	Female	84.8
Whickham North	Female	80.3
Whickham South and Sunnyside	Female	87.6

Source: data is from the OHID's Local Health profile, with further information on male and female life expectancy within the Gateshead local authority available, respectively, at the following two links: <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/local-health/data#page/3/gid/1938133185/pat/502/par/E08000037/ati/8/are/E05001067/iid/93283/age/1/sex/1/cat/-1/ctp/-1/yr/5/cid/4/tbm/1>
<https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/local-health/data#page/3/gid/1938133185/pat/502/par/E08000037/ati/8/are/E05001067/iid/93283/age/1/sex/2/cat/-1/ctp/-1/yr/5/cid/4/tbm/1/page-options/car-do-0> The profile also provides comparable estimates for the Gateshead local authority for the five-year period, from 2016 to 2020.

■ Medical Records: Standards

Richard Fuller: **[13197]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that NHS Trusts adhere to national guidelines on the (a) accuracy and (b) reliability of medical records.

Richard Fuller: **[13198]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what (a) policies and (b) procedures are in place across NHS Trusts to ensure that medical records are (i) accurate and (ii) evidence-based.

Richard Fuller: **[13199]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to monitor NHS Trusts' adherence to (a) General Medical Council and (b) National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidance on patient records.

Karin Smyth:

Each National Health Service trust is a data controller under the Data Protection Act 2018, and therefore responsible for ensuring the accuracy and integrity of their

records. To assist trusts in fulfilling these responsibilities, a range of guidance and assurance is in place.

For example, NHS England publishes a Code of Practice on Records Management for all NHS trusts to follow. This covers all aspects of records management, including the accuracy and reliability of medical records. Each trust is responsible for following the principles and guidance set out in the code, which may include local measures, such as a record keeping audit, or monitoring the availability of records.

In addition, in line with the Code of Practice, NHS trusts are responsible for ensuring they have appropriate policies and procedures in place to manage their records. This will usually be a standalone records management policy, with associated procedures, such as how to destroy records.

Furthermore, NHS England's Data Security and Protection Toolkit (DSPT) requires NHS trusts to understand legal and professional obligations for records management. The DSPT involves a periodic audit in which trusts have to demonstrate they are adhering to this requirement.

Regulators also set out professional standards for health and care professionals. For example, the General Medical Council's Good Medical Practice requires doctors to make sure that formal records of their work, including patients' records, are clear, accurate, contemporaneous, and legible.

The Care Quality Commission has powers, under section 63(2)(b) of the Health and Social Care Act 2008, to access records held by the service that they are inspecting, where necessary, as part of their regulatory functions.

■ Mental Health and Suicide: Mothers

Dr Danny Chambers:

[\[13073\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to tackle (a) mental health and (b) suicide rates among mothers in the twelve months postpartum.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 12 November 2024]: Specialist community perinatal mental health services are established in all parts of England, but we recognise more is needed. Too many people with mental health issues, including mothers in the 12 months postpartum, are not getting the support or care they need, which is why we will fix the broken system to ensure that people can be confident in accessing high quality mental health support when they need it.

As set out in NHS England's 2024/25 Priorities and Operational Planning Guidance, the National Health Service is working to increase the number of people accessing perinatal mental health services to 66,000. In 2023/24, 58,200 women accessed these services, compared to 30,600 in 2019/20.

The Suicide Prevention Strategy for England was published in September 2023. The strategy highlights pregnant women and new mothers as a priority group who could benefit from targeted support.

■ Mental Health Services

Freddie van Mierlo:

[\[12009\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to (a) increase (i) capacity and (ii) coordination among mental health services to ensure people receive treatment close to home, (b) provide free prescriptions to people with chronic mental health conditions and (c) introduce a statutory independent mental health commissioner to advocate for patients, families, and carers.

Stephen Kinnock:

As part of our mission to build a National Health Service fit for the future, we are committed to shifting care out of hospitals and into the community, close to people's homes. NHS England is currently piloting neighbourhood based, open access community mental health centres in six areas to support people experiencing mental ill health.

Whilst there are no current plans to review or amend the list of medical conditions that entitle a patient to receive free prescriptions, extensive arrangements are in place to ensure that prescriptions are affordable for everyone. For example, people who are: in receipt of certain qualifying benefits or tax credits; are pregnant or have recently given birth; or are aged 60 years old and over, all qualify for free prescriptions. Additionally, income-based support is available under the NHS Low Income Scheme, and Pre-Payment Certificates are available to anyone, allowing people to claim as many prescriptions as they need for a set cost.

We have no plans to appoint a statutory mental health commissioner as it would not add significant value within the framework provided by existing bodies.

■ Mental Health Services: Birmingham

Laurence Turner:

[\[13706\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the average time was between referral and first contact for mental health services for people aged 17 years and under in Birmingham in each of the last five years.

Stephen Kinnock:

Tables showing the average time between referral and first contact for mental health services for people aged 17 years old and under in Birmingham in each of the last five years are attached. There are a number of caveats that should be taken into account when interpreting this data, which are included in the attachment.

Attachments:

1. Table for PQ13706 [Table for PQ13706.xlsx]

■ Mental Health Services: Families**Adam Dance:**[\[11989\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that community mental health hubs and schools are well linked with existing family support services.

Stephen Kinnock:

The aim of the community mental health hub pilot sites is to be able to support the full range of adults' needs that are important to recovery, without the need for onward referrals, or for people to navigate the complicated networks of support that they need when experiencing significant challenges to their wellbeing. Each pilot site will work in conjunction with voluntary, community, and social enterprise organisations, as well as other services that provide support to people, such as housing providers and family support services.

We will also roll out Young Futures hubs in every community, providing open access mental health support for children and young people in every community. In addition, there are currently approximately 65 locally funded early support hubs in England open to those aged 25 years old and under. During 2024/25, the Department is running a Shared Outcomes Fund project, backed by £8 million, to boost and evaluate the impact of 24 of these existing early support hubs.

We are currently working with colleagues at the Department for Education and NHS England to consider options to deliver our commitment to provide access to specialist mental health professionals in every school in England.

■ Mental Health Services: Gloucester**Alex McIntyre:**[\[11803\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to reduce the waiting lists for child and adolescent mental health services in Gloucester.

Stephen Kinnock:

It is the responsibility of NHS Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board to make available appropriate provision to meet the mental health and other care needs of children and young people in Gloucester.

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

We will also provide access to specialist mental health professionals in every school in England so that mental health conditions, such as anxiety and depression, can be identified early on and prevented from developing into more serious conditions in later life. We will also roll out open access Young Futures hubs for children and young people in every community. This national network is expected to bring local

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

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

■ **Mental Health Services: Veterans**

Edward Morello: [\[10215\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support veterans' mental health in rural constituencies.

Edward Morello: [\[10216\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to improve access to health services for veterans living in rural areas.

Tom Hayes: [\[10296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to improve mental health support for veterans.

Stephen Kinnock:

NHS England commissions Op COURAGE, the integrated mental health and wellbeing service for veterans. Veterans can self-refer to Op COURAGE. The service has been designed to support veterans from all areas, including rural areas, and is delivered from a range of locations, including National Health Service trusts, general practices, Poppy Shops, veteran hubs, and drop-in centres. Elements of the service may also be provided online if this is clinically appropriate.

Integrated care boards are responsible for providing health and care services to meet the needs of their local populations, taking into account local considerations such as access to services in rural areas. The Government recognises that too many people are not receiving the mental health care they need, and that waits for mental health services are too long. The Government is determined to change that and ensure mental health has the same focus as physical health, to help people in rural areas to access high quality mental health support when they need it.

■ **NHS England: Equality**

James McMurdock: [\[11807\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people are employed by NHS England in roles relating to equality, diversity and inclusivity.

Karin Smyth:

There are 34 individuals out of around 16,000 full-time equivalent staff who are employed by NHS England in roles relating to equality, diversity and inclusivity. NHS England provides services that are available for all, and good equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) principles ensure that everyone can access healthcare.

■ NHS: Compensation

Rupert Lowe:

[\[12205\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much the NHS paid in compensation in each of the last five years.

Andrew Gwynne:

NHS Resolution (NHSR) manages clinical negligence and other claims against the National Health Service in England. NHSR administers claims covered by several indemnity schemes. The two main schemes are: the Clinical Negligence Scheme for Trusts, which provides cover for clinical negligence claims against secondary care providers, including all NHS trusts; and the Clinical Negligence Scheme for General Practice, which provides cover for clinical negligence claims relating to NHS services provided in general practice, for incidents occurring on or after 1 April 2019. NHSR also administers the Liabilities to Third Parties Scheme for non-clinical claims against NHS trusts, such as public and employer's liability.

The following table shows the payments made for clinical negligence claims, broken down into damages, NHS legal costs, claimant legal costs, and sum total paid, between the financial years 2019/20 and 2023/24:

FINANCIAL YEAR	DAMAGES PAID	NHS LEGAL COSTS CLAIMANT LEGAL		TOTAL PAID
		PAID	COSTS PAID	
2019/20	£1,644,216,037	£145,231,480	£475,257,408	£2,264,704,926
2020/21	£1,588,102,706	£150,740,413	£432,972,932	£2,171,816,051
2021/22	£1,777,244,213	£157,860,991	£470,329,975	£2,405,435,179
2022/23	£1,985,073,662	£161,232,916	£489,738,305	£2,636,044,883
2023/24	£2,111,274,291	£171,207,686	£544,941,740	£2,827,423,717
Total	£9,105,910,909	£786,273,487	£2,413,240,360	£12,305,424,756

In addition, the following table shows the payments made for non-clinical claims, also broken down into damages, NHS legal costs, claimant legal costs, and sum total paid, between the financial years 2019/20 and 2023/24:

FINANCIAL YEAR	DAMAGES PAID	NHS LEGAL COSTS CLAIMANT LEGAL		TOTAL PAID
		PAID	COSTS PAID	
2019/20	£29,385,103	£7,235,444	£18,155,566	£54,776,113
2020/21	£28,523,132	£6,244,463	£16,379,137	£51,146,732
2021/22	£32,118,571	£6,529,827	£17,314,793	£55,963,192
2022/23	£26,857,633	£6,081,045	£16,314,408	£49,253,086

FINANCIAL YEAR	DAMAGES PAID	NHS LEGAL COSTS PAID	CLAIMANT LEGAL COSTS PAID	TOTAL PAID
2023/24	£26,166,825	£7,091,718	£16,635,005	£49,893,548
Total	£143,051,264	£33,182,497	£84,798,910	£261,032,671

Notes:

1) NHSR has advised that the values for the payments reported for each year will be different from those reported in the published Annual report and accounts (ARA), because: accruals for NHS legal costs are included in the accounting records used for the ARA and are not included at the last day of the financial year in the Claims Management System used to provide these more detailed tables; timing differences in manual postings, for instance income received is reflected in the financial records used for the ARA and not included at the last day of the financial year in the Claims Management System used to provide these more detailed tables; and payments made in 2019/20 and 2020/21 for some older general practice claims (ELGP), during their transition to NHSR, are included in the accounting records used for the ARA, however, those ELGP payments are not included in the Claims Management System used for these tables during the oversight period, as NHSR was not managing the cases within its claims management systems; and

2) there may be other compensation schemes involving the NHS that are not covered by NHSR, however, this information is not held centrally.

■ **NHS: Drugs**

Paul Davies:

[\[13381\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish a breakdown of the cost to the public purse of NHS spend on (a) branded pharmaceuticals, (b) generic pharmaceuticals and (c) companion diagnostics in the last 12 months.

Karin Smyth:

On 7 November 2024, the NHS Business Service Authority published data on the costs of medicines, appliances, dressings, and medical devices prescribed within primary and secondary care in England. This report is available at the following link:

<https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/statistical-collections/prescribing-costs-hospitals-and-community-england/prescribing-costs-hospitals-and-community-england-2023-24>.

A breakdown of the prescribing costs in England between branded and generic medicines is available for primary care only, and can be found at the following link:

<https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/statistical-collections/prescription-cost-analysis-england/prescription-cost-analysis-england-202324>.

Such publications do not account for income received under the 2024 voluntary scheme for branded medicines pricing, access, and growth (VPAG) or the statutory

scheme. Information on how the VPAG and the statutory scheme, which operate United Kingdom-wide, control the cost of sales of branded medicines to the National Health Service is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/voluntary-scheme-quarterly-net-sales-and-payment-information>

VPAG and statutory scheme sales data does not reflect the total cost to the NHS. The publication reports net sales of non-exempt products and non-exempt companies only, and is exclusive of additional costs such as pharmacy and wholesaler margins.

■ NHS: Procurement

Mr Peter Bedford: **[13319]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has for the future of NHS procurement frameworks.

Karin Smyth:

As one of the interventions in the Strategic Framework for NHS Commercial and a workstream in the Commercial Efficiencies Optimisation Programme, NHS England launched an Accredited Framework Host programme in late 2023.

The ambition is to drive efficiency by creating the best commercial routes to market for the National Health Service, aiming to create a healthy, competitive marketplace by de-duplicating framework agreements, to deliver high quality procurement outcomes.

NHS England successfully accredited 20 Procurement Framework Host organisations, which cover £16 billion of third-party goods and services the NHS spent in 2023/24, all of whom have subscribed to enhanced standards. These standards cover a range of areas, from minimum contractual terms and conditions, robust supplier appointment and value for money assessment processes, through to the sharing of commercial and commission data with NHS England.

Further details and the list of accredited host organisations is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/system-guidance-for-the-implementation-of-framework-host-management/>

■ Nurses: Students

Jayne Kirkham: **[13700]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of making retrospective payments to student nurses that were incorrectly labelled as being ineligible for the £5,000 annual training grant via the NHS Learning Support Fund since 2019.

Karin Smyth:

There are no such plans.

The NHS Learning Support Fund (LSF) is an annual scheme operated under rules that are published by the Department for each academic year. Eligibility for the LSF under these rules reflects eligibility for student loans set by the Department for Education.

The NHS LSF scheme is administered by the NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA) on behalf of the Department. It includes provisions for students to ask the NHSBSA for a review of their decisions, and to contact the Department to appeal NHSBSA decisions.

■ Ovarian Cancer

Alex Easton:

[\[13380\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to (a) increasing public awareness of the symptoms of, (b) provide timely access to (i) diagnostic tests and (ii) treatments for and (c) otherwise take steps to improve early diagnosis rates for ovarian cancer.

Andrew Gwynne:

NHS England runs Help Us Help You campaigns to increase knowledge of cancer symptoms and address barriers to acting on them, to encourage people to come forward as soon as possible to see their general practitioner. The campaigns focus on a range of symptoms, including symptoms of ovarian cancer, as well as encouraging body awareness, to help people spot symptoms across a wide range of cancers at an early point. Previous phases of the campaign have focused on abdominal symptoms which, among other abdominal cancers, can be indicative of ovarian cancer.

It is a priority for the Government to support the National Health Service to diagnose cancer, including ovarian cancer, as quickly as possible, to treat it faster, and to improve outcomes. This is supported by NHS England's key ambition on cancer to meet the Faster Diagnosis Standard, which sets a target of 28 days from urgent referral by a general practitioner or screening programme to patients being told that they have cancer, or that cancer is ruled out.

To ensure women have access to the best treatment for ovarian cancer, NHS England commissioned an audit on ovarian cancer. The aim of the audit is to provide timely evidence for cancer service providers of where patterns of care in England may vary, to increase consistency of access to treatments, and help stimulate improvements in cancer treatment and outcomes for patients.

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

The Government will set out any further priorities on cancer, including on early diagnosis, in a national cancer plan. The national cancer plan will include further

details on how we will improve outcomes for cancer patients, as well as speeding up diagnosis and treatment, ensuring patients have access to the latest treatments and technology, and ultimately bringing this country's cancer survival rates back up to the standards of the best in the world.

■ Respiratory Syncytial Virus: Vaccination

Dr Caroline Johnson:

[\[13274\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many adults have received the respiratory syncytial virus vaccination in each month since July 2024.

Andrew Gwynne:

The UK Health Security Agency measures the coverage of vaccines against the respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). The RSV adult vaccination programme in England began on 1 September 2024. Only data for the catch-up cohort, those adults aged 75 to 79 years old before the programme start date, has been published. This publication covers the first full month of the programme, and is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-protection-report-volume-18-2024/hpr-volume-18-issue-9-news-31-october>

During the reporting period, from 1 to 30 September 2024, the total vaccination uptake among the catch-up cohort was 22.6%. Data for the routine cohort, those adults turning 75 years old from the programme start date, will be published in an annual RSV report in due course. NHS England publishes weekly data by region on the RSV vaccines administered, which offers further insight into the progress of the vaccination programme. The weekly data on vaccines administered is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/vaccinations>

■ Social Services: Innovation

Helen Morgan:

[\[12796\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Accelerating Reform Fund in innovating the social care sector.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Accelerating Reform Fund (ARF) aims to address barriers to the adoption and scaling of innovation in adult social care and improve support for unpaid carers. Local authorities are supported to take forward locally identified innovative projects, working collaboratively with other local authorities, the National Health Service, care providers, and voluntary and community organisations in their integrated care system footprints.

An independent national evaluation by Ipsos aims to improve the evidence base on the impact of funded innovations, as well as assessing the success of the fund in overcoming barriers to, and creating the conditions for, innovation.

Emerging evidence suggests the ARF is encouraging more innovative activities in adult social care. The evaluation will continue to assess the effectiveness of the ARF through the lifecycle of the fund, concluding in June 2025.

■ **Walsall Manor Hospital: Bowel Cancer**

Valerie Vaz:

[\[13449\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the two year survival rate for patients with bowel cancer in Walsall; and what assessment he has made of the impact of levels of availability of robotics for cancer operations on that figure.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Department has not made a specific estimate on the two-year survival rate for patients with bowel cancer in Walsall, however, the Department is focused on improving survival rates for all cancers, and on meeting all National Health Service cancer waiting time targets, so no patient waits longer than they should.

No specific assessment has been made on the impact of the levels of availability of robotics for cancer operations. However, there is a robotic assisted surgery clinical strategy for the Black Country Provider Collaborative which has increased robotic surgery access for all patients in the Black Country, particularly for renal service.

■ **Walsall Manor Hospital: Cancer**

Valerie Vaz:

[\[13448\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of the level of robotics capability for cancer operations at Walsall Manor Hospital.

Andrew Gwynne:

No specific assessment is planned. There is a robotic assisted surgery clinical strategy for the Black Country Provider Collaborative which has increased robotic surgery access for all patients in the Black Country, particularly for renal service.

HOME OFFICE

■ **Anti-social Behaviour**

Natasha Irons:

[\[12814\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to help tackle antisocial behaviour in (a) Croydon East constituency and (b) other constituencies.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Tackling anti-social behaviour is a top priority for this Government, and a key part of our Safer Streets Mission.

We will put thousands of new neighbourhood police and community support officers into local communities and we will crack down on those causing havoc on our high streets by introducing tougher powers, including new Respect Orders to tackle repeat offending.

■ Asylum: Applications

Ashley Dalton:

[\[13632\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent progress her Department has made on increasing its capacity to clear the backlog of asylum applications.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Home Secretary has removed the retrospective application of the Illegal Migration Act. This allows asylum claims from individuals who have arrived in the UK since 7 March 2023 to be considered against the existing legislative regime under the Nationality and Borders Act 2022, enabling decision-makers to progress the cases that had been put on hold.

The Home Office continues to invest in a programme of transformation and business improvement initiatives to speed up and simplify decision making, reduce the time people spend in the asylum system and decrease the number of people who are awaiting an interview or decision.

This will enable the department to maximise our capacity and progress cases in a more efficient and cost-effective way, in order to reduce the asylum backlog and cut the costs of asylum accommodation.

■ Asylum: LGBTQ+ People

Gill Furniss:

[\[13461\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to support LGBT people seeking asylum.

Dame Angela Eagle:

All asylum and human rights claims admitted to the UK system, including those based on sexual orientation and gender identity, are considered in accordance with our obligations under the Refugee Convention and European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

With specific respect to LGBT+ asylum seekers, whilst they are registering their claim, the Home Office ensures that these claimants are signposted to relevant NGOs specialising in the support of LGBT+ individuals. This is done through an information leaflet given to all asylum claimants at the point of claim which includes sections on legal advice, additional help and assistance with links to relevant legal bodies and support organisations.

The Home Office remains committed to delivering an asylum system that is responsive to all forms of persecution including those based on sexuality or gender

identity and which supports claimants in providing all information relevant to their claim to facilitate fair and sustainable asylum decisions.

■ Domestic Abuse

Mark Pritchard:

[\[13221\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to reduce familial abuse.

Jess Phillips:

This Government is committed to tackling domestic and sexual abuse in all its forms. Achieving our aim of halving violence against women and girls in a decade will require a whole systems approach.

The Domestic Abuse Act (2021) recognises children as victims of domestic abuse in their own right when they see, hear or experience the effects of domestic abuse.

We recognise that domestic abuse and sexual violence can take many forms such as from family members in the context of so-called honour-based abuse, or older victims experiencing abuse from their partner or adult children. That is why we fund Hourglass and Karma Nirvana to deliver specialist helplines, which provide tailored support for older victims of domestic abuse and victims of honour-based abuse respectively.

This government also remains firmly committed to tackling all forms of child sexual abuse and working to keep children safe across the country. We are driving forward action right across government, education, children's social care, health, policing, law enforcement, and working with industry, international and civil society partners to ensure we are all doing all that we can to tackle this horrific crime.

■ Domestic Abuse: Men

Mark Pritchard:

[\[13188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will (a) commission and (b) publish research into domestic abuse against men.

Mark Pritchard:

[\[13218\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to help tackle domestic abuse against men.

Mark Pritchard:

[\[13220\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to improve reporting of domestic abuse against men.

Jess Phillips:

The definition of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) encompasses crimes which disproportionately, but not exclusively, affect women and girls. We recognise that men and boys also experience abusive and violent crimes, such as stalking, domestic abuse and sexual abuse. That is why we fund a specific helpline with

Respect, which provides specialist tailored support for male victims of domestic abuse.

On 24 October, the Home Secretary announced a package of reforms to improve the police response to victims of VAWG related crimes. Ensuring that all victims have a positive experience when dealing with the police is essential to increase reporting of these crimes and deliver better outcomes for victims.

Our new VAWG strategy to be published next year aims to help all victims of domestic abuse and this strategy will lay out our plans for any future initiatives and research, including for men who are victims of abuse.

■ **Emergency Services: Hoaxes and False Alarms**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[12727\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to help reduce the number of hoax calls to the emergency services.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[12728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will take steps to improve information sharing between emergency services on hoax callers.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Making a hoax phone call to the emergency services is a criminal offence. All calls to the emergency services are recorded and the number can be traced, even if withheld. Local services regularly remind the public of the serious consequences of hoax calls.

Emergency services may also request a Communications Provider to place a temporary restriction on the account of the hoax/nuisance caller. However, contact management, including the management of hoax calls, is an operational matter for services.

There are existing mechanisms in place for emergency services to share information on hoax callers. The decision to share data and take or request further action is an operational one for services.

■ **Equipment: Theft**

Charlotte Nichols: [\[12991\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will reintroduce the Equipment Theft (Prevention) Bill.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Equipment Theft (Prevention) Act 2023 gained Royal Assent on 20 July 2023.

We are committed to implementing the Act, which aims to prevent the theft and re-sale of high-value equipment, particularly for use in an agricultural setting. I recently met with Ruth Bailey, CEO of Agricultural Engineers Association on the 5th November 2024.

The Act requires secondary legislation before it can come into effect. We will be carefully considering the views of those who may be affected by the legislation and its regulations, to understand the potential implications and determine the scope of the legislation.

■ **Fire and Rescue Services and Police: Hoaxes and False Alarms**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[12729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average cost is of hoax calls made to the (a) police and (b) fire service.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Home Office does not hold this data.

■ **Fire and Rescue Services and Police: Post-traumatic Stress Disorder**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[12751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to reduce instances of post traumatic stress disorder within the (a) police and (b) fire service.

Dame Diana Johnson:

(a) Policing

The Government has been clear that the wellbeing of our police is a priority, and we want to ensure that all police officers and staff have the appropriate support in place to thrive in their careers and continue to serve the public. Chief Constables have a responsibility to manage their workforce effectively and this includes ensuring the wellbeing of all officers and staff.

Through the Police Covenant, and led by the Chief Medical Officer, all forces now meet the new Occupational Health foundation level standards. We also continue to fund the National Police Wellbeing Service. The Service provides evidence-based guidance, advice, tools and resources to support forces and individual officers, including guidance on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Policing. The NPWS is helping forces to identify where there is most risk of impacts on mental health, and developing work around building resilience, as well as putting in place support for those who need it, including trauma support.

(b) Fire

Responsibility for health and wellbeing ultimately rests with Fire and Rescue Services. The National Fire Chiefs Council's Health and Wellbeing lead has established a health and wellbeing board to drive positive change across the sector which focuses on prevention, early intervention and support for individuals. The Home Office supports the board's work

■ Floods: Fire and Rescue Services

Grahame Morris: [\[13446\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make it her policy to create a statutory duty on fire and rescue services to respond to major flooding events.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Fire and Rescue Authorities have duties under the Civil Contingencies Act (2004) to prepare for emergencies, including major flooding. Fire Rescue Authorities also have discretionary powers to respond to incidents under their general powers in the Fire and Rescue Services Act (2004) and in response to the risks set out in their Community Risk Management Plans prepared under the National Framework.

The Home Office is undertaking further work alongside Defra, the National Fire Chiefs Council and other relevant stakeholders to understand in more detail if there are gaps in the Fire and Rescue Services flooding response and resilience system.

■ Foreign Nationals: Offenders

Shaun Davies: [\[13553\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many offenders were (a) ordered to be deported at the end of their prison sentence and (b) deported at the end of that sentence in each of the last six years.

Dame Angela Eagle:

We are committed to delivering justice for victims and safer streets for our communities. Foreign nationals who commit crime should be in no doubt that the law will be enforced and, where appropriate, we will pursue their deportation, and they will be swiftly removed from the country.

The Home Office publishes the quarterly statistics on the returns of foreign national offenders (FNOs) by nationality and year. These returns are published in the Returns Detailed Datasets, Year Ending June 2024, which are available at: [Immigration system statistics data tables - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-data-tables)

The published statistics refer to enforced returns which include deportations, as well as cases where a person has breached UK immigration laws, and those removed under other administrative and illegal entry powers that have declined to leave voluntarily.

Figures on deportations, which are a subset of enforced returns, are not separately available.

■ Home Office: Buildings

Sir Ashley Fox: [\[13052\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 30 October 2024 to Question 9277 on Home Office: Buildings, how many individual desks

were occupied in her Department's headquarters office in the most recent four weeks for which figures are available.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Office occupancy data for the period July - September has been published, with further publications to now happen on a quarterly basis.

The data is published here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-service-hq-occupancy-data>.

Sir Ashley Fox:

[13053]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 30 October 2024 to Question 9277 on Home Office: Buildings, how many civil servants are assigned to work in her Department's headquarters in London; and how many individual desks are available in that office.

Dame Diana Johnson:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer given to UIN 9276 on 11th November 2024.

■ **Home Office: Data Processing**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[12983]

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

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Home Office manages directly, and on behalf of operational partners, significant data assets measured in the tens of billions of rows of data and millions of data subjects. This data is used every day to deliver public services, manage performance and deliver insight into policies. Its careful use, including sharing with key partners, supports the delivery of the government's objectives as a whole.

We are moving much of this data off legacy systems, including some up to 50 years old, and on to modern platforms. This is enabling improvement in the productivity of key operational activities, better performance management and improved strategic analysis. This is part of a broader programme of technology-enabled business change that supports productivity enhancements, through optimising business processes and improving safe and secure access to the data that staff need to perform their roles.

We already make use of well-established artificial intelligence and automation enabled systems within the Home Office to improve business delivery as part of overall digital improvements in the department. In addition, we are running a small number of Generative AI trials to test their potential for productivity and quality improvements. These are supported by changes in our processes and policies, to ensure appropriate guidance and controls are in place for responsible adoption.

■ Home Office: HOPE not hate**Nick Timothy:**[\[12771\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the answer of 30 October 2024, to Question 10945, on Home Office: HOPE not hate, what meetings officials who are not classified as senior officials for the purposes of quarterly transparency returns have had with representatives of Hope Not Hate since the general election.

Dame Diana Johnson:

No meetings have occurred between Home Office officials and Hope Not Hate since the General Election although officials may have attended wider stakeholder forums where Hope Not Hate have been present.

■ Immigration: Applications**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:**[\[13266\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of the time taken for applications for indefinite leave to remain to be processed following a successful asylum claim on the mental health of applicants.

Dame Angela Eagle:

We have a proud record of providing protection to those who need it, for as long as it is needed, in accordance with our international obligations. Those who qualify for protection are normally granted five years' limited leave and have access to the labour market and welfare support. Refugees, like the vast majority of migrants, are expected to complete a qualifying period of leave before being eligible to apply for settlement.

Settlement provides permission to stay in the UK permanently and freedom from immigration control for those who still require protection. As the need for protection may be temporary, a safe return review is carried out on every application for settlement on a protection route to determine and confirm the need is continuing. If there are, for example, significant improvements in country conditions or changes in personal circumstances that mean someone no longer needs protection, they may be expected to return to their country of origin or to apply to stay in the UK under other provisions of the Immigration Rules. Those who are still at risk of serious harm in their country are not expected to return there.

Our service standards for these Indefinite Leave to Remain applications is six months, and in cases where this is not possible, we contact our customers within that time to explain the reasons for this. Safeguarding, including where there are mental health issues, is an issue that we take extremely seriously and we will expedite applications if there are compelling and compassionate reasons to do so.

■ Immigration: Georgia

Pete Wishart:

[\[13183\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to withdraw Georgia from the list of safe states as defined in immigration legislation.

Gill Furniss:

[\[13460\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to section 80AA(1) of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of removing Georgia from the list of safe states for the purposes of section 80A.

Dame Angela Eagle:

Section 80AA of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 (as amended and inserted by section 59 of the Illegal Migration Act 2023) provides for a list of generally safe states for whom asylum and human rights claims would be declared inadmissible; Georgia was added to that list by regulations.

Our current assessment of the situation in Georgia is set out in the relevant Country Policy and Information Notes, which are available on the [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) website.

We will continue to monitor the situation, working closely with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. Should we consider that Georgia – or any other designated state – no longer meets the relevant criteria, we would ask Parliament to make the necessary amendments to the list.

■ Kent Police: Finance

Sojan Joseph:

[\[13717\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of funding levels for Kent Police.

Dame Diana Johnson:

This Government is committed to ensuring that the police have the resources they need to tackle crime effectively.

Kent Police's funding will be up to £431.5m in 2024-25. This is in addition to £4m provided for the 2024-25 pay award which has been allocated outside of the police funding settlement.

As announced at the Autumn Budget 2024, the settlement will increase the core government grant for police forces and help support frontline policing levels across the country.

Force level funding allocations for the financial year 2025-26 will be confirmed at the forthcoming police funding settlement. Funding for future years beyond 2025-26 will be set out in phase 2 of the Spending Review.

■ Knives: Crime**Natasha Irons:**[\[12813\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that the police have adequate resources to tackle knife crime in (a) Croydon East constituency and (b) other constituencies.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Prime Minister and the Home Secretary are personally committed to halving knife crime over the next decade. It is a key part of the Government's mission to take back our streets.

This Government is committed to ensuring that the police have the resources they need to tackle all crime effectively. The 2024-25 police funding settlement provides the Metropolitan Police Service with funding of up to £3.5 billion in 2024-25. This includes £185.3 million in recognition of the demands the force faces in policing the capital city.

The Home Office will also provide £175m of additional funding in 2024-25 to police forces to help with the cost of the pay award, of which the Metropolitan Police will receive a further £37.4 million for support with those costs.

As announced at the Autumn Budget 2024, the settlement will increase the core government grant for police forces and help support frontline policing levels across the country. Further details and force level allocations will be set out at the forthcoming police funding settlement.

The Home Office is also providing £66.3m funding this financial year (2024/25) to police forces in England and Wales for hotspot policing to tackle anti-social behaviour and serious violence. This includes £8.1m allocated to the Metropolitan Police.

■ Migrant Workers: Wind Power**Karl Turner:**[\[13439\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 15 October 2024 to Question 7745 on Migrant Workers: Wind Power, if she will contact employers that utilised the concession to obtain data on the number of workers brought to work in UK waters between 2017 and 2023.

Seema Malhotra:

The offshore wind workers immigration rules concession ended on 30 April 2023. There are no plans to collect this data.

■ Offenders: Foreign Nationals**James McMurdock:**[\[12622\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of attempted deportations of foreign national offenders by her Department have been successfully challenged on Article 8 ECHR grounds in each of the last ten years.

James McMurdock:

[12632]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many foreign national offenders of which nationality were deported in each of the last five years.

James McMurdock:

[12633]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people who arrived in the UK by small boats are (a) male and (b) female.

James McMurdock:

[12829]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of foreign national offenders have successfully appealed a deportation order under Article (a) 3, (b) 6 and (c) 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights, in each year since 2014.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Home Office publishes data on returns of foreign national offenders (FNOs) in the '[Immigration System Statistics Quarterly release](#)'. Data on total returns of FNOs by nationality can be found in table Ret_D03 of the '[returns detailed datasets](#)', with the latest data going up to the end of June 2024. Figures on FNO returns are not broken down by return type, and include enforced returns, voluntary returns and a small number of FNOs refused entry at port and subsequently returned.

Deportations are a specific subset of total FNO returns which are enforced either following a criminal conviction or when it is judged that a person's removal from the UK is conducive to the public good. The deportation order prohibits the person returning to the UK until such time as it may be revoked.

The Home Office does not regularly publish information about FNO appeals. However, in February 2022 an [ad-hoc transparency piece on FNO lodged and allowed appeals](#), covering the period 2008 to 2021, was released. This provides numbers of FNO appeals lodged, and the numbers of those which are subsequently allowed, and of those how many were allowed on human rights grounds only, broken down by financial year of the appeal lodged date.

Data on the number of individuals arriving in the UK by small boat broken down by sex is published in table Irr_D01 of the '[Irregular migration detailed datasets](#)'. This release covers the period 2018 to June 2024.

■ Proceeds of Crime

Suella Braverman:

[12719]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether any funds raised through the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 have not been distributed in each of the last five years.

Dan Jarvis:

The Asset Recovery Incentivisation Scheme (ARIS) was introduced in 2006 to allow a proportion of the proceeds of crime recovered under the Proceeds of Crime Act

2002 (POCA), to be redistributed to agencies involved in the asset recovery process. Funds recovered under POCA that do not enter ARIS, represent either victim compensation or recovery costs associated with asset recovery.

The Government is also mindful of considerations which may apply under international law, including under the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC). When an asset return under UNCAC takes place these funds will not be distributed under ARIS.

Further details can be found in the annual asset recovery statistical bulletin published on GOV.UK: [Asset recovery statistical bulletin: financial years ending 2019 to 2024 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

■ Refugees: Loans

James McMurdock: [\[12827\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much her Department spent on refugee integration loans in each year since 2010.

Seema Malhotra:

Refugee Integration Loans were introduced in 2007 following a public consultation and have operated over the last seventeen years to support integration of genuine refugees, including into work.

Details are available at [Refugee integration loan: Overview - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

■ Sexual Offences: Women

Jim Shannon: [\[12715\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to tackle the sexual exploitation of women to pay drug debts.

Jess Phillips:

County Lines is the most violent model of drug supply and a harmful form of exploitation. Gangs exploit children and vulnerable adults to move and store drugs and money, often using coercion, intimidation, violence - including sexual violence - and weapons to ensure compliance.

The Home Office funded County Lines Programme was launched in 2019 to tackle this violent and exploitative drug distribution model. Through the Programme we are funding specialist support providers to support victims of county lines gangs, including girls, to help them escape from exploitation.

In addition, this Government will also work closely with the voluntary and community sector to help sexually exploited people to exit prostitution.

To help support people at risk of being sexually exploited, Changing Lives has received £1.36m from the Home Office over three years (2022-2025) for their Net-Reach project, which provides online outreach, early intervention and intensive support for women and girls at high-risk of exploitation and abuse.

We are also providing funding to Trevi Women, who provide trauma-informed support to women wishing to exit on-street prostitution and survivors of VAWG crimes, remove barriers that prevent prostituted women from accessing necessary support. They also provide long-term support to reduce the likelihood of clients being further exploited.

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

■ **Shoplifting: Essex**

James McMurdock:

[\[12822\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to reduce shoplifting in Essex.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Shop theft rose to record levels under the previous government, with shopworkers facing unacceptable violence and abuse in the process. We will not stand for this. Everybody has a right to feel safe on the job.

This Government will end the effective impunity, introduced by the previous Government, granted to shop theft of goods under £200 and we will also introduce a new offence of assaulting a retail worker to protect the hardworking and dedicated staff that work in stores.

■ **Terrorism**

Rupert Lowe:

[\[12319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 31 October 2024 to Question 11104 on Terrorism, if she will publish a breakdown of the ideological motivations for the 43 late-stage attack plots disrupted since March 2017.

Dan Jarvis:

This information is not disclosable without jeopardising ongoing investigations and wider national security operations.

■ **Transgender People: Young People**

Uma Kumaran:

[\[13368\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to support young trans people impacted by hate crime.

Jess Phillips:

This Government is determined to tackle all forms of hate crime across England and Wales, including transgender identity hate crimes.

Under the Victims' Code all victims, including victims of hate crime, are entitled to be referred to support services when they report a crime.

The Government funds vital support services to help victims cope and recover from the impact of crime, through a mix of local and nationally commissioned services. The Government also provides Police and Crime Commissioners with annual grant funding to commission local practical, emotional, and therapeutic support services for victims of all crime types, including hate crime.

■ Visas: Digital Technology

Ian Byrne:

[13023]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to help support (a) older applicants, (b) non-English speakers and (c) digitally excluded people to apply for e-visas.

Seema Malhotra:

The Home Office is committed to ensuring everyone, including the elderly, people with low English language ability and the most vulnerable, are properly supported as we transform our immigration system.

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

Where a person is unable to manage their own affairs due to, for example, age or disability, a 'proxy', who is authorised, can create and manage the account on behalf of the person. People can also contact the UK Visas and Immigration Resolution Centre (<https://www.gov.uk/contact-ukvi-inside-outside-uk> for support via email and webchat, and telephone. They can also support people through the online journey by helping them to access or recover their account, update their personal details and assisting them with technical issues with their online immigration status, and where necessary, verify the person's status through alternative means.

For those inside the UK our Assisted Digital service is available to provide support by phone and email to those who need help with IT-related aspects of creating a UKVI account. Access needs can include any disability that requires support to use online services, a lack of device or a lack of internet access. More information is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/assisted-digital-help-online-application>

We are also taking further steps to reduce the number of circumstances where people need to provide evidence of their immigration status, by developing services to make the relevant immigration status information available automatically through system to system checks with other government departments and the NHS.

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

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

On 18 September 2024, we announced that the Government is providing up to £4m in dedicated grant funding to a UK wide network of voluntary and community sector organisations to deliver valuable support to those who need it, during the transition from physical immigration documents to eVisas. The list of organisations is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evisa-community-support-for-vulnerable-people>.

■ Visas: Gaza

Marsha De Cordova:

[12989]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of (a) creating a Gaza Family visa scheme modelled on the Ukraine Family Scheme visa and (b) deferring biometric requirements for those eligible for family reunion but unable to leave Gaza.

Seema Malhotra:

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

The government is keeping existing visa pathways under review in response to events. Palestinian nationals who wish to come to the UK can do so via the existing range of routes available. Immediate family members of British citizens and those settled in the UK who wish to come and live in the UK can apply under one of the existing family visa routes.

The FCDO is also providing consular assistance to those with British nationality, or dual nationality including British, who are in Gaza or who have left Gaza to a third country.

Any application for a UK visa will be assessed against the requirements of the Immigration Rules.

Biometrics, in the form of fingerprints and facial images, underpin the UK immigration system and are integral to national security. We recently published updated guidance on Gov.UK that sets out the circumstances where we may predetermine an application before a person attends a visa application centre to enrol their biometric information or when we may excuse the person from having to enrol their biometrics before they travel to the UK.

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

Patricia Ferguson:

[13126]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will facilitate the issuing of visas to (a) Gazan and (b) other academics whose supporting paperwork has been lost during the conflict in the Middle East.

Seema Malhotra:

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

The government is keeping existing visa pathways under review in response to events. Palestinians and academics from the Middle East affected by conflict who wish to come to the UK can do so via the existing range of visa routes available.

Any application for a UK visa will be assessed against the requirements of the Immigration Rules.

The requirements for each route, including how to prove the requirements are met, are set out in the Immigration Rules and accompanying guidance. There is additional guidance available for when to apply evidential flexibility, which decision makers will refer to when considering applications from applicants who may have lost documents due to ongoing conflict.

All decisions on visa applications are undertaken on a case-by-case basis, dependent on what applicants have stated on their application forms. The supporting documents guidance sets out the additional evidence required for the different types of visits – <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/visitor-visa-guide-to-supporting-documents/guide-to-supporting-documents-visiting-the-uk>.

The Government welcomes academics from across the globe and recognises the importance of international collaboration in this field. Academic visitor visa applications are assessed in the round, looking at all the factors of the case, in line with immigration rules.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**■ Homelessness****Grahame Morris:****[13192]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent discussions her Department has had with local authorities on their legal duties under section 208 of the Housing Act 1996.

Rushanara Ali:

On 11 November 2024 the Deputy Prime Minister wrote to all local authority Chief Executives in England about out-of-area accommodation placements, including temporary accommodation and housing offers to end a homelessness duty. This letter referred to section 208 of the Housing Act 1996, and reminded local authorities that they are required by law to notify the receiving local authority of any out-of-area placement.

■ Local Government Finance

Ashley Dalton:

[\[13584\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department plans to extend the flexible use of capital receipts to include (a) pensions and (b) voluntary redundancies.

Jim McMahon:

I am aware that the previous government consulted on options to extend freedoms for local authorities to use capital resources and borrowing to address budget pressures as well as other measures. This government will need to carefully consider the options available to support local authorities. The government is aware that current flexible use of capital receipts direction is due to end and intends to update the sector in due course. It is important that all decisions are consistent with putting the sector on an ongoing, sustainable financial footing.

Ashley Dalton:

[\[13589\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department plans to introduce three year funding settlements for local authorities.

Jim McMahon:

We will be publishing a policy statement in late November, where we will set out our intentions for reform of the local government finance system, including a multi-year settlement starting in 2026-27.

■ Temporary Accommodation: Care Leavers

Alistair Strathern:

[\[13596\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of removing the local connection test for care leavers seeking to access temporary accommodation.

Rushanara Ali:

Homelessness legislation includes eligibility criteria such as the local connection test, to ensure that resources are prioritised effectively, ensuring accommodation is there for people who need it most.

There are already existing provisions in homelessness legislation in respect of local connection for care leavers. Under the legislation, a young person owed leaving care duties under [section 23C of the Children Act 1989](#) will have a local connection to the area of the children services authority that owes them the duties. If the children services authority is a county council and not a housing authority, the young person will have a local connection with every housing authority district falling within the area of the children services authority.

Where a care leaver is aged under 21 and normally lives in a different area to that of a local authority that owes them leaving care duties, and has done for at least two years including some time before they turned 16, the young person will also have a local connection in that area. This means a care leaver who is looked after by one

area but is placed in another will have a local connection to both areas and if homeless may choose to either remain where they have been living or return to their home area.

We have already committed to improving access to social housing for care leavers under 25 and exempt them from local connection and residency tests for social housing. We will work with the sector and engage with relevant stakeholders to bring forward these changes in due course.

JUSTICE

■ Offenders: Deportation

Sir John Hayes:

[\[12914\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will make it her policy to immediately deport foreign nationals convicted of criminal offences resulting in custodial sentences.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The removal of Foreign National Offenders (FNOs) is an important priority of this Government. FNOs who commit crime should be in no doubt that the law will be enforced and, where appropriate, we will work with the Home Office to pursue their deportation. We are currently on track to remove more foreign national offenders this year than at any time in recent years.

As the Lord Chancellor stated in Parliament on 05 November, we are reviewing the operation of our removal mechanisms to ensure they are as effective as possible. This includes assessing how we can make the Early Removal Scheme more effective. We will be working with the Home Office as we develop our plans in this area, to ensure that FNOs who have no right to remain here are deported as swiftly as possible.

■ Offenders: Foreign Nationals

Mr Peter Bedford:

[\[13320\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what proportion of offenders sentenced to a term of imprisonment were foreign born in (a) 2022, (b) 2023 and (c) 2024.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The Ministry of Justice publishes information on the number of offenders sentenced to immediate custody, but it is not possible to identify an offender's nationality at this point from the centrally collated court data. This information may be held on court records but to examine individual court records would be of disproportionate costs.

However, the number of foreign national offenders (FNOs) serving a prison sentence is available. On 30 June 2022, there were 6,214 FNOs serving a prison sentence; on 30 June 2023 there were 6,453 FNOs serving a prison sentence and on 30 June 2024 there were 6,486 FNOs serving a prison sentence. This information is routinely

published in the department's Offender Management Statistics Quarterly (OMSQ) publication.

We refer all foreign national offenders in receipt of custodial sentences to the Home Office. Foreign national offenders who commit crime should be in no doubt that the law will be enforced and, where appropriate, we will work with the Home Office to pursue their deportation. This will help to manage prison pressures, keep the public safe and reduce crime.

We are currently on track to remove more foreign national offenders this year than at any time in recent years and we are working across government to explore the ways we accelerate this work further.

■ **Offenders: Supported Housing**

Andy Slaughter:

[\[13442\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether her Department is taking steps to utilise supported accommodation rather than custody to reduce the impact of prison.

Andy Slaughter:

[\[13443\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of supported accommodation rather than custody for (a) women and (b) their families.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

HMPPS offers a three-tier structure of temporary accommodation known as Community Accommodation Service (CAS), two tiers of which provide accommodation that can be used to support community orders, releases on Home Detention Curfew, and bail. CAS1 (also known as Approved Premises) provides 24-hour staffed accommodation with a high level of monitoring, and CAS2 provides accommodation with a minimum of two hours support per week from a support worker, in addition to probation supervision.

We are establishing a Women's Justice Board, to set the vision and strategic direction to address the distinct needs of women in or at risk of contact with the Criminal Justice System and will include a focus on residential alternatives to custody.

We know that, for women specifically, supported accommodation as an alternative to custody can be particularly valuable: women supported in the community are 4 percentage points less likely to reoffend than those on short custodial sentences. CAS1 can be used to fulfil a community order residential requirement, CAS2 can support individuals with temporary accommodation who are part of the current Intensive Supervision Court pilots, including the female pilot; and we are providing grant funding for dedicated residential women's centres to build the evidence base around their use and inform future work. We are working closely with the Judiciary and Offender Managers to promote greater awareness and use of these options.

■ Prison Sentences

Mr James Frith:

[\[12477\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps her Department takes to ensure that recall decisions are (a) fair and (b) proportionate to public safety concerns.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The Government's absolute focus is on public protection. Offenders on licence can be swiftly recalled to prison if they breach their licence conditions. The recall of an offender to custody is an important public protection measure, and successive thematic reviews conducted by HM Chief Inspector of Probation have found that the Probation Service is using recall appropriately.

Additionally, HMPPS has issued guidance to probation practitioners, to ensure all safe alternatives to recall are considered before a decision is taken to recall an offender.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Care Homes: Northern Ireland

Jim Shannon:

[\[12716\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, if he will have discussions with his counterparts in Northern Ireland on potential steps to facilitate the provision of records from mother and baby homes in Northern Ireland to affected individuals.

Hilary Benn:

I understand that the Truth Recovery Programme in the Executive Office, working closely with victims and survivors of historical institutions in Northern Ireland, has made progress on the right to information and access to records. The Northern Ireland's Department of Health has also produced practice guidance and there is work ongoing to progress secondary legislation with the Department for Science, Information and Technology to support this important objective.

■ Culture and Languages: Northern Ireland

Colum Eastwood:

[\[13578\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the time taken to appoint commissioners under the Identity and Language (Northern Ireland) Act 2022.

Hilary Benn:

The Northern Ireland Executive is responsible for implementing the provisions of the Identity and Language (Northern Ireland) Act 2022, including those provisions which allow for the establishment of an Irish Language Commissioner and a Commissioner for the Ulster Scots and the Ulster British tradition. In May 2023, the Government commenced the provisions in the Act required for the Executive Office to begin to progress work in relation to these appointments. The Government expects the

Executive Office will make an announcement in due course regarding next steps on implementation of the legislation.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

■ Artificial Intelligence: Procurement

Chi Onwurah:

[\[13475\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to his Department's publication entitled Assuring a Responsible Future for AI, published on 6 November 2024, what assessment he has made of the role that Government procurement can have in driving demand for AI assurance.

Feryal Clark:

We know that Government procurement is a powerful lever to drive innovation, giving businesses confidence to invest in and shape markets by signalling Government needs and intent, and this is no different with AI assurance. By embedding them in public sector procurement, Government can likely drive demand for proven AI assurance practices and support improvements in the quality of the AI supply chain. We are continuing to assess this potential, and last week we launched a public consultation on our AI Management Essentials tool, with questions as to the potential market effects of including these practices in Government procurement processes.

■ Cybersecurity: Small Businesses

Chi Onwurah:

[\[13476\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what the (a) annual and (b) consolidated take up is of cyber essentials by small and medium sized businesses.

Feryal Clark:

a) Cyber Essentials certificates awarded to small and medium sized businesses:

i. November 2023 to October 2024: 41,162, including 9,680 Cyber Essentials Plus certificates.

ii. November 2022 to October 2023: 26,674, including 7,966 Cyber Essentials Plus certificates.

iii. November 2021 to October 2022: 20,773, including 4,938 Cyber Essentials Plus certificates.

iv. November 2020 to October 2021: 18,136, including 3,694 Cyber Essentials Plus certificates.

b) From 1 May 2020 to 31 October 2024 (the period for which IASME Consortium have been government's sole delivery partner for Cyber Essentials), 131,339 Cyber Essentials certificates have been awarded to small and medium businesses. This includes 27,217 Cyber Essentials Plus certificates.

■ Research: Investment**Lee Anderson:** [\[12756\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of R&D investment in (a) clean energy, (b) AI and (c) quantum technology on (i) the University of Nottingham and (ii) Nottingham Trent University.

Feryal Clark:

The Government will accelerate innovation, investment and productivity through world class science, research and development. Advanced science and engineering in fields such as clean energy, AI and quantum technologies support economic growth and the industrial strategy. University of Nottingham and Nottingham Trent University were both recognised for their world leading research including in engineering in REF2021. Decisions about public investment of R&D funding are made by experts on behalf of UK Research and Innovation in line with the Haldane Principle. For example, University of Nottingham has been awarded £6.4m to lead an EPSRC Centre for Doctoral Training on Resilient Chemistry which will tackle challenges including synthetic fuels and next generation battery materials.

■ Research: South East**Chi Onwurah:** [\[13478\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he plans to increase the amount spent on research outside the Greater South East by 40%.

Feryal Clark:

This public R&D regional investment target is set out in the statement of missions laid in relation to the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023.

Increasing productivity right across the UK is fundamental to our mission to kickstart economic growth. Through our Industrial Strategy and the development of Local Growth Plans, we will build on local strengths to ensure that public and private R&D investment right across the UK helps local places to reach their potential.

SCOTLAND**■ Agriculture: Inheritance Tax****Andrew Bowie:** [\[13022\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, if he will make an assessment with Cabinet colleagues of the potential impact of the changes made to inheritance tax at the Autumn Budget 2024 on the financial viability of small family farms in the north east of Scotland.

Ian Murray:

This Government inherited a £22 billion in year black hole in the nation's finances. The action we are taking in this Budget restores economic stability so we can invest in the future.

The government recognises that people want to pass on their assets to their families. However, the government is making the inheritance tax system fairer by ensuring that wealthy estates contribute more to the public finances.

The vast majority of agricultural estates currently pay no inheritance tax, and that will continue to be the case after the reforms announced at Budget. This means that any farm, following the death of the owner, can pass on a £1 million free of inheritance tax if they leave their residence to direct descendants.

The reforms announced for agricultural property relief are only expected to affect around 500 claims at death each year from 2026-27. Almost three-quarters of estates claiming the relief are expected to be unaffected.

■ **Employers' Contributions: Hospitality Industry**

Andrew Bowie:

[\[12941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, with reference to paragraph 2.40 of the Autumn Budget 2024, HC 295, published on 30 October 2024, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of an increase in the rate of employers' National Insurance Contributions on (a) pubs and (b) small restaurants in Scotland.

Ian Murray:

This Government inherited a £22 billion black hole in the nation's finances. The action we are taking in this Budget restores economic stability so we can invest in the future.

The government recognises the need to protect the smallest businesses, including small restaurants, which is why we have more than doubled the Employment Allowance to £10,500, meaning more than half of businesses with NICs liabilities either gain or see no change next year.

In addition, we are making business rates in England fairer to protect the high street. The Government will introduce permanently lower tax rates for retail, hospitality, and leisure (RHL) properties with rateable values less than £500,000, alongside 40% relief next year for RHL properties up to a cash cap of £110,000 per business. Business rates are devolved and the Scottish Government could support Scotland's high streets by using some of the record budget settlement it received to match these reforms.

Also, to recognise the economic and cultural importance of pubs, and commitment to supporting smaller brewers, the government is cutting alcohol duty on draught products from February next year.

■ **Employers' Contributions: Small Businesses**

Andrew Bowie:

[\[12939\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, with reference to paragraph 2.40 of the Autumn Budget 2024, HC 295, published on 30 October 2024, what assessment he has made with Cabinet colleagues of the potential impact of the proposed increase in the rate

of employers' National Insurance Contributions on (a) small businesses and (b) independently owned businesses in Scotland.

Ian Murray:

This Government inherited a £22 billion black hole in the nation's finances. The action we are taking in this Budget restores economic stability so we can invest in the future.

The government will protect the smallest businesses by increasing the Employment Allowance to £10,500. This means that next year around 43% of UK employers will pay no employer NICs.

The Federation for Small Businesses (FSB) has called for an increase to the Employment Allowance, and for it to be indexed to the National Living Wage. We have met the FSB's ask for the Employment Allowance to cover 4 National Living Wage employees in 2025/26.

■ **Energy: Taxation**

Andrew Bowie:

[12942]

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of (a) increases to the Energy Profits Levy and (b) the abolition of the investment allowance on north east Scotland.

Ian Murray:

The UK Government recognises that oil and gas will continue to have a role in the UK's energy mix for decades to come and is committed to managing the energy transition in a way that supports jobs in existing and future industries. But we require the sector to contribute to the ambition to make the UK a clean energy superpower.

At Autumn Budget 2024, the government confirmed that from 1 November 2024, the Energy Profits Levy (EPL) rate would increase by 3 percentage points to 38%, the EPL investment allowance would be abolished and the EPL decarbonisation allowance rate would be adjusted to 66%. The government also confirmed an extension to the period the levy applies from 31 March 2029 until 31 March 2030. To support jobs in future and existing industries, the government decided to make no additional changes to the availability of capital allowances in the EPL.

The government has carefully considered the impact of the removal of the EPL's investment allowance. HM Treasury publishes impacts in summary form for tax measures in tax information and impact notes (TIINs) alongside the Finance Bill. The summary of impacts from these changes to the EPL can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/energy-profits-levy-reforms-2024>

Andrew Bowie:

[12944]

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of proposed increases to the Energy Profits Levy on future employment levels in Scotland.

Ian Murray:

The UK Government recognises that oil and gas will continue to have a role in the UK's energy mix for decades to come and is committed to managing the energy transition in a way that supports jobs in existing and future industries. But we require the sector to contribute to the ambition to make the UK a clean energy superpower.

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<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/energy-profits-levy-reforms-2024>

Andrew Bowie:**[12945]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of (a) increases to the Energy Profits Levy and (b) the abolition of the investment allowance on future trends of private investment in north east Scotland.

Ian Murray:

The UK Government recognises that oil and gas will continue to have a role in the UK's energy mix for decades to come and is committed to managing the energy transition in a way that supports jobs in existing and future industries. But we require the sector to contribute to the ambition to make the UK a clean energy superpower.

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■ Exports: Scotland

Andrew Bowie: [\[13012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what steps he is taking to promote (a) Scotch whisky exports and (b) other Scottish exports.

Ian Murray:

The recent budget saw the Scotland Office awarded 750 thousand pounds to expand its international trade activities and establish the Brand Scotland initiative.

Brand Scotland funding will support industry via trade missions, projects delivered by the overseas network, and promotional events in the UK and overseas. The Scotland Office routinely promotes Scotch Whisky at events we run overseas, for example during my visits to Norway, and South East Asia this month. Scottish exports, including whisky, will all benefit from this work.

■ Inheritance Tax: Scotland

Andrew Bowie: [\[13019\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what assessment he has made of the impact of changes to inheritance tax on the Scottish economy.

Ian Murray:

Despite a massive £22 billion black hole in the nation's finances that this Government inherited, the Scottish Government will receive a record £47.7 billion settlement in 2025/26 - the largest in real terms in the history of devolution.

This includes additional Barnett consequentials of £1.5 billion for 2024/25 and a further £3.4 billion for 2025/26.

On top of this, the UK Government committed to invest directly around £1.4 billion on important Scottish local growth projects. This includes Freeports, Investment Zones, long term plans for towns, Levelling Up Fund projects, Levelling Up Partnerships and a full commitment to remaining Deal projects. As well as a further £900 million of support for the expanded UK Shared Prosperity Fund in 2025/26.

Also, our new approach is making the UK inheritance tax system fairer, ensuring the wealthiest households contribute more while reflecting people's strongly held desire to pass down their assets to children and grandchildren.

■ Scotch Whisky Association

Andrew Bowie: [\[12961\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, when he next plans to meet the Scotch Whisky Association.

Ian Murray:

I have had several meetings with the Scotch Whisky Association (SWA) in recent months, including during my first week in office, and am pleased to be working closely with them on a range of shared priorities.

I will be driving growth in Scotland around the world through the Brand Scotland initiative, and will work closely with the SWA to promote the UK's largest food and drink export across all four corners of the globe.

■ Trade Promotion: Scotland

Andrew Bowie:

[\[13463\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what steps he is taking to support Brand Scotland.

Ian Murray:

I am proud to champion Scotland's interests globally through Brand Scotland. I have just returned from a successful visit to Norway and will be visiting South East Asia next week to promote Scottish trade, investment, and culture. Following the announcement of £750,000 for promoting Brand Scotland internationally next year, planning is underway to ensure the programme maximises opportunities for growth in Scotland.

■ Whisky: Excise Duties

Andrew Bowie:

[\[12962\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of increases on the duty for non-draught alcohol on the scotch whisky industry.

Ian Murray:

The overall alcohol package within the recent Budget balances commercial pressure on the alcohol industry with the need to raise revenue to address the £22 Billion blackhole caused by the decisions of the previous government. Increases on duty are in line with inflation and under the previous Government, duty was increased by 10.1% following the duty review.

90% of Scotch Whisky is exported, paying no duty. To provide specific support to the Scotch Whisky industry, the government will reduce fees for geographical verification.

Andrew Bowie:

[\[12963\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of increases in the duty on non-draught alcohol on levels of employment in the scotch whisky industry.

Ian Murray:

Despite the previous government increasing duty by 10.1%, the Scotch Whisky industry employs 11,000 people directly in Scotland, 7,000 of whom work in rural areas. In addition, the industry supports a further 42,000 jobs across the UK, 36,000 of which are based in Scotland. Furthermore, the increases in duty are in line with inflation. I am confident that the sector will continue to offer excellent employment opportunities to people in Scotland, while remaining one of our most successful exports, for years to come.

Andrew Bowie: [\[12964\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the increase in alcohol duty on scotch whisky exports.

Ian Murray:

90% of Scotch Whisky is already exported and therefore pays no duty. Increases on duty are in line with inflation and under the previous Government, duty was increased by 10.1% following the duty review.

■ Whisky: Scotland

Andrew Bowie: [\[12965\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what discussions he has had with the scotch whisky industry on barriers to business.

Ian Murray:

I meet regularly with the Scotch Whisky industry, and am pleased we can work closely on a range of shared priorities to support growth in the sector.

Andrew Bowie: [\[13462\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what steps he is taking with the Secretary of State for Business and Trade to increase the value of exports of Scotch whisky per year.

Ian Murray:

Food and drink is a key strength of Scotland's, and the Scotland Office and Department for Business and Trade are working closely on a range of shared priorities to increase the value of numerous Scottish exports.

Scotch whisky exports are being championed through the Brand Scotland initiative, and I will be in Malaysia and Singapore later this month to promote our first-class food and drinks exports to growing markets in Asia.

TRANSPORT

■ Bus Services: Essex

James McMurdock: [\[12832\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to support bus services in Essex.

Simon Lightwood:

Improving local bus services is a key part of this government's growth mission. As announced in the King's Speech on 17 July 2024, the government will introduce a Buses Bill later this session. This will put the power over local bus services back in the hands of local leaders right across England, including in Essex, to ensure networks meet the needs of the communities who rely on them. The Bill will seek to increase the powers available to local leaders to choose the model that works best in

their area, whether that be franchising, high-quality partnerships with private operators or local authority ownership.

In addition, the government has confirmed an additional £925 million for the 2025 to 2026 financial year to support and improve bus services in England outside London which is in addition to the introduction of a new National Bus Fare Cap at £3 from January 2025, bringing total bus investment at the Budget to over £1 billion. Local authorities can use the £925 million to introduce new bus routes, make services more frequent and protect crucial bus routes for local communities.

The government will continue working closely with local transport authorities including Essex County Council, and others, to deliver better bus services throughout England.

■ Highway Code: Publicity

Dr Ben Spencer:

[\[13604\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of DVLA's programme of education of updates to the Highway Code for licence holders.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Department for Transport (DfT) and the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) promote changes to The Highway Code on the Government's flagship road safety campaign THINK! and its social media channels and via partner organisations.

Results from the most recent campaign activity in August 2023 include:

- Awareness: The percentage of road users reporting to know either a little or a lot about the Highway Code changes in September 2023 was at 70% among all road users (82% amongst drivers), with 86% of road users having heard of the changes by September 2023.
- Understanding: In September 2023 86% of drivers correctly identified that you should leave at least 1.5 metres of space when passing cyclists. Pedestrian priority at junctions was correctly identified by 77% of drivers.
- Empathy: Drivers agreeing that it is their responsibility to respect and give space to vulnerable road users remains consistently high and was at 93% in September 2023.
- Action: In September 2023 81% of drivers claim to leave a gap of 1.5 metres when passing a cyclist all or most of the time. 79% of drivers claim to pass horse riders and horse drawn vehicles with at least 2 metres distance and at under 10mph all or most of the time. Of the respondents that recognised the 30 second hero assets from Phase 3, nine in ten (90%) said they had done something as a result.

DfT and DVSA continue to monitor attitudes and behaviours towards vulnerable road users as part of our ongoing campaign planning cycle.

■ London North Eastern Railway: WiFi**Chi Onwurah:**[\[13473\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has made an assessment of the quality of wifi on London North Eastern Railway services; and if she will have discussions with that company on improving that wifi.

Simon Lightwood:

The Department is working closely with London North Eastern Railway (LNER) to ensure all aspects of onboard experience, including WiFi, meet customers' expectations.

LNER reports on customer satisfaction to the Department every rail period and their most recent report indicates that Wifi is not a significant cause of customer dissatisfaction.

We remain open to new innovations which improve the provision of onboard Wi-Fi and LNER and NR are leading a project to improve Wi-Fi connectivity on the approach to Kings Cross.

■ Motor Insurance: Applications**Richard Fuller:**[\[13196\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a requirement for insurance providers to request images of the front and back of an applicant's driving licence as part of the quotation process.

Lilian Greenwood:

Motor Insurers already have the option to sign up to the MyLicence service run by DVLA, where a motor insurer can check the electronic driver record of an applicant for all the relevant information. This service is predicated on direct consent from the individual seeking a policy quote.

■ Roads: Ashfield**Lee Anderson:**[\[13237\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans his Department has to help tackle backlogs of (a) road maintenance and (b) upgrades in Ashfield and Mansfield constituency.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Government takes the condition of local roads very seriously and is committed to maintaining and renewing the local highway network. Nottinghamshire County Council is the local highway authority for the Ashfield and Mansfield constituency, and they are therefore responsible for the condition of their local network.

This Government has a commitment to enable local highway authorities in England to fix up to a million more potholes a year. At Budget 2024, the Chancellor announced an extra £500 million for local highway maintenance for the 2025/26 financial year, an

increase of nearly 50% compared to the current financial year exceeding this Government's manifesto commitment on repairing local roads.

The Government will confirm funding allocations to English local highway authorities and mayoral combined authorities, including the East Midlands Combined Authority of which Nottinghamshire County Council is a constituent member, in due course.

■ Roads: Repairs and Maintenance

Rupert Lowe:

[13564]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what information her Department holds on the number of pot holes that were reported in each of the last 25 years.

Lilian Greenwood:

It is the responsibility of local highway authorities to manage and maintain their local highway networks, including understanding what parts of the network require maintenance, based on local needs and priorities.

Local authorities are required to provide road condition information to the Department as part of the data obligations set out in the Single Data List. The Department publishes this information on gov.uk, and the data goes back to March 2007.

TREASURY

■ Agriculture: Inheritance Tax

David Reed:

[13647]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate her Department has made of the number of farmers affected by the withdrawal of Agricultural Property Relief in (a) East Devon and (b) Exmouth and Exeter East constituency.

James Murray:

The Government published information about the reforms to agricultural property relief and business property relief at

www.gov.uk/government/publications/agricultural-property-relief-and-business-property-relief-reforms, and further explanatory information at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/what-are-the-changes-to-agricultural-property-relief>. Around 500 estates across the UK are expected to be affected each year from 2026-27.

In accordance with standard practice, a tax information and impact note will be published alongside the draft legislation before the relevant Finance Bill.

Rebecca Smith:

[901149]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate her Department has made of the number of farms that will be affected by changes to agricultural property relief and business property relief.

James Murray:

The Government published information about the reforms to agricultural property relief and business property relief at www.gov.uk/government/publications/agricultural-property-relief-and-business-property-relief-reforms, and further explanatory information at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/what-are-the-changes-to-agricultural-property-relief>. Around 500 estates across the UK are expected to be affected each year from 2026-27.

In accordance with standard practice, a tax information and impact note will be published alongside the draft legislation before the relevant Finance Bill.

■ Armed Forces: Inheritance Tax

James Cartlidge: [\[13505\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 5.52 of the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 October, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of changes to inheritance tax on Death in Service awards for surviving spouses of military personnel.

James Murray:

Most unused pension funds and death benefits will be included within the value of a person's estate for inheritance tax purposes from 6 April 2027.

Transfers to spouses and civil partners are exempt from inheritance tax. This means death benefits paid to spouses or civil partners are unaffected.

■ Defibrillators: VAT

Steve Witherden: [\[13136\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of removing Value Added Tax from automated external defibrillators.

James Murray:

The Government currently provides VAT reliefs to aid the purchase of defibrillators. For example, when an AED is purchased with funds provided by a charity and then donated to an eligible body, no VAT is charged. Furthermore, all state schools in England have been fitted with AEDs.

A key consideration for any potential VAT relief is whether savings would be passed on to the consumer. Evidence suggests that businesses only partially pass on any savings from lower VAT rates.

■ Department for Business and Trade: Finance

Chi Onwurah: [\[13474\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 8 November 2024 to Question 12054 on Department for Business and Trade: Finance, whether the figures

referenced are included in the £20.4 billion mentioned on page 65 of the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 October.

Tulip Siddiq:

The £20.4bn referenced on page 65 of the Budget document refers to all departmental research and development budgets for 2025/2026.

This includes a research and development allocation for the Department for Business and Trade for 2025/2026 of £329m. This includes part of the over £2bn for the automotive sector and £975m for the aerospace sector announced over the next 5 years to 2029/2030 at Budget. The £520m announced for life sciences is not included in the overall figure as it is not research and development.

The overall allocations for the automotive and aerospace sectors in the Budget are multi-year commitments, with detail to be agreed through the second phase of the Spending Review. This multi-year allocation includes R&D and Capital funding.

■ **Economic Growth: Exmouth and Exeter East**

David Reed:

[\[13650\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps her Department is taking to (a) encourage (i) investment in infrastructure and (ii) economic growth and (b) support local businesses in Exmouth and Exeter East constituency.

James Murray:

As part of the Budget, this Government announced an over £100 billion increase in departmental capital investment over the next five years compared to plans the government inherited.

The government has committed £640 million in Bus Service Improvement Plan funding to improve bus services; £650 million of funding for local transport beyond our city-regions to improve connectivity in towns, villages and rural areas; and support for the first round of electrolytic hydrogen production projects, including a first of its kind project in Devon. This government has confirmed the establishment of a County Combined Authority in Devon and Torbay, giving local leaders the power to make decisions that benefit their communities, boosting economic growth and driving reform. We are encouraging local leaders in Devon and Torbay to deepen and widen their existing devolution agreements and take strides towards mayoral devolution as a gold standard

Alongside this, the government set out plans for the 10-year infrastructure strategy. This will boost investment and growth in the South West and across the country, providing certainty and stability for the supply chain, and helping to unlock private investment. To give businesses the certainty and stability to invest, the Government is developing a modern industrial strategy and creating the National Wealth Fund to support its delivery and mobilise billions of pounds of investment in the UK's growth industries. The Government owned British Business Bank is also investing over £1 billion through their regional Investment Fund programmes, supporting growing businesses across Devon.

■ Electronic Commerce: Money Laundering

Phil Brickell: [\[13110\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential implications for her policies of the number of (a) Suspicious Activity Reports and (b) Defence Against Money Laundering Suspicious Activity Reports from electronic payment providers.

Tulip Siddiq:

HM Treasury's Money Laundering, Terrorist Financing and Transfer of Funds (Information on the Payer) Regulations 2017 place requirements onto electronic payment providers to establish policies, controls and procedures to mitigate the risks of money laundering and terrorist financing.

HM Treasury works closely with the National Crime Agency, who are responsible for collecting and interpreting Suspicious Activity Reports and other intelligence, and with the Financial Conduct Authority, who supervise authorised electronic payment providers, to monitor the threat. The government will be publishing an updated assessment of the risks in its upcoming update to the Anti Money Laundering and Counter Terrorist Financing National Risk Assessment.

■ Employers' Contributions

Ben Lake: [\[13481\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate she has made of the value of increased national insurance contributions from (a) GP surgeries, (b) higher education institutions and (c) care facilities (i) in Wales and (ii) nationally.

Darren Jones:

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](#).

A Tax Information and Impact Note that covers the employer NICs changes was published by HMRC on 13 November.

■ Employers' Contributions: Essex

James McMurdock: [\[13138\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the impact of increasing employers' national insurance contributions on businesses in Essex.

James Murray:

Estimates of the impact on businesses in Essex from changes to Employer NICs announced at Autumn Budget 2024 are not available.

■ Employers' Contributions: Public Sector

Ben Lake: [\[13479\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 2.40 of the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 October, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of using the StatsWales definition of public sector workers for determining exemptions.

Ben Lake: [\[13480\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she has made an estimate of the value of increased national insurance contributions from public sector organisations included within the StatsWales definition of public sector but omitted from the definition used by the Office of National Statistics.

Darren Jones:

The Treasury routinely uses the Office for National Statistics (ONS) classification of the public sector boundary, for example in relation to public sector spending, public sector borrowing and public sector debt.

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.](#)

A Tax Information and Impact Note that covers the employer NICs changes was published by HMRC on 13 November.

■ Employers' Contributions: Wales

Ben Lake: [\[13497\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 4 November 2024 to Question 11940 on Employers' Contributions: Wales, whether the referenced support will be provided annually; and over what duration that support will be provided.

Darren Jones:

The Government will provide support for departments and other public sector employers for additional Employer National Insurance Contribution costs only. This funding will be allocated to departments, with the Barnett formula applying in the usual way. Given the impacts of this policy change need to be worked through in further detail, this additional support has not yet been included in departmental or devolved government settlements for 2025-26. However, the Government will make these allocations as soon as possible to inform planning for 2025-26.

The overall outcome of the Barnett formula is that devolved governments all receive at least 20% more funding per person than equivalent UK Government spending in the rest of the UK.

■ Energy: Taxation

Andrew Bowie:

[\[12943\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of proposed increases to the Energy Profits Levy on supply chain resilience.

James Murray:

At Autumn Budget 2024 the government confirmed that from 1 November 2024, the Energy Profits Levy (EPL) rate would increase by 3 percentage points to 38%, the EPL investment allowance would be abolished and the EPL decarbonisation allowance rate would be adjusted to 66%. The government also confirmed an extension to the period the levy applies from 31 March 2029 until 31 March 2030.

The government has carefully considered the impact of the increase to the EPL. Treasury publishes impacts in summary form for tax measures in tax information and impact notes (TIINs) alongside the Finance Bill. The summary of impacts from these changes to the EPL can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/energy-profits-levy-reforms-2024>

■ Financial Services: Internet

Phil Brickell:

[\[13108\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many electronic money institutions have (a) had their activities restricted and (b) been de-authorised following an investigation by the Financial Conduct Authority.

Tulip Siddiq:

This question is a matter for Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) which is an independent, non-governmental body. The FCA will respond to the Honourable Member by letter and a copy of this letter will be placed in the Library of the House of Commons.

■ Further Education: VAT

Alex Burghart:

[\[13459\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his Answer of 17 October 2024 to Question 8846 on Further Education: VAT, if she will set out the reasons why further education colleges are unable to recover the VAT they have incurred on their expenditure.

James Murray:

Section 33 of the VAT Act 1994 provides a scheme that allows local authorities (LAs) and similar public bodies to refunds of VAT equal to that incurred on purchases of goods and services relating to their statutory non-business activities. The scheme was introduced to prevent VAT falling as a burden on local taxation. As funding for maintained schools is channelled via LAs, maintained schools benefit from the scheme. Section 33B, which allows academies to recover the VAT they pay, was

introduced in April 2011 to ensure that academies were not disincentivised from leaving LA control.

FE colleges and sixth forms are not eligible for VAT refunds as they do not fit the objectives of either Section 33 or Section 33B (protecting local taxation or encouraging academisation). Almost all sixth form colleges (the second most common type of FE college) have the choice to restructure as 16-19 academies, enabling the recovery of VAT under the refund scheme; however, many choose not to.

■ Government Departments: Public Expenditure

Neil O'Brien:

[\[13493\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the official statistics entitled Public Expenditure Statistical Analyses 2024, CP 1131, published on 30 July 2024, if she will publish by Department the data provided in Table 6.5.

Darren Jones:

Underlying data for table 6.5 will become available on 28 November when the Annual OSCAR Transparency Release is published on GOV.UK. As an alternative, economic category data based on departmental budgets (PESA table 2.1) are available from the "Public Spending Statistics (PSS) July 2024: database" webpage:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/public-spending-statistics-release-july-2024>

■ Hospitality Industry and Retail Trade: Business Rates

Andrew Griffith:

[\[13640\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 5.70 of the Autumn Budget 2024, HC 295, published on 30 October 2024, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the planned reduction of the Retail, Hospitality, and Leisure relief scheme from 75% to 40% on (a) pubs, (b) other hospitality businesses and (c) small retail businesses.

James Murray:

Without intervention by this Government, Retail, Hospitality and Leisure (RHL) relief would have ended entirely in April 2025, creating a cliff-edge for businesses. Instead, the Government has decided to offer a 40 per cent discount to RHL properties up to a cash cap of £110,000 per business in 2025-26 and frozen the small business multiplier. This is a package worth over £1.6 billion in 2025-26, aimed at supporting the most vulnerable businesses, ensuring that over 250,000 RHL properties receive the full 40% support.

By tapering RHL relief to 40%, rather than removing it entirely, the government has saved the average pub, with a rateable value (RV) of £16,800, over £3,300 in 2025.

At Budget, the Government also announced that from 2026-27, it intends to introduce permanently lower tax rates for RHL properties, including those on the high street.

This permanent tax cut will ensure that they benefit from much-needed certainty and

support. The Government intends to fund this by introducing a higher multiplier on the most valuable properties, which includes the majority of large distribution warehouses, including warehouses used by online giants.

The exact rates for any new business rate multipliers will not be set until Budget 2025 so that the Government can take into account the revaluation outcomes as well as the economic and fiscal context.

■ Pensions: Taxation

Nick Timothy: [\[12769\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when she plans to implement Section 14 of the Finance Act 2024.

James Murray:

Section 14 of the Finance Act 2024 came into force on 6 April 2024.

Subsequent clarificatory regulations have been laid and come into force from 18 November, taking retrospective effect from 6 April 2024.

■ Research and Development Tax Credit: Fraud

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[13464\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of the average time taken to investigate alleged fraudulent research and development tax relief claims on small businesses.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[13465\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps her Department is taking to reduce the time taken to investigate alleged fraudulent research and development tax relief claims.

James Murray:

HMRC is committed to tackling error and fraud whilst also ensuring the R&D tax relief claims process is straightforward for genuine claimants.

At Autumn Budget, HMRC published the Approach to Research and Development tax Reliefs for 2023 to 2024, which shows that the average time to complete a compliance check for 2023-24 is 246 days. The length of a compliance check will depend on a range of factors, including the complexity of the claim. The additional information required upfront to support claims is being used to inform HMRC's risking of claims and compliance approach.

■ Research: Finance

Chi Onwurah: [\[12938\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the answer of 4 November 2024 to Question 11881 on Research Finance, if her Department will publish a tabular summary

of Capital DEL allocated in the Budget to research and development by Department for 2024-25.

Darren Jones:

The departmental research and development (R&D) allocations for 2024-25 are set out in the table below. The numbers represent departmental plans as of Autumn Budget 2024, which reflect underspends identified through the Public Spending Audit 2024-25, including as a result of lower Horizon association costs than previously budgeted for.

In 2025-26, the government has allocated £20.4 billion for investment in R&D – more than ever before which reflects its focus on growth. This includes the protection of £6.1 billion for core research.

DEPARTMENT	24-25 R&D (£M)
DSIT	£ 12,500m*
DHSC	£ 2,000m*
MOD	£ 1,800m*
DESNZ	£ 1,000m*
DEFRA	£ 400m*
SIA	£ 400m*
FCDO	£ 500m*
DBT	£ 300m*
DfT	£ 300m*
DCMS	£ 50m**
DfE	£ 50m**
HO	£ 30m**
DWP	£ 40m**
MHCLG	£ <10m
FSA	£ <10m
MOJ	£ <10m
HMRC	£ <10m
HMT	£ <10m
TOTAL	£ 19,524m

**rounded to nearest £100m*

***rounded to nearest £10m*

Individual departments have been rounded to reflect the possibility that allocations can change as a result of in-year inter-department budget transfers.

■ Revenue and Customs and Valuation Office Agency: Civil Servants

Sir Ashley Fox:

[9059]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many civil servants are assigned to work in each of (a) HMRC's and (b) the Valuation Office Agency offices; and how many desks are available in each office.

James Murray:

The table below sets out HMRC's headcount and workspaces by location for September 2024.

Table 1: HMRC Locations – Headcount and workspaces for September 2024

LOCATION	HEADCOUNT	WORKSPACES
100PS	955	516
Belfast	2,208	1,030
Birmingham	3,372	1,610
Bradford	1,193	804
Bristol	1,262	820
Cardiff	4,208	2,281
Croydon	2,555	1,469
Dover	196	155
East Kilbride	1,911	1,269
Edinburgh	1,940	1,426
Gartcosh	283	238
Glasgow	2,872	1,447
Ipswich	451	268
Leeds	3,782	1,817
Liverpool	5,596	2,753
Manchester	6,014	3,214

LOCATION	HEADCOUNT	WORKSPACES
Newcastle	8,056	5,565
Nottingham	4,061	1,855
Portsmouth	994	913
Preston	1,419	804
Reading	101	78
Stratford	5,112	2,717
Swansea	127	140
Telford	1,059	565
Washington	2,135	1,944
Worthing	587	712
Total	62,449	36,410

The Valuation Office Agency (VOA) is an executive agency of HMRC and has 35 offices nationally (England, Scotland and Wales). Table 2 shows VOA's Headcount and workspaces for September 2024

Table 2 VOA Locations – Headcount and workspaces for September 2024

LOCATION	HEADCOUNT	WORKSPACES
Aberdeen	4	5
Birmingham	170	84
Bristol	102	60
Cambridge	38	30
Canary Wharf Hub	325	212
Cardiff	111	60
Carmarthen	22	14
Colchester	56	54
Croydon	177	86
Durham	409	360
Eastbourne	42	42

LOCATION	HEADCOUNT	WORKSPACES
Edinburgh	20	8
Exeter	44	30
Folkestone	26	32
Glasgow	18	15
Hull	54	50
Inverness	5	6
Lancaster	14	16
Leeds	273	162
Liverpool	150	70
Manchester	180	84
Newcastle	233	104
Norwich	41	52
Nottingham	127	80
Oxford	34	24
Plymouth	437	322
Preston	53	30
Sheffield	53	30
Southampton	58	60
St Austell	17	24
Stoke-On-Trent	67	52
Swansea	71	24
Wembley	113	67
Worthing Digital Centre	2	3
Wrexham	51	24
Total	3,597	2,376

Our offices have different types of workspaces which allow people to match the task to the most suitable space. We therefore use workspaces rather than the number of desks.

■ **Small Businesses: Research and Technology**

David Reed:

[\[13651\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps she is taking to support SMEs in the (a) technology and (b) research and development sectors, in the context of the Autumn Budget 2024.

James Murray:

At Budget, Government protected record levels of investment with £20.4bn for R&D in 2025/26, on top of support provided through the tax system. The government is supporting commercialisation of our world-class university research by providing at least £40 million over 5 years for proof-of-concept funding and improvements to support for researchers spinning out the UK's cutting-edge research into firms of the future.

We also announced that we are extending Made Smarter Innovation with up to £37m funding, and funding for the Made Smarter Adoption programme will double to £16 million in 2025-26, supporting more small manufacturing businesses to adopt advanced digital technologies and enabling the programme to be expanded to all nine English regions.

Furthermore, the SME Digital Adoption Taskforce will be extended and will produce an interim report early in 2025 with practical steps and recommendations to enhance SME adoption of digital technology using insights from local and international experiences. To further support small businesses, DBT will shortly be announcing details on a £4m pilots package to encourage tech adoption for SMEs.

■ **Tax Avoidance: Prosecutions**

Marie Goldman:

[\[13152\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many (a) promoters and (b) operators of schemes now subject to the Loan Charge have been prosecuted.

James Murray:

I refer the hon. Member for Chelmsford to the answer I gave on 16 October 2024 to Question UIN [7747](#).

■ **Taxation: Rebates**

Ruth Cadbury:

[\[12960\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of HMRC's processing of refund requests for taxpayers.

James Murray:

HMRC aims to process all refunds and repayments within a reasonable timeframe. The processing of these is recorded as part of HMRC's post turnaround measure. HMRC's service standard for post turnaround is 80% of customer correspondence cleared within 15 working days of receipt. HMRC's performance has been 77% from April to August 2024.

Post performance is published monthly and can be accessed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmrc-monthly-performance-reports#reporting-year-2024-to-2025>.

To improve their services and meet published standards HMRC have recently deployed additional customer service advisers. They expect to meet their post service standards in the second half of 2024-25 as the new advisers are trained and up to speed.

WALES**■ Welsh Language****Ann Davies:****[13615]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what discussions has she had with the Welsh Government on the impact of the measures announced in the Autumn Budget 2024 on the Welsh Government's Welsh language strategy Cymraeg 2050.

Jo Stevens:

The Welsh Government will be provided with a £21 billion settlement in 2025/26 – the largest in real terms since devolution. This includes an additional £1.7 billion through the Barnett Formula with £1.5 billion for day-to-day spending and £250 million for capital investment in 2025/26. The Welsh Government will decide how to allocate funding on devolved matters like the Welsh language strategy Cymraeg 2050.

Although the Welsh language is a devolved matter, the UK Government has a role to play in supporting the Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050 strategy. This is most notably through ensuring that S4C continues to thrive because of its vital role in ensuring the ongoing promotion and use of the Welsh language.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES**■ Gender Based Violence****Max Wilkinson:****[90195]**

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, if she will have discussions with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on the potential impact of Part II of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 on the effectiveness of the Government's work on tackling violence against women and girls.

Jess Phillips:

This Government has set out an unprecedented mission to halve violence against women and girls in a decade and we are determined to deliver on that ambition.

We will keep all legislation under review as we develop our approach to tackle sexual exploitation and violence against women and girls. We currently have no plans to change the law but will consider licensing regulations to make sure that they are protecting the vulnerable and tackling sexual crime, as well as public nuisance.

WORK AND PENSIONS■ **Maternity Pay****Munira Wilson:**[\[13007\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what data her Department holds on the number of statutory maternity pay cases per constituency in (a) 2022, (b) 2023, and (d) 2024.

Andrew Western:

Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) is delivered through HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC), rather than the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). We do not hold information on SMP cases per constituency, however a breakdown by region, supplied by HMRC, is below.

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
East Midlands	41,900	40,900	20,300
East of England	58,600	57,100	28,900
London	90,300	89,500	45,700
North East	21,100	20,700	10,500
North West	66,400	64,500	32,300
Northern Ireland	20,100	19,900	10,100
Scotland	45,400	43,600	21,900
South East	84,500	82,900	41,500
South West	47,600	46,300	23,000
Wales	26,000	26,000	12,900
West Midlands	51,000	49,800	25,100
Yorkshire and The Humber	46,800	45,700	23,000

Notes:

1. Figures for Statutory Maternity Pay are rounded to the nearest hundred.
1. Figures for Statutory Maternity Pay were collected using HMRC Real Time Information (RTI) and were extracted in August 2024. RTI is subject to revision or updates. The location of the claim is based on the taxpayers' residential address as recorded on RTI.
2. Figures are the number of individuals in receipt of SMP in a given financial year. A significant number of cases will be active across two financial years, and therefore counted in both. As the 2024-25 financial year is still ongoing, figures are correct up until May 2024.

■ **National Insurance: Bulgaria and Romania**

Rupert Lowe: [\[13611\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many National Insurance numbers were issued to (a) Bulgarian and (b) Romanian nationals resident in Great Yarmouth constituency in each year since 2016.

Rupert Lowe: [\[13612\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many National Insurance numbers were issued to foreign nationals in each year since 2010.

Andrew Western:

The Department publishes quarterly statistics on [National Insurance number allocations to adult overseas nationals entering the UK](#) on [Stat-Xplore](#). The latest statistics, for January 2002 to June 2024, can be compiled by [rolling year end to June](#) and [nationality](#) down to country level, and are available by Westminster parliamentary constituency (based on the address given at time of National Insurance number registration).

Users can log in or access [Stat-Xplore](#) as a guest and, if needed, can access [guidance](#) on how to extract the information required.

■ **Pensioners: Low Incomes**

Adam Jogee: [\[13541\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent steps she has taken to support pensioners with the lowest incomes in Newcastle-under-Lyme constituency.

Emma Reynolds:

The last Labour Government lifted more than 1 million pensioners out of poverty, and this Government remain absolutely committed to supporting pensioners and giving them the dignity and security they deserve in retirement. We are honouring our commitment to the Triple Lock with a 4.1% increase to the basic State Pension, the new State Pension, and to the standard minimum guarantee in Pension Credit. As

such, according to the latest OBR projections, the full yearly rate of the new State Pension is forecast to increase by around £1,900 over the course of this parliament whilst the full yearly amount of the basic State Pension is forecast to increase by around £1,500.

We know there are low-income pensioners who aren't claiming Pension Credit, and we are urging pensioners to come forward and check their eligibility for Pension Credit to ensure as many people in need as possible have access to this support. This will passport them to receive Winter Fuel Payment alongside other benefits – hundreds of pounds that could really help them.

Low income pensioners and others struggling with the cost of living should contact their local council to see what support may be available to them, as they may be able to receive support from the Household Support Fund, Council Tax Reduction, or through energy support programmes such as the Homes Upgrade Grant and Energy Company Obligation.

■ Personal Independence Payment

Mary Glendon:

[\[12735\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate her Department has made of the average wait for a Personal Independence Payment review decision.

Sir Stephen Timms:

We make every effort to conduct award reviews as soon as possible. Most decisions are made without the need for an assessment by a Healthcare Professional.

Where the claimant requests a review of their Personal Independence Payment award, the median wait is 69 working days as of September 2024. Where the review is initiated by the department, the median wait for a decision that is referred to an assessment provider is 290 working days as of September 2024, and 252 days where it is not referred to an assessment provider.

Whilst reviews are outstanding, all payments to existing claimants continue. Should a review identify eligibility for an increased award, backdated payments will be made where appropriate to ensure claimants are not adversely impacted by delays.

■ State Retirement Pensions: Women

Susan Murray:

[\[13356\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the report by the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman entitled Women's State Pension age: our findings on injustice and associated issues, published on 21 March 2024, whether compensation proposals will form part of a future fiscal event.

Emma Reynolds:

I was the first Minister in 8 years to meet the WASPI campaign group and listen to their concerns.

We need time to review and consider the Ombudsman's report along with the evidence provided during the investigation.

Once this work has been undertaken, the Government will be in a position to outline its approach.

■ Youth Services: Care Leavers

Steve Darling:

[\[12800\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will include bespoke support for unemployed care leavers in the Youth Guarantee.

Andrew Western:

We recognise the challenges care leavers face as they move out of the care system and are working closely with Department for Education to ensure care leavers can access the right skills, opportunities, and wider support, to move towards sustained employment and career progression.

Under the new Youth Guarantee, all young people between 18-21 years will be able to access support to enter employment, education and training opportunities. This includes Care Leavers who we know are more likely than their peers to not be in education, employment or training and may benefit from more tailored support to support their transition as they leave the care provided by their Local Authority.

We are working closely with the Department for Education on the design of the Youth Guarantee, which is in the early stages of development. The Autumn Budget announced that we will establish eight Youth Guarantee Trailblazer areas to test new ways of supporting young people into employment, education or training, by bringing together and enhancing existing programmes in partnership with local areas. Further details will be set out the up-coming 'Get Britain Working' White Paper.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

SCOTLAND

■ Energy: Taxation

Andrew Bowie:

[\[12945\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of (a) increases to the Energy Profits Levy and (b) the abolition of the investment allowance on future trends of private investment in north east Scotland.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 14 November 2024. The correct answer should have been:

Ian Murray:

The UK Government recognises that oil and gas will continue to have a role in the UK's energy mix for decades to come and is committed to managing the energy transition in a way that supports jobs in existing and future industries. But we require the sector to contribute to the ambition to make the UK a clean energy superpower.

At Autumn Budget 2024, the government confirmed that from 1 November 2024, the Energy Profits Levy (EPL) rate would increase by 3 percentage points to 38%, the EPL investment allowance would be abolished and the EPL decarbonisation allowance rate would be adjusted to 66%. The government also confirmed an extension to the period the levy applies from 31 March 2029 until 31 March 2030. To support jobs in future and existing industries, the government decided to make no additional changes to the availability of capital allowances in the EPL.

The government has carefully considered the impact of the removal of the EPL's investment allowance. HM Treasury publishes impacts in summary form for tax measures in tax information and impact notes (TIINs) alongside the Finance Bill. The summary of impacts from these changes to the EPL can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/energy-profits-levy-reforms-2024>

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Finance Bill. The summary of impacts from these changes to the EPL can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/energy-profits-levy-reforms-2024>

The UK Government recognises that oil and gas will continue to have a role in the UK's energy mix for decades to come. Nonetheless, public and private investment must be driven towards cleaner energy, including in the north east of Scotland. Money raised from changes to the Energy Profits Levy will be used to support the transition to clean energy, enhance energy security and provide sustainable jobs for the future.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

■ Prohibition on new coal extraction licences

Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero (Ed Miliband): [\[HCWS215\]](#)

Firstly, I would like to give thanks to the hundreds of thousands of workers across the United Kingdom who have dedicated themselves to the coal extraction industry that helped power the industrial revolution and for the sacrifices they have made.

At the end of September 2024, Great Britain's last coal fired electricity power plant, Ratcliffe-on-Soar, closed after over 50 years in service. This marks the right time to take further steps to move away from coal by restricting its future supply.

It is our intention to change coal extraction policy through primary legislation to restrict future licensing of all new coal mines. We anticipate this will involve measures to amend the Coal Industry Act 1994 to prevent the prospective granting of licences. We will examine what limited exceptions may be required, for example, for safety or restoration purposes, and there are a small number of licensed operational coal mines that will be unaffected by the measures and can continue coal mining in accordance with their current licences and consents.

The measures we will bring forward, when timing allows, mean we will be one of the first countries in the world to ban new coal mines, allowing us to focus our efforts on revitalising our industrial heartlands, supporting the transition to new jobs in clean energy across the United Kingdom and creating industries of the future. It marks a clear signal to industry, markets and the world that coal mining in the United Kingdom does not have a long-term future.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Alleged Serious and Significant Offences (Diplomatic Immunity): 2023

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Indo-Pacific (Catherine West):
[\[HCWS217\]](#)

In 2023, nine serious and significant offences allegedly committed by people entitled to diplomatic or international organisation-related immunity in the United Kingdom were drawn to the attention of the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office by Parliamentary and Diplomatic Protection of the Metropolitan Police Service, or other law enforcement agencies.

We define serious offences as those which could, in certain circumstances, carry a penalty of 12 months' imprisonment or more. Also included are other significant offences, such as driving without insurance, certain types of assault and cruelty to or neglect of a child.

Around 26,500 people are entitled to diplomatic or international organisation-related immunity in the UK and the vast majority of diplomats and dependants abide by UK law. The number of alleged serious offences committed by members of the diplomatic community in the UK is proportionately low.

Under the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations 1961 and related legislation, we expect those entitled to immunity to obey the law. The FCDO does not tolerate foreign diplomats or dependants breaking the law.

We take all allegations of illegal activity seriously. When the police or other law enforcement agencies bring instances of alleged criminal conduct to our attention, we ask the relevant foreign government or international organisation to waive immunity, where appropriate, to facilitate further investigation. For the most serious offences, and when a relevant waiver has not been granted, we request the immediate withdrawal of the diplomat or dependant.

Listed below are alleged serious and significant offences reported to the FCDO by UK law enforcement agencies in 2023.

2023

Possession / distribution of indecent images of children

Iraq 1

Driving without insurance

Fiji 1

Pakistan 1

Assault

Ghana 1

Libya 1

Mongolia 1

Sexual Assault

Libya 1

Indecent Exposure

Portugal 1

Cruelty to or Neglect of a Child

Singapore 1

Figures for previous years are available in the then Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Americas and Caribbean's written statement to the House on 14 September 2023 (HCWS1028), which can be found at: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2023-09-14/hcws1028>

■ Debts owed by Diplomatic Missions and International Organisations in the United Kingdom: 2023-24

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Indo-Pacific (Catherine West):

[\[HCWS218\]](#)

Foreign, Commonwealth & Development (FCDO) officials have regular contact with diplomatic missions and international organisations in the UK about outstanding National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) payments, outstanding parking fine debt and unpaid London Congestion Charge debt, to press for payment of outstanding debt and fines. Protocol Directorate wrote in February 2024 to all diplomatic missions and international organisations about their obligations to pay the charges, fines and taxes for which they are liable, and has since written again to those missions with outstanding debt to give them the opportunity to either pay outstanding debts, or to appeal against specific fines and charges that they consider incorrectly recorded.

National Non-Domestic Rates:

The majority of diplomatic missions in the United Kingdom pay the National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) due from them. Diplomatic missions and international organisations are obliged to pay only 6% of the total NNDR value of their offices. This represents payment for specific services received, such as street cleaning and street lighting.

As at 17 October 2024, the total amount of outstanding NNDR payments arising from invoices issued to 31 December 2023 is £4,142,255. Representations in 2024 by Protocol Directorate of the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office to missions and organisations has led to the settlement of over £869,000 of outstanding debts owed by a number of missions and organisations. We continue to urge all those with NNDR debt to pay their dues.

Diplomatic premises of the following countries / international organisations have balances in excess of £10k in respect of NNDR for invoices issued up to 31 December 2023:

DIPLOMATIC MISSION / INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION	VALUE OF OUTSTANDING BENEFICIAL PORTION OF NNDR PAYMENTS DUE
CHINA	£646,183.22
IRAN	£242,754.13
SUDAN	£241,400.83
LIBYA	£209,263.27
ZIMBABWE	£172,770.72
ZAMBIA	£168,873.60
RUSSIA	£168,615.50

DIPLOMATIC MISSION / INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION	VALUE OF OUTSTANDING BENEFICIAL PORTION OF NDR PAYMENTS DUE
NIGERIA	£118,223.07
BULGARIA	£115,654.07
INDIA	£99,385.88
BANGLADESH	£97,640.51
SRI LANKA	£93,522.48
MOROCCO	£88,399.84
ETHIOPIA	£87,934.22
SIERRA LEONE	£79,090.60
QATAR	£77,327.54
UGANDA	£74,753.26
ALGERIA	£58,487.81
IRAQ	£57,682.73
TUNISIA	£54,937.61
ESWATINI	£50,325.28
SOUTH AFRICA	£50,298.09
EQUATORIAL GUINEA	£50,058.32
GAMBIA	£45,155.81
YEMEN	£43,258.32
COTE D'IVOIRE	£35,771.34
CAMEROON	£33,062.87
HUNGARY	£32,600.51
PAKISTAN	£32,053.47
VENEZUELA	£30,504.96
LIBERIA	£24,739.40
FIJI	£23,463.65
GHANA	£23,008.64

DIPLOMATIC MISSION / INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION	VALUE OF OUTSTANDING BENEFICIAL PORTION OF NDR PAYMENTS DUE
SAUDI ARABIA	£22,929.93
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO	£22,374.42
ARGENTINA	£21,746.47
TOGO	£21,735.05
LUXEMBOURG	£20,520.96
TANZANIA	£18,285.77
COMMONWEALTH TELECOMMS ORGANISATION	£18,155.52
MALAWI	£17,761.64
HAITI	£17,731.72
OMAN	£17,406.76
JAMAICA	£14,131.20
PARAGUAY	£13,484.65
ALBANIA	£13,263.32
ICELAND	£13,178.88
REPUBLIC OF GUINEA	£13,133.54
GERMANY	£12,466.26
EGYPT	£11,771.64
AFGHANISTAN	£11,414.22
SLOVENIA	£11,301.21
ERITREA	£11,283.53
NORTH KOREA	£11,080.28
ST LUCIA	£10,951.20
GRENADA	£10,892.50
LESOTHO	£10,748.40
SEYCHELLES	£10,676.87

Parking Fines:

Parking fines incurred by diplomatic missions and international organisations are brought to our attention by local authorities, primarily but not exclusively in London. The FCDO considers those with privileges and immunities liable for fines issued as Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) by local authorities for vehicle parking infringements. We expect PCNs to be paid to the issuing office.

The FCDO regularly reminds missions and international organisations to pay outstanding PCNs. We wrote to all missions and international organisation in February to remind them of their obligations to pay fines for parking infringements and have written to those missions and organisations with outstanding debt, giving them the opportunity either to pay or to appeal against them if they consider that the fines had been recorded incorrectly.

As at 30 June 2024, the total value of outstanding PCNs notified to FCDO by local authorities is £1,489,618. The table below details those diplomatic missions and international organizations which have outstanding PCN fines totalling £10,000 or more:

MISSION / INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION	VALUE OF OUTSTANDING PCNS
Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia	£196,630.00
Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan	£138,850.00
High Commission for the Federal Republic of Nigeria	£78,300.00
Embassy of the Kingdom of Morocco	£71,060.00
Embassy of the Republic of Iraq	£70,380.00
Uganda High Commission	£55,680.00
Embassy of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire	£40,200.00
Embassy of the Republic of South Sudan	£33,435.00
Embassy of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia	£33,260.00
High Commission for the Republic of Zambia	£29,525.00
Embassy of Romania	£28,620.00
Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman	£28,160.00
Embassy of the United Arab Emirates	£27,215.00
Embassy of the Republic of the Sudan	£25,025.00

MISSION / INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION	VALUE OF OUTSTANDING PCNS
High Commission for the Islamic Republic of Pakistan	£24,375.00
High Commission of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka	£23,280.00
Embassy of Panama	£21,920.00
High Commission of the Republic of Ghana	£21,525.00
Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran	£19,869.00
Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany	£19,730.00
Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan	£17,975.00
Embassy of the State of Qatar	£17,855.00
Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan	£17,795.00
High Commission of the United Republic of Tanzania	£15,435.00
Embassy of Georgia	£15,135.00
Embassy of the People's Republic of China	£14,923.00
Malaysian High Commission	£14,309.00
High Commission for the Republic of India	£13,964.00
Embassy of Hungary	£11,040.00
High Commission for the Republic of Cameroon	£10,925.00
Embassy of the Republic of Liberia	£10,875.00
Embassy of Libya	£10,095.00

London Congestion Charge :

The value of unpaid Congestion Charge debt incurred by diplomatic missions and international organisations in London since its introduction in February 2003 until 30 September 2024 as advised by Transport for London (TfL) was **£152,436,135**. TfL publishes details of diplomatic missions and international organisations with outstanding fines at <https://tfl.gov.uk/corporate/publications-and-reports/congestion-charge>

We consider that there are no legal grounds to exempt diplomatic missions and international organisations from the London Congestion Charge, which is comparable to

a parking fee or toll charge they are required to pay. FCDO officials write to diplomatic missions and international organisations with large Congestion Charge debts annually, to encourage payment.

The table below shows those diplomatic missions and international organisations with outstanding fines of £100,000 or more. FCDO officials write to diplomatic missions and international organisations with large Congestion Charge debts annually, to encourage payment. TfL will also be approaching all diplomatic missions and international organisations with outstanding Congestion Charge debt.

DIPLOMATIC MISSION / INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION	AMOUNT OWED
U.S. Embassy	£15,160,275
Embassy of Japan	£10,422,558
Embassy of the People's Republic of China	£9,303,180
High Commission of the Republic of India	£9,141,875
High Commission for the Federal Republic of Nigeria	£8,812,745
Embassy of the Russian Federation	£6,061,815
Embassy of the Republic of Poland	£5,630,650
High Commission of the Republic of Ghana	£5,311,245
Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan	£5,038,765
Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany	£4,714,830
Embassy of the Republic of the Sudan	£4,077,860
Kenya High Commission	£3,459,030
High Commission for the Islamic Republic of Pakistan	£3,423,720
Embassy of the Republic of Korea	£2,810,740
Embassy of the Republic of Cuba	£2,756,400
Embassy of France	£2,617,800
Embassy of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria	£2,428,290
High Commission of the United Republic of Tanzania	£2,394,920

DIPLOMATIC MISSION / INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION	AMOUNT OWED
Embassy of Spain	£2,277,960
High Commission of the Republic of South Africa	£2,065,460
Sierra Leone High Commission	£2,033,835
Embassy of Romania	£1,925,050
Embassy of the Republic of Türkiye	£1,837,390
Embassy of Greece	£1,739,312
Embassy of Ukraine	£1,729,090
High Commission of the Republic of Cyprus	£1,536,330
Embassy of Hungary	£1,444,620
High Commission for the Republic of Zambia	£1,194,200
Embassy of the Republic of Yemen	£1,103,700
Botswana High Commission	£1,066,890
Embassy of the Republic of Bulgaria	£967,700
Uganda High Commission	£920,720
High Commission for the Republic of Mozambique	£898,290
High Commission of the Republic of Malawi	£891,755
Embassy of the Republic of Zimbabwe	£865,895
Embassy of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia	£858,370
Embassy of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire	£840,810
Kingdom of Eswatini High Commission	£815,770
High Commission of the Republic of Namibia	£796,480
High Commission of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka	£787,920
High Commission for the Republic of Cameroon	£775,680

DIPLOMATIC MISSION / INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION	AMOUNT OWED
Embassy of the Kingdom of Morocco	£764,290
Malta High Commission	£755,405
Embassy of the Republic of Belarus	£737,785
Embassy of Belgium	£715,830
Mauritius High Commission	£710,855
Embassy of Slovakia	£704,700
Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania	£680,295
Embassy of Austria	£655,540
Embassy of the Republic of Liberia	£642,630
Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan	£624,830
High Commission of the Kingdom of Lesotho	£569,020
Embassy of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea	£566,690
Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam	£546,540
Embassy of the Republic of Iraq	£527,310
Embassy of the Republic of Guinea	£524,740
Jamaican High Commission	£500,920
Embassy of Tunisia	£493,840
Embassy of the Czech Republic	£489,730
Embassy of the Republic of South Sudan	£460,920
Embassy of the Democratic Republic of the Congo	£444,420
Embassy of the Republic of Slovenia	£438,723
Royal Danish Embassy	£419,675
Embassy of the Republic of Latvia	£369,770
High Commission for Antigua and Barbuda	£356,595
Embassy of Portugal	£350,620

DIPLOMATIC MISSION / INTERNATIONAL**ORGANISATION** **AMOUNT OWED**

Embassy of Luxembourg	£343,055
Embassy of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan	£296,870
Belize High Commission	£282,030
Embassy of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea	£276,320
High Commission of the Republic of Maldives	£252,260
Embassy of the Arab Republic of Egypt	£243,820
Embassy of Estonia	£236,060
Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia	£222,080
Embassy of the Republic of the Philippines	£208,390
High Commission for Guyana	£203,680
Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania	£200,780
Embassy of the State of Eritrea	£194,980
The High Commission of the Republic of Seychelles	£169,935
Embassy of the Dominican Republic	£169,180
Embassy of the Kyrgyz Republic	£147,957
High Commission for Saint Lucia	£141,680
Embassy of El Salvador	£132,865
Embassy of the Republic of Senegal	£132,555
Embassy of the Republic of Albania	£127,630
Embassy of the Republic of Moldova	£124,570
The Gambia High Commission	£116,980
Embassy of Bosnia & Herzegovina	£101,380

Figures for previous years are available in the then Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Americas and Caribbean's written statement to the House on 14 September

2023 (HCWS1030), which can be found at: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2023-09-14/hcws1030>

HOME OFFICE

■ Publication of the Director of Labour Market Enforcement (DLME) interim annual strategy 2024-25

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Safeguarding and Violence Against Women and Girls (Jess Phillips): [\[HCWS219\]](#)

Alongside my hon Friend the Minister for Employment Rights, Competition and Markets, I am today publishing the Labour Market Enforcement Annual Strategy for 2024-25, submitted by the DLME Margaret Beels OBE. The Strategy will be available on GOV.UK.

The Director's role was created by the Immigration Act 2016 to bring better focus and strategic co-ordination to the enforcement of labour market legislation by the three enforcement bodies which are responsible for state enforcement of specific employment rights:

- The Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate (EAS);
- His Majesty's Revenue and Customs National Minimum and Living Wage enforcement team (HMRC NMW/NLW team); and
- The Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA).

Under Section 2 of The Act, the Director is required to prepare an annual labour market enforcement strategy, which assesses the scale and nature of non-compliance in the labour market and sets priorities for future enforcement by the three enforcement bodies and the allocation of resources needed to deliver those priorities. The annual strategy, once approved, is laid before Parliament.

The Director is a statutory office-holder independent from Government, but accountable to the Department for Business and Trade's Secretary of State and the Home Secretary.

In line with the obligations under the Act, Margaret Beels submitted this strategy for 2024-25 on 25th March 2024 (it has since been revised and resubmitted to the new administration).

This strategy continues on from the 2023-24 strategy by using the same four themes to provide an assessment of the scale and nature of non-compliance and notes sectors where the risk level has changed. The strategy sets out the DLME's desire to achieve improved cohesion and join-up between the DLME and the three state enforcement bodies through non-legislative measures, including suggestions of where the enforcement bodies and sponsor departments should be focusing their efforts.

The Government's view is that the enforcement bodies have been funded sufficiently to deliver the activities set out in the strategy.

The DLME carried out stakeholder engagement for the 2024-25 strategy with a call for evidence.

In previous years, the government published a response to the strategy setting out the approach we will take to the recommendations. Following their submission, the enforcement bodies have had an opportunity to review the recommendations, and we have sought agreement on the recommendations ahead of publication of the strategy.

As part of the Government's commitment and in line with the ambition set out in Make Work Pay, the Fair Work Agency will bring together existing state enforcement functions and incorporate a wider range of employment rights. The DLME, as do we, consider the recommendations to still be appropriate to not only co-ordinate the enforcement of labour market legislation currently, but to help pave the way for the FWA by continuing to support the close collaboration of the enforcement bodies.

I thank the DLME for her strategy and encourage her to continue to work closely with stakeholders and the enforcement bodies.

JUSTICE

■ Criminal Legal Aid Consultation Response

Minister of State for Justice (Heidi Alexander):

[\[HCWS216\]](#)

Today, I am announcing the Government's response to the Criminal Legal Aid Crime Lower consultation which was launched in January of this year. Crime Lower covers work carried out by legal aid providers at police stations, in the magistrates' courts in relation to people accused of, or charged with criminal offences, prison law and work completed by the Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC).

Criminal legal aid is a vital part of the Criminal Justice System. It plays an important role in upholding the constitutional right to access to justice and a fair trial, providing an equality of arms between the prosecution and defence.

In response to the Criminal Legal Aid Independent Review (CLAIR), the Ministry of Justice allocated additional investment in its 2024/25 budget to solicitors undertaking criminal legal aid work in police stations and the Youth Court. The Crime Lower consultation sought views on how best to distribute the additional £21.1m funding for those schemes.

The Government is committed to supporting the sustainability of the criminal legal aid system and will invest an additional £2.9m in the police station schemes, taking the total annual investment in response to the Crime Lower consultation to £24m.

£18.5m per annum will go into the police station fee schemes to begin the process of harmonising the different fees across different police stations.

£5.1m per annum will be spent on a separate Youth Court fee scheme with enhanced fees for the most serious offences.

We are also introducing police station travel remuneration in relation to police station schemes with fewer than two providers, and the Isle of Wight. This reflects concerns around capacity challenges for specific schemes and is designed to incentivise providers

from neighbouring schemes to pick up cases in these areas of concern. This will cost around £0.4m per annum.

The consultation response has been published on Gov.uk and a copy has been placed in the Library of the House.

PRIME MINISTER

■ Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Prime Minister (Sir Keir Starmer):

[\[HCWS220\]](#)

The United Kingdom delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe is as follows:

Full Representatives

THE RT. HON. THE LORD TOUHIG (LEADER OF THE UK DELEGATION AND VICE-CHAIR)

Dan Aldridge MP

Sir Christopher Chope MP

Cat Eccles MP

Linsey Farnsworth MP

Stephen Gethins MP

Lord German

Lord Griffiths of Burry Port

Leigh Ingham MP

Alicia Kearns MP

The Rt. Hon. the Lord Keen of Elie KC

James MacCleary MP

Perran Moon MP

Jake Richards MP

John Slinger MP

The Rt. Hon. the Baroness Taylor of Bolton

Tony Vaughan MP

Michelle Welsh MP

Substitute Members

RICHARD BAKER MP

The Rt. Hon. the Lord Blencathra

The Rt. Hon. Dame Karen Bradley MP

Baroness Brinton

The Rt. Hon. the Baroness Chakrabarti

The Rt. Hon. the Lord Foulkes of Cumnock

Baroness Helic

Baroness Hunt of Bethnal Green

The Rt. Hon. Sir Edward Leigh MP

Kate Osamor MP

Kate Osborne MP

Manuela Perteghella MP

Mike Reader MP

Sam Rushworth MP

Elaine Stewart MP

The Rt. Hon. Valerie Vaz MP

Nadia Whittome MP

Baroness Wilcox of Newport

TRANSPORT

■ CAA publication of independent report into NATS Technical Failure

Secretary of State for Transport (Louise Haigh):

[\[HCWS221\]](#)

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has today (14 November) published the final report of the independent review, led by Jeff Halliwell and an expert panel, into the NATS Technical IT Failure of 28 August 2023. I would like to express my gratitude to the panel for its work.

In its final report, the panel has recognised that several factors contributed to the technical failure and that it is unlikely that the same unique set of circumstances would ever occur again, and that if they did, due to the actions already taken by NATS, the

outcome would be different. Whilst I am pleased that actions have been taken since the incident, it is critical that we ensure that consumers have confidence when travelling; that possible disruption is minimised; that there is resilience in the system; and that air passengers are informed of their rights should something go wrong.

The report estimates that over 700,000 passengers were impacted, with the total cost of the technical failure to industry and air passengers likely to have been between £75 and £100m.

The panel met with a wide range of industry stakeholders, including NATS, airlines and airports, international operators, and the Department for Transport (DfT). It has reached the conclusion that all relevant parts of the aviation sector need to work together better in the future when responding to major events such as the NATS Technical Failure.

The panel makes a total of 34 recommendations for future improvements for NATS (12), CAA (11), airlines/airports (6) and the Government (5) to respond to and deliver on.

The five recommendations that the Government has been asked to consider relate to improving consumer protections for aviation passengers, including giving the CAA additional powers and mandating Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) for all airlines operating in the UK.

The CAA will be responsible for monitoring delivery against the panel's recommendations for all parties. It is important that progress is made and that actions taken deliver better outcomes for the consumer. I have therefore asked that the CAA produces a report in six months' time to provide an update on the progress made in response to each of the 34 recommendations set out in today's publication.

Air passenger rights are a priority for my Department, and we will look to introduce reforms when we can to provide air travellers with the highest level of protection possible.

■ East West Rail

Secretary of State for Transport (Louise Haigh):

[\[HCWS222\]](#)

East West Rail supports this Government's mission to kickstart economic growth and productivity right across the Oxford-Cambridge region by providing easier and faster regional connectivity, opening up access to employment and skills training, and supporting new housing developments. By 2050, East West Rail is set to boost the Oxford-Cambridge regional economy by £6.7 billion every year.

The Oxford-Cambridge region is home to a number of research and development hubs across a variety of highly skilled and highly productive sectors, such as life sciences research at the Cambridge Biomedical Campus. East West Rail would provide these vital sites with the connectivity they need to increase their access to the talent pool and allow the region to compete better on the global stage, supporting up to 28,000 jobs in Cambridge alone.

East West Rail will also be crucial to ensuring that planned housing developments in the region are well connected, by joining newer settlements and housing to established conurbations in Cambridge, Bedford, Oxford, and Milton Keynes.

The first stage of East West Rail from Oxford to Bletchley and Milton Keynes is currently in delivery and will open in 2025. The Budget confirmed the acceleration of works on the Marston Vale Line, ensuring that East West Rail services will run from Oxford to Milton Keynes and Bedford from 2030.

The next stage of the scheme is a non-statutory consultation, which will go live on 14th November 2024, and be followed by a statutory consultation, and then a Development Consent Order application. This consultation will feature proposals on:

- The new services and stations that will be provided by East West Rail for people living in the Oxford-Cambridge region;
- Battery/overhead electrification as the baseline traction solution for the railway;
- Options for how stations and services should be provided for the Marston Vale Line (Bletchley-Bedford);
- Redevelopment of Bedford station to address increased service levels and improve the passenger experience;
- The closure of Bicester London Road Level Crossing and other proposals related to level crossings;
- The alignment of the railway and new East Coast Main Line interchange station at Tempsford;
- A new station at Cambourne and potential alterations to other stations along the line of route, including in the Cambridge area; and
- Options in the Oxford area to accommodate additional services.

The Department for Transport will also be issuing safeguarding directions for East West Rail today to protect land from conflicting development. I am placing a copy of the safeguarding directions in the Libraries of both Houses.

Taking forward these next steps for the East West Rail scheme reinforces this Government's mission to kickstart economic growth and connectivity to unlock access to the skills, education, and jobs needed to deliver national growth and individual prosperity. The Department for Transport will work collaboratively with cross-Government partners, including the Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government, to ensure a joined-up approach to growth and development in the region.