



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 18 November 2024 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:29 P.M., 18 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

#### ■ Arms Trade: Israel

**Tim Roca:** [\[13355\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether any arms export licences to Israel are under review other than those already suspended.

**Mr Douglas Alexander:**

All extant licences to Israel are kept under careful and continual review as standard.

#### ■ Beer: Wokingham

**Clive Jones:** [\[12818\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to help promote the growth of independent brewers in Wokingham constituency.

**Gareth Thomas:**

The government will consult on ways to ensure that independent brewers can retain and expand their access to UK pubs, and maximise drinkers' choice, including through provisions to enable 'guest beers'.

In recognition of the economic and cultural importance of pubs, and the wider "on trade", the Government is reducing alcohol duty on qualifying draught products – approximately 60% of the alcoholic drinks sold in pubs. This represents an overall reduction in duty bills of over £85m a year.

This Government remains committed to helping small businesses and independent brewers 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. The Government-backed British Business Bank also improves access to finance to help businesses grow.

Businesses who want to start exporting or expand into new markets can access support through our digital GREAT.gov.uk platform and Export Support Service. We are supporting businesses to build their exporting knowledge and capability through our online Export Academy programme and series of 'peer to peer' networking events around the UK.

Additionally, The Department for Business and Trade has a network of international trade advisers offering one to one support across England including Wokingham where we directly support three local craft breweries in the area.



## ■ Companies: Registration

**Liam Byrne:**

[\[13737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what his policy is on companies moving their registration overseas when they have been found in breach of export licence conditions and the Government has imposed a requirement that they return the exported goods to the UK with which they have not complied.

**Mr Douglas Alexander:**

The registration of a business is generally a matter for its owners. However, if they are UK legal or natural persons active in the Maritime Anti-Piracy sector, they are still subject to UK Export Licensing legislation. The only requirement under existing UK licensing provisions is for Private Maritime Security Companies to make an application to use alternative approved storage for controlled goods. The enforcement of export licensing is a matter for His Majesty's Revenue & Customs.

## ■ Department for Business and Trade: UKHospitality

**Andrew Griffith:**

[\[13637\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what meetings he has had with representatives from UK Hospitality since 30 October 2024 on the potential impact of the Autumn Budget 2024 on the hospitality industry.

**Gareth Thomas:**

DBT engaged with UK Hospitality as part of a budget briefing call with retail, hospitality and small business representatives held on 4th November. The department also engages very regularly with UK Hospitality, through the Hospitality Sector Council, addressing strategic issues on areas including high street regeneration, skills, sustainability, and productivity.

## ■ F-35 Aircraft: Israel

**Imran Hussain:**

[\[11866\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of the decision to continue issuing licenses for F-35 fighter jet components that are sold indirectly to Israel through an intermediary country on human rights in (a) Gaza and (b) the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

**Mr Douglas Alexander:**

The F35 programme has a significant dependence on the UK, which provides unique and critical components. At the present time, any suspension of F-35 components to Israel through the programme is not possible without undermining the programme overall, and the government's judgement is that this would have a significant negative impact on international peace and security. Therefore, at the present time, exports to the F-35 programme are excluded from the current suspension of export licences. We are keeping this under close review.

The Secretary of State for Business and Trade has set out this decision in further detail to the House in his written ministerial statement on 2 September 2024:

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2024-09-02/hcws64>

**Imran Hussain:**

**[11867]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of section V of the International Court of Justice, Advisory Opinion, Legal Consequences arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, published by the United Nations Palestinian Rights Committee on 18 October 2024 on the issuing of export licenses for F-35 fighter jet components to be sold indirectly to Israel through an intermediary country.

**Mr Douglas Alexander:**

The UK is fully committed to international law and fully respects the independence of the International Court of Justice. We continue to consider the Court's Advisory Opinion carefully, with the seriousness and rigour it deserves.

The F35 programme has a significant dependence on the UK, which provides unique and critical components. At the present time, any suspension of F-35 components to Israel through the programme is not possible without undermining the programme overall, and the government's judgement is that this would have a significant negative impact on international peace and security. Therefore, at the present time, exports to the F-35 programme are excluded from the current suspension of export licences. We are keeping this under close review.

## ■ Home Shopping: Northern Ireland

**Jim Allister:**

**[14257]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what discussions he has had with (a) eBay and (b) other online sellers on the potential impact of the General Product Safety Regulations 2023 on the ability of consumers in Northern Ireland to continue to buy goods from Great Britain.

**Justin Madders:**

My fellow ministers and I undertake regular engagement with businesses, including online marketplaces and those who sell products online, to listen to their concerns.

In addition, officials in my Department have regular discussions with business representatives, including online marketplaces and businesses that sell products online, on a range of issues, including the impact of the EU's new General Product Safety Regulations. This engagement allows businesses to raise specific issues directly with the Government.

## ■ Inflation: USA

**Liam Byrne:**

[\[13177\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the US Inflation Reduction Act on UK businesses.

**Mr Douglas Alexander:**

DBT engaged with UK Hospitality as part of a budget briefing call with retail, hospitality and small business representatives held on 4th November. The department also engages very regularly with UK Hospitality, through the Hospitality Sector Council, addressing strategic issues on areas including high street regeneration, skills, sustainability, and productivity.

## ■ MNG Maritime: Export Controls

**Liam Byrne:**

[\[13736\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, on how many occasions and for what reasons MNG Maritime was granted extensions to the deadline to return to the UK the weapons stored in the Vessel Based Armouries it operated following his Department's revocation of six export licences allowing the company to operate three vessel-based armouries storing weapons for private maritime security companies in July 2023.

**Mr Douglas Alexander:**

In the event that a licence for a Vessel Based Armoury (VBA) is revoked, it is the responsibility of the Private Maritime Security Companies which make use of the affected VBA to arrange transfers of controlled goods to alternative, and appropriately licensed, armouries.

## ■ Office for Product Safety and Standards

**John McDonnell:**

[\[13392\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will take steps to ensure that the Office for Product Safety and Standards is adequately resourced to enforce the provisions of the Product Regulation and Metrology Bill.

**Justin Madders:**

Capacity already exists to enforce the provisions proposed in the Product Regulation and Metrology Bill in both the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) and in local authorities. 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.

## ■ Office of Trade Sanctions Implementation

**Liam Byrne:**

[\[14013\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what (a) country and sector policy specialist, (b) legal, (c) administrative, (d) compliance, (e) enforcement, (f) industry

engagement, (g) budgetary and (h) other resources he has allocated to the Office for Trade Sanctions Implementation.

**Mr Douglas Alexander:**

The Office for Trade Sanctions Implementation (OTSI) has recruited people with a wide range of professional experience from across government and the private sector to fulfil OTSI's responsibilities of policy, licensing and enforcement of certain trade sanctions, and industry engagement, along with financial management, project delivery and business support specialists. OTSI is also supported by legal, analytical and digital experts.

OTSI is funded from the £50m Economic Deterrence Initiative (EDI) for 2023/24 and 2024/25. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) is expected to publish more information on the EDI in the near future.

**Liam Byrne:**

[\[14014\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what (a) training and (b) support his Department plans to provide to businesses in respect of the new Office for Trade Sanctions Implementation.

**Mr Douglas Alexander:**

The Office for Trade Sanctions Implementation (OTSI) will support businesses to meet their obligations under the UK's trade sanctions regime through issuing guidance and engaging with a range of sectors and businesses.

OTSI has already undertaken a major programme of industry engagement and outreach and is committed to ongoing business engagement to support compliance. OTSI has already published a suite of online guidance for businesses and launched new online tools which make it easier to report a breach and apply for a licence.

OTSI is committed to supporting businesses to comply with trade sanctions by improving existing guidance as well as creating and promulgating new guidance, where necessary.

■ **Office of Trade Sanctions Implementation: Annual Reports**

**Liam Byrne:**

[\[14012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether the Office for Trade Sanctions will publish an annual report.

**Mr Douglas Alexander:**

The Office for Trade Sanctions Implementation intends to publish an annual review covering an overview of its activities across the year, following the model set by similar units such as the Office for Financial Sanctions located in HM Treasury and the Export Control Joint Unit in the Department for Business and Trade.

## ■ Parental Leave

**Mr Connor Rand:** [\[13608\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how many people used shared parental leave in the last year.

**Mr Connor Rand:** [\[13609\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if his Department can publish a sectoral breakdown of shared parental leave take up in the last 12 months.

**Justin Madders:**

Information provided by employers to HMRC shows that in 2023/24 (the latest year for which full year data is available), 17,200 individuals were in receipt of Statutory Shared Parental Pay. Data for earlier years was published as part of the Shared Parental Leave evaluation. Data collected using HMRC Real Time Information is subject to revision.

This data provides a broad indication of take-up but does not include anyone taking unpaid leave. Information on the sector or industry worked in by the recipient of Shared Parental Pay is not available.

The Government commissioned the Parental Rights Survey as part of the Shared Parental Leave (SPL) evaluation which provides information on the sector parents taking SPL work in. Findings from the evaluation are available here (see figure 4.10 for sector information) - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/shared-parental-leave-spl-evaluation>

## ■ Post Offices

**Mr Gregory Campbell:** [\[14030\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make an estimate of how many (a) Crown Post Offices and (b) sub Post Offices there will be in 2029.

**Gareth Thomas:**

No decisions to close any or all of the remaining Directly Managed Branches have been taken.

The Post Office will continue to deliver on the 11,500 minimum branch requirement set by Government. Longer term, Government has set out our plan to publish a Green Paper to consult with the public on the long-term future of the Post Office. This Green Paper will help inform what customers, communities and postmasters would like to see from a modern Post Office network.

## ■ Postal Services: Standards

**Stuart Anderson:** [\[14100\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what recent discussions he has had with Ofcom on the effectiveness of Royal Mail's delivery of the universal service obligation on letter delivery delays.

**Justin Madders:**

Ministers and officials meet with Ofcom regularly to discuss a range of issues in relation to its role as the regulatory authority for the postal sector, including the overall provision of the universal service obligation.

It is for Ofcom, as the independent regulator, to monitor and enforce Royal Mail's delivery of the universal service obligation.

**■ Pyramid Selling: Regulation**

**Andrew Cooper:** [\[13973\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, which regulations govern multi-level marketing schemes; and if he will make an assessment of the effectiveness of the regulatory framework of such schemes.

**Andrew Cooper:** [\[13974\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to ensure participants in multi-level marketing schemes are protected from misleading claims about the financial benefits of said schemes.

**Justin Madders:**

Although multi-level schemes are not illegal, it is a criminal offence to persuade someone to make a payment to a scheme by promising benefits from getting other people to join the same scheme (Fair Trading Act 1973 section 120(3)).

Also, the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008 (CPRs) prohibit unfair and misleading marketing tactics towards consumers. This includes "establishing, operating or promoting a pyramid promotional scheme where a consumer gives consideration for the opportunity to receive compensation that is derived primarily from the introduction of other consumers into a scheme rather than from the sale or consumption of products."

To strengthen the enforcement of these and other consumer rights, the Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act 2024 increases the powers available for enforcement bodies.

**■ Retail Trade: Northern Ireland**

**Jim Allister:** [\[13983\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of (a) eBay and (b) other sellers based in Great Britain turning off their seller accounts to Northern Ireland because of the costs of compliance with the General Product Safety Regulations 2023 on consumers in Northern Ireland.

**Jim Allister:** [\[13984\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of (a) eBay and (b) other sellers based in

England, Wales and Scotland turning off their seller accounts to Northern Ireland because of the costs for compliance with the General Product Safety Regulations 2023.

**Jim Allister:** [\[13985\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of (a) eBay and (b) other sellers based in England, Wales and Scotland turning off their seller accounts to Northern Ireland because of the costs of having to comply with the General Product Safety Regulations 2023 on (i) the supply of goods and (ii) price levels in Northern Ireland.

**Jim Allister:** [\[13995\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if his Department will make an estimate of the potential (a) direct cost to (i) producers, (ii) retailers and (iii) consumers in Northern Ireland and (b) economic impact to Great Britain of compliance with the General Product Safety Regulations 2023.

**Justin Madders:**

Our assessment of the impact of the updated GPSR remains that it largely formalises how businesses are operating in the UK and that where businesses need to make changes, in most cases, they will be adapting to continue trading with the EU. The measures are therefore likely to have limited impact in practice. We are providing guidance which we will keep under review as we continue to engage businesses – including online marketplaces – to ensure we are supporting them to trade freely across the whole of the UK.

## ■ Shipping: Weapons

**Liam Byrne:** [\[13413\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he plans to review the export control licensing process for vessel based armouries.

**Mr Douglas Alexander:**

As with all export licences, the Department for Business and Trade keeps the licensing of the Maritime Anti-Piracy Sector under continual review.

**Liam Byrne:** [\[13414\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make it his policy that vessel based armouries export licence applications should include an assessment of available alternative licensed storage facilities in the event that a licence is (a) suspended and (b) revoked.

**Mr Douglas Alexander:**

The Open General Trade Control Licence, which UK Private Maritime Security Companies (PMSCs) require for Maritime Anti-Piracy (MAP) operations, once granted, is open-ended for as long as the PMSC remains active in the MAP sector and is abiding by the terms of the licence. Licences can include provision for the storage of arms in approved land-based armouries as an alternative storage facility.

**■ Small Businesses: West Dorset****Edward Morello:**[\[13313\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to support small rural businesses in West Dorset constituency to access export markets.

**Gareth Thomas:**

DBT is supporting companies like Baboo Gelato, based just outside Dorchester, to take their first steps into exporting.

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

**CABINET OFFICE****■ Child Poverty Taskforce****Neil Duncan-Jordan:**[\[13376\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent discussions the child poverty taskforce has had with medical professionals.

**Ellie Reeves:**

The Child Poverty Taskforce understands the importance of children's health in tackling child poverty. In December, children's health will be discussed at the external experts meeting as part of strategy development for ensuring low-income families are able to access quality services to tackle the impacts of poverty.

This engagement is happening alongside a wider commitment for the Taskforce to involve families, charities, campaigners, and leading organisations across the UK to understand the multiple drivers and impacts of poverty. Recently Taskforce co-chairs, the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions and Secretary of State for Education, visited a Barnado's Family Centre in Brent to join a children's session focused on healthy eating and heard how parents are struggling with the costs of essentials.

The Taskforce has set out their broader engagement strategy in their latest publication titled 'Tackling Child Poverty: Developing Our Strategy'. This engagement is in addition to the large existing evidence base on child poverty in the UK and internationally, which the Taskforce is building understanding from.

Individual medical professionals as well as organisations are also welcome to submit specific evidence to [childpoverty.secretariat@cabinetoffice.gov.uk](mailto:childpoverty.secretariat@cabinetoffice.gov.uk). We will set out details on the publication of the Strategy in due course.



## ■ Civil Servants: Communication

**Rupert Lowe:**

[13308]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many civil service staff are employed in (a) communications and (b) public relations roles.

**Georgia Gould:**

Please see the documentation published at the following location which provides details on the number of civil service staff employed in the communication profession:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/civil-service-statistics>

For reference, public relations is classified as a subset of communications.

## ■ Civil Servants: Conflict of Interests

**Mike Wood:**

[14090]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to paragraphs 11 and 19(a) of the guidance entitled Declaration and Management of outside Interests, published on 6 November 2024, what the threshold is for determining whether a close personal relationship between two civil servants should be declared as an interest.

**Georgia Gould:**

Any interest which could bring about a perceived, potential or actual conflict of interest should be declared. Individuals have a responsibility to consider each relationship in context and declare it if they judge this to be the case.

## ■ Government Departments: Flags

**Rupert Lowe:**

[13326]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what flags are owned by each Department.

**Georgia Gould:**

For the properties operated by the Government Property Agency (GPA), where flag flying forms part of its service, all buildings with flagpoles have the union flag. In addition, buildings will have a variety of other flags depending on their function in Government. The GPA also has a procured service whereby non-stocked or ad hoc flags can be provided and hoisted by a specialist company for the required duration.

## ■ Government Departments: Lanyards

**Rupert Lowe:**

[13325]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much was spent on LGBT+ lanyards in each Department in each of the last five years.

**Georgia Gould:**

The information requested is not centrally held.

**■ Government Departments: Sanitation**

**Rupert Lowe:** [13323]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much has been spent in total on (a) design, (b) installation and (c) signage of gender neutral toilets by each Department.

**Rupert Lowe:** [13324]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many (a) gender neutral, (b) male and (c) female toilets there were in each Department in each of the last 10 years.

**Georgia Gould:**

Cost and asset data relating to these questions are not held centrally by the Government Property Agency.

**■ Government Departments: Staff**

**Mr Richard Holden:** [13820]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 21 October 2024 to Question 8125 on Government Departments: Staff, whether the transparency team in his Department reminds other Departments to update their organogram data; and how often Departments should publish that data.

**Georgia Gould:**

Each individual department is required to publish this information regularly on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) and is responsible for their own publication. Where possible departments should publish this information quarterly, and they have been issued guidance which contains a publishing schedule.

**■ Public Bodies: Information Officers**

**Mr Richard Holden:** [13819]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to Table 14.1 of his Department's publication entitled Statistical bulletin - Civil Service Statistics: 2024, published on 31 July 2024, if he will publish a breakdown of the communications staff by public body.

**Georgia Gould:**

Information on the number of civil servants by profession (including communications) in each government department and agency are published annually by Cabinet Office as part of the accredited official statistics publication 'Civil Service Statistics'. Statistics for 2024 can be found at Table 8 in the data tables available at the following web address: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/civil-service-statistics-2024/statistical-bulletin-civil-service-statistics-2024#overview>

## ■ Senior Leadership Committee

**Mike Wood:**

[\[14091\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference paragraphs 28 to 32 of the Government's response to the House of Lords Constitution Select Committee's 17th Report entitled Permanent Secretaries: their appointment and removal, HL 257, published in January 2024, whether an annual report has been produced on the work undertaken by the Senior Leadership Committee.

**Georgia Gould:**

As set out in the Government's response (para 31), an annual update on the work undertaken by the Senior Leadership Committee will be provided to the First Civil Service Commissioner and other members of the Committee next year. This will cover the work of the Committee in 2024.

## CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

### ■ Arts: Finance

**Munira Wilson:**

[\[13614\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what progress the Creator Remuneration Group has made; and what steps her Department plans to take to help ensure creators are fairly remunerated for their work.

**Chris Bryant:**

The government wants to see remuneration arrangements that create the right conditions for sparking and driving innovation and investment, whilst rewarding creators for their work.

The government's response to the CMS Committee's report on Creator Remuneration acknowledges the challenges facing creatives. In responding, the government has committed to exploring the case for a Freelance Commissioner and highlights the new provisions in the Employment Rights Bill. The government is also committed to finding the right balance between fostering innovation in artificial intelligence and ensuring protection for creators and investment in the creative industries. We intend to proceed carefully but with a degree of urgency in this area and hope to announce next steps soon.

On music streaming specifically, the government believes all artists and creators should be appropriately remunerated for the use of their works, as this is what allows them to invest their time, effort, and money into creating music. That is why this government is engaging with music stakeholders, including through a working group to pursue industry-led actions on remuneration from music streaming. We will continue to bring industry and creator representatives together to address issues and find solutions.

**■ Department for Culture, Media and Sport: Official Visits****Rupert Lowe:** [\[13327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, which (a) sporting, (b) cultural and (c) other events were attended by staff in her Department in each of the last five years by financial value.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

Gifts and hospitality data for Ministers, Senior Officials and Special Advisors is published quarterly, details of which can be found on the gov.uk website. [Here](#) is the most recent publication of Ministers gifts and hospitality, covering the period of Q4 2023/24 (January 2024 - March 2024).

Cabinet Office are yet to confirm when the data covering the periods Q1 and Q2 2024/25 will be published. In future, the Cabinet Office intends to publish a monthly Central Register beginning in December 2024. This will cover all ministers' gifts and hospitality for November 2024 onwards.

**■ Football: Disability****Dan Carden:** [\[13814\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions her Department has had with football authorities about (a) inclusion and (b) accessibility for disabled fans.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

The government recognises the great importance of sport and physical activity for disabled people at both the grassroots and elite levels. We recognise there are barriers which exist and prevent some people from taking part and spectating. We will continue to do all that we can to tackle these and are encouraging sport bodies to make sport more accessible.

The government recently ratified the St Denis Convention. In doing so, we committed to providing an integrated safety, security and service approach at football matches and other sports events. The Sports Ground Safety Authority, one of DCMS's Arm's-Length Bodies, has begun a partnership with the Council of Europe to better understand and promote the 'safety' and 'service' element of the convention to the benefit of all fans.

**■ Football: Gambling****Dr Beccy Cooper:** [\[13378\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions she has had with Premier League clubs on gambling sponsorship on their websites.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

All major sporting bodies, including the Premier League, have published their gambling sponsorship Codes of Conduct, setting minimum standards for socially responsible gambling sponsorships. As part of the Code of Conduct, clubs must

ensure that no gambling sponsor logos or other promotional materials relating to gambling sponsorship appear on sections of their website which are designed to be viewed and used specifically by children. The Premier League's decision to ban front-of-shirt sponsorship by gambling firms will also commence by the end of the 2025/26 season.

The Department will closely monitor the implementation of the Codes to ensure they have a meaningful impact.

**Abtisam Mohamed:**

[\[13515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of gambling sponsorship in football on (a) under-18 football players that have gambling sponsorship on their kits and (b) young fans.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

The European Sponsorship Association (ESA) and Football Association (FA) require that in the case of teams comprising players all under the age of 18, gambling logos do not appear on any item of kit or clothing, and football bodies' gambling sponsorship Code of Conduct requires that academy teams with players predominantly under the age of 18 do not play in kit featuring gambling logos.

As part of the Industry Code for Socially Responsible Advertising, gambling operators cannot allow their logos or any other promotional material to appear on any commercial merchandising designed for children, including on children's replica shirts. The Code of Conduct also requires that gambling sponsorship must be designed to limit its reach and promotion to those under the age of 18, such as ensuring that no gambling sponsor logos or other promotional materials relating to gambling sponsorship appear on sections of their website which are designed to be viewed and used specifically by children. The Department will closely monitor the implementation of the Codes to ensure they have a meaningful impact.

Additionally, in line with the advertising rules prohibiting top-flight footballers and celebrities from appearing in gambling adverts to limit their appeal, from the end of the 2025/26 season Premier League clubs have agreed to remove front of shirt sponsorships by gambling firms.

## ■ Heritage Council

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[13846\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, when the next meeting of the Heritage Council will be.

**Chris Bryant:**

The next meeting will be organised soon, when we look forward to taking forward a series of important measures with the heritage sector and listening to people's concerns and ideas for the future.

**■ Music Venues: Greater London**

**Uma Kumaran:** [\[13365\]](#)

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

**Chris Bryant:**

The Government recognises the value of the grassroots music sector - it provides the foundation for the entire music industry, fostering creativity, innovation and cultural expression.

The Government response to the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee's report on grassroots music venues sets out our commitment to working across the music sector to support the sustainability of grassroots music. In particular, the Government is urging the live music industry to introduce a voluntary levy on tickets for stadium and arena shows, to help safeguard the future of the grassroots music sector. The Government response can be found here:

<https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/45646/documents/225972/default/>

As part of our support for the sector, we are continuing to help fund Arts Council England's successful Supporting Grassroots Music Fund which provides grants to grassroots music venues, recording studios, promoters and festivals of live and electronic music in England, including London.

**■ Sports: Community Development**

**Edward Morello:** [\[13298\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of closures of grassroots sports clubs on (a) community cohesion and (b) wellbeing in rural constituencies.

**Edward Morello:** [\[13299\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of closures of grassroots disability sports clubs on (a) community cohesion and (b) wellbeing in rural constituencies.

**Edward Morello:** [\[13300\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will take steps to undertake a review of the capital funding requirements of grassroots sports clubs for the sustainable, long-term maintenance of their facilities.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

The Government is committed to improving access to high quality sport and physical activity opportunities for everyone, including those with disabilities. This is central to achieving the aims set out in the Government's manifesto around the Health and Opportunity Missions. The Government will support more people to be active wherever they live, whether in cities or the countryside.

We recognise that grassroots sports clubs are at the heart of communities up and down the country. These provide important places for people of all ages to be active, bring communities together and improve their mental and physical wellbeing.

That is why this Government has committed to continue funding for grassroots facilities. £123 million will be invested UK-wide in grassroots facilities via the Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programme throughout 2024/25, working with our delivery partner, the Football Foundation.

## DEFENCE

### ■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

**Robbie Moore:**

[901263]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking with Cabinet colleagues to support veterans.

**Al Carns:**

The Prime Minister's announcement last week of an additional £3.5 million to combat veteran homelessness demonstrates that veterans are at the forefront of the highest office of this Government.

Both my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence and I continue to work across Government, the Devolved Administrations, and the third sector to strengthen the support we offer to our veterans.

**Louise Jones:**

[901264]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what progress he has made on increasing defence cooperation with Germany.

**Maria Eagle:**

On 23 October 2024 the Defence Secretary, along with German Defence Minister Pistorius, signed the Trinity House Agreement on Defence co-operation between the United Kingdom and Germany. The agreement represents a significant milestone in the defence relationship between our two countries and underscores our shared commitment to maintaining peace and stability in Europe.

**Richard Foord:**

[901265]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent discussions he has with international allies on the provision of arms and resources to Ukraine.

**Luke Pollard:**

The Secretary of State for Defence regularly holds discussions with international partners on how to best support Ukraine, including at the recent NATO Defence Ministers meeting. This includes regular discussions with his Ukrainian counterpart.

At the last Ukraine Defence Contact Group in September, Allies committed to continue their support for Ukraine, both in the immediate fight and for the long term.

**Mr Alistair Carmichael:**

[\[901267\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent assessment he has made with Cabinet colleagues of the adequacy of the security provisions for energy and telecommunications infrastructure in the UK's exclusive economic zone.

**Luke Pollard:**

The UK Government constantly monitors and regularly assesses the security of critical national infrastructure, including energy and telecommunications assets in the UK's Exclusive Economic Zone. This is a whole-of-Government effort involving multiple Departments, including the Ministry of Defence.

**Jamie Stone:**

[\[901268\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he plans to take with his European counterparts to help develop defence projects.

**Maria Eagle:**

European security is this Government's foreign and defence priority. We will strengthen relationships with key European Allies through bilateral defence agreements, such as our recent Trinity House Agreement with Germany, and an ambitious UK-EU security pact which will bolster Euro-Atlantic security and complement our commitment to NATO.

**Sir Edward Leigh:**

[\[901271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he plans to take to help increase levels of defence manufacturing.

**Maria Eagle:**

Our UK industry partners are at the heart of our One Defence approach. This Government is committed to supporting defence manufacturing in the UK and will bring forward a Defence Industrial Strategy which ensures the imperatives of national security and a high-growth economy are aligned.

**Martin Wrigley:**

[\[901272\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much he plans to allocate to spending on defence research and development in the next 12 months.

**Maria Eagle:**

Defence research and development remains critical to maximising the operational advantage of our Armed Forces in an increasingly volatile and technology-driven world. The Department is committed to investing in cutting edge science, technology and innovation.

Following the recent Autumn Budget announcement, the allocation of funding for the next 12 months is ongoing.



## ■ Armed Forces: Private Education

**Dame Caroline Dinenage:**

[\[14035\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans he has to review the cap on Continuity of Education Allowance in (a) 2024/25, (b) 2025/26, (c) 2026/27, (d) 2027/28 and (e) 2028/29.

**AI Carns:**

Rates for the Ministry of Defence's (MOD) Continuity of Education Allowance (CEA) are reviewed and calculated on an annual basis to take into account increases in school fees. Rates become effective in August each year, allowing claimants to submit claims before the start of the new academic year in September.

Following the Budget statement by the Chancellor on 30 October 2024, the MOD confirmed that it would carry out an in-year re-rating of CEA. There are no plans to change the current annual CEA rating cycle in subsequent academic years.

## ■ Defence

**David Reed:**

[R] [\[13654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to ensure that the defence industrial base is prepared to support military readiness.

**Maria Eagle:**

This Government is committed to bringing forward a Defence Industrial Strategy which ensures the imperatives of national security and a high-growth economy are aligned. The strategy will deliver a better, more innovative and more resilient defence sector to support military readiness. It will enable the UK to innovate at speed and better support its Armed Forces, deter its adversaries and seize opportunities presented by the technologies of the future.

## ■ Diego Garcia: Military Bases

**James Cartlidge:**

[\[13787\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost to the public purse was of running the UK-US military base on Diego Garcia in financial year 2023-24.

**Luke Pollard:**

The direct cost to the Ministry of Defence (MOD) for running the UK element of the UK-US military base in the British Indian Ocean Territory in financial year 2023-24 was £3.8 million. This excludes minor costs incurred directly by, for example, visiting units or HQ elements in the UK. Any costs incurred by other Government Departments cannot be provided by the MOD.

**James Cartlidge:**

[\[13788\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what proportion of the cost of running the UK-US military base in Diego Garcia was covered by the United States in financial year 2023-24.

**Luke Pollard:**

It is not possible to determine relative proportions of the running cost of the base in Diego Garcia. The United States is responsible for any costs it incurs, while the UK remains responsible for the cost of the UK element of the base only.

**■ Military Aircraft: Helicopters****John Glen:**[\[13435\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 5 September 2024 to Question 1248 on Military Aircraft: Helicopters, whether the Prime Minister's Office plans to use insourced armed forces' helicopters for official travel after December 2024.

**Maria Eagle:**

No. Routine helicopter transport will be sourced through the Ministerial Transport Office, not from Military helicopters.

**■ Ministry of Defence: Employers' Contributions****Dr Caroline Johnson:**[\[13767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answers of 4 and 11 November to Questions 11939 and 12740 on Ministry of Defence: Employers' Contributions, what estimate he has made of the indirect costs to his Department following the proposed increase in employer national insurance contributions on suppliers and contractors that support his Department.

**Al Carns:**

As individual suppliers and contractors will manage the increase differently, it is not possible for the Department to estimate the indirect costs relating to the change in Employer National Insurance Contributions.

**■ Shipbuilding: Harland and Wolff****Sir Geoffrey Cox:**[\[13180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will take steps to ensure that (a) Harland and Wolff is able to carry out the construction of Fleet Solid Support vessels and (b) Appledore Shipyard remains open.

**Maria Eagle:**

Harland and Wolff is a subcontractor to Navantia UK on the Fleet Solid Support (FSS) ship programme and the successful delivery of this programme remains a priority. There is extensive engagement with Navantia UK, as the Prime Contractor, to understand what steps the company is taking to ensure delivery of the FSS contract and management of its supply chain.

We continue to work with all parties to find an outcome for Harland & Wolff that protects shipbuilding and manufacturing, including Appledore.

## ■ Veterans: Lincolnshire

**Sir John Hayes:**

[\[13171\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to support military veterans in (a) South Holland and the Deepings constituency and (b) Lincolnshire.

**Al Carns:**

This is a Government of service that will always stand up for those who serve our country, no matter which community they are based in. I am working across Government and with civil society to ensure veterans, including those in South Holland and the Deepings, and throughout Lincolnshire, get access to the health, housing, employment and other support they need.

A range of support is in place for veterans. In England Op RESTORE provides specialist care to veterans who have physical health problems, and Op COURAGE, a mental health specialist service helps veterans and their families.

Housing support is available across the United Kingdom via Op FORTITUDE, a single referral pathway to connect veterans with help and support. This system provides housing guidance and assistance to veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness. As of 3 November 2024, over 2,700 referrals have been made and nearly 800 veterans have been supported into housing.

Veterans can also access a range of tailored employment support, including the Career Transition Partnership, which is the initial point of provision for those leaving military service in search of new job opportunities.

Armed Forces Champions are also based across the UK's JobCentre Plus network to help support members of the armed forces community into work.

## EDUCATION

### ■ Academies: Accountability

**Ian Sollom:**

[\[13957\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to ensure academy trusts are subject to local accountability by parents and communities in instances where school policies and complaints procedures fail to resolve concerns.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

Academies are required to have a complaints procedure in place that adheres to Part 7 of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Where parents or carers have concerns, they should first approach the academy, and it is their responsibility to handle and resolve complaints. If a complainant has concerns that an academy did not handle a complaint in line with the regulations, they can then escalate to the department, whose role it is to consider whether the academy followed the correct process.

For members of the wider community who do not have a child at the academy, the regulations do not apply. However, the department still expects academies to handle complaints swiftly and respectfully.

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education holds academies to a high level of accountability through their funding agreement. Where wider concerns are raised, for example, as a result of poor governance or lack of compliance with the framework, the department will intervene proportionately to ensure compliance.

As part of the King's Speech, we have committed to legislate to require all schools, including academies, to cooperate with the local authority on school admissions and place planning, and to give local authorities greater powers to deliver their function and ensure that admissions decisions account for the needs of the community.

### ■ **Bereavement Counselling and Death: Curriculum**

**Sojan Joseph:**

[\[14155\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of including lessons on death and bereavement in the National Curriculum.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

The department wants to support all young people to be happy, healthy and safe, and to equip them for adult life so they achieve and thrive.

The statutory relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) statutory guidance makes clear that teachers should be aware of common adverse childhood experiences, including bereavement, and understand when and how these may be affecting of their pupils. This will help teachers to tailor their lessons accordingly, taking decisions on appropriate resources and support to enable them to teach the curriculum effectively. Teachers are free to draw on the support and expertise of subject associations and other providers of curriculum support.

The RSHE statutory guidance, which sets out the specific topics pupils should be taught, is currently under review. My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education has been clear that children's wellbeing will be the government's priority, in light of which the department is looking carefully at the responses from the period of public consultation which ended on 11 July, engage with stakeholders and consider the relevant evidence before setting out next steps. As part of this process, the department will explore whether any more or amended content is required, including on death and bereavement.

### ■ **Extracurricular Activities**

**Rachel Gilmour:**

[\[13358\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the impact of the restriction of school and extra curricular options through repayment deadlines within the UK Benefits System on parents and students.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

The department has no plans to undertake this specific assessment, but we have evaluated the impact of poverty on educational outcomes. Evidence shows that disadvantaged pupils and those with additional needs are more likely to fall behind and need extra support to achieve and thrive.

That is why the department is working to make sure that all children and young people have access to a variety of enrichment opportunities at school as an important part of our mission to break down barriers to opportunity. We recognise that these activities are a vital way for children and young people to gain skills and strengthen their sense of school belonging, supporting them to thrive.

The Department for Work and Pensions strives to set affordable and sustainable repayment plans and encourages customers to make contact if they are unable to afford the proposed repayment rate.

When a customer makes contact because they are experiencing financial hardship, the rate of repayment can be reduced or, depending on the customer's financial circumstances, a temporary suspension of repayment can be agreed. There is no minimum amount a customer has to repay.

As seen in the measures announced by my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in the Autumn Budget 2024 to drive up opportunity and drive down poverty, a new Fair Repayment Rate will be introduced from April 2025, reducing Universal Credit deductions overall cap from 25% to 15%. This measure will help approximately 1.2 million of the poorest households benefit by an average of £420 a year.

**■ Free School Meals: Gateshead Central and Whickham****Mark Ferguson:****[13265]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many primary school children are (a) eligible for and (b) registered to receive free school meals in Gateshead Central and Whickham constituency.

**Stephen Morgan:**

The most recently published figures on free school meals (FSM) eligibility are from the January 2024 school census, published in June 2024 here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics>.

The statistics are based on counts of pupils who are eligible for FSM and are known by their school to be claiming. The department does not hold information on pupils who are eligible but do not claim.

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 schools' and pupils' statistics.

The constituency of Gateshead Central and Whickham is made up of elements of two old constituencies: Gateshead and Blaydon. As of January 2024, 35% of pupils at state-funded primary schools in Gateshead and 21% of pupils at state-funded primary schools in Blaydon were eligible for and claiming FSM. This compares with 24% for the whole of England.

The schools and pupils publication includes data at school level. This can be combined with information from 'Get Information About Schools' (GIAS) to identify parliamentary constituency, which can be accessed here: <https://get-information-schools.service.gov.uk/>. GIAS reflects the changes made following the general election parliamentary constituency changes. Updates to geographical data in GIAS are made on a quarterly basis using data published by the Office for National Statistics.

### ■ Private Education: VAT

**Adam Dance:**

**[13385]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to paragraph 2.62 of the Autumn Budget 2024, HC 295, published on 30 October 2024, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the application of the standard VAT rate to independent schools on the teaching of (a) music and (b) the arts in such schools; and if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing support to such schools for such teaching.

**Stephen Morgan:**

HM Treasury (HMT) is responsible for VAT policy. HMT has published its assessment of the impacts of removing the VAT exemption that applied to private school fees, which can be found on here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/vat-on-private-school-fees/ac8c20ce-4824-462d-b206-26a567724643#who-is-likely-to-be-affected>.

As this sets out, the government expects the impacts of these changes on the private and state sectors to be small.

The government's costings have been scrutinised by the independent Office for Budget Responsibility.

As set out in HMT's response to the technical consultation in the VAT changes, performing arts schools that offer full-time education to children of compulsory school age and/or 16 to 19-year-olds for a charge will remain in scope of this policy. This is to ensure fairness and consistency across all schools that provide education services and vocational training for a charge. In addition to providing performing arts education, when educating children of compulsory school age, these institutions will also provide academic education. An exemption from the VAT rules would therefore be unfair to other private schools.

The department provides means-tested bursaries for eligible families as part of the Music and Dance Scheme (MDS) if their child has a place at any one of eight performing arts private schools. For the 2024/25 academic year, lower income

families will receive additional support to ensure the total cost of their parental contributions do not rise from January 2025 as a result of the VAT change. This will benefit around half of the families with an MDS bursary for their child.

## ■ Religion: Education

**Laura Kyrke-Smith:**

[\[13677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 17 October 2024 to Question 8936 on Religion: Education and with reference to her Department's Guidance for local authorities about membership of Standing Advisory Councils for Religious Education, published in September 2023, whether membership of (a) Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education and (b) Agreed Syllabus Conferences must also be drawn from non-religious worldviews analogous to a religious belief.

**Laura Kyrke-Smith:**

[\[13678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 17 October 2024 to Question 8936 on Religion: Education, whether locally agreed syllabuses on religious education must also take into account the teaching and practices of (a) humanism and (b) other principal non-religious worldviews.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

Following the ruling in the Bowen vs Kent County Council case, the department published additional guidance for local authorities regarding the membership of Standing Advisory Councils for Religious Education (SACREs). The guidance sets out the department's view on the ruling and makes clear that, where an application has been received, representatives from non-religious belief systems may be appointed to Group A of a SACRE and/or to an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC). The non-religious beliefs adhered to by the person/s to be appointed must be analogous to a religious belief, in accordance with case law under the European Convention of Human Rights and the Human Rights Act 1998, and attain the necessary level cogency, seriousness, cohesion, and importance to attract protection under the Convention Rights. The final decision on appointment of persons to a SACRE or ASC, however, is a matter for local authorities.

Locally agreed syllabuses should take account of non-religious worldviews. As referenced in the department's 2010 guidance, religious education (RE) should encourage pupils to explore their own beliefs, whether they are religious or non-religious. Inclusion of non-religious worldviews should be seen as part of a well-rounded RE curriculum.

## ■ School Meals: Costs

**Sir Christopher Chope:**

[\[14003\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the increase in employers' National Insurance contributions, as announced in the Autumn Budget 2024, on the ability of school meals providers to provide those meals within the existing fixed price cost of £2.53.

**Stephen Morgan:**

The government will provide funding to the public sector to support them with the additional costs associated with changes to Employers National Insurance Contributions policy.

This funding will be additional to the £2.3 billion increase to core school budgets announced at the Autumn Budget 2024. Due to timing constraints, this compensation will need to be provided as a separate grant, alongside the national funding formula (NFF), in 2025/26. Schools will continue to have autonomy over their spending and will be able to use any future grant funding to cover all cost increases, including food costs.

The department currently allocates a meal rate of £2.53 per child per meal for the 2024/2025 academic year to support the delivery of universal infant free school meals and further education free meals. Final funding rates for the 2024/2025 academic year will be confirmed in due course. Further to this, we fund benefits-related free school meals (FSM) at £490 per eligible pupil annually through the FSM factor of the NFF for schools. In total, we spend £1.5 billion across these programmes.

This funding is intended to cover the broad costs of meal provision. However, schools have considerable autonomy over delivery of FSM, including entering into contracts with suppliers and allocation of funding within their budgets.

**Schools: Transport****David Williams:**[\[13330\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to support local authorities to ensure that young people's home to school transport needs are met.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

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

The department knows that local authorities' spending on home to school travel has increased sharply in recent years, particularly for children with special educational needs and disabilities. This is largely due to increases in the number of children with education, health and care plans and the number of those children who have to travel long distances to a school that can meet their needs. The department is committed to improving inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools so fewer children need to travel long distances to a school that can meet their needs. This will reduce home-to-school travel costs for local authorities over time.



Most central government funding for home-to-school travel is provided through the local government finance settlement administered by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. The government recognises the challenges local authorities are facing. The government has listened to voices across the sector and prioritised local government in the budget. The government announced £1.3 billion of new grant funding in the 2025/26 financial year for local government to deliver core services. Together with local income from council tax and business rates, this will provide a real-terms increase in core spending power of around 3.2%.

## ■ Special Educational Needs

**Neil O'Brien:**

[\[13835\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan have a named school on their education, health and care plan.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

As at January 2024, 446,448 children and young people with an education, health and care (EHC) plan, had a school (including mainstream schools, special schools, alternative provision or pupil referral unit) named as the setting on their EHC plan.

This represents 77.5% of all EHC plans.

**Monica Harding:**

[\[14275\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department is taking steps to (a) ensure that deficit reduction measures taken by local authorities as part of their safety valve agreements do not reduce the (i) level and (ii) quality of support for SEND children and young people and (b) monitor such support.

**Monica Harding:**

[\[14276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the impact of her Department's Safety Valve Agreement with Surrey County Council on (a) funding per EHCP in Surrey and (b) quality of SEND provision in Surrey.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

The Safety Valve programme helps local authorities provide an improved special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) service by maximising the impact of their high needs budget and promoting a more stable and effective system for children and young people with SEND. Safety Valve agreements were established only if both the local authority and the department agreed that the proposals would improve services for children and young people with SEND. The future use of Safety Valve agreements is under review.

Existing Safety Valve agreements do not in any way release local authorities from their obligation to fulfil their statutory duties to children and young people with SEND, and no agreement would have been made if it compromised a local authority's ability to meet these obligations. The department regularly reviews the implementation of all Safety Valve agreements through our monitoring process, and provides support and

intervention if they go off track. The department does not hold any data on the potential impact of Surrey's Safety Valve agreement regarding funding per education, health and care plan.

### ■ Special Educational Needs: Finance

**Monica Harding:** [\[14227\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if her Department will take steps to ensure the uplift for SEND funding announced in the Autumn Budget 2024 is allocated by local authorities to families assessed as being in the most urgent need; what steps her Department plans to take to (a) monitor and (b) evaluate the impact of this funding on (i) children and (ii) families in each local authority; and how she plans to report that evaluation.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

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

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

The department is now in the process of calculating indicative high needs funding allocations for local authorities next year, which will be published shortly.

It is for the local authorities to decide how they manage their spending to secure the best possible outcomes for children and young people within the resources available.

Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission jointly inspect local area SEND provision to ensure there is joined-up support for children, young people and their families. These inspections are published and enable the department to intervene in cases of significant concern. The inspections also allow the department to work with local areas and professional advisors to address any areas of weakness that might be identified.

### ■ STEM Subjects: Teachers

**Stuart Anderson:** [\[13258\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to extend the targeted STEM retention incentive payments for secondary school teachers to those teachers in further education colleges.

**Janet Daby:**

In October, the department expanded eligibility for retention incentives to include early career further education (FE) teachers in key science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and technical subjects. FE teachers can currently apply for the payment between 14 October 2024 and 31 March 2025 on GOV.UK:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/targeted-retention-incentive-payments-for-fe-teachers>.

The targeted retention incentive, aimed at boosting the recruitment and retention of teachers, gives eligible teachers in disadvantaged schools and all colleges up to £6,000 after tax. This has doubled the previous retention payments paid to school teachers and is now available to eligible teachers at all FE colleges, for the first time.

## ■ STEM Subjects: West Dorset

**Edward Morello:**

[\[13302\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking with Cabinet colleagues to ensure that rural schools have access to the latest (a) technological resources and (b) STEM education in West Dorset constituency.

**Stephen Morgan:**

Reliable technology can offer significant benefits to everyone who works and learns in schools and trusts. The department is working with commercial providers to accelerate gigabit capable internet rollout to schools, alongside a joint investment from the department and the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology.

In collaboration with Building Digital UK (BDUK), the department is jointly funding fibre upgrades to 833 schools across England by the end of 2025. This is in addition to the 683 delivered by BDUK programmes with the department between 2017 and 2021.

Additionally, Connect the Classroom is supporting over 3,700 schools to upgrade their wireless networks, including some schools in West Dorset. So far, the programme has delivered over £200 million of funding to improve connectivity for over one million pupils nationally.

To widen participation in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education in schools, the department is funding the Stimulating Physics Network (SPN) and Subject Knowledge for Physics Teaching (SKPT) programmes.

The SPN promotes the take-up of A level physics and provides coaching support to increase the profile of physics and retention of physics teachers. There are a total of 285 partner schools in England, supported by 42 coaches based in SPN-led schools and regional network staff, to ensure there is a good offer across the country for SPN. An SPN-led school in Hampshire covers support for schools across Hampshire and Dorset.

SKPT, which has practical sessions delivered across the country, aims to provide training to non-physics teachers to allow them to become specialists in physics. Rural schools that do not have access to local existing SKPT provision can contact the Ogden Trust, who run the SKPT programme, as there are limited bespoke packages of support for such schools. Schools in West Dorset can receive teacher continuing professional development (CPD) on mathematics curriculum pedagogy and subject knowledge via the Jurassic Maths Hub, one of 40 maths hubs across England who offer school-to-school maths teacher CPD from reception to post-16.

The department also funds the Advanced Mathematics Support Programme, supporting teachers to improve the teaching of AS and A level mathematics, AS and A level further mathematics and core mathematics. Support is focused in disadvantaged areas and areas with low post-16 mathematics participation so that, whatever their location, background or gender, students can access high-quality mathematics teaching.

Additionally, the department funds the National Centre for Computing Education (NCCE), which provides free CPD and resources to improve the quality of computing education and increase participation in computing at GCSE and A level. The NCCE manages a network of over 30 computing hubs across England to support schools and colleges in all areas of the country. NCCE CPD is delivered either in-person or online to reduce the need for travel, and hubs schedule courses based on demand and local attendance patterns.

The NCCE has a particular focus on reaching schools in education investment areas. Dorset has been identified as one of the NCCE's highest priority areas and is receiving an additional focus as part of the 'Targeted School Engagement Programme'. The Devon and Dorset hub is working closely with the education team at Dorset Council to embed NCCE provision across the area and promoting wider activities, including last September's National Coding Week. Contact details for the Devon and Dorset hub are available from the NCCE's Teach Computing website here: <https://teachcomputing.org>.

## ■ Students: Loans

**Rupert Lowe:**

**[13306]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 6 November 2024 to Question 11711 on Students: Loans, for what reason there was an increase in the amount of debt written off between 2022-23 and 2023-24.

**Janet Daby:**

The table below shows the amount that has been cancelled or written off in the 2022/23 and 2023/24 financial years, broken down by reason.

REASON	AMOUNT CANCELLED OR WRITTEN OFF DURING THE FINANCIAL YEAR (£M)	
	2022/23	2023/24
Because of death	35.5	73.8
Because of age	20.1	24.0
Because of disability	2.9	2.8
Because of bankruptcy	-	-
On completion of Individual	-	-

REASON	AMOUNT CANCELLED OR WRITTEN OFF DURING THE FINANCIAL YEAR (£M)	
Voluntary Arrangement (IVA)		
Trivial balances	-	-
Losses through fraud (including phishing)	0.2	0.4
Other	-	-
Total	58.6	101.1

In the 2023/24 financial year, the department approved the Student Loans Company (SLC) to close or write off accounts confirmed as deceased by HMRC. Previously, when notifications were received from HMRC, SLC would be required to obtain the death certificate copy which would result in delays in closing the account formally (the account would sit at 'Deceased Notified'). The SLC are working through a backlog of cases, hence increased numbers of such write-offs in the 2023/24 financial year.

Write-offs do not include trivial balance write-offs. Trivial balance write-offs occur if there is a positive or negative balance on an account of £25 or less and no contact can be established with the borrower (customers can request for this to be reversed). In the context of these figures, these borrowers are considered fully repaid and are therefore not included. Cancellations involve the clearance of the remaining debt in line with the terms of the loan, for example, when reaching a specific age or becoming permanently disabled. Write-offs for bankruptcy, Individual Voluntary Arrangement or trust deed are no longer allowed against student loans balances. Any figures arise from retrospective clear up exercises.

These figures have been taken from SLC's student loans in England publication which is updated in June each year. The publication, Student loans in England: 2023 to 2024 can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/student-loans-in-england-2023-to-2024>.

The figures were published in 'Table 1A' here:

<https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fassets.publishing.service.gov.uk%2Fmedia%2F6672d0e2f92bc4be25da7e13%2Fslcsp012024.xlsx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK>.

## ■ Universities: China

**Josh Simons:**

**[13269]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to help (a) ensure that academic (i) funding and (ii) other resources are not used to support Chinese state surveillance and (b) protect universities from national security risks.

**Janet Daby:**

The UK welcomes international partnerships and students, including those from China, who make a very positive impact on the UK's higher education (HE) sector, economy and society as a whole. However, the UK will always protect its national security interests, human rights and values.

There are a set of measures that protect against undue foreign interference in UK universities. These include the Academic Technology Approval Scheme, which vets students and researchers seeking to study in sensitive areas, as well as the provisions of the Education Act 1986, which require HE providers to uphold freedom of speech within the law for staff, students and visiting speakers. In England, all registered providers must uphold applicable public interest governance principles in order to meet the regulatory requirements of the Office for Students, including principles on academic freedom and accountability, such as operating openly and with integrity.

The government also offers practical advice through the National Protective Security Authority, the National Cyber Security Centre and the Research Collaboration and Advice Team (RCAT) to support the HE sector with maximising the opportunities of international collaboration, whilst also managing the risks. The department works alongside these partners and engages directly with the sector to increase their understanding of the risks and their ability to respond to them.

The National Security Act 2023 further strengthened the UK's legal powers to counter foreign interference, including those actions which amount to transnational repression, and provides the security services and law enforcement agencies with additional tools to deter, detect and disrupt modern-day state threats.

This government will take a consistent, long-term and strategic approach to managing the UK's relations with China, rooted in UK and global interests. We will cooperate where we can, compete where we need to, and challenge where we must. The department is contributing towards the government's audit of the UK's relationship with China as a bilateral and global actor, to improve the UK's ability to understand and respond to the challenges and opportunities China poses.

**■ Universities: Freedom of Expression****Claire Coutinho:**[\[13264\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what legal costs have been incurred by her Department for the appeal by the Freedom of Speech Union against her decision to pause the implementation of the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023 as of 1 November 2024.

**Janet Daby:**

The requested information is not known while this claim is in process and it is not appropriate to comment on live legal proceedings.

## ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

### ■ Batteries: Storage

**Llinos Medi:**

[\[14145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps is he taking to increase battery storage capacity in the (a) distribution and (b) transmission grid.

**Michael Shanks:**

Batteries have a vital role to play in the energy sector, as set out in the National Energy System Operator's recent advice on achieving clean power by 2030.

The Government is working closely with the National Energy System Operator, Ofgem and industry to facilitate the deployment of battery storage. The Clean Power 2030 Action Plan will provide details on the steps we are taking to increase battery storage capacity connected to the distribution and transmission networks.

### ■ Billing: Documents

**Clive Jones:**

[\[13371\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what data his Department holds on the number of utility companies that charge for paper copies of bills; what assessment he has made of the potential impact of this practice on customers; and whether he plans to take steps to monitor this practice.

**Miatta Fahnbulleh:**

The Department does not hold this data.

Ofgem's Standard Licence Condition 21B.8 explicitly states that "the licensee must not make a specific charge for the provision of a Bill or statement of account or for access in an appropriate way to the consumption data used to calculate that Bill or statement of account. This paragraph does not apply in respect of providing additional copies of a Bill or statement of account to a Customer."

The Government is aware that not everyone can manage their account online and will continue to work with Ofgem and suppliers to understand where improvements are needed, and to ensure all consumers, including the elderly and vulnerable, receive the standard of service they deserve.

### ■ British Coal Staff Superannuation Scheme

**Lee Anderson:**

[\[13224\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he plans to make an assessment of the potential merits of the British Coal Staff Superannuation Scheme.

**Sarah Jones:**

The Government has fulfilled its manifesto commitment to transfer to the Mineworkers' Pension Scheme investment reserve to Members. I am open to

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

### ■ **British Coal Staff Superannuation Scheme: Mineworkers' Pension Scheme**

**Lee Anderson:** [\[13228\]](#)

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

**Sarah Jones:**

The Government has fulfilled its manifesto commitment to transfer to the Mineworkers' Pension Scheme investment reserve to Members. I am open to considering options put forward by the Trustees for changes to the British Coal Staff Superannuation Scheme.

### ■ **Carbon Emissions**

**Sir Christopher Chope:** [\[14005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the impact of reductions in carbon emissions since 1990 on climate change in the UK.

**Kerry McCarthy:**

The UK was the first country to set legally binding carbon budgets and the first major economy to establish a net zero target in law. The Impact Assessment of the Sixth Carbon Budget included a cost-benefit analysis which showed the economic costs and benefits of net zero. Without the shift to renewable energy, we will continue to be exposed to volatile fossil fuel markets and the cost of living crises households had to live through in the last Parliament. The UK has a vital role to play - nearly half of annual global emissions come from countries producing 3% or less of the global total, and our domestic leadership is essential to persuade others to act and protect future generations from climate breakdown.

**Sir Christopher Chope:** [\[14006\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to the Prime Minister's speech at COP29 in Baku on 12 November 2024, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of the revised emissions targets.

**Kerry McCarthy:**

At COP29, the Prime Minister announced the UK's ambitious and credible NDC target to reduce all greenhouse gas emissions by at least 81% by 2035, compared to 1990 levels, excluding international aviation and shipping emissions.

This is an ambitious, economy-wide emission reduction target, covering all greenhouse gases, sectors and categories and aligned with limiting global warming to 1.5 °C, as set out in the Global Stocktake, agreed at COP28. It aligns with the recommendation of the independent Climate Change Committee published on 26



October and is consistent with the effort required to deliver our ambitious Carbon Budget 6 (2033-2037). More details on delivery will follow in our cross-economy plan to meet carbon budgets, to be published in due course.

## ■ Carbon Emissions: Business

**Oliver Ryan:**

[13606]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of support available to businesses developing technologies to reduce carbon emissions.

**Kerry McCarthy:**

The Government policies supporting businesses to develop technologies to reduce carbon emissions adhere with the Department's published monitoring and evaluation framework, which sets out our commitment to robust and proportionate monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of our policies

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/desz-monitoring-and-evaluation-framework>).

Example programmes through which the Government provides support for low carbon technology development include the Net Zero Innovation Portfolio and its predecessor, the Energy Innovation Programme. Both of these are monitored through Key Performance Indicators and subject to external evaluations. An evaluation of the Energy Entrepreneurs Fund, for instance, found that it was effective at accelerating technological progress ( <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/energy-entrepreneurs-fund-phases-1-7-final-evaluation> ).

## ■ Carbon Emissions: Housing

**Samantha Niblett:**

[13261]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of Government programmes supporting homeowners with reducing levels of carbon emissions.

**Miatta Fahnbulleh:**

To reach our Clean Power target by 2030 we need to decarbonise the way we heat and cool our homes and workplaces. After many years of stop-start settlements by previous governments, this government has provided an exceptional initial three-year settlement for home upgrades despite this only being a single-year fiscal event. This demonstrates our ambitions to deliver the Warm Homes Plan as effectively as possible.

The new Wave 3 of the Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund (WH:SHF) and Warm Homes: Local Grant (WH:LG) will support low-income homeowners and private tenants and social tenants in England with energy performance upgrades and cleaner heating, with delivery expected in 2025.

## ■ Climate Change: International Cooperation

**Munira Wilson:**

[\[13588\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps the Government is taking to secure further International Climate Finance commitments from member states at COP29.

**Kerry McCarthy:**

This Government is committed to restoring the UK's global leadership on climate and nature. We are honouring the existing commitment on our pledge to spend £11.6bn in International Climate Finance between April 2021 and March 2026 including at least £3bn on nature, from which £1.5bn will be dedicated to protecting and restoring forests. In doing so, we can encourage member states at COP29 to follow our example. Public finance will continue to be key, but we cannot act alone. A concerted and sustained global effort to boost finance from all sources is necessary.

## ■ Community Energy: Finance

**Dave Doogan:**

[\[13275\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what methodology his Department will use to allocate the £1 billion of funding for community energy to each of the nations in the UK.

**Michael Shanks:**

GBE will benefit all four nations, creating jobs and building supply chains across the whole of UK. GBE's funding envelope provides a total amount for it to operate UK-wide.

We are resetting the Government's approach to working with the devolved nations. We are working with the Northern Ireland Executive, and Scottish and Welsh Governments on the scope and opportunities for GBE's work across the UK. The vision statement between the Scottish Government and DESNZ is a key step towards progressing this collaboration, including exploring opportunities for GBE to partner with the Community and Renewable Energy Scheme to support local energy in Scotland.

## ■ Community Energy: Infrastructure

**Stuart Anderson:**

[\[13259\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to increase levels of community energy infrastructure.

**Michael Shanks:**

The Government recognises the role community groups play in our efforts to tackle climate change. Great British Energy's Local Power Plan will support Local and Combined Authorities and Community Energy Groups to roll out small and medium-scale renewable energy projects, to develop up to 8GW of cleaner power by 2030.

The Government also supports the community energy sector through the £10 million Community Energy Fund, which enables communities across England to access grant funding to develop local renewable energy projects for investment.

## ■ District Heating

**Sojan Joseph:**

[\[13955\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if she will take steps to ensure that (a) tenants and (b) leaseholders are not adversely financially impacted by communal heating schemes.

**Miatta Fahnbulleh:**

The Department is introducing heat network regulation in January 2026 which aims to provide consumers with comparable protections to existing gas and electricity regulations.

Ofgem is being appointed as heat network regulator and will have powers to investigate and intervene where prices appear disproportionate or unfair.

We are exploring options on further price protections including potentially capping connection costs within heat network zones.

We are also working with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to ensure heat network regulation works alongside existing leaseholder and tenant protections.

## ■ Electricity: Infrastructure

**Ms Polly Billington:**

[\[13139\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, when he plans to publish new guidance on Community Benefits for Electricity Transmission Network Infrastructure.

**Michael Shanks:**

We are committed to ensuring that communities who live near new clean energy infrastructure can see the benefits of this and are currently considering how to most effectively deliver this. This includes developing guidance on community benefits for electricity transmission network infrastructure, which we will publish in due course.

## ■ Electricity: Wales

**Llinos Medi:**

[\[14147\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, pursuant to the Answer of 14 October 2024 to Question 7928 on Electricity: Wales, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of planned investment in the (a) distribution and (b) transmission grid to meet Net Zero targets.

**Llinos Medi:**

[\[14148\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, pursuant to the Answer of 14 October 2024 to Question 7928 on Electricity: Wales, what estimate he has made of

the level of investment needed between 2028 and 2033 in the (a) transmission and (b) distribution grids to help meet net zero targets.

**Michael Shanks:**

As the independent regulator, Ofgem assesses network owners' investment plans with regard to their duties, including to support net zero. Government supports Ofgem's ambition for acceleration of network build and strategic investment in the next electricity transmission price control, covering the period 2026-31. Ofgem's current consultation on the framework for the next electricity distribution price control (starting in 2028) identifies the need for significant investment ahead of need, strategic planning, and regulatory changes to prepare the GB distribution networks for net zero.

■ **Energy: Meters**

**Alison Hume:**

[\[14234\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the smart meter network in the north of England.

**Miatta Fahnbulleh:**

The Government recognises that too many households across GB are currently unable to send automatic readings to their energy suppliers, including meters without access to WAN coverage. We will set out new plans to improve the rollout and the consumer experience, alongside Ofgem, in due course.

**Alison Hume:**

[\[14236\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what guidance his Department issues to energy suppliers on their statutory responsibilities for installing functioning smart meters in customers' homes.

**Miatta Fahnbulleh:**

The Department is working closely with industry to make sure they are addressing meters that are not providing automatic readings. This work includes monitoring and sharing benchmarked performance data, sharing best practice and providing guidance on how to identify and resolve meter operation issues.

Energy suppliers are obligated under their licence conditions to meet minimum annual installation targets and take all reasonable steps to ensure their customers' smart meters are functional. The Office of Gas and Electricity Markets (Ofgem) is responsible for regulating

■ **Environment Protection: Industry**

**Lauren Edwards:**

[\[13089\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what progress he has made on establishing the Office for Clean Energy Jobs; and when he plans to publish its terms of reference.

**Sarah Jones:**

The Office for Clean Energy Jobs ('the Office') has been established within DESNZ. The Office will focus on developing a skilled workforce in core energy and net zero sectors, crucial to meeting our mission to make the UK a clean energy superpower. Recognising the critical workforce challenges within the energy transition, the Office is dedicated to ensuring that clean energy jobs are not only abundant, but also of high quality, focussing on fair pay, favourable terms, and good working conditions.

The Office is actively engaging with key stakeholders, including trade unions and industry leaders, to keep job quality at the forefront of our efforts. Grangemouth will be among the first areas that the Office will work with, as part of the joint UK and Scottish Government investment plan. DESNZ will also come on board as a strategic partner to develop a skills passport to support workers to transition to the clean energy sector.

**Fuel Poverty****Pippa Heylings:** [\[14248\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what estimate he has made of the number of people living in fuel poverty.

**Pippa Heylings:** [\[14249\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what estimate he has made of changes in the number of (a) children and (b) pensioners living in fuel poverty since 1 January 2024.

**Pippa Heylings:** [\[14251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what estimate he has made of the number of people at risk of fuel poverty in winter 2024-25.

**Miatta Fahnbulleh:**

There were an estimated 3.17 million households in fuel poverty in England in 2023 and this is projected to decrease to 3.12 million in 2024 based on assumptions of economic factors and government policy as at January 2024. These statistics are taken from the published annual fuel poverty statistics published in February 2024: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fuel-poverty-statistics>.

The change in the number of households in fuel poverty with children, by age group and by employment status in England can be found in the published 2023 fuel poverty trends tables: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/fuel-poverty-trends-2024>. Updated Fuel Poverty statistics relating to 2024 will be published in March 2025.

**Pippa Heylings:** [\[14250\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what recent assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of progress on meeting targets to end fuel poverty by 2030.

**Miatta Fahnbulleh:**

The Government is committed to tackling fuel poverty. We are currently reviewing the fuel poverty strategy and engaging with stakeholders as part of this process. We will publish a consultation on a new strategy in due course. The Secretary of State has already announced the launch of the Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund and Warm Homes: Local Grant, as well as the intention to consult on new minimum energy efficiency standards in the social and private rented sectors.

**■ Great British Energy****Melanie Onn:**[\[13496\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of GB Energy supporting grid connection.

**Michael Shanks:**

Great British Energy (GBE) will drive clean energy deployment. Across its different functions, GBE will offer a range of support to turbocharge the growth of energy projects, including through project development. The electricity grid is a key enabler for the deployment of clean power generation and Government will work with industry to upgrade our national transmission infrastructure. I do not anticipate that GBE will be directly involved in providing grid connections. However, by working with National Energy System Operator, Ofgem, The Crown Estate and other stakeholders, GBE could provide a coordinated approach to grid connections, helping to accelerate and derisk the delivery of clean energy technologies.

**■ Innovation: West Dorset****Edward Morello:**[\[13303\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to help promote rural innovation in green technologies in West Dorset constituency.

**Kerry McCarthy:**

Technology and innovation are essential to reaching clean power by 2030 and are a critical part of the Government's deployment plans for achieving the Clean Energy Superpower Mission.

The Southwest of England is playing an important role in advancing clean technologies, with over £120m committed to the region through our Net Zero Innovation Portfolio (NZIP).

**■ National Grid****Llinos Medi:**[\[14146\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what discussions he has had with relevant stakeholders on rewiring existing (a) distribution and (b) transmission grid infrastructure.

**Michael Shanks:**

The reinforcement of our electricity network is critical to deliver clean, secure power to homes and businesses across the country. This reinforcement includes both new infrastructure, on and offshore, and upgrades to existing lines which are always considered first. Transmission and distribution companies are carrying out significant upgrades to increase the capacity of existing lines on their networks. However, upgrading will not eliminate the need for new lines as it will not be sufficient to provide the necessary network capacity in all areas.

**■ Offshore Industry: North Sea****Ian Byrne:**[\[13254\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of his Department's policy on new oil and gas fields in the North Sea on his policies on net zero.

**Michael Shanks:**

We plan to consult later this year on the implementation of our manifesto position not to issue new oil and gas licences to explore new fields.

The Government's priority is a fair, orderly and prosperous transition in the North Sea in line with our climate and legal obligations, which drives towards our clean energy future of energy security, lower bills, and good, long-term jobs.

**■ Renewable Energy****Munira Wilson:**[\[13586\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to ensure a just transition to a renewable energy based economy.

**Michael Shanks:**

The Government is actively coordinating its efforts to ensure a just transition, enabling workers to benefit from the economic opportunities arising from our shift to net zero. To support this, it has established the Office for Clean Energy Jobs, which aims to assist workers and communities at risk of economic displacement by focusing on skill development and training in the clean energy and net zero sectors. The Government's primary goal is to create quality jobs in Britain's industrial heartlands, ensuring a fair transition for industries based in the North Sea.

**Pippa Heylings:**[\[13856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what discussions he has had with Ofgem on the adequacy of local supply rights for small-scale renewable energy providers.

**Michael Shanks:**

Ministers have not held meetings on this specific matter with Ofgem. The Department is aware that Ofgem's licensing regime already enables small-scale generators to apply for a supply licence that is restricted to a specific geographic area.

The Government's Local Power Plan aims to support local energy generation projects through working with local authorities, combined authorities and communities. Officials within the department are in discussions with Ofgem to understand the current regulatory landscape in more detail.

## ■ Wind Power

**Mike Amesbury:** [\[13243\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has had discussions with the Secretary of State for Business and Trade on the potential merits of including support for the wind industry in the Government's industrial strategy.

**Michael Shanks:**

Given the key interactions between the two departments, this Department is in regular discussions with the Department of Business and Trade regarding the Industrial Strategy

Due in Spring 2025, the Industrial Strategy will channel support to eight key growth-driving sectors – those in which the UK excels today and will excel tomorrow – and this includes Clean Energy Industries. Future work will be done to determine the key subsectors, using evidence collected from the Invest 2035 Green Paper and further evidence-gathering.

**Nick Timothy:** [\[13607\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether it is his Department's policy to allow wind turbines manufactured by Chinese companies to be used on new wind farms.

**Michael Shanks:**

The Government takes the security and resilience of our energy infrastructure extremely seriously with the UK being one of the most reliable and safest energy systems, and one of the most attractive investment destinations in the world.

The Government will take a consistent, long-term and strategic approach to managing the UK's relations with China, rooted in UK and global interests. The Government will co-operate where it can, compete where it needs to, and challenge where it must.

## ■ Wind Power: National Wealth Fund

**Mike Amesbury:** [\[13242\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the National Wealth Fund on offshore wind supply chain development.

**Michael Shanks:**

The National Wealth Fund builds on the success of the UK Infrastructure Bank, expanding its mandate, with an enhanced risk budget, to support the broader Industrial Strategy.



The National Wealth Fund aims to address key barriers to investment and strengthen the entire value chain, by catalysing more private investment and accelerating investable projects coming to market to unlock growth opportunities across the UK. This will ensure robust support for domestic clean energy supply chains.

## ■ Wind Power: Seas and Oceans

**Mike Amesbury:**

[\[13241\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on offshore wind supply chain development.

**Michael Shanks:**

The Chancellor has launched the National Wealth Fund, capitalised with £27.8bn, to mobilise billions of pounds of investment in the UK's world-leading clean energy and growth industries.

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

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 will set out its full approach to supporting UK clean energy supply chains in the Industrial Strategy in the spring.

## ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

### ■ Dogs: Meat

**Steve Yemm:**

[\[13591\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to outlaw the consumption of dog meat.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

The Government has seen no evidence that dog meat is being sold or consumed in this country. There are strict rules for food businesses on the slaughter and production of meat for human consumption in the United Kingdom and dog or cat meat would not be permitted under these requirements. We also have specific laws on the sale of food in England which are enforced under the Novel Foods Regulation 2018. These regulations make it an offence to sell dog or cat meat in England.

### ■ Domestic Waste

**Tom Hayes:**

[\[11731\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to encourage reductions in household waste.

**Mary Creagh:**

The Government is committed to creating a roadmap to a circular economy – a future where we keep our resources in use for longer; waste is reduced; we accelerate the path to net zero; we see investment in critical infrastructure and green jobs; our economy prospers; and nature thrives.

We continue to support the Waste and Resources Action Programme in waste prevention activities including support for Textiles 2030 and Courtauld 2030.

Alongside this, the Simpler Recycling reforms will ensure that across England, people will be able to recycle the same materials, no longer needing to check what their council will accept for recycling. Every household across England will be able to recycle the same materials across the following waste streams: metal; glass; plastic; paper and card; food waste; garden waste.

This policy will make recycling easier and ensure there is a comprehensive, consistent service across England. This will reduce confusion with recycling to improve recycling rates, ensuring there is more recycled material in the products we buy, and stimulating the UK recycling industry will grow.

**■ Domestic Waste: Waste Disposal****Tim Roca:**[\[13722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make two weeks the maximum time between bin collections.

**Mary Creagh:**

Simpler Recycling will mean that people across England will be able to recycle the same materials at home, work or school, ending the confusion over what can or cannot be recycled in different parts of the country.

Ministers are currently reviewing final Simpler Recycling policy decisions, including guidance on the approach to collections, and we hope to provide further certainty and clarity to stakeholders as soon as possible.

**■ Food: Allergies****Ian Sollom:**[\[13593\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to help ensure safe dining in restaurants for people with food allergies.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has a statutory role in leading government policy on food safety, including in gathering evidence and advising the government.

Following the FSA Board decision in December 2023, FSA officials are progressing a programme of work to evaluate and appraise the options for improving the provision of allergen information for non-prepacked foods, such as food served in restaurants.

The FSA has agreed to keep Defra looped in on this work and any recommendations emerging from it. It would not be appropriate for Defra to comment on any proposals prior to the FSA completing its evaluation and appraisal of policy options.

Any new legislation needs to be carefully considered, taking into account the views of all stakeholders and the balance of costs and benefits.

## ■ Food: Labelling

**Andrew Bowie:**

[\[13223\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure clear labelling of (a) locally produced fruit and vegetables and (b) imported produce.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

The UK maintains high standards on the information provided on food labels and packaging so that consumers can have confidence in the food that they buy. This applies equally to food that is domestically produced or imported.

The fundamental principles of our food labelling rules are that information provided to the consumer must not mislead and must enable consumers to make informed decisions.

Country of origin information is compulsory for most uncut fresh fruit and vegetables. In any case, where an indication of origin or provenance is given, either in words or pictures, this must be accurate. Buying food locally and supporting their local food economy is important to many consumers and where any label indicates that a food is produced locally, this must not be misleading to a consumer.

Shops and supermarkets will often use in-store signs to help shoppers easily identify and buy great British produce and this too is subject to the food labelling rules.

## ■ Furs

**Neil Coyle:**

[\[13781\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when the Animal Welfare Committee is expected to publish its review on the responsible sourcing of fur.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

I refer the Honourable Member to the reply I gave to the Honourable Member for Romford for [PQ 4519](#) on 16 September 2024.

## ■ Horticulture: Exports

**Valerie Vaz:**

[\[13766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with the horticultural industry on changes to phytosanitary certificates.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

Defra engages with GB businesses well in advance of any such changes, through the Plant Health Portal and Plant Health Advisory Forum

Any changes to the required content of phytosanitary certificates are communicated to third country trading partners via World Trade Organisation notifications and through letters directly to third country competent authorities. Such notifications are sent months in advance to ensure that third countries have time to comment on, and adapt to, the changes.

The exception to this is during emergency situations, when the high level of biosecurity risk means new requirements are implemented more rapidly.

**■ Horticulture: UK Trade with EU****Valerie Vaz:****[R] [13762]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions his Department has had with the horticultural industry on the potential impact of EU-UK border processes on biosecurity.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

Defra continues to monitor and review the impact of the controls. We are working closely with industry, trade partners and enforcement agencies to minimise disruption and costs to trade, while continuing to protect our biosecurity.

Defra engages with the horticultural industry through the Plant Health Portal and Plant Health Advisory Forum.

**■ Inland Waterways: Ashford****Sojan Joseph:****[12894]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department has taken to clear up water ways in Ashford constituency.

**Emma Hardy:**

The Government's Water (Special Measures) Bill will be the first important step in enabling wider, 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.

With respect to the Ashford constituency, this year Environment Agency (EA) officers have inspected four permitted water company assets, with more planned in the coming months as part of an increased programme of regulatory visits. No significant issues have been found so far. Where significant permit breaches or issues are identified, the appropriate enforcement response will be pursued according to the EA's enforcement policy.

EA Agricultural Officers have been focusing their regulatory efforts in the Great Stour catchment this year. These inspections ensure farmers are operating in ways that reduce polluting inputs into watercourses.

The EA is also an active participant of the Kentish Stour Catchment partnership which identifies and commissions projects to improve water quality and river habitats across the catchment.

## ■ Landfill

**Mrs Lorraine Beavers:**

[\[14175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps to require landfill operators to publish regular information on the (a) types and (b) quantities of waste deposited at each of their sites.

**Mary Creagh:**

The waste data for landfills in England is publicly available through the Environment Agency. Operators must report waste types and quantities, which are part of a public register accessible via the Environment Agency and published annually on GOV.UK: [How to access waste management data for England - GOV.UK](#)

The most recent data can be found online through the [2023 Waste Data Interrogator - data.gov.uk](#) webpage.

## ■ Landfill: Coastal Areas

**Mrs Lorraine Beavers:**

[\[14176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of banning further licenses for coastal landfill sites.

**Mary Creagh:**

The Secretary of State does not currently have plans to make an assessment of the potential merits of banning further licences for coastal landfill sites.

The Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations provide an integrated framework for the regulation of activities that could harm the environment or human health. The Environment Agency issues permits only if pollution risks are acceptable and requires coastal landfill operators to prevent waste release, considering future climate risks. Local planning authorities have responsibility for providing planning consent for facilities such as landfill sites and decide upon future landfill locations.

## ■ Lithium-ion Batteries: Waste Disposal

**Alistair Strathern:**

[\[13283\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent steps he has taken to regulate the safe disposal of lithium-ion batteries.

**Mary Creagh:**

Existing UK regulations place a number of obligations related to battery disposal on producers of lithium-ion batteries and products containing lithium-ion batteries.

These obligations include the requirement for all batteries sold in the UK to be clearly marked with the crossed-out wheeled bin symbol indicating that they should not be disposed of by throwing them in the bin.

Those selling batteries are required to provide a means to take back waste batteries and producers of industrial batteries (which includes electric vehicle, e-bike and e-scooter batteries) must take back waste batteries free of charge upon request.

This Government is committed to cracking down on waste as we move towards a circular economy where we keep our resources in use for longer and reduce waste. Proposals to consult on reforms to the UK batteries regulations are being reviewed before setting out next steps.

■ **Litter****Dr Simon Opher:**[\[14170\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing mandatory codes of practice for businesses to reduce litter.

**Mary Creagh:**

The Government is not, at this time, planning to make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing mandatory codes of practice for businesses to reduce litter.

We want to see businesses recognising what they can do to discourage the littering of their products and packaging, and the potential benefits to their brand of being associated with tackling, rather than causing, litter. Local councils do, however, have powers to intervene where needed. These include Community Protection Notices which can be used to require the owner of premises to take certain actions to tackle litter created by their activities. Planning guidance also clarifies the powers available to councils to ensure new hot food takeaways do not increase the impact of litter on local communities.

■ **Packaging: Recycling****Claire Hanna:**[\[13847\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the policy objective is of (a) extended producer responsibility and (b) packaging recovering notes; and what the relationship is between the two policies.

**Mary Creagh:**

Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging (pEPR) is intended to make producers responsible for the costs of managing their packaging, incentivising them to use less packaging and make the packaging they do use more sustainable.

The key pEPR obligations include paying local authority disposal costs for the management of packaging collected from households and public information campaigns, in addition to scheme administration and regulator fees. pEPR also includes a recycling obligation, which requires producers to obtain PRNs, based on the amount of packaging they have placed on the market, from accredited reprocessors and exporters. The cost of PRNs is intended to support the actual recycling of the collected packaging waste.

Combined, pEPR disposal fees and the cost of PRNs support the collection, sorting and reprocessing of packaging, as well as the costs of disposing of packaging which is not recycled.

A full explanation of how the pEPR system will operate can be found in the Explanatory Memorandum published alongside the Producer Responsibility (Packaging and Packaging Waste) Regulations which were laid in Parliament on the 24<sup>th</sup> October [The Producer Responsibility Obligations \(Packaging and Packaging Waste\) Regulations 2024 - Draft Explanatory Memorandum](#).

#### ■ **Thames Water: Employers' Contributions**

**Dr Ben Spencer:**

[\[12554\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of changes in employers' National Insurance contributions on Thames Water's (a) financial viability and (b) infrastructure investment plan.

**Emma Hardy:**

To repair public finances and help raise the revenue required to increase funding for public services, the Government has taken the difficult decision to increase employer National Insurance. The Government has been clear that we need to take difficult decisions to deliver long-term stability and growth. Stabilising the public finances is the only way to create long-term stability in which businesses can thrive

Defra will not make any assessment of the potential impact of changes in employers' National Insurance contributions for an individual company.

#### ■ **Waste Management: Reform**

**Uma Kumaran:**

[\[13367\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to implement the recommendations of the Fifth Report of the Committee of Public Accounts of 2023-24 on Government's programme of waste reforms, HC333, published on 1 December 2023.

**Mary Creagh:**

The Government intends to implement the recommendations set out in the report, of which a number have already been implemented by the programme. Due to the General Election and subsequent change in Government earlier in the year, the strategic landscape that the programme is part of has changed and therefore the

Government is reviewing some of the intended target dates for the implementation of the recommendations to ensure that they align with the Governments Missions. The Government is committed to ensuring successful implementation of the Collection and Packaging Reforms as set out in the Autumn budget presented to the House in October. These reforms remain intrinsic to providing the sector much needed certainty to encourage future investment, along with a transition towards a Circular Economy.

## FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

### ■ Armenia: Azerbaijan

**Sammy Wilson:**

[\[13193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made recent representations to his Azerbaijani counterpart on Armenian prisoners illegally held by the Azerbaijan regime.

**Stephen Doughty:**

The UK continues to urge the Azerbaijani authorities to ensure that those detained during its longstanding conflict with Armenia, or during September 2023's military operation in Nagorno-Karabakh, are afforded a fair trial and provided safe conditions, in accordance with Azerbaijan's international obligations and commitments. Regarding prisoners of war, we have been consistent in calling for their release, and for the return of the remains of the deceased, throughout the period of conflict in the region. I raised this issue with Special Representative of the President of Azerbaijan, Elchin Amirbayov, during his visit to the UK in October.

**Sammy Wilson:**

[\[13194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had recent discussions with his Azerbaijani counterpart on the right of return of Armenians of Artsakh under international protection.

**Stephen Doughty:**

The UK has consistently encouraged the Azerbaijani authorities to provide clarity on the rights and security of ethnic Armenians displaced by conflict who wish to return to Nagorno-Karabakh. We have no plans to raise international protection in relation to this matter. We commend the tremendous efforts of the Armenian government which has supported those displaced from the region to enable them to have a future in the country.

### ■ Armenia: Detainees and Refugees

**Colum Eastwood:**

[\[13576\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to make representations on (a) a right of return for Armenians and (b) the release of detained Armenians during the COP29 summit.



**Stephen Doughty:**

The Government has encouraged Azerbaijan to provide clarity on the rights and security of ethnic Armenians displaced by conflict who wish to return to Nagorno-Karabakh. The UK continues to urge Azerbaijan to ensure that those detained during September 2023's military action in Nagorno-Karabakh are afforded a fair trial and provided safe conditions. Regarding the remaining prisoners of war, we have been consistent in calling for their release and for the return of the remains of the deceased throughout the period of conflict in the region. I discussed these issues with Azerbaijani counterparts in the run-up to COP29.

**Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction Agreement****Dr Al Pinkerton:**[\[13314\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what progress he has made on ratification of the United Nations agreement on biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction.

**Anneliese Dodds:**

The Government is completely committed to ratification of the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement, also known as the High Seas Treaty), which is in line with our determination to reinvigorate the UK's wider international leadership on climate and nature. Work is in hand on the measures needed to implement the detailed and complex provisions of the Agreement before the UK can ratify.

**Uma Kumaran:**[\[13362\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had recent discussions with the Leader of the House on bringing forward legislative proposals to ratify the Global Ocean Treaty.

**Anneliese Dodds:**

The Government is completely committed to ratification of the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement, also known as the High Seas Treaty), which is in line with our determination to reinvigorate the UK's wider international leadership on climate and nature. The Foreign Secretary and the Leader of the House of Commons have discussed the measures needed to implement the detailed and complex provisions of the Agreement before the UK can ratify.

**Council for At-risk Academics****Patricia Ferguson:**[\[13124\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will take steps with Cabinet colleagues to support the work of the Council for At-Risk Academics.

**Anneliese Dodds:**

The UK is committed to supporting and promoting academic freedom and is aware of the excellent work that the Council of At-Risk Academics does in helping academics in dangerous situations all over the world. The UK also recognises the essential role that civil society and human rights defenders, which can include academics, play in promoting and protecting human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. Our Embassies and Missions support those at risk in a number of ways, including monitoring cases, observing trials and raising issues with host governments.

**■ Cybercrime****Mr Gregory Campbell:**[\[13999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many potential cyber attacks from other states were intercepted by the National Cyber Security Centre in the six weeks before 4 July 2024.

**Stephen Doughty:**

The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) continually monitors threats to our national security. The NCSC does not routinely disclose statistics relating to incidents. However, details on key findings and trends will be published in its Annual Review on 3 December 2024.

Ahead of the UK General Election, NCSC engaged with stakeholders across the UK economy and society to ensure they had the necessary tools to keep the election safe.

The Electoral Commission also reported that polling day ran smoothly, and that people were able to cast their ballot securely. Ultimately, because voting takes place with pencil and paper, this significantly reduces the threat of interference.

**■ Darfur: Human Rights****Jim Shannon:**[\[12717\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the human rights situation in Darfur.

**Anneliese Dodds:**

The UK condemns the growing body of evidence of serious atrocities being committed against civilians in Darfur and wider Sudan, including in the recent report by the UN Fact Finding Mission. We analyse the conflict and atrocities on an ongoing basis including through funding the Centre for Information Resilience (CIR), a research body which is gathering open-source evidence about the ongoing fighting in Sudan, with an eye to future accountability processes. In October, the UK led the mandate renewal of the UN Fact-Finding Mission for Sudan (FFM) as part of the 'Sudan Core Group' at the UN Human Rights Council. The FFM is vital for ensuring credible allegations of human rights violations and abuses by all sides, including atrocities being committed in Darfur, are investigated impartially. The UK also continues to provide support to the Office for the High Commissioner for Human

Rights in Sudan (OHCHR), a UN body that plays a crucial role in monitoring and reporting on human rights violations. We are working with the UN, key regional actors, and UN Security Council (UNSC) members to shine a spotlight on Sudan during our UNSC presidency. On 12 October, the Minister for Africa chaired an open meeting on protection of civilians at the UNSC, seeking to galvanise greater action on protection and humanitarian access following the publication of the UN Secretary General's recommendations.

## ■ Diplomatic Relations: Human Rights and Politics and Government

**Neil Coyle:**

[\[13786\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the criteria for maintaining diplomatic relations with other states include (a) the strength of democratic institutions and (b) human rights.

**Anneliese Dodds:**

The UK is committed to promoting and protecting democratic institutions and human rights around the world. The decision to maintain or suspend diplomatic relations is made on a case-by-case basis.

## ■ Donald Trump

**Rupert Lowe:**

[\[13101\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if the Prime Minister will have discussions with the Royal Household on issuing an invitation for a state visit to President-Elect Trump.

**Stephen Doughty:**

The Government does not comment on discussions with the Royal Household. The Prime Minister spoke to President-elect Donald Trump on 6 November to congratulate him on his historic victory. The Prime Minister said he looked forward to working closely with President-elect Trump across all areas of the UK-US special relationship.

## ■ Export Controls and Sanctions: Departmental Coordination

**Liam Byrne:**

[\[13738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure effective cross-government working on (a) sanctions and (b) export controls (i) policy, (ii) implementation and (iii) enforcement between (A) his Department's Sanctions Directorate, (B) the Office for Financial Sanctions Implementation, (C) the Office for Trade Sanctions Implementation, (D) the Export Controls Joint Unit and (E) HMRC.

**Stephen Doughty:**

In October, I convened the first Small Ministerial Group on sanctions, which launched a cross-Government review to examine whether we have the right powers, approach, capacity and resourcing on policy, implementation and enforcement, with an urgent

focus on strengthening the latter. This grouping brings together key sanctions Departments: the FCDO; His Majesty's Treasury (with responsibility for both the Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation and HMRC); the Department for Business and Trade (with responsibility for the Office for Trade Sanctions Implementation and shared responsibility for the Export Controls Joint Unit with the Ministry of Defence and FCDO); the Department for Transport; and the Home Office.

### ■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Electronic Purchasing Card Solution

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[13746\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 10 September 2024 to Question 4342 on Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Electronic Purchasing Card Solution, for what reason his Department was unable to meet its target to publish the historic (a) £500 (period November-2022 to July-2024 inclusive) and (b) £25,000 (period June-2022 to July-2024 inclusive) spend files by the end of September; and when he now plans to publish them.

**Catherine West:**

The FCDO publishes its transparency publications in accordance with the cross-Government transparency schedule, determined by Cabinet Office. The September 2024 transparency publication was postponed and therefore the publication of these reports has been delayed.

The FCDO is targeting the next cross-Government transparency day to publish the historic files, presently scheduled for the end of November 2024.

### ■ India: Political Prisoners

**Nadia Whittome:** [\[14136\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the imprisonment of (a) Yasin Malik and (b) other political prisoners under the Public Safety Act in India.

**Catherine West:**

HM Government has made no specific assessments related to the case of Yasmin Malik or others detained in India under the Public Safety Act. It is not for the UK to comment on an independent judicial process in another country. However, we encourage all states to ensure that their domestic laws adhere to international standards for free and fair trials and that the treatment of detainees respects international obligations.

### ■ International Criminal Court: Vladimir Putin

**Mr Gregory Campbell:** [\[13174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make representations to his new US counterpart in January 2025 on potential steps

to help implement the arrest warrant for President Putin of Russia issued by International Criminal Court judges in March 2023.

**Stephen Doughty:**

We encourage all countries to co-operate with the International Criminal Court (ICC). The UK is fully committed to holding Russia to account for its illegal and barbaric actions in Ukraine, and has provided support to the ICC to assist its work, including the investigation into the situation in Ukraine. The Foreign Secretary looks forward to working with the Trump Administration in the months and years ahead in the spirit of our shared values of freedom, democracy and enterprise. American leadership will remain crucial to the global challenges that all our nations face.

■ **Nagorno Karabakh: Cultural Heritage**

**Sammy Wilson:**

[\[13195\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made recent representations to his Azerbaijani counterpart on the protection of the cultural and religious heritage of Artsakh.

**Stephen Doughty:**

The UK Government is clear that the preservation of religious and cultural sites in the region is important. We are aware of allegations from both Armenia and Azerbaijan that cultural and religious sites have been deliberately damaged over the course of the decades-long conflict between the two states. The UK Government has raised the topic of religious and cultural destruction with the Azerbaijani Government on many occasions and continues to press for the protection of sites of significance.

■ **Sanctions**

**Liam Byrne:**

[\[13739\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how the Government assesses the (a) effectiveness and (b) impact of sanctions policies.

**Stephen Doughty:**

UK sanctions are designed and targeted to deter and disrupt malign behaviour, and to demonstrate our defence of fundamental principles, including democracy, human rights and the rule of law. The FCDO conducts reviews of the effectiveness and impact of our sanctions regimes. Any assessment will depend on the intended purposes of each individual regime - which are set out in the regulations for that regime. For example on Russia we consider wider macro-economic impacts, reduction in UK exports and imports and wider changes to trading patterns, changes to designated persons' behaviour, volume of frozen assets, and alignment with international partners. I launched a cross-Government review of sanctions enforcement with the support of Ministers from His Majesty's Treasury, the Department of Business and Trade, the Department for Transport and the Home Office. Through this review the Government will consider whether we have the right

powers, approach, capacity and resourcing on policy, implementation and enforcement of sanctions.

#### ■ Sierra Leone: Development Aid

**Neil Coyle:**

[\[13779\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to monitor the effectiveness of the use of UK aid in Sierra Leone.

**Anneliese Dodds:**

UK aid is guided by UK Government priorities and we work closely with the Government of Sierra Leone to ensure effective implementation of Sierra Leone's own national development plans. The UK does not provide budget support to the Government of Sierra Leone.

All UK development funding is subject to rigorous procurement protocols, due diligence and strong transparency standards. Our programmes are regularly and robustly monitored. The FCDO also works closely with the Independent Commission for Aid Impact to apply the highest standards to our aid spend. These measures ensure the effectiveness of UK aid in Sierra Leone throughout design, delivery and evaluation stages.

#### ■ Sierra Leone: Elections

**Neil Coyle:**

[\[13785\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps he is taking with international counterparts to ensure that future elections in Sierra Leone will be free and fair.

**Anneliese Dodds:**

In his first conversation with Sierra Leone's Foreign Minister, Timothy Kabba, Lord Collins, Minister for Africa, highlighted the importance of implementing the Agreement for National Unity and recommendations of the Cross-Party Committee on Electoral Systems and Management Bodies in a bipartisan way. The UK remains committed to supporting a democratic Sierra Leone, and in this vein the British High Commission is currently exploring options to bolster support to governance processes that underpin the 2023-28 electoral cycle, in consultation with our diplomatic partners in Sierra Leone.

#### ■ Ukraine: Military Aid

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[12714\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans he has for the provision of support to Ukraine.

**Stephen Doughty:**

The Government's support for Ukraine is ironclad. The UK has provided £12.8 billion in military, humanitarian and economic support to Ukraine since 2022. We have

committed £3 billion a year in military assistance to Ukraine for as long as it takes. The UK will also provide £2.26 billion as part of the G7 Extraordinary Revenue Acceleration Loans to Ukraine scheme. This is additional funding on top of our existing £3 billion a year commitment and will be used for Ukraine to procure military equipment via the MOD.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

### ■ Antimicrobials: Drug Resistance

**Dr Danny Chambers:**

[\[14278\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he is taking steps to encourage increase his international counterparts to increase financial support for low- and middle-income countries in combating antimicrobial resistance at the Global High-Level Ministerial Meeting in Saudi Arabia.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The United Kingdom has long championed improved global finance to address antimicrobial resistance (AMR). The Department has committed £450 million of Official Development Assistance budget to tackle AMR in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) through improving laboratory capacity and surveillance on resistance. The UK has also funded £106.6 million through the Global AMR Innovation Fund to develop innovative solutions to AMR which focus on the needs of LMICs.

We welcome the adoption of the political declaration on AMR at the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and its call for the World Bank to work with the Quadripartite to facilitate improved access to existing funding for AMR.

I attended the 4<sup>th</sup> Global High-Level Ministerial Conference on Antimicrobial Resistance in Jeddah on 15 and 16 November 2024. At the event I worked with other global leaders to secure progress that is being made to deliver the commitments agreed at the UNGA High Level meeting and build momentum on the actions needed, particularly on sustainable financing to tackle AMR.

### ■ Audiology: Paediatrics

**Gregory Stafford:**

[\[13644\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 6 November 2024 to Question 10930 on Audiology: Paediatrics, how many children have been (a) recalled for reassessment and (b) needed onward referral to clinical services following the review by the NHS England National Paediatric Hearing Improvement Programme.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

The Department does not hold this information.

**■ Blood: Donors****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[13444\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he has taken to work with relevant organisations to increase blood donations in (a) England and (b) Romford constituency.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

NHS Blood and Transplant (NHSBT) is responsible for blood donation in England.

Throughout the year, NHSBT produces advertising campaigns to attract new donors, such as the new gift of blood winter stocks campaign for 2024. As part of this work, NHSBT partners with organisations to utilise their expertise and national resources to increase blood donations. Notable examples of these partnerships include Disney, Dalgety Teas, Fulham Football Club, the Civil Service, National Health Service trusts, and integrated care boards.

In addition, NHSBT awards funds to community groups through its Community Grants Programme to promote blood donation. This funds community, and faith and belief organisations to drive awareness, understanding, and behaviour change. During the latest funding round, NHSBT awarded funds to 23 organisations to promote blood donation.

NHSBT's physical and digital marketing, and collaboration and partnership, activity takes place across England, including in the Romford constituency.

**■ Breast Cancer: Research****Melanie Ward:**[\[13708\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has had recent discussions with the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology on research into lobular breast cancer.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

Cancer research is a critical priority for the Department of Health and Social Care, the Department of Science, Innovation and Technology, and their operational delivery partners, like the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) and the Medical Research Council (MRC). Department of Health and Social Care and Department of Science, Innovation and Technology officials meet regularly to discuss a range of research investments, including lobular and other breast cancers, to drive the maximum collective research impact on policy, practice, and individual lives.

The Department invests £1.5 billion each year on research through its research delivery arm, the NIHR. The NIHR spends more on cancer than any other disease group, at over £121.8 million in 2022/23, reflecting its high priority. The NIHR awarded funding to 53 new research projects on breast cancer in the period 2018/19 to 2022/23, to a total value of £31 million.

Cancer is also one of the largest areas of investment for the MRC with an annual spend of approximately £125 million, including investment in the Francis Crick



Institute. In addition, other parts of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) spend approximately £75 million annually. Over five years, between 2018 and 2022, the average funding awarded by UKRI, including the MRC, to breast cancer research was approximately £10 million per year.

#### ■ **Cancer: Mental Health Services**

**Mr Connor Rand:** [\[14151\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many psycho-oncologists are currently working in the NHS.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Department does not hold the information requested.

#### ■ **Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease: Medical Treatments**

**Jim Shannon:** [\[13771\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people are being treated for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The Department does not hold this data. Most chronic obstructive pulmonary disease treatment will take place in the community, so this information will be held at a regional level.

#### ■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

**Sir Christopher Chope:** [\[14004\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what support is available from the NHS for people requiring neurological rehabilitation following a covid-19 vaccination.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

In the very rare event where an individual may have suffered a severe adverse reaction to a COVID-19 vaccine, care and support will be best met and managed by local National Health Service specialist services, augmented as appropriate by national specialist advice. Individuals would be treated and managed through existing healthcare services, for example by seeing their general practitioner, who may refer them to a relevant specialist if necessary.

#### ■ **Dementia: Diagnosis**

**Jim Shannon:** [\[13453\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of dementia diagnosis times; and what steps his Department is taking to improve diagnosis rates.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

We are committed to improving dementia diagnosis rates and recovering them to the national ambition for two thirds of people with dementia to have a formal diagnosis.

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

The Government's Dame Barbara Windsor Dementia Goals programme is investing in innovations in biomarkers, clinical trials, and implementation. Some of these innovations could support improved diagnosis in the future, if validated for clinical use.

### ■ Dental Services: Lincolnshire

**Sir John Hayes:**

**[13731]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the average waiting time is to register with an NHS dentist in Lincolnshire.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

Patients in England are not registered with a National Health Service 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 the South Holland and The Deepings constituency, this is the NHS Lincolnshire ICB.

### ■ Dental Services: NHS

**Tim Roca:**

**[13719]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase the number of dental practices that accept new NHS patients.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

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

NHS dentists are required to keep their NHS.UK website profiles up to date so that patients can find a dentist more easily. This includes information on whether they are accepting new patients. This information is available at the following link:

<https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-dentist>

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

## ■ Dental Services: Norfolk

**Rupert Lowe:**

[\[13086\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many dentists have closed in (a) Great Yarmouth constituency and (b) Norfolk since 2016.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

Data is not held on how many dentists have closed in the Great Yarmouth constituency and Norfolk since 2016.

## ■ Department of Health and Social Care: Civil Servants

**Sir Ashley Fox:**

[\[9619\]](#)

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

**Karin Smyth:**

The following table shows the number civil servants assigned to work in each of the Department's offices, as well as how many desks are available in each office:

LOCATION	STAFF ASSIGNED TO OFFICE	DESKS AVAILABLE TO THE DEPARTMENT IN EACH OFFICE
London	2,302	858
Leeds	840	500
Bristol	44	34
Birmingham	38	24
Liverpool	37	23
Cambridge	33	68
Burnley	25	32
Nottingham	21	24
Manchester	18	10
Newcastle	14	19
Reading	5	8
Edinburgh	4	4

## ■ Diabetes: Medical Equipment

**Saqib Bhatti:** [\[13844\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure alignment of Integrated Care Boards with NICE guideline 28, updated in 2022, related to the fair and equitable adoption of continuous glucose monitoring for eligible people with type 2 diabetes.

**Saqib Bhatti:** [\[13845\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to ensure that Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care Board is in alignment with NICE guideline 28, updated in 2022, related to the fair and equitable adoption of continuous glucose monitoring for eligible people with type 2 diabetes.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence recommended that all people living with type 1 diabetes and people living with type 2 diabetes who required insulin therapy should be eligible for real time continuous glucose monitoring (CGM). The guidance recommends that all adults and children with type 1 diabetes are eligible for CGM, and that only certain adult and child populations with type 2 diabetes are eligible for CGM.

NHS England is developing new reporting systems which are designed to support ICBs to monitor the delivery of CGM. Data on CGM for diabetics is now collected as part of the National Diabetes Audit (NDA). NHS England plans to routinely publish this data in the NDA Core Quarterly dashboard in 2025/26, which will provide the data insights ICBs require, including data on CGM uptake, variation, and health inequalities.

This information will help in providing ICBs with data about inequalities and diabetes, and will allow them and NHS England to target strategies to ensure uptake of those patients who are clinically eligible for CGM, but where there are wider factors limiting access to support.

## ■ Epilepsy: Drugs

**Rebecca Smith:** [\[13699\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to tackle shortages of epilepsy medication.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Department is working hard with industry to help resolve the intermittent supply issues with some epilepsy medications. As a result of ongoing activity and intensive work, including directing suppliers to expedite deliveries, some issues, including with some carbamazepine and oxcarbazepine presentations, have been resolved.

There is a supply issue with all strengths of lamotrigine tablets due to manufacturing issues, and this is expected to resolve from late November 2024. Other manufacturers of lamotrigine tablets can meet the increased demand during this time.

The Department continues to work closely with industry, the National Health Service, and others to help ensure patients continue to have access to an alternative treatment until their usual product is back in stock.

## ■ Epilepsy: Research

**Rachel Gilmour:**

[13728]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to (a) increase funding for epilepsy research and (b) improve treatment options for patients with epilepsy.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The Department funds research into epilepsy via the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). The NIHR spent almost £19 million on 46 epilepsy research projects in the five years from April 2019 to March 2024. Additionally, over this period, more than 9,500 people were enabled to participate in epilepsy research by the NIHR Clinical Research Network, now the NIHR Research Delivery Network.

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

The NIHR also works closely with other Government funders, including UK Research and Innovation, which is funded by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology and includes the Medical Research Council, to fund research into epilepsy to improve treatments and prevent poor health outcomes for patients.

We want a society where every person, including those with long-term conditions such as epilepsy, receives high-quality, compassionate continuity of care, with their families and carers supported. We will change the National Health Service so that it becomes not just a sickness service, but one that is able to prevent ill health in the first place. This will help us be better prepared for the change in the nature of disease, and allow our services to focus more on the management of chronic, long-term conditions, including epilepsy.

At the national level, there are a number of initiatives supporting service improvement and better care for patients with epilepsy, including the RightCare Epilepsy Toolkit and the Getting It Right First Time Programme for Neurology, with further information on both available, respectively, at the following two links:

<https://gettingitrightfirsttime.co.uk/academy-resources/population-health/>

[https://gettingitrightfirsttime.co.uk/medical\\_specialties/neurology/](https://gettingitrightfirsttime.co.uk/medical_specialties/neurology/)

NHS England has also established a Neurology Service Transformation Programme, a multi-year, clinically led programme to develop a new model of integrated care for neurology services, including for epilepsy.

**■ General Practitioners: Labour Turnover****Dr Beccy Cooper:**[\[13310\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of developing a National GP Retention Strategy backed by ring-fenced funding.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

The Government has committed to increasing the number of general practitioners (GPs), and this includes doing more to address GP retention and the reasons why GPs leave the profession. The 10-Year Health Plan, which will be published in spring 2025, will set out a long-term vision to train and retain the staff the National Health Service needs to be fit for the future. The plan will be shaped by responses from the public, NHS staff, and experts to the biggest national conversation about the future of the NHS since its birth, launched by the Department and NHS England in October.

**■ Health Services: Children****Neil Duncan-Jordan:**[\[13377\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of Child health GP hubs on access to specialists in local GP settings.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

We will trial neighbourhood health centres to bring together a range of services, ensuring healthcare is closer to home and patients receive the care they deserve. This is part of our broader ambition to move towards a neighbourhood health service, with more care delivered in local communities to spot problems earlier. They will bring together existing services such as family doctors, district nurses, social workers, physiotherapists, palliative care, and mental health specialists.

We have also made changes to the Medical Performers List to remove barriers preventing secondary care doctors working in primary care, which would allow paediatricians to deliver care in general practice settings as part of a multidisciplinary team.

**■ Health Services: Males****Adam Jogee:**[\[13870\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to help improve men's health; and if he will use the upcoming Men's Health summit to commission a new men's health strategy consultation.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The Government's mission is getting the National Health Service back on its feet, so that it is there for everyone. The Government looks forward to its discussions with everyone interested in men's health, to hear views and ideas on how to improve

outcomes for men. We are developing a 10-Year Health Plan so that we are better able to meet the needs of the population, including men.

The forthcoming men's health summit will help inform the Department on future actions.

#### ■ **Health Services: Scotland**

**Gregor Poynton:** [\[13960\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many patients in Scotland were supported by specialised services provided by NHS England in the last 12 months.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

This information is not held centrally, as health is a devolved matter in Scotland.

#### ■ **Hearing Aids**

**Sorcha Eastwood:** [\[13920\]](#)

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 AirPods Pro 2's Hearing Aid feature.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

We are aware of the new features on the AirPods Pro 2. As part of the 10-Year Health Plan, we will consider the potential of technologies, including wearable technologies, to support the shift in healthcare from hospital to community, analogue to digital, and sickness to prevention.

#### ■ **Hospitals: Parking**

**Ian Byrne:** [\[13018\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will eliminate parking fees at NHS hospitals for NHS staff and patients.

**Ian Byrne:** [\[13020\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the provision of Blue Badge parking spaces at NHS facilities.

**Ian Byrne:** [\[13021\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of private companies that manage NHS car parks.

**Karin Smyth:**

No assessments have been made of the potential merits of eliminating car-parking charges for National Health Service patients and staff, the adequacy of Blue Badge parking spaces, or the effectiveness of the private companies that manage NHS car parks.

All NHS trusts that charge for hospital car parking provide free parking for those in the greatest need, which includes NHS staff working overnight, frequent outpatient attenders, disabled people, and parents of children staying overnight in hospital.

All NHS trusts are expected to follow the Department's published NHS Car Parking guidance. This sets out that where car parking charges exist, they should be reasonable for the area. This guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nhs-patient-visitor-and-staff-car-parking-principles/nhs-patient-visitor-and-staff-car-parking-principles>

NHS organisations decide locally on the provision, management, and charging for their car parking, within the policy set out by the Department, and including the provision of Blue Badge parking spaces.

### ■ Human Papillomavirus: Vaccination

**Anna Sabine:** [\[14222\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase HPV vaccination uptake amongst school-aged boys.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

National Health Service Commissioned School Aged Immunisation Service providers have robust catch-up plans in place for the adolescent human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination programme based on population need.

The UK Health Security Agency works closely with charities and academics to develop resources that can be used to raise awareness of HPV and the importance of vaccination, including for boys.

NHS England has improved digital communications on vaccinations, including expanding the NHS app, and has improved access to the HPV vaccine outside of schools through community clinics at convenient times and locations.

### ■ Kidney Diseases: Medical Treatments

**Luke Murphy:** [\[13854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve treatment of Chronic Kidney Disease.

**Luke Murphy:** [\[13855\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve diagnosis of Chronic Kidney Disease for (a) younger patients and (b) broadly.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

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



information, patients are supported to make behavioural changes and access treatment which helps to prevent and detect kidney disease earlier.

NHS England has established the Renal Services Transformation Programme (RSTP), which aims to reduce unwarranted variation in the quality and accessibility of renal care, to improve outcomes and services for those with kidney disease. NHS England, through the RSTP and regional renal networks, is implementing initiatives to provide better, integrated care, to reduce health inequalities, and to focus on prevention and timely intervention for kidney disease.

Working in collaboration with the NHS RightCare Programme and the renal community, the RSTP has developed a renal toolkit to provide integrated care boards, renal clinical networks, and providers with tools, case studies, and principles to support transformation of services at a local level. The toolkit outlines principles to support better management of patients identified with chronic kidney disease (CKD) throughout their patient journey. The RSTP is also working closely with NHS England's regional renal clinical networks to review this toolkit, and to work with local partners to develop transformation programmes that will focus on early identification and management of kidney disease, and will seek to reduce the number of patients progressing through various stages of CKD, and reduce the number of patients requiring dialysis. By supporting prevention and early intervention, the need for late-stage treatments will be reduced.

Regional renal clinical networks prioritise the prevention and early diagnosis of CKD within their transformation ambitions. This includes considerations to develop a unified approach to testing populations at risk of developing CKD, and includes raising awareness of diagnostic tools like urine albumin creatinine tests, enabling CKD diagnosis at stages 1 and 2. NHS England aims to improve awareness and access to these important urine and blood tests across primary and secondary care.

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

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

## ■ Low Alcohol Drinks: Labelling

**Kirsty Blackman:**

**[13468]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the consultation entitled Updating labelling guidance for no and low-alcohol alternatives, published on 28 September 2023, whether his Department plans to take steps to update labelling guidance for no and low-alcohol alternatives.

**Kirsty Blackman:**[\[13469\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to standardise the term alcohol-free at 0.5% ABV for no and low-alcohol alternatives.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

A consultation published in 2023 considered options for updating labelling guidance for no and low alcohol alternative drinks.

We will continue to consider how alcohol labelling can be improved to support consumers to make informed decisions about the products they are purchasing, whilst also promoting responsible consumption.

**Medical Treatments: Foreign Nationals****Rupert Lowe:**[\[13043\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will strengthen the procedure ensuring that patients meet the residency requirements for treatment on the NHS.

**Karin Smyth:**

Relevant National Health Service bodies are legally required to identify, make, and recover charges from overseas visitors under the NHS (Charges to Overseas Visitors) Regulations 2015, also known as the Charging Regulations. The Department is committed to working with NHS England to ensure effective implementation of the Charging Regulations.

**Mental Health Services: Children****David Williams:**[\[13249\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce waiting times for child and adolescent mental health services in (a) Stoke-on-Trent North constituency and (b) Kidsgrove.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

It is unacceptable that too many children and young people are not receiving the mental health care they need, and we know that waits for mental health services are far too long. That is why we will recruit 8,500 additional mental health workers across both adult, and children and young people's mental health services, including in the Stoke-on-Trent North constituency and Kidsgrove.

The Department of Health and Social Care is working with Department for Education to consider how to deliver our commitment of access to a specialist mental health professional in every school. Alongside this we are working towards rolling out Young Futures hubs in every community, offering open access mental health services for young people.

**Mike Amesbury:**[\[13487\]](#)

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

**Stephen Kinnock:**

It is unacceptable that too many children and young people are not receiving the mental health care they need, and we know that waits for mental health services are far too long, including in areas such as the Runcorn and Helsby constituency. That is why we will recruit 8,500 additional mental health workers across both adult, and children and young people's mental health services.

The Department of Health and Social Care is working with the Department for Education and NHS England to consider how to deliver our commitment of providing access to a specialist mental health professional in every school. Alongside this we are working towards rolling out Young Futures hubs in every community, offering open access mental health services for young people.

■ **NHS: Staff****Rupert Lowe:**[\[13386\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of NHS staff have been non-patient facing in each of the last ten years.

**Karin Smyth:**

The following table shows the number and percentage of the Full Time Equivalent (FTE) workforce employed by National Health Service trusts and other core NHS organisations in England that are in NHS infrastructure support roles, this being a proxy for non-patient facing roles, as of each August from 2014 to 2024:

YEAR	TOTAL STAFF	NHS INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORT STAFF	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL STAFF WHO ARE INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORT
2014	986,595	153,363	15.5%
2015	1,006,026	156,824	15.6%
2016	1,031,091	161,353	15.6%
2017	1,046,979	164,339	15.7%
2018	1,067,951	170,443	16.0%
2019	1,100,273	178,371	16.2%
2020	1,159,365	184,270	15.9%

YEAR	TOTAL STAFF	NHS INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORT STAFF	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL STAFF WHO ARE INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORT
2021	1,198,746	194,546	16.2%
2022	1,230,089	202,980	16.5%
2023	1,297,455	214,501	16.5%
2024	1,348,584	218,914	16.2%

Source: NHS Hospital and Community Health Service monthly workforce statistics, NHS England, available at the following link: <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/nhs-workforce-statistics>

Notes:

1. the NHS infrastructure support staffing group includes staff defined as managers, senior managers, non-patient facing clerical or administrative staff, and maintenance or works staff;
2. FTE refers to the proportion of full-time contracted hours that the post holder is contracted to work, as one would indicate they work a full set of hours, and 0.5 that they worked half time; and
3. this data relates to the Hospital and Community Health Service workforce directly employed in NHS trusts and other core organisations, like integrated care boards for the latest data point, who are paid.

## ■ Nurses

**Mr Connor Rand:**

[\[14152\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many clinical nurse specialists are currently working in the NHS.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Department does not hold the information requested.

## ■ Nutrition

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[13770\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of people being treated for diet related illnesses.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

Diet is an important part of maintaining good health and reducing the risk of chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, and some cancers, such as bowel, breast, and pancreatic cancer. Illnesses related to diet are very broad,

ranging from malnutrition, dental decay, mental health conditions, and other diseases attributable to overweight and obesity.

Comparable data is not directly available on the number of people being treated for all diet related illnesses. There is data on the number of people being treated for some illnesses which can be attributed to dietary risk factors. However, it is not known if all these cases were caused by diet related risk factors. From a malnutrition perspective, in 2022/23, there were 10,795 admissions for malnutrition reported by National Health Service trusts. Further information on malnutrition is available at the following link:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/supplementary-information/2024/malnutrition-admissions-by-provider-2009-10-to-2022-23>

It is estimated 8.5% of adults in the United Kingdom have diabetes. For people with type 2 diabetes, we estimate that 810,000 people achieved all three treatment targets, those being National Institute for Health and Care Excellence recommended treatment targets for Hba1c (glucose control), blood pressure, and serum cholesterol, in 2020/21, which is the equivalent to 35.5% of people with type 2 Diabetes. Further information is available at the following link:

<https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/cardiovascular/data#page/>

In 2022/23, NHS England data shows that 214,000 hospital admissions were due to coronary heart disease. It is possible to estimate the number of people with some illnesses which can be partly attributed to diet related risk factors, including cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes. NHS England estimates that approximately 1.9 million individuals in England have coronary heart disease, which is a component of cardiovascular disease. Further information is available at the following link:

<https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/cardiovascular/data#page/>

The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities estimates that approximately 4 million individuals in England have both type 1 and 2 diabetes, with further information available at the following link:

<https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/diabetes-ft/data#page/>

Estimates are also available on the proportion of cases or deaths from some illnesses which can be attributed to diet related risk factors. The Global burden of disease estimated that in England there were approximately 50,000 deaths attributable to diet related risk factors in 2021. Further information is available at the following link:

<https://vizhub.healthdata.org/gbd-results/>

Finally, Cancer Research UK estimates that 6%, or 23,000 out of 385,000, of cancer cases in the UK are attributable to obesity and overweight.

## ■ Ophthalmology: Training

**Ian Byrne:** **[14237]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many training places there were for ophthalmology in the NHS in each of the last five years.

**Karin Smyth:**

The following table shows the number of doctors in training in the ophthalmology specialty in England, in each of the last five years:

YEAR	NUMBERS OF DOCTORS IN TRAINING IN THE OPHTHALMOLOGY SPECIALTY GROUP
2019	558
2020	563
2021	563
2022	583
2023	592
2024	610

Source: General Medical Council, National Training Survey, via Data Explorer, available at the following link: <https://gde.gmc-uk.org/postgraduate-training/postgraduate-trainees/postgraduate-trainees-summary-data>

## ■ Out of Area Treatment: Shropshire

**Shaun Davies:** **[13550]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many outpatients from Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin integrated care system (ICS) have been treated out of area by (a) other ICSs and (b) private providers in each year for which data is available.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Government is committed to putting patients back at the heart of care. This includes supporting a patient's right to choose, if they wish, where they go for their first appointment, including private providers holding contracts for National Health Services.

Information on the number of individual patients who have been treated out of area in the Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Integrated Care System (ICS) is not held centrally. However, information on the number of outpatient appointments taking place outside of the ICS is available, although it should be noted that a patient may have had more than one outpatient appointment. The following table shows the combined outpatient activity in English NHS hospitals and English NHS

commissioned activity in the independent sector, and the number and percentage of appointments made outside of the ICS, for each of the last three years:

YEAR	TOTAL APPOINTMENTS	NUMBER OF APPOINTMENTS OUTSIDE OF THE ICS	PERCENTAGE OF APPOINTMENTS OUTSIDE OF THE ICS
2021/22	864,870	138,715	16%
2022/23	958,190	171,505	17.9%
2023/24	1,027,375	178,590	17.4%

Source: Hospital Episode Statistics, NHS England.

### ■ Palliative Care: Runcorn and Helsby

**Mike Amesbury:**

[\[13488\]](#)

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

**Stephen Kinnock:**

Palliative care services are included in the list of services that integrated care boards (ICBs), including the Cheshire and Merseyside ICB, which covers the Runcorn and Helsby constituency, must commission. This promotes a more consistent national approach and supports commissioners in prioritising palliative and end of life care. To support ICBs in this duty, NHS England has published statutory guidance and service specifications.

I recently met NHS England to discuss how to reduce inequalities and variation in access to, and the quality of, palliative and end of life care. Additionally, we have committed to develop a 10-Year Health Plan, to deliver a National Health Service fit for the future, and as part of this we will carefully be considering policies, including those that impact people with palliative and end of life care needs, with input from the public, patients, health staff, and our stakeholders, as we develop the plan. More information about how they can input into the 10-Year Health Plan is available at the following link:

<https://change.nhs.uk/en-GB/>

### ■ Patients: Homelessness

**Mike Amesbury:**

[\[13817\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that homeless people are discharged safely from hospital.

**Deirdre Costigan:**

[13829]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that people facing homelessness are discharged safely from hospital in winter 2024-25.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

The Department of Health and Social Care and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government have published guidance and supporting materials for health and care staff on discharging people at risk of, or experiencing homelessness. This ensures that every health and care interaction with a homeless person acts as an opportunity to provide support and signposting, with the aim of ending rough sleeping. The Department of Health and Social Care continues to work with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on the development of the Government's plans for social and affordable housing. Further information on the published guidance and supporting materials for health and care staff on discharging people at risk of, or experiencing homelessness, is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/discharging-people-at-risk-of-or-experiencing-homelessness/discharging-people-at-risk-of-or-experiencing-homelessness>

#### ■ Pharmacy: Employers' Contributions

**Mr Lee Dillon:**

[12879]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to paragraph 2.40 of the Autumn Budget 2024, HC 295, published on 30 October 2024, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the rise in the rate of employer national insurance contributions on pharmacies.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

We have taken tough decisions to fix the foundations in the public finances at Autumn Budget. This enabled the Spending Review settlement of a £22.6 billion increase in resource spending for the Department from 2023/24 outturn to 2025/26. The employer national insurance rise will be implemented April 2025, the Department will set out further details on allocation of funding for next year in due course.

#### ■ Primodos: Research

**Esther McVey:**

[12696]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 13 September 2024 to Question 4203 on Primodos: Research, when he expects the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency to complete that review; and what steps he is taking to (a) manage potential conflicts of interest and (b) ensure transparency during the review process.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), together with the wider Government, are committed to reviewing any new scientific evidence since



the conclusions of the 2017 independent Expert Working Group, convened by the Commission on Human Medicines (CHM).

As per the commitment to reviewing any new scientific evidence, the MHRA has reviewed the publication by Danielsson et al. For full transparency, the MHRA will present their review at the November 2024 CHM meeting. The meeting will have a number of invited experts, including the papers authors, who are invited to give a presentation on their paper and address any questions from the CHM. Mrs Marie Lyon has also been invited to participate as an expert patient, as a representative of the Association For Children Damaged by Hormone Pregnancy Tests. The CHM will give their opinion, and the MHRA will then act upon the CHM's advice if required. Both the MHRA and the CHM have codes of conduct in order to manage potential conflicts of interest.

The MHRA have a Dealing with Staff Conflicts of Interest Policy, where staff must declare all relevant interests on appointment, when they arise and annually, so that they can be discussed, mitigated, or disposed of, or both, as required. Staff cannot hold direct financial interests in the pharmaceutical industry or healthcare, specifically medical device, industries.

The CHM has a Code of Practice on conflicts of interest which applies to chairs, members, co-opted members, and invited observers and experts. The annual declaration of interests made by all chairs and members are published on GOV.UK website. Declarations from members for the day, invited experts, and patient experts are published in the same way as permanent members of the CHM, on the GOV.UK website, and in the committee minutes for transparency reasons. Further information is available on the GOV.UK website, at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/human-medicines-regulations-2012-advisory-bodies-annual-report-2023>

The minutes and outcome of the November CHM discussion will be communicated and made publicly available through the GOV.UK website, at the earliest opportunity.

## ■ Prostate Cancer: Ethnic Groups

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:**

**[14083]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for (a) his policies and (b) the forthcoming UK National Screening Committee review on prostate cancer guidelines of the findings of the report by Prostate Cancer UK entitled Lifetime risk of being diagnosed with, or dying from, prostate cancer by major ethnic group in England 2008–2010, published in July 2015, on the risk of prostate cancer for Black men.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC) is carrying out an evidence review for prostate cancer screening, and this includes different potential ways of screening the whole population from 40 years of age onwards, and targeted screening programmes aimed at groups of men identified as being at higher than average risk,

such as those with a family history, carriers of the BRCA2 gene mutation, and based on ethnicity.

The UK NSC is aware of Prostate Cancer UK's report, and this will be considered as part of its evidence review process, with further information available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-nsc-evidence-review-process/uk-nsc-evidence-review-process>

## ■ Radiology: Equipment

**Susan Murray:** [13360]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to tackle shortages of molybdenum-technetium generators.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Department has been working hard with industry to help resolve the shortages of radioisotopes, which are affecting the United Kingdom and other countries around the world. The affected radioisotopes are mainly used for diagnosing cancers, including prostate and breast cancer, and are also used for the imaging of organ function in scans, including for the heart. Supply of the affected molybdenum-technetium generators has improved significantly during week of 11 November.

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

The Department issued a National Patient Safety alert which provided comprehensive management advice for NHS clinicians across the UK on how to manage and prioritise patients affected by these shortages. The guidance covers actions for health boards in the devolved nations, including on the coordination of mutual aid arrangements and escalation routes where issues are identified.

## ■ Rare Diseases: Research

**Edward Morello:** [13697]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to incentivise private sector investment into research for (a) brain tumours and (b) other rare diseases.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The Department is committed to implementing recommendations from Lord O'Shaughnessy's independent review of commercial clinical trials, maximising our potential to be a world leader, and developing a more competitive, efficient, and accessible clinical research system.

The Department aims to ensure that all patients, including those with brain tumours and rare diseases, have access to cutting-edge clinical research and innovative, lifesaving treatments.

The Government funds research through The Department of Health and Social Care funded National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) and the Medical Research Council (MRC), sponsored by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology. The NIHR and the MRC are jointly funding the Rare Diseases Research Platform UK, a £14 million initiative made up of eleven research centres based at universities, which work collaboratively with industry and charities to accelerate understanding, diagnosis, and therapy of rare diseases.

Additionally, Genomics England, a company owned by The Department, partners with the world's leading pharmaceutical companies and biotechnology firms through their Discovery Forum to accelerate new treatment development.

## ■ Smoking

**Mary Kelly Foy:**

[\[13511\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the policy paper entitled Stopping the start: our new plan to create a smokefree generation, last updated on 8 November 2023, reflects his Department's current policy.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The landmark Tobacco and Vapes Bill was introduced into Parliament on 5 November, and will be the single biggest public health intervention since the banning of smoking in indoor public spaces.

This bill goes further than ever before. It will create the first smoke-free generation, gradually phasing out the sale of tobacco products across the country, enable the Government to strengthen the existing ban on smoking in public places to reduce the harms of passive smoking in certain outdoor settings, ban vapes and nicotine products from being promoted and advertised to children, and introduce tougher enforcement measures, including through providing powers to introduce a retail licensing scheme for tobacco and vapes.

This bill will help deliver our ambition for a smoke-free United Kingdom, and forms part of our Health Mission to shift the health system from treatment to prevention.

## ■ Thyroid Diseases: Prescriptions

**Sir Christopher Chope:**

[\[14002\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason there are different rules for exemptions from NHS prescription charges for people with (a) hypothyroidism and (b) hyperthyroidism.

**Karin Smyth:**

Records are not available to enable us to explain why only hypothyroidism is listed.

The list of specified medical conditions that provide exemption from prescription charges was agreed in discussion with the British Medical Association in 1968. Decisions on which conditions to include were reflective of medical knowledge and practice at the time. The only addition to the list since then has been the treatment of cancer in 2009.

However, whilst it is the case that most patients with hypothyroidism, also known as an underactive thyroid, will require life-long synthetic hormone replacement with a medication called levothyroxine, patients with hyperthyroidism, also known as an overactive thyroid, do not necessarily require medication, as this condition can sometimes be managed surgically, or with radioactive iodine therapy.

While the Government's policy remains that there are no current plans to review the list of medical conditions that entitle someone to apply for a medical exemption certificate, there are extensive arrangements currently in place in England to ensure that prescriptions are affordable for everyone. Further information is available at the following link:

<https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/help-nhs-prescription-costs>

## ■ Tirzepatide

**Richard Tice:**

**[13384]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on the potential thyroid cancer risk from Mounjaro; when his Department received this information; whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of the provision of Mounjaro through the NHS on the risk of thyroid cancer; whether the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency has requested information from the US Food and Drug Administration on its interim report on this matter of March 2024; and for what reason the risk-labelling for Mounjaro is different in the UK to that used in the US.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency's (MHRA) role is to continually monitor the safety of medicines during their use. We have robust, safety monitoring and surveillance systems in place for all healthcare products. New medicines such as Mounjaro, which contains tirzepatide, are more intensively monitored to ensure that any new safety issues are identified promptly.

Thyroid cancer has not been causally linked with Mounjaro or any other medicines that belong to the same therapeutic class as tirzepatide, specifically glucagon-like peptide-1 receptor agonists (GLP-1RAs), and it is currently not listed as a side-effect associated with GLP-1RA medicines in the approved United Kingdom prescribing information, also known as the Summary of Product Characteristics (SmPC).

A recent European Union review conducted by the European Medicines Agency (EMA) included a comprehensive class review of the available evidence related to all types of thyroid cancer, taking into consideration various types of evidence, including large observational studies, literature, clinical trial cases, and post-marketing cases.

The EMA reached the decision that the overall evidence was insufficient to establish an association between GLP-1RAs and thyroid cancer. Furthermore, the addition of a precautionary warning to the SmPCs was not agreed upon given the limitations of the currently available evidence, unlike the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) approved product information. It is not uncommon for regulators to come to different decisions based on different assessments of risk. This can be due to factors such as differences in patient demographics, usage of a particular medicine in different countries, or differences in inclusion criteria for the product information for medicinal products. The difference in the United States' labelling, in part, relates to the FDA's interpretation of the data from animal studies, an area of research that is required for all new medicines prior to approval, and information related to thyroid cancer was added as a precautionary warning. However, the human relevance of the animal data is not known, and this is specified in the UK prescribing information.

A signal of thyroid cancer was not observed in the clinical trials for these medicines at the time of licensing, however it was acknowledged that clinical trials are not usually large or long-enough to observe cancer outcomes. Therefore, based on the need for further exploration of the risk about the human relevance, the pharmaceutical companies for all GLP-1RAs have been requested to assess the risk within a collaborative, long-term post-authorisation safety study evaluating medullary thyroid cancer events using United States cancer registries. The results from this study are not expected for a few years and will hopefully provide further information on this risk. Furthermore, the pharmaceutical companies are also monitoring all thyroid cancer types as part of their ongoing routine pharmacovigilance obligations.

Based on the current evidence, the benefits of GLP-1 RAs outweigh the potential risks when used for the licensed indications. The risk of thyroid cancer with this class of medicines remains under review by the MHRA and all pharmaceutical companies which hold a licence for a GLP-1RA. As part of our continuous monitoring procedures, we work with our international counterparts, such as the FDA, to gather information on the safety of medicines in other countries. When a safety issue is confirmed, we always act promptly to inform patients and healthcare professionals, and take appropriate steps to mitigate any identified risk.

## ■ Vaccination

**Helen Morgan:**

[\[13837\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help promote UK vaccine development.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

Vaccines are critical for preventing infectious diseases, and lessening their impact. Vaccine development ensures that the United Kingdom remains on the cutting edge of technological advancements, and is able to respond to new and emerging disease risks. The Department's work on vaccine development aligns with the Biological Security Strategy, which seeks to ensure that the UK is resilient to a spectrum of biological threats and is a world leader in responsible innovation by 2030. It also

contributes to the 100 Days Mission, a global mission to have safe and effective diagnostics, therapeutics, and vaccines in the first 100 days of a pandemic. The Department promotes UK vaccine development through a variety of mechanisms, including:

- investing in innovative research through the National Institute for Health and Care Research and its infrastructure, which actively supports the development of new interventions to prevent disease, including research for the whole of the national immunisation programme;
- funding the UK Vaccine Network's (UKVN) research projects into vaccines and vaccine technology that could prevent and respond to epidemics in low- and middle-income countries, with research innovations developed through this project having the potential to also promote the development of vaccine technologies with domestic applications, with, for example, the UKVN's funding for a Middle East respiratory syndrome vaccine being rapidly adapted to develop the Oxford-AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine;
- funding the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), which aims to accelerate development of vaccines against epidemic and pandemic threats and to enable equitable access to these vaccines globally, with the UK having committed to provide £160 million in support for the CEPI over five years at the Global Pandemic Preparedness Summit in March 2022;
- establishing the UK Health Security Agency's Vaccine Development and Evaluation Centre to strengthen UK research and develop vaccines against the world's deadliest pathogens;
- investing in the Moderna Strategic Partnership, through which Moderna has invested in mRNA research and development in the UK and is building a state-of-the-art vaccine manufacturing centre with the ability to produce up to 250 million vaccines a year; and
- assessing bids into the Government's Life Sciences Innovation Manufacturing Fund, announced on 30 October 2024, which will provide up to £520 million in capital grants to help the UK's medicines manufacturers grow and innovate.

## ■ Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme

**Esther McVey:**

[\[13773\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much has been spent on (a) reviewing applications to the Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme and (b) reviewing cases where a patient has challenged a decision in each of the last 5 years.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme transferred from the Department for Work and Pensions to the NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA) in November 2021. We cannot provide any costings for the scheme during the period in which it was operated by the Department for Work and Pensions. Since the NHSBSA took over

operation of the scheme, the following costs have been incurred for the medical assessments of the claims:

- in the financial year 2021/22, no costs were incurred, as the claims assessment did not begin until May 2022;
- in the financial year 2022/23, the total cost of the medical assessments was £5,018,638.73;
- in the financial year 2023/24, the total cost of the medical assessments was £10,500,029.88; and
- in the current financial year, up to 1 November 2024, the total cost of the medical assessments is £9,616,394.02.

These are annual totals since we do not separate the budgets for initial assessments and mandatory reversals, the review of claims already assessed.

## HOME OFFICE

### ■ Asylum: Afghanistan

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:**

[\[14065\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of asylum claims her Department has (a) granted and (b) refused to non-religious people fleeing Afghanistan from fear of persecution in the latest period for which data is available; and whether her Department has issued guidance on handling asylum claims for (a) religious and (b) non-religious persecution.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

The Home Office publishes data on asylum in the '[Immigration System Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'. Data on initial decisions on asylum claims by nationality can be found in table Asy\_D02 of the '[asylum and resettlement detailed datasets](#)'. The Home Office does not publish initial decisions on asylum claims by religion.

Information on how to use the datasets can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbooks. The latest data relates to the year ending June 2024. Data for the year ending September 2024 will be published on 28 November 2024.

All asylum and human rights claims, including those based on religious persecution, are carefully considered on their individual merits in accordance with our international obligations. Our guidance for considering asylum claims is available on GOV.UK at: [Assessing credibility and refugee status: caseworker guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

Each individual assessment is made against the background of relevant case law and the latest available country of origin information. This is based on evidence taken from a wide range of reliable sources, including reputable media outlets; local, national, and international organisations, such as human rights organisations; and information from the Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office. Our assessment

of the situation of a given group in a given country, is set out in the relevant country policy and information note, which is available on GOV.UK at:

[www.gov.uk/government/collections/country-policy-and-information-notes](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/country-policy-and-information-notes).

## ■ Asylum: Hotels

**Chris Philp:**

[13776]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many (a) asylum hotels were open and (b) asylum seekers were housed in hotels as of (i) 30 June and (ii) 31 October 2024; and what was the daily cost of the asylum hotels during this period.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

The Home Office has a statutory obligation to provide destitute asylum seekers with accommodation and subsistence support whilst their application for asylum is being considered.

Data, published quarterly, on the number of supported asylum seekers in accommodation, including hotels, can be found within the Asy\_D11 tab for our most recent statistics release. The data can also be broken down by local authority:

[Immigration system statistics data tables - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-data-tables)(opens in a new tab).

The Home Office does not publish data on daily numbers or cost of hotels in use. The Government inherited an asylum system which is under exceptional strain, with tens of thousands of cases in the asylum backlog and a range of challenges across the system.

## ■ Asylum: Housing

**Sir John Hayes:**

[13170]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what is the total amount paid to (a) Serco, (b) Clearsprings and (c) Mears since 2019 for contracts to provide housing for asylum seekers.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

Costs are subject to change depending on numbers being accommodated within the asylum system, and details are considered to be commercially confidential. The total expenditure on asylum is published in the Home Office Annual Report and Accounts, available at [HO annual reports and accounts - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/home-office-annual-reports-and-accounts).

## ■ British Nationality (Irish Citizens) Act 2024

**Mr Gregory Campbell:**

[14029]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when the provisions of the British Nationality (Irish Citizens) Act 2024 will come into force.

**Seema Malhotra:**

The British Nationality (Irish Citizens) Act 2024 will come into force on a date that is set out in future regulations made by the Secretary of State, as allowed for by Clause



2(3) of the Act. This will be when the Home Office is able to make operational changes to implement the new route. Work on this is underway.

## ■ **British Nationality: Applications**

**Rupert Lowe:**

[13369]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many citizenship applications were granted in each of the last 20 years by original nationality.

**Seema Malhotra:**

This data is published online quarterly and for the period in question can be found under the heading 'Citizenship' at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/immigration-system-statistics-data-tables#citizenship>.

The relevant table is called **Citizenship detailed data sets, year ending June 2024** and the tab on the spreadsheet is **Data-Cit\_D02**.

## ■ **Deportation**

**Chris Philp:**

[13783]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people were returned to their home countries between (a) 5 July and 31 October 2023 and (b) 5 July and 31 October 2024; and how many and what proportion of those returned since 5 July 2024 (i) left voluntarily, (ii) were forced to return, (iii) were foreign national offenders, (iv) had arrived by small boat, broken down by nationality.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

The Home Office published an [ad-hoc release](#) containing information about the total number of enforced and voluntary returns from the UK between 5 July and 28 October 2024 and the same period in 2023, on 4 November this year.

The number of returns between July and September 2024 will be published in the [Immigration system statistics](#) release on 28 November, with data for the period October to December 2024 published in the release on 27 February 2025. Data in Ret\_D01 of the returns detailed tables accompanying the report provide quarterly data broken down by return type (enforced/voluntary/port), nationality and return destination group (Home/EU member state/Other safe country).

The Home Office publishes information about those who by small boat in the [Irregular Migration to the UK](#) quarterly release. Quarterly data on enforced and voluntary returns are given by return date in table Irr\_02e of the [irregular migration to the UK summary tables](#) accompanying the release.

## ■ **Detention Centres: Costs**

**Pete Wishart:**

[13184]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the cost to the public purse of increasing the immigration detention estate by 290 places.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

The Home Office does not comment on service provider procurement exercises, which are commercially sensitive. However, contracts are published upon the Contracts Finder website, once awarded. The Home Office is committed to ensuring value for money on all IRC sites.

■ **Draft Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill****Dame Caroline Dinéage:**[\[14032\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to her Department's policy paper entitled Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill: Scope (Premises), updated on 1 November 2024, if she will make an estimate of the number of those premises with (a) 200 to 300, (b) 301 to 400, (c) 401 to 500, (d) 501 to 600, (e) 601 to 700 and (f) 701 to 800 individuals present at any one time.

**Dan Jarvis:**

Estimates for the capacity of venues are based on a floorspace factor calculation (where no known capacity is available), drawing from ordnance survey data. The breakdown is:

NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS EXPECTED AT VENUE	ESTIMATED NUMBER OF VENUES IN GROUPING
<b>200-300</b>	<b>62336</b>
<b>301-400</b>	<b>31787</b>
<b>401-500</b>	<b>23597</b>
<b>501-600</b>	<b>13227</b>
<b>601-700</b>	<b>9031</b>
<b>701-800</b>	<b>7539</b>

As a result of pre-legislative scrutiny, Government made changes to the Bill removing the smallest premises from scope and reducing the number of venues in the standard tier from approximately 278,900 to an estimated 154,600.

In addition, responsible persons will now be able to assess the number of people that may reasonably be expected to be present. This is considered a fairer basis to reflect actual usage of venues.

When considering the appropriate threshold, Government's concern is to ensure venues where a sizable amount of people gather are in scope, ensuring those responsible are required to take proportionate and reasonable action to mitigate the impacts of a terrorist attack. We are confident that, because of the changes detailed, the Bill strikes an appropriate balance between protecting the public and preventing undue burden on organisations in scope.

## ■ Fire and Rescue Services: Rural Areas

**Edward Morello:**

[\[13296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that rural fire services are adequately resourced to respond to emergencies in isolated areas.

**Edward Morello:**

[\[13297\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much funding her Department has provided to rural fire services to help (a) reduce response times and (b) cover greater distances in the 2024-25 financial year.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

The final Local Government Settlement 2024/25 has determined that overall fire and rescue authorities will receive around £2.87 billion this year to continue protecting our communities at the highest standard. Standalone Fire and Rescue Authorities including Dorset and Wiltshire will see an increase in core spending power of £95.4 million in 2024/25. This is an increase of 5.6 per cent in cash terms compared to 2023/24.

It is the responsibility of each fire and rescue authority to determine how to allocate that funding based on its analysis of risk and local circumstances. Funding allocations for 2025/26 will be set out at the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement next month.

In the meantime, the Government will continue to work closely with stakeholders across the sector to ensure fire and rescue services have the resources they need to keep the public safe.

## ■ Floods: Fire and Rescue Services

**Neil Duncan-Jordan:**

[\[13705\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will introduce a national capability for flood rescue (a) led by Fire and Rescue Authorities and (b) underpinned by a statutory duty.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

Defra is the lead government department for flooding in England, they hold the Flood Rescue National Asset Register, a list of teams or assets that voluntarily join the register and maintain availability for national deployment in England.

This is coordinated through the National Resilience Assurance Team, for which Merseyside FRS are the lead authority. The National Asset Register holds assets from the Fire and Rescue Service and Non-Government Organisations who are assured to the standards set out in the Flood Rescue Concept of Operations.

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.

### ■ Immigration: Sri Lanka

**Nick Timothy:** [\[13793\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has made an assessment of the potential impact of granting Sri Lankan Tamils on Diego Garcia the right to come to the UK.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

No such right exists, and no such right will be considered. On the specific cases of the migrants who have been located on Diego Garcia since 2022, I refer the Hon. Member to PQ 12545.

### ■ London Fire Brigade

**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[13410\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to support the London Fire Brigade with fire prevention activities and operational training.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

The Home Office's Fire Kills campaign promotes fire safety messages at the national level and supports fire prevention activities undertaken by individual fire and rescue services (FRSs). Campaign plans and promotional materials are developed in partnership with the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and designed to support local delivery. Regular engagement with FRSs, including with the London Fire Brigade, ensures this support is fit for purpose and aligns with local priorities.

We are working closely with both the London Fire Brigade and the NFCC to consider the recommendation from the second phase of the Grenfell Tower public inquiry on how the London Fire Brigade, and FRSs nationally, can implement lessons learned from previous incidents, inquests and investigations. It is something we take extremely seriously and the Government will carefully consider all recommendations from the public inquiry to ensure that such a tragedy can never occur again.

### ■ Migrant Workers: Social Services

**Neil O'Brien:** [\[13811\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has to review the treatment of migrant workers in the care sector.

**Seema Malhotra:**

The Government is deeply concerned by reports of unethical practices relating to international recruits within the adult social care sector. UK Visas and Immigration

continue to investigate and take action, alongside partners, where evidence of abuse is found, engaging with the Gangmasters Labour Abuse Authority and other relevant agencies to hold employers to account and working with Department for Health and Social Care to support impacted workers.

## ■ Migrants: Detainees

**Pete Wishart:**

[\[13185\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate her Department has made of the cost to the public purse of immigration detention (a) in total, (b) per person detained and (c) by detention centre in the 2024-25 financial year.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

The total amount spent on immigration detention in the 2024/25 financial year will be published in the Home Office annual report and accounts in 2025.

The Home Office does not publish the costs associated with each Immigration Removal centre as this is commercially sensitive.

**Pete Wishart:**

[\[13186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has made a recent assessment of the potential merits of implementing the recommendations of the 14th Report of Session 2017-19 of the Home Affairs Select Committee, Immigration detention, HC 913, published on 21 March 2019.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

No recent review of this report has taken place. However, the Government is committed to tackling irregular migration and strengthening border security. We are maximising efforts to establish a system that is better controlled and managed by increasing enforcement capabilities and returns, whilst operating a detention estate with appropriate safeguards in place.

## ■ Migrants: Scotland

**Dr Scott Arthur:**

[\[13289\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to take steps with the Scottish government to help tackle destitution experienced by migrants in Scotland.

**Seema Malhotra:**

Migrants with permission under certain family or private life routes can apply for 'change of conditions' support where they are destitute, at risk of imminent destitution or if there are reasons relating to the welfare of a relevant child.

For all other immigration routes, if there are particularly compelling circumstances why leaving the UK is not possible, discretion can be used to consider if the circumstances justify provision of public support.

Regardless of immigration status, local authorities are able to provide basic safety net support if it is established there is a risk to the wellbeing of a child or there is a genuine care need that does not arise solely from destitution.

### ■ **Motor Insurance: Fraud**

**James McMurdock:** [\[13704\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to tackle cash-for-crash moped scams.

**Dan Jarvis:**

Cash-for-crash scams impact consumers by increasing the price of insurance premiums and putting innocent lives at risk.

The government is committed to tackling this threat and has worked in collaboration with the UK insurance sector to publish an insurance fraud charter. This is a voluntary agreement which aims to raise the visibility of insurance fraud, improve victim support and better detect and prevent scams, such as crash-for cash.

Actions within the charter include:

- Working with the National Crime Agency's National Assessment Centre to carry out a review into the role of professional enablers in the insurance.
- Identify policies being exploited by 'illegal insurance intermediaries'.
- Strengthen data security measures to stop insurance fraudsters using customer details to target people.

Review the tactics and websites being used by fraudsters to promote bogus insurance offers.

### ■ **Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 (Amendment of List of Safe States) Regulations 2024**

**Pete Wishart:** [\[13187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will take steps to repeal Part II of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 (Amendment of List of Safe States) Regulations 2024.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

The Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 (Amendment of List of Safe States) Regulations 2024 amended Section 80AA of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 (as inserted by section 59 of the Illegal Migration Act 2023).

The provisions in the Illegal Migration Act 2023 that use the Section 80AA list are not yet commenced. Therefore, at present, S80AA has no effect in practice. The Government is considering all options relating to the Illegal Migration Act and its implementation, and will set out more details in due course.

## ■ Offenders: Foreign Nationals

**Chris Philp:**

[13778]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many foreign national offenders (a) are currently in (i) prison and (ii) the community and (b) have been deported since 5 July 2024.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

The number of foreign national offenders (FNOs) in prison in England and Wales is published quarterly in table 1\_Q\_9 of Offender Management Statistics, with the latest data (30 September 2024) available from: [prison-population-30-Sept-2024.ods](#).

Any FNO convicted of a crime who receives a custodial sentence in the UK is referred to the Home Office for deportation consideration following sentencing. We are focussing resources on those cases currently serving custodial sentences and maximising removals directly from prison.

We will pursue deportation action against individuals living in the community rigorously, actively monitoring and managing cases through the legal process and negotiating barriers to removal.

Between 5 July and 28 October 2024, there were 1,520 enforced and voluntary returns of FNOs, this is an increase of 14% compared to 1,330 FNO returns in the same period of 2023. Further information can be found here: [Returns from the UK between July and October 2024 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

The Home Office publishes the quarterly statistics on the returns of 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 \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

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.

**Shaun Davies:**

[14128]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many foreign nationals have been issued with deportation orders but not deported.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

The information requested is not available from published statistics.

The Home Office publishes a quarterly paper on statistics on foreign national offenders (FNOs) subject to deportation action, living in the community. These are published in the Immigration Enforcement Data, Year Ending June 2024, which are available at: [Immigration Enforcement data: Q2 2024 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Any FNO convicted of a crime who receives a custodial sentence in the UK is referred to the Home Office for deportation consideration following sentencing. We

are focusing resources on those cases currently serving custodial sentences and maximising removals directly from prison.

We will pursue deportation action against individuals living in the community rigorously, actively monitoring and managing cases through the legal process and negotiating barriers to removal.

## ■ Police: Mental Health Services

**Edward Morello:**

[\[13295\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking with Cabinet colleagues to improve access to mental health services for police officers in rural constituencies.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

The Government has been clear that the wellbeing of our police is a priority. 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, we continue to fund the National Police Wellbeing Service to provide evidence-based guidance, advice, tools and resources to support forces and individual officers, including guidance on mental health support for the police. The NPWS is helping all forces to identify where there is most risk of impacts on mental health. They are working with forces, developing work to build resilience, and putting in place support for those who need it.

**Chris Philp:**

[\[13777\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish the schedule of implementation for the Right Care, Right Person model for all the police forces in England and Wales.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

It is a matter for each chief constable to determine how much of the Right Care, Right Person (RCRP) approach they wish to adopt.

I know the Rt Hon Member was strongly committed in his past role to the adoption of Right Care, Right Person approach, and I welcome his continued interest in the subject.

Although he will be aware that there is no national implementation schedule for RCRP, and timing is ultimately a matter for each chief constable, it is recognised best practice for the police to work in close consultation with local partners to understand local issues and gaps, to be clear on who will respond to what, and to agree a timeline for implementing the different phases of RCRP in their force area.

The Home Office continues to receive regular updates from police forces across England and Wales on the status of their implementation, and I am pleased to report that work is progressing well across the country.



## ■ Shoplifting: Prosecutions

**Rupert Lowe:**

[\[13342\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what proportion of reported retail thefts have resulted in a charge in each of the last five years.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

The Home Office collects and publishes information on the number of shoplifting offences and their investigative outcomes recorded by the police in England and Wales on a quarterly basis.

The proportion of shoplifting offences which resulted in a “Charge/Summonsed” outcome can be derived from the Outcomes Open Data tables, which can be accessed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-recorded-crime-open-data-tables>

Retail theft reached record levels under the previous Government and while the latest figures show a rise in the proportion of retail thefts resulting in a charge or summons there is more to be done.

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

## ■ Undocumented Migrants: Hotels

**Rupert Lowe:**

[\[13353\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many irregular migrants are in hotel accommodation.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

Data on the number of supported asylum seekers in accommodation, by local authority and accommodation type, can be found within the Asy\_D11 tab for our most recent stats release: [Immigration system statistics data tables - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-data-tables) ([www.gov.uk](#))([opens in a new tab](#)) ([opens in a new tab](#)).

## ■ Undocumented Migrants: Offenders

**Rupert Lowe:**

[\[12900\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 5 November 2024 to Question 11395 on Undocumented Migrants: Offenders, if she will publish information on the proportion of irregular migrants who have (a) previous criminal convictions and (b) subsequently obtained a criminal record.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

Official statistics published by the Home Office are kept under review in line with the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#), taking into account a number of factors including user needs, as well as quality and availability of data.

**■ War Memorials: Demonstrations****Nick Timothy:** [\[13997\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to page 56 of the King's Speech Background Briefing Notes, published by the Prime Minister's Office on 17 July 2024, whether she plans to include measures on protest at war memorials in the crime and policing bill.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**  
Yes.

**HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION****■ House of Commons: Twitter****David Chadwick:** [\[14000\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent and Rhymney, representing the House of Commons Commission, whether the Commission plans to review the use of X by the House of Commons.

**Nick Smith:**  
The House of Commons is committed to engaging and informing the public about its work. We currently use a range of social media platforms and channels to reach a diverse range of audiences. We continuously review all social media platforms used by the House, and emerging channels.

**■ Ministers: Workplace Pensions****Alex Burghart:** [\[13763\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent and Rhymney, representing the House of Commons Commission, pursuant to the Answer of 18 October 2024 to Question 8129 on Ministers: Workplace Pensions, what the percentage employer contribution to the Parliamentary Contribution Pension Fund for the Ministerial Pension Scheme is in the 2024-25 financial year.

**Nick Smith:**  
The exchequer contribution to the Ministerial Pension Scheme in the financial year 2024–25 is 10.5% of pay per annum.

**■ Parliamentary Estate: ICT****Mark Pritchard:** [\[13423\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent and Rhymney, representing the House of Commons Commission, what steps the Commission is taking to reduce the use of IT hardware manufactured in China on the parliamentary estate.

**Nick Smith:**

The House of Commons Administration is aware of the risks, and carefully considers hardware procurements, and any security implications of using Chinese manufactured IT hardware on the parliamentary estate. We work with government departments to ensure that we work in line with the latest advice and guidance. The procurement of much of Parliament's IT hardware (i.e. laptops, printers, tablets and accessories) is managed by a UK-based company called XMA.

**HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT****Absent Voting****Rupert Lowe:**[\[13090\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what proportion of voters are registered to vote by post in each parliamentary constituency.

**Rushanara Ali:**

The data is not held centrally. Electoral registers are maintained by local Electoral Registration Officers (EROs). EROs are the custodians of electoral registers, and this data is not held by central government.

**Absent Voting: Visual Impairment****Steve Darling:**[\[13038\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will review the postal voting system to help improve accessibility for blind and partially sighted people.

**Rebecca Paul:**[\[13042\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department plans to trial new accessible voting devices to help blind and partially sighted people vote independently.

**Rushanara Ali:**

I refer the hon Member to the answer given to Question [UIN 10319](#) on 29 October 2024.

**Affordable Housing: Ashfield and Mansfield****Lee Anderson:**[\[13236\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans her Department has to increase the availability of affordable housing in Ashfield and Mansfield constituency.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

I refer the hon Member to the answer I gave to Question UIN [11383](#) on 31 October 2024.

## ■ Community Ownership Fund

**Sir John Hayes:** [\[13168\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when she plans to make an announcement on the status of applications to the Community Ownership Fund Round 4.

**Alex Norris:**

I refer the rt hon Member to the answer given to Question UIN [11941](#) on 8 November 2024.

## ■ Elections

**John McDonnell:** [\[12913\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will publish an Equality Impact Assessment of changes resulting from the Elections Act 2022.

**Rushanara Ali:**

The previous Government published the Equality Impact Assessment relating to changes resulting from the Elections Act 2022. This was published on 5 July 2021 and can be found here: [Elections Bill equality assessment](#).

We are currently undertaking an evaluation of the impact and implementation of the Elections Act at the recent UK Parliamentary General Election, as set out in legislation. Our evaluation report will be published in due course.

## ■ Homelessness

**James Cartlidge:** [\[12953\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will provide additional support to district councils to reduce levels of homelessness.

**Rushanara Ali:**

As announced at the Budget on 30<sup>th</sup> October, funding for homelessness services is increasing next year by £233 million compared to this year (2024/25). The increased spending will help to prevent rises in the number of families in temporary accommodation and help to prevent rough sleeping. This brings total spend to nearly a billion pounds in 25/26.

As announced on 6<sup>th</sup> November, the department will also be providing £10 million of Rough Sleeping Winter Pressures Funding to local authorities across England this winter.

## ■ Homelessness: Students

**Ian Byrne:**

[\[13257\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of trends in the level of student homelessness.

**Rushanara Ali:**

The Government recognises that homelessness levels are far too high and this can have a devastating impact on those affected. The homelessness statistics show that 4,850 (1.5%) households had an employment status of 'student/training' and were threatened with homelessness or were homeless in 2023-24.

As announced at the Budget on 30 October, funding for homelessness services is increasing by £233 million compared to this year, bringing total spend to nearly a billion in 2025-26. The increased spending will help to prevent rises in the number of families in temporary accommodation and help to prevent rough sleeping.

## ■ Housing Associations

**Uma Kumaran:**

[\[13290\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the regulatory standards for housing associations.

**Uma Kumaran:**

[\[13291\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to take steps to improve the regulation of under-performing housing associations.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

All registered providers of social housing are required to meet the outcomes of the regulatory standards set by the independent Regulator of Social Housing.

On 1 April 2024, the Regulator introduced a new, proactive consumer regulation regime. It has begun proactively seeking assurances that registered providers are meeting the outcomes of the strengthened consumer standards through routine regulatory inspections of large landlords. Following a programmed inspection, the Regulator will issue all large landlords with a consumer grading to make clear how landlords are performing. In addition, it continues to issue all large private registered providers with governance and viability gradings.

There are a range of actions the Regulator can take where the outcomes set by the standards are not being delivered, including formal enforcement action.

**■ Housing: Construction****Mr Clive Betts:**[\[13401\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on embedding circular design principles in the construction of 1.5million homes.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

The Secretary of State for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs has written to the Deputy Prime Minister, Chancellor of the Exchequer and Secretaries of State for Business and Trade, Energy Security and Net Zero and Transport and invited them to join a Small Ministerial Group on Circular Economy (CE-SMG).

This group will govern, join up and drive CE work across government departments to support work relating to the Government's Growth and Clean Energy Missions and feed into the Industrial Strategy.

The National Model Design Code and National Design Guide, which support the National Planning Policy Framework, already encourages the implementation of sustainable construction that focuses on reducing embodied energy, embedding circular economy principles to reduce waste, designing for disassembly and exploring the remodel and reuse of buildings where possible, rather than rebuilding.

Our continued commitment to well-designed homes and places is further supported through proposed updates to the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code in Spring 2025.

**John Milne:**[\[13993\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what her planned timetable is for publishing an updated version of the Housing Delivery Test.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

The 2023 Housing Delivery Test outcomes will be published by the end of the year.

**■ Housing: Horsham****John Milne:**[\[R\] \[14256\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will meet the hon. Member for Horsham to discuss the obligations on Horsham District Council (a) to build more than 900 houses a year and (b) not to build new houses that do not meet the requirements of Water Neutrality.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

Paragraph 60 of the National Planning Policy Framework makes clear that local authorities should plan for as much of an area's identified housing need as possible, including with an appropriate mix of housing types for the local community.

Addressing the impact of 'water neutrality' requirements on housing delivery is a cross-government priority. The way that water resources are planned for is being considered as part of a commission recently announced by the Secretary of State for

the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. As set out in the King's Speech, we want to ensure development delivers positive environmental outcomes.

### ■ **Local Government: Employers' Contributions**

**Laurence Turner:** [\[13962\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 30 October 2024 to Question 11851 on Employers' Contributions: Local Government, whether local authorities will be compensated in full for the additional cost of employers' national insurance contributions; and when she plans to announce details of each local authority's allocation of the support for additional employer NICs costs.

**Jim McMahon:**

As per our response to Question UIN [11851](#) on 8 November 2024, the Government has committed to provide support for departments and other public sector employers for additional employer NICs costs. This applies to those directly employed by the public sector, including local government. We will set out further details of how this support will be delivered in due course.

**Steff Aquarone:** [R] [\[14241\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the impact of the increase in employer National Insurance contributions on local authorities in Norfolk.

**Jim McMahon:**

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

### ■ **Local Government: Equality**

**Lee Anderson:** [\[13222\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent discussion she has had with local government representatives on diversity and inclusion projects.

**Jim McMahon:**

Local authorities are best placed to decide how to meet the needs of their local communities, and to decide what diversity and inclusion work they need to carry out.

### ■ **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Special Advisers**

**Mrs Kemi Badenoch:** [\[2977\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many special advisers have been appointed to her Department as of 30 August 2024; and whether she plans to recruit more.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

As of the end of August 2024, the Deputy Prime Minister had appointed four Special Advisers to the department to support her ministerial role.

**■ Polling Stations: Visual Impairment****Neil Duncan-Jordan:** [\[12863\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if her Department will ensure that (a) audio and (b) tactile solutions are available at polling stations to enable (i) blind and (ii) partially sighted voters to vote (A) independently and (B) in secret.

**Rushanara Ali:**

I refer my hon Friend to the answer given to Question UIN [10319](#) on 29 October 2024.

**■ Private Rented Housing: Rents****Rachel Blake:** [\[13348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of short-term letting websites on recent trends in private rental prices in Cities of London and Westminster constituency.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

Whilst short-term lets can benefit local economies, the government appreciate that excessive concentrations in some areas of the country can impact the availability and affordability of homes both to rent and buy. We have committed to introducing a registration scheme for short-term lets and removing the furnished holiday let rules to ensure all income from property will be treated the same for tax purposes. We also recognise that more needs to be done and are considering what additional powers we might give local authorities to enable them to respond to the pressures created by short-term lets.

**■ Property Management Companies****Samantha Niblett:** [\[13605\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to regulate estate management providers to ensure that homeowners are not subject to (a) hidden fees, (b) unclear information and (c) unsatisfactory maintenance.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

I refer my Hon Friend to the answer to Question UIN [13718](#) on 15 November 2024.

**■ Property Management Companies: Fees and Charges****Mr Richard Holden:** [\[13795\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she plans to take to reduce new build freehold estate management fees.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

I refer the Hon Member to the answer to Question UIN [13718](#) on 15 November 2024.



## ■ Rents

**Liam Conlon:** [\[13280\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to end rental bidding wars by landlords and letting agents (a) nationally and (b) in Beckenham and Penge constituency.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

The Renters' Rights Bill will prohibit rental bidding practices.

## ■ Right to Buy Scheme

**Dr Beccy Cooper:** [\[13286\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to paragraph 5.149 of Autumn Budget 2024, HC 295, published on 30 October 2024, how long discounts on the Right to Buy scheme will be reduced for.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

The discount levels in question will remain in place until further notice.

## ■ Service Charges

**Uma Kumaran:** [\[13292\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she has made a recent assessment of the potential merits of introducing a legal right for (a) tenants and (b) residents to trigger an audit of service charges where bills are disputed.

**Uma Kumaran:** [\[13293\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she has made a recent assessment of the potential merits of establishing an independent body to regulate service charges for residents of all tenures.

**Uma Kumaran:** [\[13294\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department is taking to support shared owners affected by (a) building remediation works and (b) increasing service charges.

**Rachel Blake:** [\[13347\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024 on recent trends in the cost of service charges for leaseholders.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

The level of service charge that leaseholders pay depends on many factors, including the terms of a lease and the age and condition of a building.

By law, variable service charges must be reasonable. Should leaseholders wish to contest the reasonableness of their service charges they may make an application to the appropriate tribunal.

The Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024 includes measures designed to drive up the transparency of service charges to make them more easily challengeable if leaseholders consider them to be unreasonable. We will set out details in due course about the extensive programme of secondary legislation need to bring the various provisions of the Act into force.

Leaseholders in shared ownership properties whose leases qualify for protections set out in the Building Safety Act are protected from the costs of internal building safety defects, with a cost cap proportionate to their equity stake in the property.

All leaseholders can benefit from the Government's Cladding Safety Scheme or Developer Scheme for the removal of unsafe cladding. The Government understands the difficulties some leaseholders are still experiencing and has committed to review how to better protect leaseholders from costs and to accelerate the pace of remediation.

#### ■ **Social Rented Housing: Mould**

**David Williams:**

[\[13248\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department is taking to help support social housing providers to meet their duties under section 42 of the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 in relation to (a) damp and (b) mould.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

The government are committed to introducing Awaab's Law to the social rented sector, setting new time limits for social landlords to fix dangerous hazards which can have a serious impact on the health of residents, including damp and mould. We are working with social housing providers and other stakeholders to determine how we best implement Awaab's Law. We will develop new guidance for landlords and residents on the new duties under the forthcoming regulations.

#### ■ **Travellers: Caravan Sites**

**Kim Johnson:**

[\[13244\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to protect the Tara Park Traveller site in Liverpool; if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of the consultation with the residents of that site on the potential impact of the Ten Streets development; and whether she plans to redevelop that site in line with the surrounding redevelopment proposals.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

I am unable to comment on individual planning cases because of the departments quasi-judicial role in the planning system.

However, planning policy is clear that, in respect of Traveller sites, it is for elected local authorities to make their own assessment of need to inform the preparation of local plans and make planning decisions. In assembling this evidence, local authorities should pay particular attention to early and effective community engagement with both settled and Traveller communities in their area.

## ■ Trees

**John Milne:**

[\[13724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will amend planning regulations in situations where a tree is found to be endangering the foundations of an adjacent building so that local authorities may recommend options other than felling.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

Existing procedures are designed to support options other than felling. The relevant guidance makes clear that applications to address tree-related subsidence damage are to be supported by appropriate information, and the standard application form requires evidence that the tree is a material cause of the problem and that other factors have been eliminated as potential influences so far as possible.

## ■ Woodhouse Colliery: Planning Permission

**Tim Farron:**

[\[13217\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what her planned timetable is for a decision on planning permission for the proposed Whitehaven coal mine.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

No target date has yet been set for a decision for the redetermination of this case. Following the quashing of the previous Secretary of State's decision, the Secretary of State will now write to parties to give them the opportunity to provide any updated information to inform the redetermination. A decision will then be made on the process for redetermination, following which a timetable will be set.

## JUSTICE

### ■ Crimes of Violence: Acids

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[13455\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people have been convicted of attacks involving acid in the last 12 months.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

The Ministry of Justice publishes data on prosecutions and convictions for a wide range of offences, including violence against the person, in the Outcomes by

Offences data tool. This can be downloaded from the Criminal Justice Statistics landing page here: [Criminal justice statistics - GOV.UK](#).

However, data held centrally does not include specific offences where acid has been used during the offence. This information may be held in court records but to examine individual court records would be of disproportionate costs.

### ■ Crimes of Violence: Young People

**Jim Shannon:**

**[13452]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will make an estimate of the number of 15-21 year olds that have been prosecuted for violent crime involving a weapon in the last 12 months.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

The Ministry of Justice publishes data on the number of defendants prosecuted, which can be filtered to specific offences and broken down by age range of defendants. This can be obtained in the Outcomes by Offences data tool, which can be downloaded from the Criminal Justice Statistics landing page here: [criminal-justice-system-statistics-quarterly-december-2023](#).

However, data held centrally does not include information on whether a weapon was involved in the course of a violent offence. This information may be held on court records but to examine individual court records would be of disproportionate costs.

### ■ Domestic Abuse: Men

**Mark Pritchard:**

**[13219]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many women were (a) prosecuted and (b) convicted for domestic abuse against men in the period 2022-2023 .

**Alex Davies-Jones:**

The Ministry of Justice publishes data on the number of offenders prosecuted and convicted which can be filtered to specific offences. This can be obtained in the Outcomes by Offences data tool, which can be downloaded from the Criminal Justice Statistics landing page here: [criminal-justice-system-statistics-quarterly-december-2023](#).

It is not possible to separately identify cases of domestic abuse, which will be recorded under the specific offences for which they are convicted, for example, intentional strangulation or suffocation. This information may be held on court records but to examine individual court records would be of disproportionate costs.

## ■ Homicide and Sexual Offences

**Rupert Lowe:**

[\[13880\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people have been sentenced for (a) murder, (b) rape and (c) other sex offences in each year for the previous ten years, broken down by primary language.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

The Ministry of Justice publishes information on the number of defendants sentenced for murder, rape, and other sex offences in the Outcomes by Offence data tool. The latest publication (2023 data) is available from the Outcomes by Offence data tool published here: [Criminal justice statistics quarterly - GOV.UK](#).

However, it is not possible to identify an offender's primary language from the centrally collated convictions data. This information may be held on court records but to examine individual court records would be of disproportionate costs.

## ■ Motor Vehicles: Theft

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[13454\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people have been convicted of theft offences involving (a) cars and (b) motorcycles in the last 12 months.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

The Ministry of Justice publishes data on the number of offenders convicted of theft offences, including theft of/from a motor vehicle. This can be obtained in the Outcomes by Offences data tool, which can be downloaded from the Criminal Justice Statistics landing page here: [criminal-justice-system-statistics-quarterly-december-2023](#).

This information will not include broader offences involving cars and motorcycles however, for example where a car was used as a getaway from a general theft offence. That information may be held on court records but to examine individual court records would be of disproportionate costs.

## ■ Offences against Children

**Rupert Lowe:**

[\[13383\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many individuals per (a) nationality and (b) ethnicity were convicted of grooming offences since 2004.

**Alex Davies-Jones:**

The Ministry of Justice publishes data on the number of offenders convicted, which can be filtered to specific offences and broken down by defendant ethnicity. This can be obtained in the Outcomes by Offences data tool, which can be downloaded from the Criminal Justice Statistics landing page here: [criminal-justice-system-statistics-quarterly-december-2023](#).

However, data held centrally does not include an offender's nationality. This information may be held on court records but to examine individual court records would be of disproportionate cost.

#### ■ Probate: Charitable Donations

**Dan Norris:** [\[13163\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many unprocessed probate applications there are in (a) North east Somerset and Hanham constituency and (b) England.

**Dan Norris:** [\[13164\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will make an estimate of the proportion of unprocessed probate applications that include legacies to charities.

**Dan Norris:** [\[13165\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will make an estimate of the total cash amount of legacy income due to charities in unprocessed probate applications.

**Heidi Alexander:**

Management Information on the open workable caseload is published in Table 5 here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmcts-management-information>. Data below national level is not available.

Bequests to charities do not influence the probate process, so HMCTS does not collect this data. However, HMCTS works closely with charity representative organisations to help them forecast their legacy income. This includes regular meetings to provide them with additional insight into performance data and forecasts on receipts and grant production levels, so that they can provide guidance to their member organisations.

#### ■ Probation Service: East Midlands

**Sir John Hayes:** [\[13399\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the Probation Service in the East Midlands.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service routinely publishes information about Probation Service regions' performance as part of the Community Performance Annual Statistics. The most recent data, published in July, cover the financial year 2023-24, and includes the performance of East Midlands Probation.

This publication includes details of performance against key performance indicators, a set of 'Probation Service Scorecard Ratings,' and other supporting information, which can all be accessed using the following link: [Community Performance Annual, update to March 2024 - GOV.UK](#).

## ■ Special Educational Needs: Surrey

**Monica Harding:**

[\[14277\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what information her Department holds on the number of education, health and care plan tribunals that were lost by Surrey County Council in each year from 2019 to 2024 to date.

**Heidi Alexander:**

Information about appeals to the First-Tier Tribunal for Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) is published at: [www.gov.uk/government/collections/tribunals-statistics](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/tribunals-statistics).

The table below sets out the number of appeals to the SEND Tribunal against decisions made by Surrey County Council about education, health and care plans for the period 2020(1) to 2023 (the latest period for which data have been published) which were overturned(2) at Tribunal.

YEAR	NUMBER
2020	109
2021	277
2022	331
2023	395

1 - Data on appeals in 2019 are not available due to HMCTS Record and Retention policy requirements that data is deleted after three years from the conclusion of the appeal and six months if the appeal is withdrawn for SEND Tribunals. The full policy on Record and Retention can be found at:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/62b47cfd3bf7f0af821efef/health-education-social-care-chamber-rrds.pdf>.

2 - The Tribunal reports a successful appeal if majority of appeals is found in favour of the parent or young person.

## ■ Young Offender Institutions

**Ben Goldsborough:**

[\[13907\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that senior leaders in Young Offender Institutes respond rapidly to an Ofsted requires improvement grade.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

To improve the quality of education, learning services are designed to be flexible and adaptable. They are reviewed annually, following completion of a needs analysis that evaluates the success, progress, and achievement of each course, assessing the interests of children, their prior attainment, and their changing needs. The Youth

Custody Services use all the mechanisms available under the contract to drive progress.

The Children and Young People's Strategy that is being developed will provide greater detail about our long-term vision for the future of the youth estate, with education and wellbeing at its centre.

## ■ Young Offender Institutions: Education

**Ben Goldsborough:** [\[13889\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many staff were employed in the provision of education in young offenders institutions in each of the last ten financial years.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

The information is not available in the form requested. As it does not employ the people concerned, the Ministry of Justice does not hold the data requested.

**Ben Goldsborough:** [\[13891\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many children have been kept apart from one another on the way to and from classes in young offenders institutions in each of the last 10 financial years.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

"Keep apart" alerts are recorded on individual young people's records and are monitored to ensure that they are safely managed when moving between different activities and areas of their respective sites. The Youth Custody Service does not, however, collate information at the level of detail requested.

**Ben Goldsborough:** [\[13898\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many planned education courses in young offenders institutes have been cancelled in each of the last five financial years; and what information she holds on the reasons for those cancellations.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

The information is not available in the form requested.

It is not the practice to cancel courses, but they may be restricted on a day-to-day basis owing to staff unavailability. As part of the annual review of the curriculum, governors and their teams may decide to replace one course with another, based on the children's needs.

**Ben Goldsborough:** [\[13912\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the attendance rate in education was at Young Offender Institute (a) Feltham, (b) Parc, (c) Werrington and (d) Wetherby in each of the last 10 financial years.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

It is not possible to provide the information requested without incurring disproportionate cost.



## ■ Young Offender Institutions: Labour Turnover

**Ben Goldsborough:**

[\[13901\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps her Department is taking to reduce the turnover of main governors in Young Offender Institutes.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

The turnover of Governing Governors in Young Offender Institutions in the youth estate has stabilised over the last two years. The average time in post is similar to that in the adult estate. Support arrangements, such as Guided Reflective Practice for Senior leaders, are in place to improve retention of senior Governors working in the challenging environment. The recruitment of Governors has improved, with the most recent campaign receiving a large number of suitable applications.

## ■ Young Offender Institutions: Teachers

**Ben Goldsborough:**

[\[13893\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that teachers in young offenders institutes receive adequate (a) training and (b) support to help them address potentially challenging behaviour by offenders in those institutes.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

All teachers in Young Offender Institutions (YOIs) have access to training and continuing professional development led by education providers, based on individual need. Teachers in YOI education departments utilise the behaviour management strategies set by establishments, and those set specifically by the education providers. Establishments have worked together to train staff in behaviour management strategies, to enable all functions to work holistically.

We recognise that rates of turnover and attrition have an impact on levels of experience among staff working with young people in YOIs, and we are seeking to address this. The Youth Custody Service (YCS) has recruited a dedicated national Head of Learning and Enrichment and Heads of Education, Skills and Work locally. These are all directly employed people with education leadership experience, whose role involves driving up quality standards. The YCS has worked with Ofsted to provide workshops to Governors, Deputy Governors, YCS central senior leaders and Heads of Education Skills and Work, to support them in leading improvements in the delivery of a rich curriculum.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### ■ InterTrade UK

**Alex Burghart:**

[\[13240\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, when he plans to publish the terms of reference for Intertrade UK.

**Hilary Benn:**

I confirmed the appointment of Baroness Foster as the chair of Intertrade UK on 19 September and work is continuing on other necessary preparatory activity. We will announce further details - including the Terms of Reference - in due course.

**■ Northern Ireland Office: Domestic Visits****Robin Swann:**[\[14268\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to the Answer of 13 November 2024 to Question 13304 on Northern Ireland Office: Domestic Visits, what steps he is taking to ensure the process is followed.

**Hilary Benn:**

Members of Parliament are notified in advance of Ministerial visits to their constituency. On a recent occasion, a typographical error in an email meant that the Honourable Member's constituency office was not notified correctly. The Northern Ireland Office has since contacted the Honourable Member's constituency office to convey apologies for this.

**■ Terrorism: Northern Ireland****Dr Al Pinkerton:**[\[13318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, with reference to page 90 of the Kings Speech 2024 background briefing notes, published on 17 July 2024, what recent progress he has made on his plans to replace the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act 2023 in a way that complies with human rights standards; and what steps he is taking to help ensure the effective conduct of investigations by the Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery.

**Hilary Benn:**

The Government remains committed to repealing and replacing the Legacy Act, in particular, those sections which have been most vehemently opposed by victims and survivors and found deficient by the court. The Government has already committed to bringing forward a remedial order under the Human Rights Act to remove conditional immunity provisions and we are considering the Dillon judgment. We are also consulting widely on a practical way forward that can obtain support and comply with our human rights obligations. I remain committed to retaining and reforming the ICIR to further strengthen its powers and independence.

Both the High Court and Court of Appeal have recognised the ICIR's structural independence and wide powers to conduct effective investigations. The Government has confidence in the ICIR's ability to deliver results for victims and survivors.

**SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY****■ Civil Service: Artificial Intelligence****Rupert Lowe:**[\[13307\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps his Department is taking to integrate AI into civil service functions; and if he will make an estimate of the potential impact of AI on costs to the public purse in the next five financial years.

**Feryal Clark:**

The Central Digital & Data Office has worked with HM Treasury to develop assessment criteria for the spending review. The criteria focus on generating value for the taxpayer and ensuring investment in AI technology provides a significant return on investment.

There is ongoing work to analyse the potential cost and value of AI for civil service functions, the outcomes of which are yet to be determined.

Public sector adoption is a key part of the AI Opportunities Action Plan, which will detail how we can reimagine our public services by ensuring the public sector takes advantage of the best emerging use-cases and tools.

**■ Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Data Processing****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[12974\]](#)

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

**Feryal Clark:**

The Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) is committed to improving its productivity, including through artificial intelligence and effective use of data.

1. For example, approximately 1,500 staff across DSIT and arms-length bodies are participating in the cross-government Microsoft 365 Copilot experiment led by CDDO. Staff are using Copilot to summarise policy papers and briefings, support initial document drafting, to extract insights from data, and retrieve information within the department or online.
2. We use data and analysis to inform decision making in the department, identify potential improvements, and ensure optimal allocation of funding/resources. We also make use of secure data platforms and reproducible analytical pipelines for data analysis, thus enabling faster, data-driven decisions.

We draw on a range of resources, published on GOV.UK, to inform our AI and data usage. For example, the Generative AI Framework, the Data Maturity Assessment, the Ethics, Transparency and Accountability Framework, the Data Ethics Framework, and the Algorithmic Transparency Recording Standard.

The department also has access to the Central Digital & Data Office for expert advice.

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

## ■ New Businesses: Finance

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[13202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to paragraph 4.94 of the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 October 2024, HC 295, how much he plans to spend over what time period on an extension of the Innovation Accelerators programme to continue to bolster high-potential innovation clusters in the Glasgow City Region, Greater Manchester and the West Midlands; and whether the programme will be extended to other places.

**Feryal Clark:**

The Government will extend the Innovation Accelerators pilot for a year to continue to bolster high-potential innovation clusters in the Glasgow City Region, Greater Manchester and the West Midlands. We will announce further details on the allocation of the R&D budget in due course.

Any future extension of the programme to other places will be subject to decisions taken through the second phase of the Spending Review.

## ■ NHS: ICT

**Samantha Niblett:**

[\[12601\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on support for the digitisation of the NHS.

**Feryal Clark:**

DSIT has pledged to create a National Data Library bringing together existing research programmes to help deliver data-driven public services, including transforming the NHS.

The Department for Health supports NHS digitisation by:

1. Empowering patients through improvements to the NHS app
2. Speeding up the implementation of the NHS Federated Data Platform

DSIT investment in the Data for R&D Programme helps ensure secure access to UK health data for research and development through a network of Secure Data Environments. UKRI has invested over £1 billion in AI research. DSIT will continue to ensure safe deployment of AI to deliver service enhancements.

## ■ Shared Rural Network

**Chi Onwurah:** [\[13761\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Shared Rural Network.

**Chris Bryant:**

The Shared Rural Network (SRN) has already delivered substantial improvements to outdoor 4G mobile coverage across the UK. 4G coverage from at least one mobile network operator has increased from 91% when the programme was agreed in March 2020 to 94.9% according to Ofcom coverage reporting. This progress includes upgrading and activating Emergency Services Network (ESN) masts which are delivering new 4G coverage in the harder to reach areas across Britain and building new masts in areas that currently have no signal at all to having coverage from all four mobile network operators.

Ofcom recently assessed that all four mobile network operators had met their 88% coverage obligation for completion of the partial not-spot programme. This part of the SRN targets areas where there is currently coverage from at least one but not all four mobile network operators.

## ■ Telecommunications: Power Failures

**Alistair Strathern:** [\[13832\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether his Department plans to improve the resilience of local telecommunications networks through power outages.

**Alistair Strathern:** [\[13833\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of telecommunications systems resilience during power cuts.

**Chris Bryant:**

Government recognises the importance of the issue of power resilience for the sector. Whilst most power cuts are brief, we recognise the impact that they can have on the telephone network. We are working closely with the regulator, communications providers and the power sector to improve resilience and minimise disruption to the public and businesses as much as possible.

Communications providers have statutory responsibilities to take all appropriate and proportionate steps to minimise disruption to services and must ensure at least one form of communication is available for contacting emergency services for a minimum of one hour during a power outage. On 6 September 2024, Ofcom published detailed resilience guidelines specifying the measures that providers are expected to meet throughout their networks, including resilience to power cuts, and set out the analysis they are completing to consider whether additional resilience is required for mobile services.

**SCOTLAND****■ Ferries and Freight: Rosyth****Graeme Downie:****[13661]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, whether he has had discussions on the reintroduction of a (a) passenger and (b) freight service from Rosyth to mainland Europe.

**Ian Murray:**

My officials have spoken with colleagues in the Department for Transport and the Treasury on this matter and I am aware of your campaigning on this issue.

This Government recognises the importance of upgrading our port infrastructure, and that is why we have created the National Wealth Fund, which will bring together key institutions and a compelling proposition for investors.

The National Wealth Fund is now open for engagement, and can be contacted via [www.uknwf.org.uk](http://www.uknwf.org.uk).

**Graeme Downie:****[13662]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, whether he has had recent discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the reintroduction of a (a) passenger and (b) freight service from Rosyth to mainland Europe.

**Ian Murray:**

I have not, but I am aware that you have written to the Chancellor of the Exchequer on this matter in connection with infrastructure enhancements that may be required at the port of Rosyth.

This Government recognises the importance of upgrading our port infrastructure, and that is why we have created the National Wealth Fund, which will bring together key institutions and a compelling proposition for investors.

The National Wealth Fund is now open for engagement, and can be contacted via [www.uknwf.org.uk](http://www.uknwf.org.uk).

**TRANSPORT****■ Bicycles: Disability****Alison Hume:****[14233]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing targeted financial support to people with mobility impairments that are purchasing adapted bicycles.

**Mike Kane:**

The Government has announced an additional £100 million investment in cycling and walking infrastructure for the financial year 2025/26. As the Department develops its future plans for active travel, it will consider, alongside Active Travel England, options for enabling more disabled people to access adapted cycles. In the meantime, the

Cycle to Work scheme already enables many people to access adapted cycles at a reduced cost.

### ■ **Bicycles: Self-employed**

**Alison Hume:**

[\[14231\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to support self-employed people to buy a bicycle.

**Mike Kane:**

The Department and Active Travel England will consider options for making cycles more accessible to all, including self-employed people, as it develops its future plans for active travel.

### ■ **Bus Services: Ashfield**

**Lee Anderson:**

[\[13239\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her Department plans to increase the frequency of bus services in Ashfield and Mansfield constituency.

**Mike Kane:**

Improving local bus services is a key part of this government's growth mission. The government will introduce a Buses Bill later this Parliamentary session. This will put the power over local bus services back in the hands of local leaders right across England, including in Ashfield and Mansfield, to choose the model that works best in their area, whether that be franchising, high-quality partnerships with private operators or local authority ownership.

Under franchising, the local authority has control of the bus network including setting routes, timetables and fares.

In addition, the government has confirmed £925 million for the 2025 to 2026 financial year to support and improve bus services in England outside London. 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 Nottinghamshire County Council, and others, to deliver better bus services throughout England.

### ■ **Bus Services: Boston and Skegness**

**Richard Tice:**

[\[13379\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to support local bus services in Boston and Skegness constituency.

**Mike Kane:**

Improving local bus services is a key part of this government's growth mission. The government will introduce a Buses Bill later this Parliamentary session. This will put the power over local bus services back in the hands of local leaders right across

England, including in Boston and Skegness, 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 £925 million for the 2025 to 2026 financial year to support and improve bus services in England outside London. Local authorities can use the £925 million to introduce new bus routes, make services more frequent and protect crucial bus routes for local communities. We have also confirmed over £150 million to introduce a new £3 cap on single bus fares in England outside London from 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2025, bringing total government bus investment confirmed at the budget to over £1 billion.

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

#### ■ Department for Transport: Apprentices

**Sir John Hayes:**

[\[13395\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many apprentices her Department has employed each year since 2010.

**Mike Kane:**

The Department formally began recording apprenticeship data from 2017, following the publication of the Civil Service Apprenticeship Strategy. This data reflects DfTc, excluding the agencies.

YEAR	APPRENTICE NUMBERS
2017 - 2018	19
2018 - 2019	20
2019 - 2020	24
2020 - 2021	7
2021 - 2022	44
2022 - 2023	123
2023 - 2024	112
2024 - present	53



## ■ Driving Licences

**Rupert Lowe:**

[\[13328\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many driving licences were issued to people born outside of the UK by nationality in each of the last five years.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

The information requested is not available, as the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency does not record the nationality of driving licence holders.

## ■ Driving Tests: Internet

**Manuela Perteghella:**

[\[13873\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress her Department has made on preventing automated software programmes from buying driving test appointments.

**Manuela Perteghella:**

[\[13874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of implementing (a) fines and (b) other sanctions on companies that use automated software programs to buy driving test appointments.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

To ensure fairness for everyone wanting to book a practical driving test, the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) continues to work hard to combat the unscrupulous practice of reselling tests, often at significant profit. The agency encourages all customers to book a test through the official channel on GOV.UK where customers can book, change and cancel tests. The agency does not license any service to resell test slots.

DVSA is deploying enhanced bot protection on its public facing booking system to stop automated systems from buying up tests unfairly. These applications, however, are constantly evolving and changing and DVSA continues to take steps to block cancellation services from accessing the booking system.

DVSA has had a number of external reviews of its bot mitigation methodology and approach. To date, none of the reviews have indicated any improvement was necessary or suggested changes in approach.

## ■ Electric Scooters: Accidents

**Dr Neil Hudson:**

[\[13850\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of e-scooter use on the number of road related incidents in the last 12 months.

**Mike Kane:**

The Department collects road traffic casualty data for e-scooters using data reported by the police to the Department for Transport. In 2023 there were 1,292 collisions involving e-scooters, compared to 1,411 in 2022. There were 1,387 casualties in

collisions involving e-scooters, compared to 1,502 in 2022, and of these 1,117 casualties were e-scooter users, compared to 1,154 in 2022.

Our best estimate, after adjusting for changes in reporting by police, is that there were 416 seriously injured and 965 slightly injured in collisions involving e-scooters, this compares to 441 and 1,049 respectively in 2022.

January to June 2024 provisional e-scooter personal injury collisions are due to be published at the end of November. January to December 2024 provisional figures are due to be published in Spring 2025.

### ■ **Electric Vehicles: Charging Points**

**Nadia Whittome:** [\[13806\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when she plans to publish guidance on cross-pavement EV charging solutions.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

This Government is committed to accelerating the roll out of charge points for electric vehicles. Guidance for local authorities to develop policies on the safe use of cross-pavement solutions will be published in due course.

### ■ **Ferries: Channel Islands**

**Neil Duncan-Jordan:** [\[13363\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions officials in her Department have had with the (a) States of Jersey, (b) States of Guernsey, (c) ferry operators and (d) trade unions on the long term provision of ferry services from (i) Poole and (ii) Portsmouth to the Channel Islands.

**Mike Kane:**

Maritime officials within the Department have had no discussions on the long-term provision of ferry services from (i) Poole and (ii) Portsmouth to the Channel Islands.

Ferry services are predominantly run on a commercial basis without UK government intervention. However, where services are pertinent to local and regional objectives, relevant bodies can become involved in the specification of service provision. In this case, we understand that the governments of the States of Guernsey and Jersey have undertaken a procurement process to meet the Islands' ferry service needs.

This is a matter for those States, and therefore this Department has not had discussions with Islands, ferry providers, or unions, in this instance.

### ■ **Parking: Pedestrian Areas**

**Mr Richard Holden:** [\[14069\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to help tackle pavement parking.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

In 2020, the Department undertook a public consultation on options for changing the way pavement parking is managed outside London. Our plan is to publish a formal response to the consultation, summarising the views received and announcing the Government's next steps for pavement parking policy. The formal consultation response will be available to view at:

[www.gov.uk/government/consultations/managing-pavement-parking](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/managing-pavement-parking)

**Railways: Artificial Intelligence and Automation****Rupert Lowe:****[13309]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of using (a) AI and (b) automation for rail reforms; and if she will have discussions with (i) Network Rail and (ii) train operators on the potential impact of those bodies using (A) AI on (B) automation on costs (1) for rail passengers and (2) to the public purse.

**Mike Kane:**

The Department recognises the potentially transformative role that technologies such as Artificial Intelligence can play across all transport modes, including rail.

Within rail, these technologies have the potential to deliver step-change improvements in several areas, including to the passenger experience, train positioning and control, infrastructure and asset management, safety management, energy management and emissions control.

My officials continue to work closely with Shadow Great British Railways and other rail industry bodies including Network Rail and the Rail Safety and Standards Board to ensure that the benefits of these technologies are fully recognised and realised.

**Railways: Temperature****Alex Mayer:****[13545]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking with rail companies to help support the safety of (a) passengers and (b) rail staff during heatwaves.

**Mike Kane:**

Train operators are required by law to mitigate and manage the safety risks to staff and passengers associated with heatwaves. The Rail Delivery Group (RDG) recently updated its guidance in June 2023 covering the specific arrangements and measures that operators should have in place to manage hot weather. This includes communicating travel conditions to passengers, providing access to water, recognising the signs of heatstroke, and administering medical assistance where needed. Operators are also expected to manage station and train environments to maintain comfortable temperatures, which extends to upgrading air conditioning and ventilation on new rolling stock and rectifying faults with these systems quickly in the event they stop working.

**■ Railways: WiFi****Rupert Lowe:**[\[13343\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of improving access to wifi on trains for (a) the economy and (b) productivity.

**Mike Kane:**

I have asked my officials to explore the feasibility of a range of technology options to improve passenger connectivity on the rail network. The Department is also measuring the strength of mobile signals along the rail network to fully understand where interventions are needed, and the potential impacts.

**■ Roads: Shropshire****Helen Morgan:**[\[13838\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the number of (a) deaths and (b) serious accidents on roads in Shropshire.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

This Government takes road safety seriously, and we are committed to reducing the numbers of those killed and injured on our roads. My Department is developing our road safety strategy and will set out more details in due course.

Local government is the main delivery agent of road safety. The responsibility to implement, fund, deliver, promote and enforce local road safety initiatives remains with the Local Authorities under the 1988 Road Traffic Act.

It is for the local council to decide what measures may be appropriate in their local area to “take steps both to reduce and prevent accidents”.

Local authorities are also responsible for the management of local roads, within the rules set by Government, including setting local speed limits where the national limit would not be appropriate.

In Shropshire, the Department for Transport has funded two road safety schemes as part of the Safer Roads Fund, the A5191 and the A529, aiming to reduce risk on England’s most high risk ‘A’ roads.

**■ Roads: Suicide****Laurence Turner:**[\[14142\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many (a) suicides and (b) attempted suicides were recorded as having taken place on the strategic road network in each of the last ten years.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

Whilst National Highways undertakes considerable work to use all intelligence and operational data to prevent suicide, it does not have definitive datasets on suicide

related incidents on the Strategic Road Network (SRN) because classification of deaths is a matter for the Coroner. Every death on our roads is a tragedy and National Highways strives to prevent deaths and serious injuries whatever the cause.

## TREASURY

### ■ Agriculture: Inheritance Tax

**Alex Easton:**

[12323]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 October 2024, HC 295, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of changes to agricultural property relief and business property relief on family-owned farms in (a) Northern Ireland and (b) the rest of the UK; and what steps she is taking with the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to help ensure the (i) sustainability and (ii) generational continuity of agricultural businesses in (A) regions where farming is a part of the local economy and heritage and (B) other areas.

**James Murray:**

The Government has published information about the reforms to agricultural property relief and business property relief at [www.gov.uk/government/publications/agricultural-property-relief-and-business-property-relief-reforms](http://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>.

In accordance with standard practice, a tax information and impact note will be published alongside the draft legislation before the relevant Finance Bill.

Agricultural land and associated buildings are exempt from business rates.

At Autumn Budget 2024, the Government provided £5 billion across this year and next to support the ongoing transition towards a more productive and environmentally sustainable agricultural sector in England. This will strengthen the domestic sector, and improve food security.

The devolved governments' settlements for 2025-26 are the largest in real terms of any settlements since devolution.

**Richard Fuller:**

[13207]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to her Department's policy paper entitled Summary of reforms to agricultural property relief and business property relief, published on 30 October 2024, whether the £1 million threshold for the two reliefs will be uprated over this Parliament by inflation.

**James Murray:**

The allowance will be £1 million from 6 April 2026. Decisions about future increases will be taken in the same way as for other inheritance tax reliefs.

**Richard Fuller:** [\[13208\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to her Department's policy paper entitled Summary of reforms to agricultural property relief and business property relief, published on 30 October 2024, what equivalent figures HMRC hold on claims for the two reliefs for years after the 2021-22 tax year.

**Richard Fuller:** [\[13209\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to her Department's policy paper entitled Summary of reforms to agricultural property relief and business property relief published on 30 October 2024, how many estates she expects to be affected from the combined reforms to the two reliefs on which the £495 million estimate in revenue is derived in 2027-28.

**James Murray:**

2021-22 is the latest available year for outturn statistics on APR and BPR claims. Further details around the timing of data releases for statistics around Inheritance Tax liabilities can be found in the 'timeliness and punctuality' section of the statistics' Background Quality Report at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/inheritance-tax-liabilities-statistics/inheritance-tax-liabilities-statistics-background-quality-report#timeliness-and-punctuality>.

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](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/agricultural-property-relief-and-business-property-relief-reforms).

It is expected that up to around 2,000 estates will be affected by the changes to APR and BPR. Up to around 520 of these are expected to relate to claims for APR (including those that also claim for BPR), and this number falls to around 430 when claims that include AIM shares are excluded. Almost three-quarters of estates claiming agricultural property relief (or those claiming agricultural property relief and business property relief together) each year are expected to be unaffected by these reforms.

**Gareth Davies:** [\[13623\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to her Department's policy paper entitled Summary of reforms to agricultural property relief and business property relief, published on 30 October 2024, what assessment he has made of the impact of this change on tenant farmers.

**Gareth Davies:** [\[13631\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to her Department's policy paper entitled Summary of reforms to agricultural property relief and business property relief, published on 30 October 2024, whether he has made an assessment of the number of farmers that will exit the sector as a result of this change.

**David Reed:** [13648]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of changes to agricultural property relief on the sustainability of domestic food production.

**David Reed:** [13649]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of changes to Agricultural Property Relief on tenants' access to (a) land and (b) secure tenancy agreements.

**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](http://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.

## ■ Childcare: Tax Allowances

**Claire Hanna:** [13281]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many and what proportion of eligible households in Belfast South and Mid Down constituency are availing of the Tax Free Childcare scheme.

**James Murray:**

Data on Tax-Free Childcare users for 2024 parliamentary constituencies will not be published until May 2025. However, the number of families who used Tax-Free Childcare in 2023/24 in the three former constituencies that predominantly make up Belfast South and Mid Down was as follows:

Belfast South - 1435

Lagan Valley - 1580

Strangford - 930

This data was published in table 11 of the Tax-Free Childcare Official Statistics in August 2024: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/tax-free-childcare-statistics-june-2024>

The number of families eligible for Tax-Free Childcare is not available by parliamentary constituency and so it is not possible to calculate the proportion that are using the scheme.

## ■ Duchy of Cornwall and Duchy of Lancaster

**Neil Duncan-Jordan:** [\[12856\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will have discussions with the Royal Household on the administration of the Duchies of (a) Cornwall and (b) Lancaster.

**Darren Jones:**

The Duchies of Cornwall and Lancaster are private estates, and neither Duchy manages public money. The government has a limited number of functions in relation to their administration, prescribed by Acts of Parliament.

## ■ Employers' Contributions

**Daisy Cooper:** [\[14066\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 11 November 2024 to Question 12746 on Employers' Contributions, if she will consult (a) small businesses, (b) social care providers and (c) GP surgeries before publishing the Tax Information and Impact Note.

**James Murray:**

A Tax Information and Impact Note that covers the employer NICs changes was published by HMRC on 13 November

The government has protected the smallest businesses from the impact of the increase to employers' National Insurance by increasing the Employment Allowance from £5,000 to £10,500, which means that 865,000 employers will pay no employer NICs at all next year. More than half of employers will see no change or will gain overall from this package and eligible employers will be able to employ up to four full-time workers on the National Living Wage and pay no employer NICs.

## ■ Employers' Contributions: Public Sector

**Alex Burghart:** [\[13512\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the answer of 6 November 2024, to Question 12294, on Employer's Contributions: Ministry of Defence, and with reference to Item 26 on page 118, Table 5.1, of the Autumn Budget 2024, HC295, on the allowance for impact of the National Insurance Contributions on public sector organisations, whether this will include funding to mitigate the NI insurance rise for (a) GPs, (b) NHS dentists, (c) NHS-funded hospices, (d) privately-funded hospices, (e) universities, (f) further education colleges, (g) children's care homes, (h) care homes for the elderly which have residents funded by local authorities.

**James Murray:**

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.



**Alex Burghart:**

[\[13513\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to Item 26 on page 118, Table 5.1, of the Autumn Budget 2024, HC295, published on 30 October 2024, if she will set out the methodological difference with the monetary figures listed for RDEL compensation to public sector employers and adult social care, in Table 3.2 in the Office for Budget Responsibility's Economic and Fiscal Outlook, October 2024, CP1169.

**Darren Jones:**

The OBR memo line was incorrect and it has now been amended - Correction on 7 October 2024: The published Economic and fiscal outlook included an incorrect definition of the policy and its costs. We have made this correction to the highlighted cells above and detailed this correction in the Correction slip within the Economic and fiscal outlook.- to align with the published figure on page 118, Table 5.1, of the Autumn Budget 2024.

**Colum Eastwood:**

[\[14154\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 11 November 2024 to Question 12760 on Employers' Contributions: General Practitioners, whether support arrangements for additional employer National Insurance contribution costs will be provided to the Northern Ireland Executive as ringfenced resource expenditure for (a) public bodies, (b) GPs and (c) NHS dentists.

**Darren Jones:**

As has been confirmed, the UK Government will provide support for departments and other public sector employers for additional employer National Insurance contributions costs. The detail of this policy change is being worked through thoroughly.

My department will continue to engage with the devolved governments.

## ■ Employers' Contributions: Small Businesses

**Edward Morello:**

[\[13344\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of increases to the lower national insurance threshold for employer contributions on small seasonal businesses.

**James Murray:**

The government has protected the smallest businesses from the impact of the increase to employer's National Insurance by increasing the Employment Allowance from £5,000 to £10,500. This means that 865,000 employers will pay no NICs at all next year. More than half of employers will see no change or will gain overall from this package.

A Tax Information and Impact Note that covers the employer NICs changes was published by HMRC on 13 November and can be found here: [Changes to the Class 1 National Insurance Contributions Secondary Threshold, the Secondary Class 1](#)

[National Insurance contributions rate, and the Employment Allowance from 6 April 2025 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk).

**Dr Neil Hudson:** [13851]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of increases in employer National Insurance contributions on small businesses in Epping Forest constituency.

**James Murray:**

Estimates of the impact on businesses in Epping Forest from changes to Employer NICs announced at Autumn Budget 2024 are not available.

### ■ Infrastructure

**Olivia Blake:** [12765]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 1.30 of the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 October 2024, HC 295, whether she plans to hold a consultation on the proposed Infrastructure Strategy.

**Darren Jones:**

I refer the Member for Sheffield Hallam to the reply given to the Members for Nuneaton and Warrington North, Parliamentary Questions Numbers 12277 and 12288.

### ■ Inheritance Tax: Monmouthshire

**Catherine Fookes:** [13288]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many estates were subject to inheritance tax in Monmouthshire constituency in each tax year between 2019-20 and 2022-23.

**James Murray:**

The Government publishes the latest Inheritance Tax liabilities statistics at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/inheritance-tax-liabilities-statistics>. Table 12.9 of the Inheritance Tax liabilities statistics has the estimated numbers of estates liable to tax on death by UK (Westminster) Parliamentary Constituency, for the latest available tax year, which is currently 2021-22. The statistics for 2022-23 has not yet been published.

In that year, 58 estates were liable for inheritance tax in the Monmouth Parliamentary constituency. The equivalent number of estates in 2020-21 and 2019-20 were 47 and 39 respectively.

### ■ Nurseries: Business Rates

**Adam Dance:** [13387]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will exempt nurseries in England from business rates.

**James Murray:**

At the Budget in October, the Government committed to increasing spending on early years and family services to over £8 billion in 2025-26. This includes an additional £1.8 billion which will be paid to early years providers to continue the expansion of government-funded childcare and help more parents, particularly women, stay in and return to work.

Business rates are a broad based tax on the value of non-domestic properties including nurseries.

To protect small businesses, the government announced at the Autumn Budget that it would freeze the small business multiplier next year. Taken together with Small Business Rates Relief, this intervention ensures that over a million properties will be protected from inflationary increases.

In addition to this support, standalone nurseries are also eligible for charitable rate relief where they have a 'charitable purpose'.

**■ People Smuggling: English Channel****Blake Stephenson:**[\[13056\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the press notice entitled Prime Minister unveils game changing investment to tackle national security threat from people smuggling gangs, published on 4 November 2024, whether the £75m funding announced for Border Security Command is in addition to the funding allocations set out in the Autumn Budget 2024.

**Darren Jones:**

The Border Security Command is funded from within the Home Office's Spending Review settlement, as announced at the Budget.

**■ Pharmacy: Finance****Adam Dance:**[\[13331\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she plans to provide additional investment for the pharmacy network.

**Darren Jones:**

At the Autumn Budget the Chancellor announced a £22.6 billion increase in day to day spending for the Department of Health and Social Care from 2023-24 to 2025-26. This is an average increase of 4% in real terms funding growth for the NHS, the highest since before 2010 excluding COVID-19 years.

The Department of Health and Social Care will set out further details of how detailed allocations will be spent, including pharmacy funding, in due course.

**Adam Dance:**[\[13332\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 October, if she will provide additional financial support to pharmacies for

(a) employer National Insurance contributions, (b) the national minimum wage and (c) business rates.

**Darren Jones:**

The Budget will provide support for government departments and other public sector employers for additional Employer NICs costs only. Pharmacies are independent contractors and therefore will not be exempt from these changes. This is consistent with the approach to previous Employer NICs changes, as was the case with the previous Government's Health and Social Care Levy.

At the Budget the Chancellor announced a £22.6 billion increase in day to day spending for the Department of Health and Social Care from 2023-24 to 2025-26. This is an average increase of 4% in real terms funding growth for the NHS, the highest since before 2010 excluding COVID-19 years.

The Department of Health and Social Care will set out further details of how detailed allocations will be spent, including pharmacy funding, in due course.

From 1 April 2025, the National Living Wage (NLW) will increase by 6.7% to £12.21 per hour for eligible workers aged 21 and over. This represents an increase of £1,400 to the annual earnings of a full-time worker on the NLW and is expected to benefit over 3 million low-paid workers. In accepting the Low Pay Commission's recommendations, which balance the impacts on business, competitiveness of the labour market and wider economy, as well as the cost of living, the government is providing support to the lowest-paid workers in the economy whilst ensuring that wider economic conditions remain stable and create the conditions for growth.

We are creating a fairer business rates system that protects the high street, supports investment, and is fit for the 21st century. To deliver our manifesto pledge, from 2026-27, we intend to introduce permanently lower tax rates for retail, hospitality, and leisure (RHL) properties, including pharmacies, from 2026-27. This permanent tax cut will ensure that they benefit from much-needed certainty and support. Ahead of these changes being made, the Government recognises that businesses will need support in 2025-26. As such, we have prevented the current RHL relief from ending in April 2025, extending it for one year at 40 per cent up to a cash cap of £110,000 per business, and we have frozen the small business multiplier.

■ **Private Education: VAT**

**Adam Dance:**

[\[13329\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to point 22 of Table 5.1 at page 117 of the Autumn Budget 2024, HC 295, published on 30 October 2024, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the application of the standard VAT rate to services provided by private schools on small private schools.

**James Murray:**

The government has conducted thorough and detailed analysis of the impacts of this policy.

A Tax Impact and Information Note (TIIN) has been published which sets out this analysis. This assessment includes exchequer impacts, economic impacts, impacts on individuals and families, business impacts, equalities impacts, and HMRC operational impacts. This was published online and can be found here: [Private school fees — VAT measure - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/private-school-fees-vat-measure).

#### ■ **Public Works Loan Board: Interest Rates**

**James Cartlidge:** [\[12956\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she plans to review Public Works Loan Board rates offered to councils.

**Darren Jones:**

The PWLB lending facility exists to provide cost effective loans to local authorities to support investments and service delivery. HMT keeps all PWLB rates under review, including the discounted rate for investment in social housing which we extended in Autumn Budget to the end of 2025-26 to give LAs certainty with their capital plans for the year ahead.

#### ■ **Treasury: Data Processing**

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[12982\]](#)

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

**James Murray:**

HM Treasury (HMT) is committed to improving its productivity, including through artificial intelligence (AI) and the effective use of data.

HMT is implementing a multi-year Data and AI Strategy to make sure it adopts a modern data platform, upskills its people in good data management, and implements ethical and sustainable AI use. The department has established a dedicated Data Science Hub, which provides data and AI tools and a dedicated data management function.

HMT is undertaking this in partnership with broader cross-governmental networks and private sector collaborations, to identify potential opportunities for cooperation and to address security risks associated with technological advancements.

## WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

#### ■ **Castes**

**Mike Wood:** [\[14095\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, whether she plans to commence the caste provisions in the Equality Act 2010 as amended.

**Anneliese Dodds:**

We are currently considering our position on caste discrimination. We will announce our plans in due course.

**■ Equality: Impact Assessments****Alex Burghart:**[\[14110\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, whether she plans to commission an equality impact assessment on the proposed commencement of the socio-economic duty in the Equality Act 2010.

**Anneliese Dodds:**

The Government is committed to commencing the socio-economic duty in the Equality Act 2010. The duty will require public bodies, when making strategic decisions, to actively consider how their decisions might help to reduce the inequalities associated with socio-economic disadvantage. To ensure effective implementation, we will certainly give due regard to the equality impacts of commencement.

**■ Equality: Men****Mike Wood:**[\[14094\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps she is to support equality of opportunity for young white working class males.

**Anneliese Dodds:**

Whoever you are, wherever you come from, Britain should be a country where hard work means you can get on in life. Our work in the Opportunity Mission aims to break the link between background and success to ensure all children, including those from white working-class backgrounds, are able to achieve and thrive today so they can succeed and flourish tomorrow.

**■ Office for Equality and Opportunity****Mr Richard Holden:**[\[13826\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what the cost was of re-branding the Equality Hub as the Office for Equality and Opportunity.

**Anneliese Dodds:**

Minimal costs were incurred in the rebranding of the Equality Hub to the Office of Equality and Opportunity as it was a renaming exercise rather than a Machinery of Government change. Therefore, there has been no programme or digital expenditure to date and only minimal administrative time by current employees.

## WORK AND PENSIONS

### ■ Access to Work Programme

**Rupert Lowe:**

[\[13916\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people used Access to Work support at what cost and for what reasons in the last financial year.

**Alison McGovern:**

The most recent complete financial year of data available in the published Access to Work official statistics is 2023/24: [Access to Work statistics: April 2007 to March 2024 - GOV.UK](#). In 2023/24, around 61,630 people received a payment for any Access to Work provision and total expenditure across all provision was £257.8 million. We have interpreted reason for using Access to Work as being the primary medical condition reported by the individual. In 2023/24, the largest Access to Work customer group in terms of number of payments, by primary medical condition are those with a 'Mental health condition', who account for 27% (16,560) of the total number of customers. Those with the primary medical condition 'Learning disability' are the second most common group and make up 11% of customers (6,720 people). Those who are 'Deaf or hard of hearing' are in receipt of the highest proportion (30%) of total Access to Work expenditure.

### ■ Children: Maintenance

**Ian Sollom:**

[\[13950\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to ensure that all parents receive the correct amount of child maintenance payment on time.

**Andrew Western:**

A principle of child maintenance is to increase levels of cooperation between separated parents and encourage parents to meet their responsibilities to provide their children with financial support.

Where a family-based child maintenance arrangement is not suitable the Child Maintenance Service offers a statutory scheme, Direct Pay and Collect and Pay, for those parents who need it.

To ensure Child Maintenance calculations are accurate the department uses proportionate and cost-effective controls, such as:

- use of verified income from HMRC and benefit systems as outlined in legislation and a principal part of service design.
- use of child benefit systems to verify qualifying child(ren)
- procedures and policy to request additional verification
- a dedicated Financial Investigation Unit who addresses allegations of misrepresentation and fraud
- a robust mandatory reconsideration (MR) and appeals process

- a robust 3 Tier Quality Framework.

The Government is dedicated to ensuring parents meet their financial obligations to children and the Child Maintenance Service will do everything within its powers to make sure parents comply. Where parents fail to pay their child maintenance, the Service will not hesitate to use its enforcement powers, including deductions from earnings orders, removal of driving licences, disqualification from holding a passport, and committal to prison. The Service is committed to using these powers fairly and in the best interests of children and separated families.

The Department publishes quarterly statistics for the [Child Maintenance Service](#). Please refer to tables 4, 5, 6.1 and 6.2 of the National Tables for data on child maintenance arrangements and collection. [national-tables-child-maintenance-service-to-june-2024.ods](#)

### ■ **Connect to Work: Arthritis**

**Dame Caroline Dinéage:**

**[14038]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how the Connect to Work scheme will support people living with arthritis to remain in employment.

**Alison McGovern:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on 12 November 2024 to PQ [12617](#)

### ■ **Department for Work and Pensions: Serco**

**Rupert Lowe:**

**[13559]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how much was paid by her Department to Serco in each of the last 10 years.

**Andrew Western:**

This information you seek can be found on the Government website here [DWP: departmental spending over £25,000 - GOV.UK](#)

### ■ **Employment Schemes: Disability**

**Pippa Heylings:**

**[13863]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the effectiveness of the support provided by her Department in helping disabled people (a) find and (b) maintain employment.

**Alison McGovern:**

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

Good quality work is generally good for health and wellbeing, so we want everyone to get work and get on in work, whoever they are and wherever they live. We want people to avoid poverty, and for this to happen we must ensure that disabled people



and people with health conditions have the opportunity to work and save for as long as they wish and are able to.

The DWP delivers a range of interventions to help disabled people and people with long-term health conditions to find and stay in work. We have already published several evaluations of the effectiveness of some of these programmes. These include the [JOBS II evaluation](#), [Employment Advisors in Improved Access to Psychological Therapies](#) and the [Health Led Trials](#).

For future interventions, the DWP is committed to adhering to HMT and Government Social Research guidelines, which includes proportionate evaluation and assessment of the effectiveness of any support in finding and staying in work, alongside wellbeing outcomes. All planned and live evaluations and evaluation reports will be registered on an Evaluation Registry from early 2025. "Evaluation" refers to impact, process, and value for money evaluation studies conducted in line with the [Magenta Book](#).

### ■ **Employment: Specific Learning Difficulties**

**Sir John Hayes:**

**[14007]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to support people with learning difficulties in rural areas that are seeking paid employment.

**Alison McGovern:**

We have a range of specialist initiatives to support people with learning disabilities and other disabled people into work. Measures include support from Work Coaches and Disability Employment Advisers in Jobcentres and Access to Work grants.

£12.3 million has also been invested into 23 lead Local Authority areas to provide support to autistic people and people with learning disabilities, under the Local Supported Employment Programme. As part of the Get Britain Working plan, we will be devolving more power to local areas so they can shape a joined-up work, health, and skills offer that suits the needs of the people they serve.

Employers play a key role in increasing employment opportunities and supporting disabled people and people with health conditions, to thrive as part of the workforce. Our support to employers includes promoting [a digital information service for employers](#) to help them support disability at work and the Disability Confident scheme.

### ■ **Leasehold: Service Charges**

**Nadia Whittome:**

**[14135]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department has made a recent assessment of the potential merits of supporting leaseholders in receipt of Universal Credit to pay service charge costs when they take up (a) part-time, (b) short-term and (c) seasonal work.

**Sir Stephen Timms:**

The Department has not recently assessed the potential merits of supporting leaseholders in receipt of Universal Credit (UC) to pay service charge costs when they take up a) part time, b) short-term and c) seasonal work.

**■ Pension Credit: Expenditure****Helen Whately:****[14074]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the cost to the public purse was for Pension Credit in the latest year for which information is available.

**Emma Reynolds:**

The total government expenditure in nominal terms for Pension Credit awards was £4.9 billion in 2022/23.

This figure does not include other operational and administrative costs, such as the government's campaign to increase take-up of Pension Credit, as well as supporting customers and sending letters.

Source: [outturn-and-forecast-tables-spring-budget-2024.xlsx](#)

**■ Pension Credit: Veterans****Steve Darling:****[14156]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of disregarding military compensation payments when calculating pension credit eligibility and awards.

**Emma Reynolds:**

The first £10 of any War Pension payment or Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS) award made due to injury or disablement is disregarded in Pension Credit. Income is calculated on a weekly basis, so the disregard is £10 per week.

Four additions to the War Disablement Pension are completely disregarded: Constant Attendance Allowance; Mobility Supplement; Severe Disablement Occupational Allowance; and dependency increases for anyone other than the applicant or her / his partner.

War Pensions and AFCS awards are a qualifying income for the Savings Credit element of Pension Credit, which is available to those who reached State Pension age before April 2016.

Armed Forces Independence Payments are fully disregarded in Pension Credit and can also allow the recipient to qualify for an additional disability amount.

In this respect, compensation payments made to veterans are treated more favourably than others who have received comparable compensation payments.

**■ Universal Credit****Rupert Lowe:**[\[13945\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many claimants are in receipt of Universal Credit after passing a habitual residency test.

**Andrew Western:**

The information is not readily available and has not previously been published as official statistics. The Department is exploring the feasibility of developing suitable official statistics related to the immigration status of non-UK / Irish Universal Credit customers.

## MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

### HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

#### ■ Healthy Start Scheme

**Nadia Whittome:**

[\[11914\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing auto-enrolment for Healthy Start.

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 4 November 2024. The correct answer should have been:**

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The Healthy Start scheme is kept under review. The Healthy Start scheme was introduced in 2006 to encourage a healthy diet for pregnant women, babies, and young children under four years old from very low-income households. It can be used to buy, or put towards the cost of, fruit, vegetables, pulses, milk, and infant formula. Healthy Start beneficiaries have access to free Healthy Start Vitamins for pregnant women and children aged under four years old. Healthy Start now supports over ~~355,000~~ **353,000** beneficiaries. This figure is higher than the previous paper voucher scheme.

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

**Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:**

[\[12732\]](#)

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

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 11 November 2024. The correct answer should have been:**

**Andrew Gwynne:**

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

Healthy Start now supports over ~~355,000~~ **353,000** beneficiaries. This figure is higher than the previous paper voucher scheme.

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

### ■ **Psychiatric Patients: Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Trust**

**Tom Gordon:**

[\[7892\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many avoidable or preventable deaths of mental health patients at Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS trust there have been in each of the last three years.

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 24 October 2024. The correct answer should have been:**

**Stephen Kinnock:**

Information on the number of deaths reported to Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust's incident reporting system are shown in the table. These are not categorised as preventable or avoidable.

REPORTING YEAR	TOTAL
<del>2023/24</del> <del>2021/22</del>	2,163
2022/23	2,329
<del>2021/22</del> <del>2023/24</del>	1,322

Source: Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust Quality Accounts

It is important to note that the majority of deaths of people in the Trust's care from natural causes and therefore include end of life care and longstanding poor physical health. There is further detail and context within the Trust's Quality Account for each year.

## WRITTEN STATEMENTS

### BUSINESS AND TRADE

#### ■ Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act subscriptions implementation consultation

**Minister for Employment Rights, Competition and Markets (Justin Madders):**  
[\[HCWS223\]](#)

The Department for Business and Trade has today published a consultation called 'Consultation on the Implementation of the New Subscriptions Contracts Regime'.

The consultation seeks views on provisions to be made in secondary legislation to set out how the regime operates and is related to the Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act (the Act), which received Royal Assent on 24 May 2024.

Part 4, Chapter 2 of the Act establishes rules for subscription contracts between traders and consumers. The purpose of the measures is to protect consumers from being trapped in unwanted subscription contracts. The new rules in the Act ensure that consumers:

- o Have clear information before signing up to a subscription.
- o Receive reminders about their ongoing subscriptions.
- o Have a 14-day period to cancel after a subscription's free or discounted trial period automatically rolls onto a full price period, or a subscription auto-renews on to a 12 month or longer period.
- o Can exit a subscription generally as easily as they signed up, including being able to cancel online if they signed up online.

Before the new rules come into force, secondary legislation is needed. The consultation will ensure that the subscription regime is effectively implemented in line with the objectives of the Act. The consultation asks stakeholders to comment on a number of key proposals including how returns and refunds work if a consumer exercises a statutory cancellation right, the extension of cooling-off periods, and how information notices must be provided.

The consultation will be open for 12 weeks and the Government will publish its response at a future point. A copy of the consultation will be placed in the libraries of both Houses and published on GOV.UK.

**ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO****■ Direction to the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority regarding Operation Fieldfare**  
**Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero (Ed Miliband):** [\[HCWS225\]](#)

I am today laying a new designation direction to the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority in respect of Operation Fieldfare. The direction has been given in accordance with sections 3 and 5 of the Energy Act 2004.

This direction will expand the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority's responsibilities under the Energy Act 2004 to allow them to collect and dispose of certain High Activity Sealed Sources in the UK.

**FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE****■ European Political Community: Budapest Summit**

**Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (Mr David Lammy):** [\[HCWS230\]](#)

On Thursday 7 November, the Prime Minister attended the European Political Community summit in Budapest, Hungary. Four months after the UK hosted the EPC at Blenheim Palace, 48 leaders from across the continent gathered to discuss our shared challenges, and how better to work together to respond to them, with a focus on European security and support to Ukraine; tackling organised immigration crime; and bolstering European economic security and connectivity. The Minister of State for the Cabinet Office accompanied the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister called for increased international co-operation in tackling the gangs who profit from organised immigration crime, and highlighted £75m of recently announced additional funding for the UK's Border Security Command. He chaired the leaders' roundtable discussion on migration, attended by Croatia, Denmark, Greece, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and the President of the European Council. To advance our collaboration with key European partners in the fight against organised immigration crime, the Prime Minister agreed new bilateral initiatives with Serbia, Kosovo and North Macedonia, which will further intelligence sharing and operational cooperation.

In a meeting with President Zelenskyy, the Prime Minister reiterated our unwavering support for Ukraine – highlighting the UK's new package of 56 sanctions targeting Russia's military-industrial complex and Russian-backed mercenary groups. The sanctions directly target the supply of Russian military equipment crucial to carrying out Putin's illegal war in Ukraine. The Prime Minister condemned in the strongest possible terms the DPRK's direct support for Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, emphasising this was proof of Putin's growing desperation.

Attending the second leader-level meeting of European Friends of Moldova, chaired by re-elected Moldovan President Sandu, the Prime Minister underlined the UK's continued

support to Moldova in the face of significant disruption from Russia during their recent elections. Leaders from France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Romania and the Presidents of the EU Commission and European Council also attended.

The Prime Minister also met a range of European leaders, including those from Albania, Denmark, the Czech Republic, Finland, Ireland, Kosovo, Norway, Poland, Portugal and Serbia, as well as EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. With Polish Prime Minister Tusk, he discussed the mutual desire to step up cooperation on defence, and agreed to work more closely to tackle organised immigration crime. With Czech Prime Minister Fiala, he welcomed the recently announced investment by Czech company CEZ into Rolls Royce SMR, which will boost our shared nuclear power ambition and support British industry. With President von der Leyen, he discussed the UK/EU partnership and the need to work together to tackle shared challenges.

The EPC will next meet in Albania in the first half of 2025.

### ■ Sudan funding uplift

**Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (Mr David Lammy):** [\[HCWS231\]](#)

I would like to update the House on UK action to respond to the ongoing conflict in Sudan, including our support to the Sudanese people affected by violence.

The conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in Sudan has created one of the world's most pressing humanitarian emergencies. By 2025, 30 million people are now expected to need humanitarian assistance. The war has now also caused the worst displacement crisis in the world, with over 11 million people displaced. The conflict is having a disproportionate impact on women and girls, who are worst affected by a surge in conflict-related sexual violence and overrepresented among the displaced.

In August, the Minister for Development, The Rt Hon Anneliese Dodds MP, visited South Sudan and Ethiopia, seeing first-hand the regional impact of the conflict. She heard from people who had been forced to flee violence in Sudan, as well as pro-democracy Sudanese civil society groups to hear how the UK can push forward efforts to secure unrestricted humanitarian access and support a sustained, meaningful and inclusive peace process with the African Union.

The UK remains committed to supporting the people of Sudan, including those forced to flee across borders to neighbouring countries. That is why, yesterday, I announced a £113 million package of support to over a million people affected by violence in Sudan, South Sudan, Chad and Uganda. With this announcement, the UK has doubled our aid in response to the conflict in Sudan this year to £227 million.

The new funding will support UN and NGO partners, providing food, cash, shelter, medical assistance, water and sanitation. Education Cannot Wait will also receive a £10 million boost, to provide safe learning spaces and psychosocial support for education and safe learning spaces for 200,000 vulnerable children in refugee and host communities in Chad, Ethiopia, Libya, South Sudan, Central African Republic and Uganda.



However, increased funding alone will not prevent millions from starving in the coming months. Last week, the SAF decided to keep the Adre border crossing open for three more months. This is a welcome move, but since Adre re-opened in August, a combination of bureaucratic impediments heavy rain and flooding have prevented the scale up of aid entering Sudan and reaching those in most need. We estimate that just 1.8% of the food needed reached the millions of food insecure people in Darfur.

The UK is using all the diplomatic levers at its disposal to galvanise international pressure on the warring parties to improve humanitarian access and the protection of civilians – including through our role as the UN Security Council penholder on Sudan.

Today, as part of the UK's Presidency of the UN Security Council, I will convene international partners in New York to discuss the humanitarian situation in Sudan, with the aim of agreeing concerted and collective action to pressure the warring parties to remove obstacles to humanitarian operations. The Sudanese Armed Forces must urgently re-open the Adre border crossing and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) must stop blocking aid from moving freely throughout Sudan.

In a further development, today, on 18 November, despite 14 votes in favour and zero abstentions, the UN Security Council failed to adopt a resolution led by the UK and Sierra Leone on the protection of civilians in Sudan due to a Russian veto. This resolution called for the development of a compliance mechanism for the Jeddah Declaration, practical options to support mediation efforts, and the establishment of humanitarian pauses. It also aimed to galvanise action towards agreement on a comprehensive, nationwide ceasefire which is the most effective way to enhance the protection of civilians.

It was designed to build upon the UN Security Council open meeting chaired by the Minister for Africa, Lord Collins, which stressed the urgent need to protect civilians in the absence of a national ceasefire and increase support for the UN Secretary General's recommendations.

Yet Russia decided to block this critical resolution. Russia's veto risks sending a message to the warring parties that they can act with impunity.

But the UK's response to this historic crisis remains consistent and unwavering. We will not let Sudan become a forgotten conflict.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

### ■ Folic Acid Fortification of Flour

**Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Public Health and Prevention (Andrew Gwynne):** [\[HCWS224\]](#)

I wish to update the House that on Thursday 14 November the Government laid legislation to fortify flour with folic acid to reduce the risk of life-changing conditions in pregnancies, such as spina bifida. Neural tube defects happen in the first few weeks of pregnancy, often before a woman even knows that she is pregnant. These can be devastating conditions for individuals and their families.

Flour is already fortified with calcium, niacin, thiamine and iron for public health reasons. Adding folic acid will mean foods made with non-wholemeal wheat flour, such as bread, will actively help avoid around 200 neural tube defects each year – around 20 per cent of the annual UK total.

This significant development in improving the health outcomes for women and babies has been many years in its development and many members across both Houses have shown a keen interest in its progression. I am extremely pleased we have now reached the point of implementation and acknowledge the dedication and efforts of all those involved.

We have worked in close collaboration with Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), as well as colleagues in devolved governments to agree this policy. These changes will be implemented by Defra through the Bread and Flour Regulations 1998 in England and similar legislation in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will be brought forward very soon. The legislation on folic acid will come into effect across all four nations in December 2026, giving industry 24 months to implement the changes.

The 24-month implementation period is in recognition of the considerable efforts required by industry to add folic acid to flour and re-label the large number of products that contain flour. The Government will continue to engage with industry on these challenges.

There is strong evidence that many neural tube defects can be prevented by increasing women's intake of folic acid, which is why existing pregnancy advice to women who are trying to conceive or who are likely to become pregnant is to take a daily supplement of 400 micrograms of folic acid before conception and up until week 12 of pregnancy. We will continue to offer this advice as the fortification of flour is intended to support, not replace, current supplementation advice for individuals.

These changes will also support the Government's commitment to improving women's health and its ambition to raise the healthiest generation of children ever.

## TREASURY

### ■ Financial Services

#### **The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Tulip Siddiq):**

[\[HCWS226\]](#)

I would like to update the House on the disposal of £1bn worth of government-owned NatWest Group (formerly Royal Bank of Scotland, RBS) shares, representing approximately 3.2% of the company, by way of a directed buyback transaction on 11 November 2024.

The government's remaining shareholding represents approximately 11.4% of voting rights in the company which demonstrates the continued progress being made towards the government's intention to return its shareholding in NatWest to private ownership by 2025-26.

#### **Rationale**

The government is committed to returning NatWest to full private ownership, given that the original policy objective for the intervention in NatWest – to preserve financial and economic stability at a time of crisis – has long been achieved. The government only conducts sales of NatWest shares when it represents value for money to do so and market conditions allow.

### Format and Timing

The government, supported by advice from UK Government Investments, concluded that selling shares to NatWest, in a single bilateral transaction, represented value for money.

Share buybacks are a common practice undertaken by companies looking to efficiently deploy their excess capital. Following approval of amendments to the Buyback Contract between HM Treasury (HMT) and NatWest by non-government shareholders at the 2024 NatWest Annual General Meeting, the bank is now able to purchase up to 15% of its share capital from HMT on a rolling 12-month basis. This is the fifth sale of shares via an off-market share sale directly to the company.

The sale concluded on 11 November 2024, with NatWest purchasing a limited number of its government owned shares. A total of approximately 262.6m shares (around 3.2% of the bank) were sold at the 8 November closing price of 380.8p per share. The reduction in the government's shareholding is less than the percentage sold following the cancellation of shares by NatWest. Following this transaction, the government's shareholding stands at approximately 11.4%.

Details of the sale are summarised below:

<i>GOVERNMENT STAKE IN NATWEST PRE-SALE</i>	<i>c.14.2%</i>
<i>Total shares sold to NatWest</i>	<i>c.262.6m shares</i>
<i>Share price at market close on 08/11/2024</i>	<i>380.8p</i>
<i>Total proceeds from the sale</i>	<i>£1bn</i>
<i>Government stake in NatWest post-sale (as % of total voting rights)</i>	<i>c.11.4%</i>

### Fiscal impacts

The net impacts of the sale on a selection of fiscal metrics are summarised as follows:

<i>METRIC</i>	<i>IMPACT</i>
<i>Net sale proceeds</i>	<i>£1bn</i>
<i>Retention value range</i>	<i>Within the valuation range</i>
<i>Public Sector Net Borrowing</i>	<i>Nil</i>
	<i>There may be future indirect impacts as a result of the sale. The sale proceeds reduce</i>

<i>METRIC</i>	<i>IMPACT</i>
	public sector debt. All else being equal, the sale will reduce future debt interest costs for government. The reduction in government's shareholding means it will not receive future dividend income it may otherwise have been entitled to through these shares.
<i>Public Sector Net Debt</i>	Reduced by £1bn
<i>Public Sector Net Financial Liabilities</i>	Nil
<i>Public Sector Net Liabilities</i>	Nil

#### ■ Government debt issuance pilot using distributed ledger technology

##### The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Tulip Siddiq):

[\[HCWS228\]](#)

My right honourable friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Rachel Reeves) announced on Thursday 14 November at Mansion House that the government intends to launch a pilot Digital Gilt Instrument (DIGIT), using distributed ledger technology.

'Distributed ledger technology' (DLT) refers to a variety of technologies characterised by their use of networks of ledgers that update and synchronise simultaneously. DLT has the exciting potential in the long-term to make transactions more efficient. DLT also brings other benefits across markets, such as automation, greater resilience, and transparency.

The Government's intention is to work with industry to test this new technology across the life cycle of a government debt instrument. This will enable the government to explore the potential benefits that DLT could bring to the debt issuance process, as well as stimulate the wider development of DLT platforms and infrastructures across UK capital markets.

This issuance will support the government's commitment to maintaining the UK as a world-leading and global financial centre. DLT is being explored with increasing ambition by other financial centres and there is potential for significant growth in the use and exchange of digital assets in the coming years. The government acting now will help position both itself and the UK market to adapt to these changes.

This pilot aims to issue a digital bond with similar features to a conventional gilt. It will utilise the Digital Securities Sandbox (DSS), which opened for applications in September 2024. The DSS provides a regulatory environment through which firms can use DLT to create, trade and administer securities, while being supervised by the Bank of England and the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA). It allows market participants to experiment with DLT-based market infrastructures in a controlled and monitored setting, ensuring that any potential risks are managed while fostering innovation.

The pilot is experimental in nature and, therefore, will sit outside of and be separate from the Debt Management Office's gilt and Treasury Bill operations. This will ensure that the pilot will be independent of our world class debt management programme.

The government will engage with the sector in the new year on what an issuance could look like and what technology options are available to facilitate an issuance.

## ■ **The Double Taxation Convention between the United Kingdom and Romania**

**The Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury (James Murray):** [\[HCWS229\]](#)

A Double Taxation Convention with Romania was signed in London on 13 November 2024. The text of the Convention is available on HM Revenue and Customs' pages of the GOV.UK website and will be deposited in the Libraries of both Houses. The text of the Convention will be scheduled to a draft Order in Council and laid before the House of Commons in due course.

## WALES

### ■ **Port Talbot Transition Board**

**Secretary of State for Wales (Jo Stevens):** [\[HCWS227\]](#)

Today I can confirm that on 16 November I announced a £13 million Business Start-Up, Growth and Resilience Fund to support businesses and individuals affected by Tata Steel's decision to transition to greener steel making.

This is the next announcement of funding from the £80 million Transition Board Fund, further displaying this government's commitment to support those impacted within Port Talbot and the wider community.

This fund will have three parts. This includes a Start-Up Fund aimed at helping former employees of Tata Steel, former contractors and close family members who wish to set up their own businesses. Grants of up to £10,000 are available.

The second part is a Business Growth Fund for local businesses to grow and expand with grants between £25,000 and £250,000.

The third part of this fund is the Business Resilience Fund for businesses that are not in the direct supply chain of Tata Steel, but are still impacted by the changes, like local shops and cafes. Grants will be between £2,500 and £25,000.

This funding will be delivered in conjunction with the Welsh Government and Neath Port Talbot Council, ensuring that businesses within the area are able to survive the shock to the local economy.

Businesses and Individuals can register an interest or send any enquiries to this email address - [tsukqueries@npt.gov.uk](mailto:tsukqueries@npt.gov.uk)