



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 19 November 2024 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:35 P.M., 19 November 2024). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

CONTENTS

ANSWERS	7	■ Civil Servants: Remote Working	13
BUSINESS AND TRADE	7	■ Civil Service	14
■ Agriculture: Exports	7	■ Committee on the Grant of Honours, Decorations and Medals	14
■ Audit: Reform	7	■ Coronavirus: Death	14
■ Construction: Fraud	7	■ Death	15
■ Department for Business and Trade: Industrial Disputes	8	■ Deputy Prime Minister	15
■ Horizon IT System: Compensation	8	■ Government Departments: Apprentices	15
■ Night-time Economy: Employment	10	■ Government Departments: Cybercrime	16
■ Sharing Economy: Leave and Minimum Wage	10	■ Government Departments: Heat Pumps	16
■ Trade Agreements: Economic Growth	10	■ Government Departments: Labour Turnover	16
CABINET OFFICE	11	■ Government Departments: Social Media	16
■ 10 Downing Street: Art Works	11	■ Government: Ethics	17
■ 10 Downing Street: Official Hospitality	11	■ Honours: Public Appointments	17
■ Cabinet Office: Buildings	11	■ Life Expectancy	17
■ Cabinet Office: Chief of Staff Association	12	■ Ministers and Special Advisers: Meetings	17
■ Cabinet Office: Civil Servants	12	■ Permanent Secretaries: Recruitment	18
■ Cabinet Office: Data Processing	12	■ Prime Minister: Artificial Intelligence	18
■ Civil Servants: Recruitment	13		

■ Prime Minister: Equality	18	■ Employers' Contributions and Minimum Wage: Apprentices	28
■ Prime Minister: Senior Civil Servants	18	■ Nutrition: Curriculum	29
■ Protestantism	19	■ Pre-school Education	30
■ Revenue and Customs: Directors	19	■ Schools: Coronavirus	30
■ Special Advisers: Conditions of Employment	19	■ Schools: Romford	31
■ Termination of Employment	19	■ Special Educational Needs	31
■ TikTok	20	■ Special Educational Needs: Lincolnshire	32
CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT	20	■ Young People: Health and Training	33
■ Cultural Heritage	20	ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO	34
■ Listed Buildings: Carbon Emissions	20	■ Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: Industrial Disputes	34
■ Youth Services: Lincolnshire	21	■ Electric Cables: Boston and Skegness	34
DEFENCE	21	■ Energy Performance Certificates	35
■ Armed Forces: Equality	21	■ Energy Performance Certificates: Rented Housing	35
■ Armed Forces: Labour Turnover and Recruitment	22	■ Energy: Housing	36
■ Army	22	■ Energy: North Wales	36
■ Defence: Technology	22	■ Energy: Rented Housing	36
■ F-35 Aircraft: Procurement	23	■ Energy: Social Rented Housing	37
■ Navy: Officers	23	■ Fuel Poverty: Bournemouth East	37
■ Nuclear Weapons: Finance	24	■ Heat Pumps: Costs	37
■ Royal Fleet Auxiliary	24	■ Housing: Construction	38
■ Veterans: Radiation Exposure	24	■ Housing: Energy	38
■ Warships: Food	25	■ National Grid: Paisley and Renfrewshire North	39
EDUCATION	26	■ Renewable Energy	39
■ Apprentices: Artificial Intelligence	26	■ Small Modular Reactors	40
■ Care Leavers: Finance	26		
■ Curriculum and Assessment Review	27		
■ Education: Artificial Intelligence	28		

■ Wind Power: China	40	■ Eritrea: Religious Freedom	51
ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS	41	■ Gaza: Food Supply	51
■ Agriculture: Sewage	41	■ Gaza: Genocide Convention	52
■ Birds of Prey: Rodenticides	41	■ Gaza: Humanitarian Aid	52
■ Boats: Synthetic Fibres	42	■ Hong Kong: Foreign Relations	53
■ Convention on Biological Diversity	43	■ Israel: Hamas	53
■ Deposit Return Schemes	44	■ Mubarak Bala	53
■ Disposable Wipes: Plastics	44	■ Pakistan: Ahmadiyya	53
■ Flood Control: Gosport	45	■ Refugees: Development Aid	54
■ Forests	45	■ Religious Freedom	54
■ Import Controls: Fees and Charges	45	■ Sierra Leone: Sanctions	55
■ Inland Waterways: Runcorn and Helsby	45	■ Sudan: Development Aid	55
■ Land Drainage	46	■ Tigray: Humanitarian Situation	55
■ Per- and Polyfluorinated Alkyl Substances	46	■ UNRWA	56
■ River Thames: Flood Control	46	HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	56
■ Rivers: Environment Protection	47	■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]	56
■ Royal Botanic Gardens Kew	47	■ Arthritis: Gosport	58
■ Water Charges: Low Incomes	48	■ Audiology: Paediatrics	59
■ Water Charges: Surrey	48	■ Brain: Injuries	60
FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE	49	■ Brain: Tumours	61
■ Afghanistan: Hazara	49	■ Clinical Priorities Advisory Group: Finance	61
■ British Nationals Abroad: Coroners	49	■ Department of Health and Social Care: Industrial Disputes	61
■ British Nationals Abroad: Death	50	■ Food: Wholesale Trade	62
■ Cameroon: Peace Negotiations	50	■ Fractures: Health Services	62
■ Catholic Agency for Overseas Development	51	■ Health Services: Transgender People	63
		■ Medical Treatments Abroad	64
		■ Mental Health Services: Transgender People	66
		■ Neurology: Medical Treatments	66

■ Nirmatrelvir/ritonavir	67	HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT	80
■ Pancreatic Cancer: Health Services	68	■ Affordable Housing: Young People	80
■ Polycystic Ovary Syndrome: Sanitary Products	68	■ Building Regulations	80
■ Prostate Cancer: Screening	68	■ Buildings: Repairs and Maintenance	80
■ Public Health	69	■ Community Ownership Fund	81
■ Sleep Apnoea	70	■ Disabled Facilities Grants: Lincolnshire	81
■ Steroid Drugs: Side Effects	70	■ History: Judaism	82
HOME OFFICE	71	■ Housing: Energy	82
■ Asylum: Finance	71	■ Housing: Foreign Nationals	83
■ Biometrics: Surveillance	71	■ Leasehold: Service Charges	83
■ Courts: Standards	72	■ Local Government Finance	84
■ Disclosure and Barring Service: Sussex Police	72	■ Parking: Debt Collection	84
■ Employment: Fire Prevention	72	■ Planning Authorities: Staff	84
■ Fast Food: Delivery Services	73	■ Right to Acquire Scheme	85
■ Foreign Nationals: Offenders	74	■ Road Signs and Markings	85
■ Fraud	74	■ Social Rented Housing: Fire Prevention	86
■ Home Office: Serco	75	■ Social Rented Housing: Lifts	86
■ Migrants: Homelessness	75	■ Towns Fund: Runcorn	86
■ Offenders: Deportation	76	■ Voting Rights: British Nationals Abroad	87
■ Police: Finance	76	JUSTICE	87
■ Police: Training	76	■ Independent Sentencing Review	87
■ Sexual Offences: Languages	77	■ Independent Sentencing Review: Public Appointments	89
■ Sexual Offences: Nationality	77	■ Injunctions	89
■ Tobacco: Smuggling	78	■ Magistrates: Shropshire	90
■ Undocumented Migrants: English Channel	78	■ Ministry of Justice: Industrial Disputes	90
■ Undocumented Migrants: Housing	79	■ Police National Computer	91
■ Visas: Offenders	79	■ Prison Sentences	92
■ Vulnerable Adults: Fraud	79		

■ Prisoners: Social Media	92	■ Railways: Tickets	103
■ Reoffenders: Foreign Nationals	92	■ Road Traffic Control: Complaints	103
■ Reparation by Offenders	93	■ Road Traffic Offences	104
■ Young Offender Institutions: Education	93	■ Roads: Safety	104
SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY	94	■ Shadow Great British Railways: Public Appointments	104
■ Artificial Intelligence: Legislation	94	■ UK Shipping Office for Reducing Emissions: Finance	104
■ Chronic Fatigue Syndrome: Research	95	TREASURY	105
■ Mobile Phones: South Derbyshire	95	■ Agriculture: Inheritance Tax	105
■ Pornography: Gower	96	■ Banking Hubs	107
■ Technology: Small Businesses	96	■ Budget October 2024	107
TRANSPORT	96	■ Development Aid	108
■ Aviation and Railways: Costs	96	■ Employers' Contributions: Charities	108
■ Bicycles: Facilities	97	■ Employers' Contributions: Prisons and Probation	109
■ British Transport Police: Labour Turnover and Recruitment	97	■ Employers' Contributions: Small Businesses	109
■ Bus Services: Gosport	98	■ Housing: Insurance	109
■ Bus Services: Temperature	98	■ Money	110
■ Chiltern Railways: Standards	98	■ National Income	110
■ Driving: Standards	99	■ Private Rented Housing: Energy Performance Certificates	111
■ East West Rail Line: Marketing	99	■ Revenue and Customs: ICT	111
■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points	99	■ Small Businesses: Innovation	111
■ Electric Vehicles: Northern Ireland	100	■ Stamp Duty Land Tax	112
■ High Speed 2 Line: Nature Conservation	100	■ Tobacco: Counterfeit Manufacturing	112
■ Ports: Electrification	101	■ Treasury: Industrial Disputes	112
■ Railways: Crime Prevention	102	WALES	113
■ Railways: Standards	102	■ Wales Office: Buildings	113
		WORK AND PENSIONS	114
		■ Access to Work Programme	114

■ Child Maintenance Service: Standards	114	■ State Retirement Pensions: Women	118
■ Children: Maintenance	115	■ Workplace Pensions	118
■ Pension Credit	116	WRITTEN STATEMENTS	120
■ Pension Credit: Expenditure	116	FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE	120
■ Personal Independence Payment: Patients	117	■ Sudan funding uplift	120
■ State Retirement Pensions: National Insurance Contributions	117	HOME OFFICE	121
		■ Police Reform	121

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

■ Agriculture: Exports

James McMurdock: [\[12624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps he is taking to support food producers from (a) Essex and (b) the UK to increase exports.

Gareth Thomas:

DBT's offer of export support for Food & Drink businesses in Essex and the whole of the UK includes: educational support via our Export Academy, 1-2-1 support from International Trade Advisors and our extensive overseas network, with trade advisors promoting UK food in over 100 countries. Overseas we deliver a large programme of trade shows, missions and events to increase exports in the sector. In addition, our UK Export Finance agency helps companies access export finance, with a dedicated finance manager covering Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk.

■ Audit: Reform

Gregor Poynton: [\[13972\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to reform the audit sector; what his planned timetable is for (a) introducing the Draft Audit and Corporate Governance Reform Bill and (b) establishing a new audit regulator; and whether he plans grant any new regulator powers over Director's accountability.

Justin Madders:

As set out in the King's Speech, the Government intends to publish a draft Audit Reform and Corporate Governance Bill in this session. The Government will keep the House updated as we work towards publication and scrutiny of a draft Bill.

This involves careful consideration of measures relating to the audit sector and corporate reporting, including transitioning to a new regulator with powers relating to directors' accountability.

■ Construction: Fraud

Susan Murray: [\[14221\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what support the Government provides to (a) individuals and (b) businesses impacted by rogue operators in the building industry.

Justin Madders:

The Consumer Rights Act 2015 sets out the standards consumers can expect when a trader supplies goods and services, including building work, and remedies if these

rights are breached. Consumers can seek redress through local authority trading standards or the Small Claims Court.

Ensuring that we have a high-quality and professional construction industry is the best way to protect commercial clients. The Building Safety Act 2022 has introduced competence requirements for both individuals and businesses working in the built environment.

■ Department for Business and Trade: Industrial Disputes

Nick Timothy:

[\[13630\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what industrial disputes are ongoing within (a) his Department and (b) each of the arm's length bodies connected to his Department; how many (i) staff and (ii) contractors are involved in each dispute; what the form of industrial action is in each dispute; which recognised trade union is involved in each dispute; what the substantive matter is that is being disputed in each case; and what steps he plans to take to end each dispute.

Justin Madders:

The Department for Business and Trade (DBT) and its Arm's Length Bodies collectively comprises of 9,921 FTE (as of March 2024). There are currently no ongoing industrial disputes with DBT employees within DBT or any of its Arm's Length Bodies.

There are, however, ongoing disputes between PCS and G4S Security Company (G4S) and International Services System - Facilities Management Services (ISS) who provide facilities management services at some DBT offices and who are contracted by Government Property Agency. These staff are employees of either G4S or ISS, they are not normally employees of the department itself.

■ Horizon IT System: Compensation

Liam Byrne:

[\[12911\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what the cost is of legal fees related to Post Office IT Horizon redress paid to external law firms by (a) scheme and (b) firm.

Gareth Thomas:

The Department for Business and Trade delivers the Group Litigation Order (GLO) scheme and the recently-launched Horizon Convictions Redress Scheme (HCRS).

Since the launch of the GLO scheme in March 2023, a total of c.£2.9 million has been spent on legal advice to the Department on settling the redress claims of postmasters in the GLO scheme. A further c.£12.5 million has been spent on support for victims' legal fees.

Since the launch of the HCRS scheme in July 2024, a total of c.£100k has been spent on legal services to the Department in the setting up of the HCRS scheme. Approximately c.£360k has been spent on victims' legal fees.

A detailed breakdown of legal fees paid by law firm and scheme is provided below:

Horizon Convictions Redress Scheme (HCRS)

VICTIMS' LEGAL COSTS £000

Hudgell Solicitors	£360
Sub-total: Victims' legal costs	£360
The Department's legal costs £000	
Addleshaw Goddard LLP	£45
Dentons UK & Middle East LLP	£55
Sub-total: The Department's legal costs	£100
Total legal fees under HCRS £000	£460

Group Litigation Order Scheme (GLO)

VICTIMS' LEGAL COSTS £000

Freeths LLP	£10,888
Howe and Co Solicitors	£1,545
Other: under £30k per supplier	£52
Sub-total: Victims' legal costs	£12,485
The Department's legal costs £000	
Addleshaw Goddard LLP	£1,675
Dentons UK and Middle East LLP	£1,060
Secondees contracted to Government Legal Department	£121
Sub-total: The Department's legal costs	£2,925
Total legal fees under GLO £000	£15,410

The figures above exclude recoverable VAT. Figures from April 2023 are subject to audit and may change.

On the Overturned Convictions (OC) & Historical Shortfalls (HSS) schemes, this is a matter for the Post Office. I have asked them to write to my Rt. Hon. Friend, the

Member for Birmingham Hodge Hill and Solihull North, and a copy of their correspondence will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

■ Night-time Economy: Employment

Sarah Coombes: [\[13618\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to help support people who work in the night time economy.

Gareth Thomas:

We recognise the important role that the night-time economy plays in supporting local communities. Healthy night-time economy businesses not only support our creative industries, including musicians, DJs and performance artists, but also support tourism and bolster day economy businesses.

In her Autumn Statement, the Chancellor announced an increase to the National Living Wage in line with the Low Pay Commission recommendation to £12.21 per hour, alongside a minimum wage for 18-20 year olds of £10.00 per hour, with a view to eventually creating a single adult wage rate. This will benefit over 3.3 million workers around the UK, including those employed in the night-time economy.

■ Sharing Economy: Leave and Minimum Wage

Adam Dance: [\[13864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps he is taking to ensure that people working in the gig economy receive (a) at least the minimum wage, (b) sick leave and (c) holiday entitlement.

Justin Madders:

All employers must comply with their legal obligations towards those they engage.

The Government is committed to creating of the Fair Work Agency. It will bring existing functions like minimum wage enforcement into one place and it will also enforce rights such as holiday pay and Statutory Sick Pay.

We have committed to consult on moving towards a simpler two-part framework that differentiates between workers and the genuinely self-employed.

If workers believe they are not being afforded the rights they are entitled to, they can contact the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (Acas) for free and impartial advice on employment matters.

■ Trade Agreements: Economic Growth

Jim Allister: [\[14407\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what recent estimate his Department has made of the potential impact of trade deals negotiated since 2020 on economic growth in (a) England, (b) Wales, (c) Scotland and (d) Northern Ireland.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

The Department of Business and Trade (DBT) does not hold an aggregated value for the impact of the signed trade deals on the UK's nations and regions. Instead, the Department publishes individual Impact Assessments (IAs) for new free trade agreements (FTAs) which set out the potential economic impacts on the UK's nations and regions. These show that all English regions and UK nations are expected to benefit from the new FTAs signed with Japan, Australia, New Zealand and CPTPP.

CABINET OFFICE■ **10 Downing Street: Art Works****Mr Richard Holden:**[\[12231\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Prime Minister plans to reinstate the portrait of Horatio Nelson in 10 Downing Street once it has undertaken its restoration work by the Government Art Collection.

Georgia Gould:

The portrait of Horatio Nelson is currently with the Royal Museum Greenwich for frame conservation, and the portrait will be reinstated in 10 Downing Street once that work is complete.

■ **10 Downing Street: Official Hospitality****John Glen:**[\[13437\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many receptions have taken place in Downing Street since the general election which were (a) funded by the taxpayer and (b) funded through political donations.

Georgia Gould:

As under previous Governments, party political receptions are not a matter for the Government. Details of official receptions are published in quarterly transparency returns on gov.uk.

■ **Cabinet Office: Buildings****John Glen:**[\[8641\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 13 September 2024, to Question 4663, on 70 Whitehall, how many work desks are available for civil servants in 70 Whitehall as a percentage of the staff assigned to work in that building.

Georgia Gould:

It has been the practice of successive governments not to comment, on grounds of both national security and staff safety, on the physical capacity or staffing numbers for individual buildings of the government estate.

■ Cabinet Office: Chief of Staff Association**John Glen:** [\[13441\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to his Department's publication entitled Cabinet Office: Government Procurement Card spend over £500, August 2024, (a) who and (b) what the payment to the Chief of Staff Association was for.

Georgia Gould:

The payment made on 29 August 2024 to the Chief of Staff Association was for membership of the association, for a permanent civil servant below senior civil servant (SCS) level. It is standard practice to not publicly reference civil servants by name below SCS. The relevant process for approvals was followed before the payment was made.

■ Cabinet Office: Civil Servants**John Glen:** [\[6094\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many people, other than special advisers, have been appointed to civil service posts in (a) his Department, (b) the Government Equalities Office and (c) 10 Downing Street without open competition since 4 July 2024; what their (a) job titles and (b) salary bands are; and on what basis each was appointed.

Georgia Gould:

The Civil Service Commission (CSC) requires that departments provide a quarterly return on their use of Exceptions at SCS2 and above. This information can be found on the CSC website.

Details of appointments below SCS2 are not published.

■ Cabinet Office: Data Processing**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[12980\]](#)

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

Georgia Gould:

The Cabinet Office is committed to improving its productivity, including through artificial intelligence (AI) and effective use of data.

The Cabinet Office Data Strategy promotes the use of high quality data and analytics to gain insights that drive decision making and operational effectiveness.

In parallel, we are growing the department's AI capabilities through the design and application of a range of solutions, including Redbox which is a tool to help staff perform research, drafting and reviewing faster, reducing administrative burdens and improving response times for stakeholders. Other solutions are also in development (e.g. machine learning applications and generative AI) to automate and accelerate routine business operations and policy activity.

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, based in the Department for Science, Innovation & Technology, for expert advice.

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

■ Civil Servants: Recruitment

John Glen: [\[12700\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether his Department plans to make a submission to the Civil Service Commission review of appointments made by exception at delegated grades.

Georgia Gould:

The Cabinet Office has provided the information requested by the Civil Service Commission regarding their review of appointments made by exception at delegated grades.

John Glen: [\[13438\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether diversity content has been standardised in civil service job adverts.

Georgia Gould:

The text on diversity in Civil Service Job adverts has not changed since it was standardised under the previous administration, of which the Rt Hon Gentleman was a member.

■ Civil Servants: Remote Working

Rupert Lowe: [\[13565\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what proportion of civil servants work from home on each day of the week.

Georgia Gould:

Data on Civil Service Headquarters (HQ) occupancy is collected and published quarterly on GOV.UK for all HQ buildings of Whitehall Departments, Office for Scotland, Office for Wales and Northern Ireland Office. Data for the latest period for which data is available can be found here:

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

■ Civil Service

John Glen: [\[13434\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will make an assessment of the effectiveness of processes for providing access to the civil service prior to the 2024 general election; if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of those processes on the efficiency of Government since the general election; and if he will take steps to publish guidance on best practice for access talks between the civil service and official opposition at the next general election.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

Pre-election contacts are an established part of the pre-election process. They are designed to allow the Opposition Parties to ask questions about departmental organisation and to inform civil servants of any organisational changes likely to take place.

Guidance on access talks is included in paragraph 2.21 of the Cabinet Manual. The meetings are confidential on both sides.

■ Committee on the Grant of Honours, Decorations and Medals

John Glen: [\[13436\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish the (a) terms of reference and (b) rules of procedure for the Committee on the Grant of Honours, Decorations, and Medals.

Georgia Gould:

I refer the Right Hon. Member to the answer of 10 October 2024, Official Report, PQ 7430.

Alex Burghart: [\[14112\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish a list of the Committee on the Grant of Honours, Decorations and Medals' sub-committees.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

The Committee on the Grant of Honours, Decorations and Medals (known as the HD Committee) has one sub-committee, the Advisory Military Sub-Committee. The terms of reference for this committee can be found on gov.uk.

■ Coronavirus: Death

Rupert Lowe: [\[13923\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many deaths listed (a) covid-19 as the main cause of death and (b) covid-19 as a contributory cause of death since January 2020.

Georgia Gould:

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

A response to the Hon. Gentleman's Parliamentary Question of 12 November is attached.

Attachments:

1. Letter from the National Statistician [PQ13923.pdf]

■ **Death**

Rupert Lowe:

[\[13339\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many excess deaths there have been in each month of the last ten years.

Georgia Gould:

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

A response to the Hon Gentleman's Parliamentary Question of 8th November is attached.

Attachments:

1. UKSA Letter [PQ13339.pdf]
2. UKSA Table of Data [PQ13339 annex.xlsx]

■ **Deputy Prime Minister**

John Glen:

[\[11597\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether there is a (a) staff and (b) budget allocation for the Deputy Prime Minister other than those allocated to the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

Georgia Gould:

The Deputy Prime Minister's core staff and budget allocation is assigned to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. The Deputy Prime Minister is also supported by staff in other Government Departments where relevant.

■ **Government Departments: Apprentices**

Jim Shannon:

[\[13451\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of trends in the uptake of apprentices in the civil service in the last 12 months.

Georgia Gould:

The uptake of apprenticeships within the Civil Service (in England) fell under the previous administration from 7,007 starts in 2022/23 to 6,508 starts in 2023/24.

This Government is committed to apprenticeships as a means of removing barriers to opportunities and building the skills needed for the future workforce.

■ Government Departments: Cybercrime**Rupert Lowe:** [\[13560\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many cyber security breaches there have been in each Department in each of the last ten years.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

The UK Government does not comment upon operational security matters.

■ Government Departments: Heat Pumps**Ben Goldsborough:** [\[12838\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many heat pumps are installed on Government property.

Georgia Gould:

Information on specific technologies such as heat pumps used across the Government estate is not held centrally. Across the office estate managed by Cabinet Office's Government Property Agency, there are 2 buildings which are heated in part by heat pumps.

■ Government Departments: Labour Turnover**Rupert Lowe:** [\[13610\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will make an estimate of the potential impact of staff turnover on the cost to the public purse of (a) recruitment, (b) training and (c) reduced productivity in each Department in the previous year.

Georgia Gould:

Civil Service Turnover data is published annually through the Civil Service statistics: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/civil-service-statistics-2024>

Civil Service departments are responsible for managing their own workforces and ensuring they have the right skills to deliver the Government's priorities. The Civil Service People Plan commits to ensuring the best people are working in Government, and that the Civil Service offers an enriching career path which rewards excellence in public service.

■ Government Departments: Social Media**Neil Duncan-Jordan:** [\[13665\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of issuing guidance to all Departments to require them to use alternative social media sites to X.

Georgia Gould:

The Government uses a range of channels to reach and engage the public. Any use of these platforms would be assessed against the high standards for digital safety set out in the Government Communication Service (GCS) SAFE framework. The four

core principles of the framework are safety and sustainability, ads context, freedom of speech, and ethics and enforcement.

■ Government: Ethics

John Glen: [\[11272\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, which Minister is responsible for ethics and integrity in government.

Georgia Gould:

I refer the Honourable Gentleman to the answer given to PQ6394.

■ Honours: Public Appointments

John Glen: [\[13431\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to fill vacancies on the Honours committees.

Georgia Gould:

There is currently ongoing activity to fill vacancies on 7 of the independent Honours Committees. New roles are advertised on the Public Appointments website and new appointments to the Honours Committees can be found on gov.uk.

■ Life Expectancy

Dr Beccy Cooper: [\[13726\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, when his Department plans to publish updated (a) life expectancy and (b) healthy life expectancy statistics for (i) electoral wards and (ii) middle layer super output areas.

Georgia Gould:

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

A response to the Hon lady's Parliamentary Question of 11th November is attached.

Attachments:

1. Letter from the National Statistician [PQ13726 (2).pdf]

■ Ministers and Special Advisers: Meetings

Mr Richard Holden: [\[14355\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether his Department issues guidance to Department's on the publication of meetings attended by (a) Ministers and (b) special advisers.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

Guidance on ministers' and special advisers' transparency returns is published on GOV.UK.

Ministers' transparency guidance is available at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6604110bf9ab41001aeea39c/2024_04_02-Ministers-Transparency-Guidance.pdf

Special Advisers' transparency guidance is available at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66041202e8c4420011220347/2024_04_02-Special-Advisers-Transparency-Guidance.pdf

■ **Permanent Secretaries: Recruitment**

Alex Burghart:

[13802]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Government response of January 2024 to the 17th Report of the House of Lords Constitution Select Committee of Session 2022/23 on Permanent Secretaries: their appointments and removal, HL 258, published on 20 October 2023, what progress he has made on updating the Senior Appointments Protocol; and if he will publish the updated Protocol.

Georgia Gould:

The Senior Appointment Protocol is being updated and will be published in due course.

■ **Prime Minister: Artificial Intelligence**

John Glen:

[13433]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether machinery of Government changes have been made to the AI and data science capability functions in the Prime Minister's Office since 4 July 2024.

Georgia Gould:

As my Right Hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced in a Written Statement, HCWS19, the Incubator for Artificial Intelligence (i.AI) will move from the Cabinet Office to the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology. The data science capabilities in the Prime Minister's Office remain the same.

■ **Prime Minister: Equality**

Rupert Lowe:

[13566]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many staff working in 10 Downing Street have diversity in their job title by pay band.

Georgia Gould:

No staff in 10 Downing Street have the word 'diversity' in their job title.

■ **Prime Minister: Senior Civil Servants**

John Glen:

[12081]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many senior civil servants in the Prime Minister's office have (a) left and (b) announced their intention to leave since 4 July 2024.

Georgia Gould:

3 Senior Civil Servants have left the Prime Minister's Office since 4th July 2024.

■ **Protestantism****John Glen:**[\[13430\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Prime Minister has had discussions with His Majesty's household on potential steps to support His Majesty in maintaining the Protestant Reformed Religion established by law.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

We do not routinely comment on discussions between the Government and the Royal Household.

■ **Revenue and Customs: Directors****Alex Burghart:**[\[14116\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether non-executive director appointments to HM Revenue and Customs are classified as regulated public appointments.

Georgia Gould:

The bodies and offices that are classified as regulated appointments are listed, by department, in Schedules 1 and 2 of the Public Appointments (No. 2) Order in Council 2023. Appointments to the Board of HM Revenue and Customs, as a non-ministerial department, are not classified as regulated public appointments.

■ **Special Advisers: Conditions of Employment****Mike Wood:**[\[14311\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the paragraph 36 of the policy paper entitled Next steps to make work pay, published on 8 November 2024, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the Government's proposals to change the statutory probation period to 9 months on Section 6a of the Model contract for special advisers, last updated on 6 November 2024.

Georgia Gould:

The Cabinet Office will consider the impact of changes to employment legislation on relevant special adviser terms and conditions.

■ **Termination of Employment****John Glen:**[\[6076\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the (a) Prime Minister, (b) Prime Minister's Chief of Staff and (c) No10 appointments team played a role in decisions relating to the departure of (i) non-executive directors and (ii) chairs of public bodies since 4 July 2024.

Georgia Gould:

As was the case under previous administrations, in order to ensure effective oversight and scrutiny of public bodies central to delivering government objectives, the Prime Minister's Office is consulted by the relevant departments on some appointments, as is normal practice for high profile issues.

■ **TikTok****Alex Burghart:**[\[14117\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether senior representatives of Tiktok are classified as as senior media executives for the purposes of gov.uk transparency returns by Ministers, special advisers and senior officials.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

Guidance on ministers', special advisers', and senior officials' transparency returns is published on GOV.UK and includes details of who would be considered senior media figures for these purposes.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT■ **Cultural Heritage****Jamie Stone:**[\[13467\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions she plans to hold with stakeholders in the heritage sector; and how often she plans to hold such discussions.

Chris Bryant:

Since the General Election, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport and her ministerial team have met with a wide range of stakeholders in the heritage sector, including representatives of the department's arm's length bodies. These meetings will continue periodically, in Westminster and around the country and we intend to announce the next date of the Heritage Council very soon.

■ **Listed Buildings: Carbon Emissions****Jamie Stone:**[\[13466\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has had recent discussions with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on the potential merits of introducing listed building consent orders to help support the decarbonisation of listed buildings.

Chris Bryant:

The UK has the oldest building stock in Europe. Historic buildings - including listed buildings and buildings within Conservation Areas - have an important role to play in supporting growth in the construction sector and our transition to Net Zero. Listed Building Consent Orders (LBCOs) proactively encourage and streamline the sensible

upgrade and development of our listed buildings, including installing decarbonisation and energy efficiency measures.

I have written to Matthew Pennycook, Minister of State at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on some of the opportunities around planning that support heritage-led development and growth, including LBCOs. My officials and I are working closely with officials in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, to prioritise the roll out of LBCOs and support the wider Government's agenda around growth and decarbonisation.

■ Youth Services: Lincolnshire

Sir John Hayes:

[\[13390\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to improve the provision of youth services in (a) South Holland and the Deepings constituency and (b) Lincolnshire.

Stephanie Peacock:

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

This Government is committed to giving all young people the chance to reach their full potential and recognises the vital role that youth services and activities play in improving their life chances and wellbeing. That is why, on 12 November 2024, the Secretary of State announced the launch of a new National Youth Strategy coproduced with young people, which will prioritise delivering better coordinated youth services and policy at a local, regional and national level.

Alongside this, the Government will be allocating over £85 million of capital funding to create fit-for-purpose spaces for young people. This includes launching the new £26 million Better Youth Spaces fund (equipment and small refurbishments for youth clubs, led by young people) and the completion of Youth Investment Fund projects such as youth clubs in communities that need them. We will also be launching the Local Youth Transformation pilot, which will provide tools, guidance, peer challenge and funding to build back local authorities' lost capability in the youth space.

DEFENCE

■ Armed Forces: Equality

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[13409\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what percentage of the Armed Forces' budget was spent on diversity initiatives in 2023.

AI Carns:

The cost of the main diversity initiatives undertaken by the Royal Navy, Army, Royal Air Force and UK Strategic Command during financial year 202-24 represented an average of 0.007% of their budgets.

■ Armed Forces: Labour Turnover and Recruitment**Alex McIntyre:**[\[13676\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to improve recruitment and retention in the Armed Forces.

AI Carns:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Minister for the Armed Forces (Luke Pollard) on 29 October 2024 to Question 10078 to the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Chris Evans).

Attachments:

1. Armed Forces: Labour Turnover and Recruitment [10078 - Armed Forces Labour Turnover and Recruitment.docx]

■ Army**David Reed:**[\[R\] \[13658\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to ensure that the Army has one fully deployable division; and if he will increase that capability to two divisions.

Luke Pollard:

The British Army has two deployable divisions: 1 (UK) Division and 3 (UK) Division.

■ Defence: Technology**David Reed:**[\[R\] \[13655\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to promote collaboration with the private sector to boost domestic production capabilities in critical defence technologies.

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 boost capabilities in critical defence technologies and enable the UK to better collaborate with the private sector.

We will develop a resilient, adaptive and collaborative defence supply chain that improves our warfighting readiness while acting as a credible deterrent, enabled by stronger collaboration between the Ministry of Defence and industry while also helping to drive economic growth.

■ F-35 Aircraft: Procurement

David Reed:

[R] [[13659](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the F-35 programme on (a) the economy, (b) jobs, (c) technological advancement and (d) growth in the (i) aerospace and (ii) defence sectors.

David Reed:

[R] [[13660](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the F-35 programme on the UK's (a) military capability and (b) international influence.

Maria Eagle:

The F-35B Lightning is a 5th Generation, swing-role combat aircraft equipped with advanced sensors, mission systems and stealth technology. Whether operating from land or onboard the Queen Elizabeth Class aircraft carriers it is a central component of the UK's Combat Air for decades to come. The unrivalled sensor, avionics and weapon employment capabilities of the platform will also undergo continual modernisation to ensure we stay ahead of emerging and proliferating threats.

UK international influence is delivered through the cutting-edge expeditionary capability of the Lightning, able to rapidly deploy and integrate seamlessly with NATO, the Joint Expeditionary Force, and Allies and Partners across the globe.

Through Lockheed Martin and the Joint Program Office approximately 15% of every F-35 aircraft delivered globally is manufactured by UK companies. The UK is the design authority for a range of significant Lightning aircraft components, securing highly skilled jobs within the UK and providing significant economic benefit. For example, the rear fuselage, batteries, ejector seats and actuators are manufactured in the UK for the entire F-35 global fleet. This manufacturing and equipment support for the global fleet of F-35 includes over 100 UK-based Tier 1 suppliers and has created over 20,000 jobs in the UK.

■ Navy: Officers

Andrew Rosindell:

[[13407](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department has taken with the Royal Navy to support the mental health of officers in the Royal Navy.

Al Carns:

The Ministry of Defence and the Royal Navy (RN) have implemented several specific measures to promote the psychological wellbeing of officers, recognising the unique challenges they face, especially in high-stress operational environments.

For those personnel requiring medical intervention, the Defence Medical Services (DMS) provide a responsive, flexible, accessible, and comprehensive treatment service. The DMS is reshaping mental health provision to reduce waiting lists, improve timelines for patient recovery and refocus on earlier intervention. This will

provide a single point of access for specialist mental health networks allowing quicker access to initial assessment and earlier allocation to the right treatment pathway.

Additionally, the RN provides mental health and stress management training, and continues to explore new initiatives to further enhance mental health support for all of our personnel.

■ Nuclear Weapons: Finance

Mike Martin: [\[14405\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if it is government policy to cover overspends from the Defence Nuclear Enterprise budget from the wider Defence budget or from the Treasury reserve.

Maria Eagle:

If an overspend within the Defence Nuclear Enterprise could not be managed within the ringfenced budget, then options to manage this within the wider Defence budget would be considered.

This is distinct from the Dreadnought programme for which HM Treasury hold a separate £10 billion contingency.

■ Royal Fleet Auxiliary

Andrew Rosindell: [\[13406\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will take steps he will take to tackle reductions in hull numbers within the Royal Fleet Auxiliary since 2003.

Maria Eagle:

The Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) is an organisation of highly valued, specialist personnel. The Royal Navy, which includes the RFA, continues to ensure it has sufficient assets available to deliver its operational outputs. The Fleet Solid Support Programme will deliver three new solid support ships, entering service with the RFA in the early 2030s.

■ Veterans: Radiation Exposure

Mark Pritchard: [\[13419\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many British nuclear test veterans who served on Christmas Island have (a) applied for and (b) received compensation in each of the last five years.

Mark Pritchard: [\[13420\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many staff in his Department are employed to assess compensation claims from British nuclear test veterans who served on Christmas Island.

Mark Pritchard:

[\[13421\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the average waiting time was for nuclear test veterans who applied for no-fault compensation under the War Pension Scheme to receive compensation in the latest period for which data is available.

AI Carns:

Nuclear Test Veterans (NTVs) who believe they have suffered ill health due to Service have the right to apply for no-fault compensation under the War Pension Scheme (WPS). Each case is considered on its own merits. War Disablement Pensions are medically certified with relevant material facts including on claimed incidents, events, and exposures.

There is not a specific NTV claim form for compensation under the WPS. However, a supplementary form is available which allows for NTV-specific information to be provided at the point of claim.

The number of WPS claims with a supplementary NTV claim form attached and the information requested for the number of NTVs who applied for, and received compensation, over the last five years is not held centrally.

WPS Caseworkers are experienced and, together with qualified medical professionals, do their utmost to acquire the relevant evidence and information to ensure the decisions made are both fair and correct. Currently, there are 35 Caseworkers who assess claims and appeals under the WPS, which include the assessment of the supplementary NTV claim form. There are currently 30 Medical Advisers who medically certify War Disablement Pension decisions.

First claims made under the WPS during 2023/24 were cleared, on average, in approximately nine months. Second and subsequent claims made under the WPS during 2023-24 were cleared, on average, in seven months. War Widow/Widowers claims during 2023-24 were cleared, on average, in two months.

■ Warships: Food

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[13408\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much the average meal costs on a Royal Navy warship; and if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of fully funding food provision on Royal Navy warships.

AI Carns:

Good nutrition is fundamental to military capability and the happiness of our personnel. It is essential for achieving optimum physical and mental performance, and for good health. The Royal Navy (RN) is committed to providing catering based on sound nutritional principles that support the health and performance of its people. The RN covers the cost of accommodation, bills and food when personnel are at sea and subsidises it when they are not.

The Daily Messing Rate (DMR), which is used to calculate the level of food supplies aboard a ship, is currently set at £5.67 to cover all three meals. The DMR is set quarterly, and this figure covers the current quarter only (October - December 2024).

EDUCATION

■ Apprentices: Artificial Intelligence

Dan Aldridge: [\[13572\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department has made an assessment of the adequacy of the role of generative AI in apprenticeship provision.

Dan Aldridge: [\[13574\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will commission research into the potential merits of the use of generative AI in apprenticeship provision.

Janet Daby:

The department is committed to supporting high quality apprenticeship training provision which supports employers and learners gain the skills they need for long-term success.

It is for training providers to choose how best to deliver apprenticeship training in order to equip learners with the knowledge, skills and behaviours set out in the apprenticeship standard, in consultation with the learner and employer. The department encourages providers to explore how they can use the latest technologies to enhance their offers.

The department will continue to work with experts to consider and respond to the implications of generative artificial intelligence (AI) and other emerging technologies.

■ Care Leavers: Finance

Munira Wilson: [\[13470\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans her Department has to continue funding the Staying Close programme after April 2025.

Munira Wilson: [\[13472\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to (a) continue and (b) expand the Staying Close programme.

Janet Daby:

This government is committed to providing support for care leavers to ensure they have the practical and emotional support they need as they move towards independence. The department is currently providing £23 million this financial year for 47 local authorities and three charities to deliver Staying Close. My right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, has announced the overall settlement for the department for the 2025/26 financial year. The department is working internally to confirm the detail of 2025/26 budgets and future funding plans as soon as possible.

As announced in the Oral Statement in the House of Commons on 18 November, it is this government's intention to make the Staying Close programme a national offer to all former relevant children up to the age of 25, when parliamentary time allows.

This will set the clear expectation that the local authority must assess whether provision of Staying Close support to the former relevant child is required, in the interests of that person's welfare.

Munira Wilson:

[\[13471\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of Staying Close funding scheme on prospects of children leaving the care system.

Janet Daby:

Within the 2022/23 to 2024/25 financial years, the department is providing £53 million to 47 local authorities and three private providers to deliver the Staying Close programme. The programme supports care leavers to find and maintain move-on accommodation, and provides practical and emotional support from someone they know and trust, to young people leaving residential and other care placements.

The independent evaluations of the initial pilots showed Staying Close found promising evidence that this programme can support better outcomes for care leavers including a 20% improvement in mental health outcomes, a 13% reduction in the number of young people who were not in education, employment or training and a 21% reduction in anti-social behaviour.

The evaluations reported that Staying Close supported young people to develop and build the skills needed to prepare for independent living. Feedback showed that young people's life skills had improved after six months of participating in the project and that they felt happier in themselves. They also showed increased participation in activities, whether education, employment or getting involved with other activities in the project.

The department continues to look at the impact of Staying Close and have commissioned the Centre for Homelessness Impact (CHI) to undertake further evaluation. This is due to report in early 2025.

■ Curriculum and Assessment Review

Deirdre Costigan:

[\[13635\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will ensure that the output of the Curriculum and Assessment Review includes a focus on schools adopting (a) inclusive and (b) nurturing approaches to education.

Catherine McKinnell:

I refer my hon. Friend, the Member for Ealing Southall to the answer of 14 November 2024 to Question [13149](#).

■ Education: Artificial Intelligence

Dan Aldridge:

[13573]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions her Department has had with training providers on the potential adoption of generative AI in education settings.

Stephen Morgan:

The department is building the evidence base for how generative artificial intelligence (AI) is best used in education and learning from the experience and expertise of the sector. As part of this work departmental officials have sought views and experiences from practitioners and training providers across all stages of education as well as the education technology sector and AI experts.

Departmental officials have also regularly met with representative bodies, such as the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP), who represent training providers. On 1 February 2024, departmental officials met representative bodies at the AELP AI conference, to discuss AI related work programs.

In November 2023, the department published the response to the call for evidence on generative AI in education to understand more about sector views and early use of generative AI tools across schools, further education and higher education. The response is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/calls-for-evidence/generative-artificial-intelligence-in-education-call-for-evidence>. In January 2024, the department published a report outlining educator and expert views on generative AI, which is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/generative-ai-in-education-educator-and-expert-views>.

The department is also a member of the cross-government AI working group and we are collaborating with peers across government to share thinking and expertise as we develop future policy.

■ Employers' Contributions and Minimum Wage: Apprentices

Mr Peter Bedford:

[13670]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made an assessment of the potential impact of changes to (a) employer national insurance contributions and (b) the level of the minimum wage on the number of (i) apprenticeship starts for young people and (ii) apprenticeship providers.

Janet Daby:

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 recognises the need to protect the smallest employers, which is why the Employment Allowance has been more than doubled to £10,500, meaning more than half of businesses with National Insurance Contributions (NICs) liabilities either gain or see no change next year. Employers will continue to be able to claim

employer NICs reliefs, including the relief for employing apprentices under 25, where eligible.

In addition, at the Autumn Budget 2024, my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that from April 2025 the Apprentice Minimum Wage will increase by 18% from £6.40 to £7.55. The government has accepted the findings of the independent Low Pay Commission in full and this increase will boost the hourly wage for thousands of young apprentices across a range of sectors and those in their first year of an apprenticeship.

The government remains committed to ensuring that apprentice wages support the attraction of talented individuals into apprenticeships and remain fair for employers. High quality apprenticeships are key to unlocking a more skilled and productive economy.

■ Nutrition: Curriculum

Alistair Strathern:

[\[14401\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has had recent discussions with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on enhancing (a) diet and (b) nutrition education in the school curriculum.

Catherine McKinnell:

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care have met to discuss a range of issues and projects.

This department's independent Curriculum and Assessment Review, which will aim to deliver a curriculum that ensures young people leave compulsory education with the knowledge, skills and attributes they need to achieve and thrive throughout life. The call for evidence is drawing to a close, but the review group will be continuing with other forms of engagement for the rest of the first term of the 2024/25 academic year.

The importance of a healthy diet and good nutrition is already covered through a number of subjects in the national curriculum, including design and technology (D&T), science and relationships, sex and health education (RSHE).

The cooking and nutrition strand of D&T, which is compulsory for key stages 1 to 3, aims to teach children how to cook, with an emphasis on savoury dishes, and how to apply the principles of healthy eating and nutrition. It recognises that cooking is an important life skill that will help children to feed themselves and others, healthy and affordable food.

Similarly, in science, healthy eating is covered through topics relating to nutrition and digestion, which cover the content of a healthy diet and the impact of diet on how the body functions.

Furthermore, within health education as a part of RSHE, it is expected that by the end of primary, pupils should know what constitutes a healthy diet, including understanding calories and other nutritional content, the characteristics of a poor diet

and the risks associated with unhealthy eating. By the end of secondary, pupils should know how to maintain healthy eating and the links between a poor diet and health risks, including tooth decay and cancer.

At GCSE, pupils can delve deeper into diet and nutrition by choosing to study Food Preparation and Nutrition. The subject requires pupils to understand and apply the principles of food science, nutrition and healthy eating when preparing and cooking food.

The department is also providing additional support for teachers through the Oak National Academy, who have been working to give teachers and their pupils access to free, optional and adaptable high quality digital curriculum resources. They have a wide array of lesson plans for D&T that contain healthy and tasty recipes to help children to understand the significance of what they put into their bodies.

■ Pre-school Education

Fabian Hamilton:

[14279]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 13 November 2024 to Question 13172 on Pre-school Education, what reforms to the early years system her Department plans; and whether she plans to publish a consultation on these reforms.

Stephen Morgan:

The department's long term intention is to reform the early years system as the foundation of opportunity and life chances for children. Giving children the best start in life is key to the government's Opportunity Mission. We will consider what reforms, if any, and what consultation are necessary, and then set out our vision for reforming the early years sector next year.

■ Schools: Coronavirus

Rupert Lowe:

[13921]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many school days were lost due to school closures during the Covid lockdowns.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department does not hold information on total school days lost due to school closures during the COVID-19 lockdowns.

However, during the COVID-19 pandemic the department did collect and publish information on attendance in education and early years settings. This information can be found in the following statistical release:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/attendance-in-education-and-early-years-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>.

■ Schools: Romford

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[13747\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of (a) primary and (b) secondary school provision in Romford constituency.

Catherine McKinnell:

Primary and secondary pupil numbers are forecast to rise from 2025/26. The department will work with local authorities and trusts to manage future demand.

The department has previously approved two primary free school projects to serve planned housing development in the Rainham and Romford planning areas. My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education has asked the department to review mainstream free schools planned by the last government, and that have not yet opened, to ensure that they continue to meet a need for places in the local area and offer value for taxpayers' money. As part of this, we are working with the London Borough of Havering to review the need for the planned provision in Romford.

■ Special Educational Needs

Helen Grant:

[\[13422\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that children with SEND have access to the necessary support at schools.

Catherine McKinnell:

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

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

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

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

A new Initial Teacher Training and Early Career Framework is due to be implemented from September 2025, which contains significantly more content related to adaptive teaching and supporting pupils with SEND, including, developing an understanding of different pupil needs and learning how to provide opportunities for success for all pupils.

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

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

■ Special Educational Needs: Lincolnshire

Sir John Hayes:

[\[13396\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to support parents of children with SEND to access transport to school in (a) South Holland and the Deepings constituency and (b) Lincolnshire.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department's ambition is that all children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) receive the right support to succeed in their education and as they move into adult life. 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 is aware that challenges within the wider SEND system are creating pressure on home-to-school travel. The government is committed to improving inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools, with specialist provision supporting children with the most complex needs, so fewer children need to travel long distances to a school that can meet their needs. This will reduce the pressure on home-to-school travel 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 department has listened to voices across the sector and prioritised local government at the Autumn Budget 2024. £1.3 billion of new grant funding in 2025/26 was announced 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%.

■ Young People: Health and Training

James MacCleary:

[\[13935\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to (a) support and (b) expand (i) mentoring and (ii) wellbeing schemes for young people in (A) schools and (B) local communities.

Stephen Morgan:

Helping children and young people to both achieve and thrive, including through work on mentoring and supporting wellbeing, is critical to breaking down barriers to opportunity – one of the five missions of this government.

The department is investing £17 million across two mentoring projects that will support the school attendance of at least 12,000 pupils in 15 areas. These programmes will be evaluated and the effective practice shared with schools and local authorities nationally. The first project is set to conclude this academic year, while the second, larger pilot will continue until 2028.

To support mental health and wellbeing, the government has also committed to providing access to specialist mental health professionals in every school in England.

The department has also launched a targeted mental wellbeing support toolkit to further help schools select the most effective targeted support options. This covers a range of evidence-based interventions, including mentoring, which we recognise can be a useful component of a whole school approach to wellbeing.

The government is committed to deliver on its pledge to provide a free breakfast club in every state-funded school with primary aged children. We have made early progress towards this, including announcing that up to 750 early adopters will be delivering these new breakfast clubs by April 2025. Breakfast clubs offer much more than just food. They can serve as a welcoming space for children, providing valuable opportunities for them to play, learn, and socialise at the beginning of the school day.

Across government, we are also supporting a variety of other schemes with a focus on mentoring and wellbeing for young people in wider communities.

Young Futures Hubs will bring together services to help improve the way that children and young people can access opportunities and support in their local communities, in doing so, promoting their development, improving mental health, and preventing young people being drawn into crime. Expertise has been brought together from across government departments to deliver on this manifesto commitment, and the government will be engaging with national and local partners, local communities and children and young people to co-design and explore options for the design and delivery of the hubs.

There are currently around 65 locally funded early support hubs in England open to those aged 11 to 25. These are open to anyone who may not meet the threshold to receive NHS support. This means children and young people experiencing feelings of anxiety or stress will have a physical space to go to in their community when their problems first emerge without the need for a referral. Early support hubs also offer

advice on wider issues which may affect a young person's mental health, including careers advice, educational support or support with their financial circumstances. In 2024/25, the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) is also running a Shared Outcomes Fund project, backed by £8 million, to boost and evaluate the impact of 24 existing early support hubs.

In the wider healthcare system, DHSC will also recruit an additional 8,500 new mental health staff to treat children and adults.

Supporting mentoring in wider communities, Youth Futures Foundation receives funding through the Dormant Assets Scheme, which is led by industry and backed by the government, for their 'Building Futures' programme with the Football Beyond Borders as their year 1 partner, which will enable thousands of vulnerable young people to access crucial mentoring support.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

■ Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: Industrial Disputes

Nick Timothy:

[\[13626\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what industrial disputes are ongoing within (a) his Department and (b) each of the arm's length bodies connected to his Department; how many (i) staff and (ii) contractors are involved in each dispute; what the form of industrial action is in each dispute; which recognised trade union is involved in each dispute; what the substantive matter is that is being disputed in each case; and what steps he plans to take to end each dispute.

Michael Shanks:

DESNZ and two of its 17 Agencies and Public Bodies (Ofgem and the Committee on Climate Change) are currently in a national trade dispute with PCS on pay, pensions, and jobs. PCS has not taken any action in relation to this dispute and DESNZ is working to resolve the dispute through its ongoing engagement with PCS, and via the annual pay discussions. Contractors supplying services to the Department are not employees of DESNZ. Any dispute relating to contractors is a matter for the unions involved and the employer of said contractors.

■ Electric Cables: Boston and Skegness

Richard Tice:

[\[14208\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an estimate of the potential cost to the public purse of compensation for loss of property value as a result of proposed pylon installations in Boston and Skegness constituency.

Michael Shanks:

Landowners, businesses and homeowners that have electrical equipment, such as pylons or towers, sited on their land have the right to compensation for the value of their land, as well as for any losses or expenses incurred. Acquiring authorities can

also put in place discretionary schemes offering additional compensation. As compensation is provided by the electricity network licence holders, not the Government, we cannot provide an estimate of potential costs.

More broadly, the Government is committed to ensuring that communities who live near new clean energy infrastructure can see the benefits and is currently considering how to deliver this most effectively.

■ Energy Performance Certificates

Tom Hayes:

[\[13685\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether his Department plans to take steps to update energy performance certificates to ensure they accurately reflect the actual energy performance of homes.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government is reviewing the building physics model and methodology underpinning EPCs to make it fit for purpose to support net zero. A public consultation on the new building physics model, the Home Energy Model, closed on 27 March 2024.

We are now reviewing the responses and will publish a response in the coming months. We will also consult shortly on proposals to improve EPCs and aim to consult further on the underlying Home Energy Model for producing them in 2025.

■ Energy Performance Certificates: Rented Housing

Tom Hayes:

[\[13681\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the potential cost to (a) landlords and (b) housing providers of ensuring that (i) private and (ii) social rented homes achieve a minimum energy performance certificate rating of C by 2030.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government will consult on increasing minimum energy efficiency standards in the domestic private rented sector and on introducing a minimum energy efficiency standard for the social rented sector. The Government will work closely with both the private and socially rented sectors during the consultations and will consider potential costs for private landlords and social housing providers in our assessment of options for the minimum energy efficiency standards.

Tom Hayes:

[\[13688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, when he plans to bring forward legislative proposals to require landlords to achieve an Energy Performance Certificate rating of C by 2030.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government will consult this year on increasing minimum energy efficiency standards in the domestic private rented sector. The consultation will include

proposals for rented homes to achieve Energy Performance Certificate C or equivalent by 2030. We encourage landlords and other key stakeholders to feed into this important consultation when published. We will set out a legislative timetable in due course following the consultation and consideration of the responses.

■ Energy: Housing

Tom Hayes: [\[13689\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to support local authorities to accelerate delivery of the Government's warm homes programme.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

We have kickstarted delivery of the Government's ambitious Warm Homes Plan, which will transform homes across the country by making them cleaner and cheaper to run, from installing new insulation to rolling out low carbon heating like solar and heat pumps.

The plan will offer grants and low interest loans to support investment, and we will partner with combined authorities and local and devolved governments to roll out this plan. This includes the announcement of the Warm Homes: Local Grant which will provide energy performance measures and low carbon heating to low-income households in England.

■ Energy: North Wales

Andrew Ranger: [\[13842\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what role North Wales will have in helping the UK reach its 2030 energy targets.

Kerry McCarthy:

Following NESO's advice on 2030 Clean Power, the Government will publish a Clean Power Action Plan later this year, which will set out how we can deliver our ambition. The resources of North Wales already play a key role in delivering clean power, including through the Gywnt Y Mor offshore windfarm, and the Government is committed to working with the Welsh Government to deliver on our national missions and serve the people of Wales.

■ Energy: Rented Housing

Tom Hayes: [\[13680\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing support for landlords with increasing the energy efficiency of properties that are difficult to retrofit.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

Landlords can use our 'Help for Households' GOV.UK page to find available support via the Home Upgrade Grant and the Great British Insulation Scheme. In addition,

there is a zero-rate of VAT until March 2027 on energy saving measures. Government will consult this year on increasing minimum energy efficiency standards in the domestic private rented sector. This consultation will set out proposals on maximum spend required from landlords and the exemptions regime to manage the cost burden placed on landlords, including those who own properties that are difficult to retrofit, whilst still achieving our ambition to lift households out of fuel poverty.

■ **Energy: Social Rented Housing**

Tom Hayes: [\[13684\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to support (a) local authorities and (b) housing associations with the costs of increasing the energy efficiency of social housing.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund (formerly SHDF) will provide grant funding for Housing Associations and Local Authorities to install retrofit measures to improve the energy efficiency ratings of a significant amount of social housing stock currently below EPC C up to that standard.

Wave 3 of the fund is open for applications until midday on 25 November 2024. The scheme is expected to begin delivery in Spring 2025 following the allocation of funding to grant recipients.

Additionally, the National Wealth Fund has worked with leading banks to make £1bn available to retrofit social housing, which we will build on.

■ **Fuel Poverty: Bournemouth East**

Tom Hayes: [\[13686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what estimate he has made of the number of households in Bournemouth East constituency who are in fuel poverty.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The latest estimate of the number of households in Bournemouth East constituency who are in fuel poverty is 6,812, which is 13.9% of households in the constituency. This estimate is taken from the published sub-regional fuel poverty statistics, in Table 4: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fuel-poverty-statistics>.

■ **Heat Pumps: Costs**

Tom Hayes: [\[13682\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will take steps to support (a) households, (b) businesses and (c) public sector organisations with the cost of installing heat pumps.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government is providing a range of support to encourage the adoption of heat pumps. The Boiler Upgrade Scheme (BUS), the Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund Wave 3 and the Warm Homes: Local Grant help to support privately owned, social and privately rented properties respectively. The BUS also supports businesses to install heat pumps and the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme is supporting a wide range of public sector organisations to install low carbon heating, including heat pumps.

The forthcoming Warm Homes Plan will also include additional measures to support investment in low carbon heating.

■ Housing: Construction**Tom Hayes:**[\[13692\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to page 13 of the UK Green Buildings Council report entitled 100 days into Government: How Labour can build a better future, published on 15 October 2024, what steps he is taking to support local authorities to (a) address regional disparities, (b) drive sustainable change and (c) safeguard quality.

Kerry McCarthy:

The Government recognises the importance of local authorities in driving net zero. Great British Energy's Local Power Plan will support local authorities to increase their capability and capacity to build a pipeline of successful projects in their local areas.

At Autumn Budget, Government introduced the first integrated settlements with Greater Manchester and West Midlands Combined Authorities, which include piloting the devolution of retrofit funding from 2025-26, which aims to support economic growth and the net zero transition.

The Government will also partner with local authorities to deliver the Warm Homes Plan, which will support investment in insulation, low carbon heating and other home improvements to cut bills.

■ Housing: Energy**Tom Hayes:**[\[13690\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make it his policy to give (a) local authorities and (b) Councils (i) powers, (ii) responsibility and (iii) resources to accelerate the delivery of the Government's Warm Homes programme.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government's ambitious Warm Homes Plan will upgrade 5 million homes across the country by making them cleaner and cheaper to run, from installing new insulation to rolling out solar and heat pumps. We will partner with combined authorities and local and devolved governments to roll out this plan. We will set out further detail on delivering our Warm Homes Plan in due course.

Tom Hayes:[\[13691\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to page 12 of the UK Green Buildings Council report entitled 100 days into Government: How Labour can build a better future, published on 15 October 2024, if he will make it his policy to introduce retrofit officers in every council to (a) develop local plans, (b) attract wider investment, (c) engage with households and supply chains and (d) oversee local one-stop shop retrofit services.

Michael Shanks:

The Warm Homes Plan will be rolled out in partnership with local authorities, combined authorities and devolved governments. As a first step, the government has committed an initial £3.4 billion over the next 3 years towards heat decarbonisation and household energy efficiency.

At Autumn Budget, the government introduced the first integrated settlements with Greater Manchester Combined Authority and West Midlands Combined Authority, which include piloting the devolution of retrofit funding from 2025-26.

The upcoming English Devolution White Paper (due for publication in late 2024) will provide more detail on the government's devolution plans, setting out an ambitious new framework for English devolution, moving power out of Westminster and back to those who know their areas best. It will give deeper powers for existing mayors as well as for new areas, including over house building and planning, as well as transport and skills.

■ National Grid: Paisley and Renfrewshire North**Alison Taylor:**[\[14229\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to increase the UK's grid capacity to (a) help achieve net zero goals and (b) support (i) improved rail connectivity and (ii) advanced manufacturing in Paisley and Renfrewshire North constituency.

Michael Shanks:

The electricity networks are owned by private network companies and regulated independently by Ofgem. Government is working closely with Ofgem to speed up delivery of new network infrastructure and reform the connections process to help achieve clean power by 2030 and accelerate to net zero.

Under the current distribution network price control (2023-2028), Ofgem has allowed £22.2bn for network investment. This will increase capacity, enabling connections for projects across GB, including rail and advanced manufacturing.

■ Renewable Energy**David Chadwick:**[\[13723\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he plans to improve the electricity grid to substation level to support the renewable energy transition.

Michael Shanks:

The Government's clean energy superpower and growth missions will be enabled by a significant reinforcement of our electricity network, at all levels across the high voltage transmission and lower-voltage distribution networks. This is underway and includes working with Ofgem, the National Energy System Operator and industry to halve the development time for new transmission infrastructure and to reform the grid connections process.

■ **Small Modular Reactors****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[14023\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what progress he has made on the selection process for Small Modular Reactors.

Michael Shanks:

Since summer 2023, Great British Nuclear (GBN) has been administering a small modular reactor technology selection process for UK deployment, and as announced at Autumn Budget in October, four vendors have been invited to negotiate.

Once negotiations have concluded, the companies will be invited to submit final tenders, which GBN will then evaluate. Final decisions will be taken in the spring.

GBN is working to a timeline that enables a robust process underpinned by fairness and transparency and ensures any selected technology provides best value for money.

■ **Wind Power: China****Nick Timothy:**[\[13797\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an assessment with Cabinet colleagues of the potential impact of Chinese-manufactured wind turbines in UK wind farms on (a) national and (b) energy security.

Michael Shanks:

The Department frequently engages with Cabinet colleagues on matters of national and energy security. The Government takes the security and resilience of UK 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.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Agriculture: Sewage

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[13534\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much sewage sludge was used in the agricultural sector in each of the last 10 years.

Emma Hardy:

The 9 English Water and Sewerage Companies (WaSCs) submit data to the Environment Agency on the total quantity of sludge sent to different outlets to meet the European reporting requirements. The total sludge sent to the agriculture outlet over the last 10 years is shown in the table below.

YEAR	TOTAL SLUDGE TO AGRICULTURE – ENGLAND ONLY (TONNES DRY SOLIDS)
2014	716,928
2015	696,355
2016	750,049
2017	726,063
2018	752,992
2019	698,597
2020	761,246
2021	759,578
2022	766,630
2023	764,810

■ Birds of Prey: Rodenticides

Suella Braverman:

[\[14073\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to help reduce the number of secondary poisonings of (a) buzzards and (b) red kites.

Mary Creagh:

Secondary poisoning of buzzards and red kites is often caused by improper use of anticoagulant rodenticides. Deliberate misuse is a criminal offence. Where wild birds of prey are killed illegally the full force of the law will apply to any proven perpetrators of the crime. Defra supports the National Wildlife Crime Unit which helps prevent and

detect wildlife crimes such as illegal poisoning by obtaining and disseminating intelligence and directly assisting law enforcers in their investigations.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) rather than Defra has policy responsibility for rodenticides which are an essential tool in managing the danger and economic costs of rodents spreading diseases, damaging property and disrupting food supplies. Given the potential risks posed to the environment by rodenticides, they are subject to strict regulation.

A stewardship regime has been set up to promote responsible use of rodenticides. For professional users, verification of competence is required at the point of sale to ensure only those who are properly trained can use them. The stewardship regime is currently under review and the outcome is expected in 2025. Furthermore, as of 4 July 2024, it is no longer possible to purchase anticoagulant rodenticides for use outdoors in open areas.

■ Boats: Synthetic Fibres

Neil Duncan-Jordan:

[\[13663\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what his policy is on the recycling of glass fibre boats.

Emma Hardy:

In our manifesto, the Government committed to reducing waste by moving to a circular economy. A circular economy is a system that decouples economic activity from new resource extraction, using a systemic approach across the full material and product lifecycle to maintain the value of our resources for as long as possible. Recycling has a role to play in the circular economy, but where possible the approach will mean moving materials and products further up the waste hierarchy by encouraging better design, reuse and repair.

The UK is leading action under the OSPAR Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter to improve the management of end-of-life recreational vessels. The OSPAR Convention is the Regional Seas Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic. This includes work with other Contracting Parties: to develop a methodology to estimate the quantity, distribution and material composition of these vessels; to collate an inventory of end-of-life vessels; and to develop guidance to support their waste management.

The UK also commissioned Resource Futures to undertake research to inform policy development to discourage abandonment and improve waste management of end-of-life recreational vessels, focused on establishing volume, location and type of materials in the waste stream and understanding current disposal options and barriers in the UK and across the OSPAR Maritime Area. This research is published online: [Marine litter from end of life recreational vessels - ME5247](#).

Neil Duncan-Jordan:

[\[13664\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has commissioned recent research into the potential impact of glass fibre boats on ecology.

Emma Hardy:

End of life recreational vessels are often made from glass reinforced polymer, or fibreglass, and are recognised as a source of marine litter when abandoned offshore or on shorelines where their degradation can lead to macro and micro litter.

Defra has not commissioned research into the potential impact of glass fibre boats on ecology directly, but the UK is leading action under the OSPAR Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter to improve the management of end-of-life recreational vessels. This includes work with contracting parties: to develop a methodology to estimate the quantity, distribution and material composition of these vessels; to collate an inventory of end-of-life vessels; and to develop guidance to support their waste management.

The OSPAR Convention is the Regional Seas Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic and, as a Contracting Party, the UK participates in monitoring programmes to assess regional trends in marine litter and implements actions under the Regional Action Plan.

The UK also commissioned Resource Futures to undertake research to inform policy development to discourage abandonment and improve waste management of end-of-life recreational vessels, focused on establishing volume, location and type of materials in the waste stream and understanding current disposal options and barriers in the UK and across the OSPAR Maritime Area. This research is published online: [Marine litter from end of life recreational vessels - ME5247](#).

■ Convention on Biological Diversity

Uma Kumaran:

[\[14140\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the outcomes of the 2024 United Nations Biodiversity Conference (COP16).

Mary Creagh:

The UK Biodiversity Conference (COP16) was the first opportunity for Parties to take stock of the progress made in implementation of the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) adopted at COP15.

Of the 27 important decisions taken at COP16, many provided guidance and support for Parties to help them implement the GBF. These decisions will not require significant changes to our domestic policies but do provide useful additional guidance, which we will consider in greater detail in due course.

We are still considering how to implement the decision adopted on digital sequence information (DSI) on genetic resources, which agreed the modalities for

operationalising the multilateral benefit sharing mechanism for the use of DSI, and invites Parties to put in place measures to incentivise companies to contribute.

■ Deposit Return Schemes

Pippa Heylings: [\[14171\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of including a digital option in the UK's deposit return scheme to enable consumers to recycle their in-scope containers from home.

Pippa Heylings: [\[14172\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of introducing a return-to-retail deposit return scheme on local council revenue streams.

Mary Creagh:

Through our regular industry engagement and international learnings from other schemes, there has been a broad consensus that a return to retail approach is the most effective way to launch a deposit return scheme (DRS) for drinks containers across the UK and begin to realise its benefits.

However, Defra recognises the broad benefits a digital model could bring and welcome the trials that are being held. I remain encouraged by this and keen to see the testing of the feasibility for introducing a digital solution in the future.

Regarding local authority revenue streams, Defra recognises the concerns expressed by some local authorities over the potential impact of DRS.

Defra officials are in regular contact with local authority representative associations and will continue to assess this important aspect of the deposit return scheme.

■ Disposable Wipes: Plastics

Marie Goldman: [\[13524\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what his Department's timetable is for (a) introducing and (b) implementing a ban on wet wipes that contain plastic.

Emma Hardy:

The Government is working together with the devolved Governments to understand the issue, with a view to legislate to ban wet wipes containing plastic across the UK.

Josh Simons: [\[14165\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to ban the (a) sale and (b) manufacture of wet wipes that contain plastic.

Emma Hardy:

The Government is working together with the devolved Governments to understand the issue, with a view to legislate to ban wet wipes containing plastic across the UK.

■ Flood Control: Gosport

Dame Caroline Dinenage:

[\[14034\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to paragraph 3.82 of the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 October, how much of the flood resilience funding will be spent in Gosport constituency.

Emma Hardy:

This Government is investing £2.4 billion over this year and next year to improve flood resilience by maintaining, repairing and building flood defences. The list of projects to receive Government funding will be consented over the coming months in the usual way through Regional Flood and Coastal Committees, with local representation.

■ Forests

Alex Mayer:

[\[13547\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, will he make an assessment of the potential impact of the import of (a) soy, (b) palm oil, (c) cocoa and (d) other products on the UK's contribution to tropical deforestation.

Mary Creagh:

UK consumption of soy, palm oil, cocoa, coffee, rubber and cattle products was associated with 15,363 hectares of deforestation in 2021 of which 11,201 was tropical deforestation. These commodities are estimated to account for 55% of the UK's tropical and non-tropical deforestation footprint.

This Government recognises the urgency of taking action to ensure that UK consumption of forest risk commodities is not driving deforestation. We will set out our approach to addressing UK consumption of forest risk commodities in due course.

■ Import Controls: Fees and Charges

Clive Jones:

[\[11480\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will publish the (a) number, (b) value and (c) repayment rate of invoices issued at Government-run border control point for charges incurred since 30 April 2024.

Daniel Zeichner:

Further information on the charge and the operating costs at Sevington will be made available in due course.

■ Inland Waterways: Runcorn and Helsby

Mike Amesbury:

[\[13486\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the quality of water in river ways in Runcorn and Helsby constituency.

Emma Hardy:

The watercourses of the River Weaver, River Gowy, Peckmill Brook and Keckwick Brook and their tributaries, together with the Mersey Estuary, were classified in 2019 and 2022. They are mainly at 'Moderate' ecological status. The Environment Agency publishes data on the classifications of rivers in England at [England | Catchment Data Explorer](#).

■ **Land Drainage****Alex Mayer:**[\[13896\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if his Department will publish its planned timescale for implementing Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.

Emma Hardy:

This Government is strongly committed to requiring standardised SuDS (sustainable drainage systems) in new developments.

We need to see SuDS in more developments; to designs that cope with changing climatic conditions as well as delivering wider water infrastructure benefits and helping to improve water quality. It is also important to ensure that appropriate adoption and maintenance arrangements are in place.

We believe that these outcomes can be achieved through either improving the current planning led approach using powers now available, or commencing Schedule 3 to the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.

A final decision on the way forward will be made in the coming months.

■ **Per- and Polyfluorinated Alkyl Substances****Uma Kumaran:**[\[12646\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 16 September 2024 to Question 4786 on Per- and Polyfluorinated Alkyl Substances, what his planned timetable is for considering measures to restrict per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances.

Emma Hardy:

Health and Safety Executive is currently preparing a UK REACH dossier for a restriction on PFAS in fire-fighting foams (FFFs), which is due to be published for consultation in 2025.

■ **River Thames: Flood Control****Monica Harding:**[\[13668\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of flood prevention plans for communities along the River Thames in Surrey between Weybridge and Long Ditton.

Emma Hardy:

The main flood prevention plan currently in development along this part of the River Thames is the proposed River Thames Scheme (RTS). It is a partnership between the Environment Agency (EA), Surrey County Council, and other local partners that will reduce the risk of flooding for communities from Staines to Teddington, including between Weybridge and Long Ditton. This will be achieved through the creation of a new flood channel, in two parts, and capacity improvements to Sunbury, Molesey and Teddington weirs on the Thames and to the river in the Desborough area. The RTS is planning to reduce flood risk to around 11,000 homes and 1,600 businesses.

The EA is also looking at how to reduce the impact of flooding in Thames Ditton. Measures under consideration include raised barriers and property flood resilience measures to reduce the impact of flooding and allow a faster recovery.

Rivers: Environment Protection**Dr Danny Chambers:**[\[13337\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps to produce a Chalk Streams Action Pack for the (a) protection and (b) enhancement of chalk streams.

Emma Hardy:

This Government is committed to the protection and enhancement of chalk streams. We recognise that these unique water bodies are not just vital ecosystems; they are a symbol of our national heritage. That is why this Government has prioritised fixing the systemic issues in the water system, to restore our rivers, lakes and seas to good health.

We have introduced the Water (Special Measures) Bill in September, which will deliver on the government's commitment to put water companies under special measures. We have also launched an independent commission into the water sector regulatory system in October to deliver transformative change to the water system.

These actions are fundamental to addressing the multiple pressures facing chalk streams.

Royal Botanic Gardens Kew**Freddie van Mierlo:**[\[13334\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has had recent discussions with the trustees of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, on the potential impact of moving the Kew herbarium to Thames Valley Science Park on the study of (a) biodiversity and (b) extinction.

Mary Creagh:

Defra officials are engaged with Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew on development of the New Herbarium Project proposal.

Kew's Herbarium collections are some of the largest and most important in the world, holding over seven million vascular plant specimens, collected globally over the last 170 years. The New Herbarium Project aims to deliver a world-leading scientific research and collections facility, both to preserve those collections in appropriately controlled conditions and to ensure the specimens are accessible to Kew's researchers and the wider international scientific community.

Science is the largest and fastest-growing department at Kew and exploring options for future science research infrastructure is important in anticipation of future changes to global biodiversity.

Defra fully recognise the importance of the Herbarium collections, which Kew maintains both for the nation and as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and is supporting Kew's Digitisation initiatives, which will ensure that 8.25 million plant and fungi specimens are digitised and made free for the public to access by 2026.

■ **Water Charges: Low Incomes**

Charlie Dewhirst:

[\[13979\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of offering a single social tariff for water for customers on a low income.

Emma Hardy:

It is clear consumers are concerned about their bills. We are therefore continuing to work with water industry to explore options to improve affordability arrangements, including holding the sector accountable for their public commitment to end water poverty by 2030.

The Government is also committed to taking action to address water poverty and help vulnerable customers with their water bills. All water companies have measures in place for customers who struggle to pay for their water and wastewater services, including measures such as WaterSure, social tariffs, payment breaks and holidays, and debt management support.

Water companies should ensure that their customers know what support schemes are available and how to use them if they need help.

■ **Water Charges: Surrey**

Monica Harding:

[\[13666\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of proposed increases to water bills on (a) household disposable income and (b) levels of poverty in Surrey.

Monica Harding:

[\[13667\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of increases to Thames Water bills since 2019 on (a) household disposable income and (b) levels of poverty in Surrey.

Emma Hardy:

It is Ofwat's responsibility, through the price review process, to independently scrutinise company plans and ensure the prices water companies charge customers are fair and proportionate.

The Government is committed to taking action to address water poverty and help vulnerable customers with their water bills. All water companies, including Thames Water, have measures in place for customers who struggle to pay for their water and wastewater services, including measures such as WaterSure, social tariffs, payment breaks and holidays, and debt management support.

Furthermore, we expect companies to hold themselves accountable for their public commitment to end water poverty by 2030 and will work with the sector to ensure appropriate measures are taken to this end.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ Afghanistan: Hazara****Satvir Kaur:**[\[12886\]](#)

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 treatment of the Hazara population in Afghanistan by the Taliban.

Satvir Kaur:[\[12887\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help improve the lives of the Hazara population in Afghanistan.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

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

■ British Nationals Abroad: Coroners**Dave Doogan:**[\[13482\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many coroners inquests have been held in (a) England and (b) Wales for the death of a UK national abroad in the last five years.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office received requests for documents to assist with coroner's inquests in England and Wales over the last five years (rounded to the nearest 100) as follows:

1,100 in 2019;

1,000 in 2020;

1,000 in 2021;

1,300 in 2022; and

1,300 in 2023.

The FCDO does not record separate figures for England and Wales. These figures may not be reflective of all deaths abroad where a coroner in England and Wales has taken forward an inquest as the FCDO may not have been contacted in every case.

The Ministry of Justice produces statistics on coroners inquests:

[<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coroners-and-burials-statistics>].

■ British Nationals Abroad: Death**Dave Doogan:****[13489]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to Bereavement abroad through homicide or culpable homicide - support: memorandum of understanding" between his Department and the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, published on 30th September 2024, whether his Department has taken recent steps to amend its processes on the deaths of UK nationals abroad who were resident in Scotland.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), the Police Service of Scotland, the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, Death Certification Review Service and Victim Support Scotland details the support offered to bereaved families of British nationals who are killed through murder or culpable homicide abroad. The MoU was created to ensure that affected families resident in Scotland have clarity on the type of support available from the MoU signatories. FCDO consular staff will provide bereaved families with information on support available during initial contact with them.

■ Cameroon: Peace Negotiations**Jim Dickson:****[14439]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to work towards a peaceful resolution to the conflict in Southern Cameroon.

Anneliese Dodds:

Dialogue is critical to achieving a peaceful resolution to the conflict in the North-West and South-West regions of Cameroon. The UK Government is committed to supporting efforts which will bring a peaceful solution through inclusive dialogue but we believe it is important that these efforts are owned and led by Cameroonians. We are also aware of the impact of the conflict on the regions' civilian populations, and urge that all perpetrators are held to account for violence against civilian communities.

■ Catholic Agency for Overseas Development**Adam Jogie:**[\[13557\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had recent discussions with CAFOD.

Anneliese Dodds:

I recently met with members of the Bond network, including CAFOD (Catholic Agency for Overseas Development), to discuss the Autumn Budget. We value CAFOD's work internationally tackling poverty, humanitarian crises and global environmental challenges. We look forward to working with them in the future as we shape more modern partnerships with civil society.

■ Eritrea: Religious Freedom**Alex Easton:**[\[13713\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, Commonwealth and Development affairs, what steps he is taking to help promote the rights of religious minorities in Eritrea.

Anneliese Dodds:

We consistently raise human rights with the Eritrean government, including religious freedoms. We advocate for the end of detentions based on religion or belief, as we have stated at the UN Human Rights Council. We call for all those unjustly incarcerated to be released. The UK's Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea raised human rights during her visit to Eritrea in June. The UK supports the work of the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Eritrea, voting in favour of his mandate renewal in July.

■ Gaza: Food Supply**Colum Eastwood:**[\[13575\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of the Famine Review Committee's alert entitled, Gaza Strip, Published on 8 November 2024.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The Famine Review Committee's warning that areas of northern Gaza likely face imminent famine is appalling. At a UK-chaired meeting of the UN Security Council on

12 November, Lord Collins called on Israel to finally, and immediately, make good on its commitment to flood Gaza with aid. The Prime Minister stressed this in a call with Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu on 19 October; the Foreign Secretary reiterated this in his call with the then Foreign Minister Israel Katz on 27 October. We continue to play a leading role in alleviating the suffering in Gaza, including by matching up to £10 million of public donations to the Disasters Emergency Committee's Middle East humanitarian appeal.

■ **Gaza: Genocide Convention**

Chris Law:

[\[12458\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of the UK's obligation under Article 1 of the Genocide Convention to prevent genocide in Gaza.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK government's long-standing policy is that any formal determination of genocide should be based on the judgment of a competent national or international court. The Foreign Secretary spoke to his Israeli counterpart on 27 October, and reiterated that Israel must do much more to bring about an end to hostilities and get aid into Gaza. We have continued to use all diplomatic avenues to push for an immediate ceasefire, the release of all hostages, the upholding of international humanitarian law, protection of civilians including a rapid increase of aid into Gaza, respect for the UN mandate in Gaza and greater stability across the West Bank.

■ **Gaza: Humanitarian Aid**

Ian Byrne:

[\[13027\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations he has made to his Israeli counterpart on allowing humanitarian assistance to be delivered in Gaza.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

We are clear that Israel can and must do more to get aid into Gaza. The Prime Minister stressed this in a call with Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu on 19 October, and the Foreign Secretary reiterated this in his call with the then Foreign Minister Katz on 27 October. On 5 November, I spoke to the Israeli Ambassador to the UK to underline the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East's key role in delivering lifesaving aid to those most in need. As the Prime Minister said on 28 October, the humanitarian situation in Gaza is simply unacceptable, particularly in the North. October saw the lowest number of humanitarian aid trucks entering Gaza since the crisis began. We continue to work alongside partners to press for an immediate ceasefire, the release of the hostages and a significant increase in aid to Gaza.

■ Hong Kong: Foreign Relations**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[13741\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to meet with the Chief Executive of Hong Kong in the next 12 months.

Catherine West:

The Foreign Secretary will engage with authorities in Hong Kong where there are clear UK interests, including on international stability, climate, health and bolstering our trade relationship. There are no current plans for the Foreign Secretary to visit Hong Kong or meet any individuals from the Hong Kong Government. Any proposed visits will be made public as and when relevant.

■ Israel: Hamas**Mrs Sharon Hodgson:** [\[13447\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what information his Department holds on the number of British citizens killed during the terrorist attack on Israel by Hamas on 7 October 2023.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office is aware of 15 British nationals who were killed on 7 October, during Hamas' attack on Israel. This is based on information provided to us by the Israeli authorities and affected bereaved families.

■ Mubarak Bala**Jim Shannon:** [\[13485\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make representations to his Nigerian counterpart for the release of Mubarak Bala.

Anneliese Dodds:

Dialogue on human rights, including Freedom of Religion or Belief, is a vital part of the UK's partnership with Nigeria. The UK Government will proactively raise cases where blasphemy legislation has been used to restrict human rights with the Nigerian authorities, and calls for Mr Bala's immediate release. The right of individuals to express opinions, including expressing their non-belief, is essential to a free and open society.

■ Pakistan: Ahmadiyya**Ruth Jones:** [\[13247\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps he is taking to prevent the destruction of Ahmadiyya Muslim places of worship in the Punjab region of Pakistan.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

We are aware of reports of the desecration of Ahmadi mosques and graves in Pakistan. The UK strongly condemns all instances of hate or violence directed

towards Ahmadiyya Muslims and other marginalised religious communities in Pakistan. I [Minister Falconer] underlined the importance of promoting religious tolerance and harmony when I met with Pakistan's Human Rights Minister Azam Tarar on 4 September. The British High Commissioner to Pakistan raised concerns about threats of violence directed towards Ahmadi Muslims with Minister Tarar on 6 November and with the Chief Minister of Punjab, Maryam Nawaz Sharif on 28 October. We continue to support projects promoting the rights of religious minorities in Pakistan, including facilitating interfaith dialogue and protecting marginalised communities from hate speech online.

■ Refugees: Development Aid

Chris Law:

[13492]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if his Department will take steps to review the reporting methodology for in-donor refugee costs.

Anneliese Dodds:

The government reports all in-donor refugee costs in line with the OECD rules on Official Development Assistance (ODA). A comprehensive review of the methodology for estimating in-donor refugee costs was undertaken by departments and detailed in a Methodology report published in September 2023, which can be found here on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk).

■ Religious Freedom

Jim Shannon:

[13484]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of Aid to the Church in Need's report entitled *Persecuted and Forgotten?*, published on 22 October 2024; and whether he plans to implement the recommendations on helping tackle the persecution of religious minorities worldwide.

Anneliese Dodds:

We note the recent report by Aid to the Church in Need; "Persecuted and Forgotten?" and are considering its findings and recommendations. The UK government seeks to address the severity and scale of violations and abuses of freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) for all abroad. No one should live in fear because of what they do or do not believe in. We tackle these issues bilaterally through our diplomatic network, and multilaterally, by coordinating with partners at fora such as the UN to promote FoRB. We did so most recently at the UN General Assembly Third Committee, 79th Session, in discussion with the Special Rapporteur for FoRB.

■ Sierra Leone: Sanctions

Neil Coyle:

[\[13784\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of imposing sanctions on travel to and from the UK for people responsible for the disputed 2023 election results in Sierra Leone.

Anneliese Dodds:

The FCDO regularly reviews its sanctions policy and does not comment on any possible future sanctions designations. Exclusion orders are used to prevent a person from entering the UK. The Home Office lead on the policy of exclusion.

■ Sudan: Development Aid

Sarah Champion:

[\[11000\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 14 October 2024 to Question 6251 on Sudan: Development Aid, if he will break down the £97 million allocated to Sudan by funding to (a) multilaterals, (b) NGOs and (c) national and local organisations.

Anneliese Dodds:

In addition to the £97 million of UK ODA to Sudan so far this year, and £16.5 million to support neighbouring countries hosting people displaced by the conflict, on 17 November, the UK announced a further £113 million of aid to support over a million people affected by the violence in Sudan, and displaced across the region including to South Sudan, Chad and Uganda. With this announcement, the UK has doubled our aid in response to the conflict in Sudan this year to £226.5 million. Our funding supports UN and NGO partners, providing food, cash, shelter, medical assistance, water and sanitation. Education Cannot Wait will also receive £10 million of this funding to provide safe learning spaces and psychosocial for 200,000 vulnerable children in refugee and host communities in Chad, Ethiopia, Libya, South Sudan, Central African Republic and Uganda. UK ODA continues to support the Sudan Humanitarian Fund (SHF) which is supporting local and national responders, including Emergency Response Rooms and a consortium of INGOs.

■ Tigray: Humanitarian Situation

Adam Jogee:

[\[13543\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the humanitarian situation in Tigray.

Anneliese Dodds:

UK assistance is helping to alleviate humanitarian suffering in Tigray and has supported over 168,000 people in accessing primary healthcare, supplied micronutrient supplements for 450,000 malnourished children and women, and provided cash transfers to over 138,000 individuals. The UK also co-led a pledging conference in April that secured \$610 million from international development

partners, including a £100 million contribution from the UK. We continue to monitor humanitarian need and response plans in Tigray through the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). We are also investing in improved data and evidence to enable the humanitarian community to make informed decisions on the humanitarian response.

■ UNRWA

Sir Desmond Swayne:

[\[13388\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that the UN implements the recommendations of the Final Report of the Independent Review of Mechanisms and Procedures to Ensure Adherence by UNRWA to the Humanitarian Principle of Neutrality, published on 20 April 2024.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The government is confident that United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is taking action to ensure it meets the highest standards of neutrality and is strengthening its procedures. £1 million of the £21 million of UK funding announced in July is earmarked to support UNRWA to implement the management reforms recommended by the Colonna review. Together with other donors, we will continue to monitor UNRWA's progress on implementation of its action plan. The FCDO will also continue to conduct our own annual assessment of UK funding to UNRWA.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Alice Macdonald:

[\[901294\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the provision of health services for women.

Karin Smyth:

Women's health is a priority for this government. We are considering how to take forward the Women's Health Strategy and aligning our work on women's health with the forthcoming 10-Year Health Plan.

Work continues to improve health outcomes for women, including the £25 million women's health hubs pilot, new NICE guidance on endometriosis and menopause and extending the Baby Loss Certificate service.

Andy McDonald:

[\[901295\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the provision of health services for women.

Karin Smyth:

Women's health is a priority for this government. We are considering how to take forward the Women's Health Strategy and aligning our work on women's health with the forthcoming 10-Year Health Plan.

Work continues to improve health outcomes for women, including the £25 million women's health hubs pilot, new NICE guidance on endometriosis and menopause and extending the Baby Loss Certificate service.

Stuart Anderson:[\[901296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve local healthcare provision in rural communities.

Andrew Gwynne:

Rural populations increasingly include people who are most likely to need care. South Shropshire is facing particular challenges. The waiting list for Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin ICB has increased by 12,000 compared to 2023. This is why we must continue to focus on patient access, including in rural areas, as part of plans to build an NHS fit for the future.

Mr Luke Charters:[\[901297\]](#)

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

Karin Smyth:

Patients are waiting too long to access the care they need, with the total waiting list standing at over 7.5 million. Last week we saw the welcome news that waiting lists have fallen. Since we ended the strikes, we have been ramping up delivery of the 2 million additional appointments that we committed to deliver (which is equivalent to 40,000 per week). The investment delivered by the Chancellor in last month's Budget will be matched with the reform our NHS needs, to get patients treated faster.

Mr Lee Dillon:[\[901298\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will conduct a review of the decision to delegate the power to hold leases for GP premises to integrated care boards.

Stephen Kinnock:

NHS England currently accepts ICBs holding leases only as a last resort or by exception due to the significant capital required. While we know that is not the most effective use of ICB resources, it is an important safeguard. We are committed to fixing the front door of the NHS by supporting GPs and ICBs through, for example, the £100 million of capital funding announced at the Budget for GP estate upgrades.

Jacob Collier:[\[901299\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support people with long covid.

Andrew Gwynne:

I know firsthand how complex and debilitating long COVID can be, and I am committed to improving support for people affected.

Since 2020, specialist long COVID services have been made available. This includes setting up over 100 long COVID services across England.

We have also invested over £57 million in long COVID research, and I recently co-chaired a roundtable on strategies to stimulate further research into treatments.

Carolyn Harris:[\[901302\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the provision of health services for women.

Karin Smyth:

Women's health is a priority for this government. We are considering how to take forward the Women's Health Strategy and aligning our work on women's health with the forthcoming 10-Year Health Plan.

Work continues to improve health outcomes for women, including the £25 million women's health hubs pilot, new NICE guidance on endometriosis and menopause and extending the Baby Loss Certificate service.

Neil Coyle:[\[901304\]](#)

What steps his Department is taking to help reduce the number of people on NHS waiting lists.

Karin Smyth:

Patients are waiting too long to access the care they need, with the total waiting list standing at over 7.5 million. Last week we saw the welcome news that waiting lists have fallen. Since we ended the strikes, we have been ramping up delivery of the 2 million additional appointments that we committed to deliver (which is equivalent to 40,000 per week). The investment delivered by the Chancellor in last month's Budget will be matched with the reform our NHS needs, to get patients treated faster.

Arthritis: Gosport**Dame Caroline Dinenege:**[\[14040\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve care for people living with arthritis in Gosport constituency.

Andrew Gwynne:

Services for those with musculoskeletal (MSK) conditions, including arthritis, are commissioned locally by integrated care boards (ICBs), including the Hampshire and Isle of Wight ICB, which covers the Gosport constituency. The Department expects MSK services and fragility fracture to be fully incorporated into local integrated care system planning and decision-making.

At a national level, NHS England is working to improve the diagnosis, treatment, and care of patients with MSK conditions such as arthritis, and increase support for

patients with arthritis through its Getting It Right First Time rheumatology programme. In January 2023, NHS England also published an improvement framework to reduce community MSK waits while delivering the best outcomes and experience. This supports integrated care systems to improve timely access to commissioned MSK triage and therapy services.

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

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

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

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

■ **Audiology: Paediatrics**

Gregory Stafford:

[13645]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 31 October 2024 to Question 10931 on Audiology: Paediatrics, what recent assessment his Department has made of whether all providers of audiology services for children will meet the UK Accreditation Services Improving Quality in Physiological Services Accreditation standards; and whether his Department has set a date by which they must do so.

Karin Smyth:

NHS England issued a letter to all integrated care boards (ICBs) in August 2023 which included the recommendation that all trusts should be working towards the United Kingdom Accreditation Service's (UKAS) Improving Quality in Physiological Services (IQIPS) accreditation, as part of the Paediatric Hearing Services Improvement Programme. This includes that ICBs should ensure that there are plans in place to implement, achieve, or maintain accreditation using the available tools, and that there is oversight of quality management systems. Further information on NHS England's issued letter is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/paediatric-hearing-services-improvement-programme-system-recommendations-for-immediate-action/>

As part of the programme, NHS England is working with the Care Quality Commission to increase uptake of the UKAS's IQIPS accreditation and ensure compliance with national diagnostic regulatory standards, alongside a range of other interventions to improve the quality and resilience of these services.

■ Brain: Injuries

Sir John Hayes: [\[14009\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to increase funding for brain injury reablement services in rural areas.

Dame Caroline Dinenge: [\[14045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to develop an acquired brain injury strategy.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Government wants a society where every person, including those with a long-term condition such as an acquired brain injury (ABI), 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 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, like ABIs, including rehabilitation where appropriate.

A decision on the next steps on ABIs at the national level will be taken in the coming months. Meanwhile, we have committed to develop a 10-year plan to deliver an NHS fit for the future. We will be carefully considering input from the public, patients, health staff, and our stakeholders as we develop the plan over the coming months. The engagement process has been launched and I would encourage my fellow Parliamentarians to engage with that process, to allow us to fully understand what is not working as well as it should and what the potential solutions are, including on ABI. More information about how they can input into the plan is available at the following link:

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

Integrated care boards (ICBs) are responsible for commissioning services such as rehabilitation and reablement services, and ensuring that there is appropriate provision to meet the health and care needs of their population. The core ICB allocations formula is an estimate of the relative need for healthcare resources in each ICB, and is recommended by an independent committee. The formula includes a range of adjustments that account for the fact that the costs of providing health care may vary between rural and urban areas.

Often, rehabilitation and reablement services don't provide services exclusively for patients with brain injuries, but also provide rehabilitation for patients with other

conditions, such as stroke and Parkinson's disease. Therefore, it is difficult to quantify the total amount of funding that is spent on brain injury rehabilitation services specifically.

■ **Brain: Tumours**

Edward Morello:

[\[13698\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make a comparative assessment of funding allocated to (a) brain tumours and (b) other cancers in the last five years; and if he will take steps to increase funding available for brain tumours.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Department spends £1.5 billion each year on research through its research delivery arm, the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), with cancer the largest area of spend at over £121.8 million in 2022/23 reflecting its high priority. The Department does not currently have plans to make a comparative assessment of funding allocated to brain and other cancers in the last five years.

The NIHR has taken steps on opportunities for brain cancer research funding. In September 2024, the NIHR announced new research funding opportunities for brain cancer research spanning both adult and paediatric populations. This includes a national NIHR Brain Tumour Research Consortium, to ensure the most promising research opportunities are made available to adult and child patients and a new funding call to generate high quality evidence in brain tumour care, support and rehabilitation.

We will get the National Health Service diagnosing cancer, including brain tumours, earlier and treating it faster so more patients survive, and we will improve patients' experience across the system. To do this, we will address the challenges in diagnostic waiting times, providing the number of computed tomography, magnetic resonance imaging and other tests that are needed to reduce cancer waits.

■ **Clinical Priorities Advisory Group: Finance**

Gregor Poynton:

[\[13961\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the funding allocation from NHS England for the Clinical Priorities Advisory Group was in (a) 2022-23 and (b) 2023-24.

Karin Smyth:

The information requested is not available as it is commercially sensitive.

■ **Department of Health and Social Care: Industrial Disputes**

Nick Timothy:

[\[13629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what industrial disputes are ongoing within (a) his Department and (b) each of the arm's length bodies connected to his Department; how many (i) staff and (ii) contractors are involved in each dispute; what the form of industrial action is in each dispute; which recognised trade union is involved in

each dispute; what the substantive matter is that is being disputed in each case; and what steps he plans to take to end each dispute.

Karin Smyth:

No recognised trade union is currently in dispute with, or holds a mandate to call industrial action in, the Department or its Arm's Length Bodies and executive agencies.

■ **Food: Wholesale Trade**

Alex Mayer:

[13544]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an estimate of the cost to the public purse of crime perpetrated by fraudsters posing as legitimate food wholesalers in the last 12 months.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) does not hold crime data relating to this question. Fraudsters posing as legitimate food wholesalers are committing theft, which would primarily sit under a policing remit.

However, the FSA has published research on the broader wholistic cost of food crime. Phase 2 of the Cost of Food Crime report was published in October 2023, based on data up until 2022. It estimates the cost of food crime to the United Kingdom economy to be between £410 million and £1.96 billion per year. The report is available at the following link:

<https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/Cost%20of%20Food%20Crime%20report.pdf>

Furthermore, in September 2024, the FSA published its Food Crime Strategic Assessment, in collaboration with Food Standards Scotland. This articulates our understanding of food crime threats and trends. The assessment is available at the following link:

<https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/FSA-Food%20Crime%20Strategy%202024.pdf>

■ **Fractures: Health Services**

Dame Caroline Dinenge:

[14044]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the availability of fracture liaison services in Gosport constituency.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Government recognises the current postcode lottery for access to quality Fracture Liaison Services in constituencies across the country. That is why the Government is committed to their expansion, and the Department is working closely with NHS England on how to ensure better quality and access, including ways to best support local systems.

Fracture Liaison Services are commissioned by integrated care boards who are best placed to make decisions according to local need. The Falls and Fragility Fracture Audit Programme, which includes a dedicated Fracture Liaison Service database, is a national clinical audit of fracture prevention care, delivered by the Royal College of Physicians. This includes reporting on individual Fracture Liaison Services, and supports local and national service improvement.

■ Health Services: Transgender People

Abtisam Mohamed:

[\[10873\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve access to healthcare for trans people.

Karin Smyth:

The government is committed to ensuring that trans people receive the care and support they need when accessing National Health Services. Regarding Children and Young People's Gender Services, the government and NHS England have committed to implementing all of the recommendations of the Cass Review.

The independent Darzi investigation found that NHS waiting times have surged, have become normalised across the NHS, and as a result public satisfaction has declined. The Cass review also noted the unacceptable waiting times across Children and Young People's Gender Services. The government and NHS England are working to improve Children and Young People's Gender Services in a variety of ways, including expanding the number of services offered. The Government and NHS England are committed to implementing the recommendations from the Cass Review to ensure children and young people with gender incongruence get the holistic care they need. In line with NHS England's ambitious two-year implementation plan, three new services in the North-West, London, and South West have now opened. A fourth service in the East of England will open in spring of next year. NHS England is advancing towards meeting its commitment for there to be a specialist children's gender service in every region by 2026.

NHS England has also increased the number of adult Gender Dysphoria Clinics in England from seven to 12, with the rollout of five new adult gender pilot clinics since July 2020. The rollout of these new clinics is helping to tackle long waiting times, which had increased due to a shortage of specialist clinical staff to meet the rapidly rising demand. NHS England is currently undertaking a review of the Adult Gender Services which will examine the model of care and operating procedures of each service, with the aim of producing an updated service specification.

NHS England has also increased capacity by recruiting new staff and enabling existing staff to complete further training to expand their role, across services. NHS England is currently undertaking a review of adult gender services, chaired by Dr David Levy. The review will examine the model of care and operating procedures of each service, and will carefully consider experiences, feedback, and outcomes from clinicians and patients, with the aim of producing an updated service specification.

■ Medical Treatments Abroad

Rupert Lowe:

[\[14196\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS patients have been sent abroad for treatment in each year for the previous ten years; if he will provide a breakdown of (a) what treatments those patients were sent abroad for and (b) where to; and what the total cost to the public purse was of those treatments.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Department does not have a policy about sending National Health Service patients abroad for treatment, although local commissioning groups have in the past commissioned overseas capacity when needed.

However, NHS patients can decide to seek treatment abroad through the Planned Treatment Scheme (S2). This is a long-standing funding route, available pursuant to the reciprocal healthcare agreements that the United Kingdom has with the European Union (EU), Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Switzerland. NHS patients can access pre-approved, planned, and state funded healthcare in one of the partner countries, at the expense of the UK, subject to eligibility criteria. The S2 is within the scope of devolved competency and is administered by the relevant healthcare authority in the resident country of the UK.

NHS patients with the intent to give birth abroad can also apply through the Maternity S2 Scheme, which covers maternity and delivery only. This scheme is administered centrally for the UK by the NHS Business Services Authority. The following table shows the number of UK issued S2s, which include both Planned Treatment and Maternity S2s, each year from 2014 to 2023:

YEAR	NUMBER OF UK ISSUED S2S
2014	1,350
2015	1,410
2016	1,347
2017	1,352
2018	1,487
2019	1,356
2020	1,325
2021	740
2022	610
2023	224

Source: EU questionnaire on planned cross-border healthcare S2 portable documents.

Notes:

1. the years in the table refer to the year that the S2 was issued, and may not necessarily be the year in which S2 treatment was received; and
2. the number of UK issued S2s does not necessarily equate to the number of individuals who received S2 treatment, as some individuals may have been issued an S2 but did not use it.

NHS England holds information about the top treatments received by NHS patients through the S2. The top 10 treatments, as provided by NHS England, are as follows:

- trauma and orthopaedics, including issues relating to knees, hips, and osteoarthritis;
- general surgery, including issues relating to obesity, hernias, and appendicitis;
- gynaecology, including endometriosis, fibroids, and polyps;
- ear, nose, and throat, including issues relating to the nose, tonsillitis, and ear infections;
- medical oncology, including chemotherapy;
- paediatric ear, nose, and throat;
- dental, including extraction;
- primary care general practice, including urinary tract infections, ear infections, and cystitis;
- neurosurgery, including issues relating to spinal problems and spinal discs, and the brain; and
- vascular, including varicose veins, and deep vein thrombosis.

The Department does not hold the total costs of treatment received through the S2 scheme, as reimbursement claims submitted by most member states are in an aggregated format, which means they also contain costs for treatment provided through other reciprocal healthcare certificates.

The European Economic Area (EEA) budget covers these reciprocal healthcare arrangements, one of which is the S2 scheme. The latest report on the EEA budget is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/healthcare-eea-and-switzerland-arrangements-act-2019-annual-report-april-2021-to-march-2022/>

■ Mental Health Services: Transgender People

Josh Newbury:

[\[10841\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of NHS mental health support available to trans patients under the age of 18.

Karin Smyth:

The independent Darzi investigation of the NHS in England found that NHS waiting lists for mental health services have surged, and that by April 2024, about 1 million people were waiting for mental health services. The Cass review also noted the unacceptable waiting times across Children and Young People's Gender Services. The government and NHS England are working to improve Children and Young People's Gender Services in a variety of ways, including expanding the number of services offered. The Government and NHS England are committed to implementing the recommendations from the Cass Review to ensure children and young people with gender incongruence get the holistic care they need. In line with NHS England's ambitious two-year implementation plan, three new services in the North-West, London, and South West have now opened. A fourth service in the East of England will open in spring of next year. NHS England is advancing towards meeting its commitment for there to be a specialist children's gender service in every region by 2026.

NHS England has rolled out an improved referral pathway into Children and Young People's gender services, which ensures that children are assessed more holistically through referral via paediatrics or children's mental health services. These services have been given detailed guidance, aligned to findings and recommendations from the Cass Review, on how to support this group of young people and their families. NHS England has also written to all children and young people on the waiting list to offer them a mental health assessment.

■ Neurology: Medical Treatments

Sammy Wilson:

[\[14047\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce the time taken for patients diagnosed with a neurological condition to begin consultant-led treatment.

Andrew Gwynne:

Tackling waiting lists, including for neurology, is a key part of our Health Mission. We are committed to getting back to the NHS Constitutional standard that at least 92% of patient wait no longer than 18 weeks from Referral to Treatment, within our first term.

To reduce waiting times for neurological services, NHS England is working hard to improve the delivery of services for admitted patients with neurological disorders, including at a trust level, whilst also enhancing the use of advice and guidance to optimise referrals, and improving productivity in outpatient services through reducing the number of missed appointments and by optimising follow up systems.

NHS England's Neurology Transformation Programme is also working to develop guidance for health systems on all aspects of neurology pathway improvement in integrated care systems, including specialised services, secondary care, and community services. This work is focused on improving equity of access to, and timeliness of, care.

Diagnostics, and in some cases surgical procedures, are key parts of the neurological pathways. At the 2024 Autumn Budget, my Rt. Hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced £1.5 billion of capital funding for new surgical hubs and diagnostic scanners. This will build capacity for over 30,000 additional procedures and over 1.25 million diagnostic tests, as well as new beds, which will create more treatment space in emergency departments, reduce waiting times, and help shift more care into the community.

■ Nirmatrelvir/ritonavir

Steve Darling:

[\[13849\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will have discussions with NICE on the potential merits of offering Paxlovid to people over the age of 50.

Karin Smyth:

Decisions on whether licensed medicines should be recommended for routine National Health Service funding are made independently by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), on the basis of the evidence of the costs and benefits. The Department has no plans to speak to the NICE about offering Paxlovid to all people over the age of 50 years old.

NICE guidance recommends Paxlovid, which contains nirmatrelvir and ritonavir, as an option for treating COVID-19 in adults only if they do not need supplemental oxygen for COVID-19 and if they are or have any of the following:

- an increased risk for progression to severe COVID-19, as defined in the guidance;
- are aged 70 years old and over;
- a body mass index of 35 kilograms per meter squared of height, or more;
- diabetes; or
- heart failure.

The NICE has agreed to NHS England's proposal to a phased implementation of its recommendations on Paxlovid, to allow more time for the NHS to put in place the capacity and infrastructure needed for full rollout to all eligible patients. Paxlovid is currently available to NHS patients at highest risk of severe COVID-19, in line with the approach to the rollout set out in the NICE's guidance.

■ Pancreatic Cancer: Health Services

Steff Aquarone:

[\[14403\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will support the implementation of the Optimal Care Pathway for pancreatic cancer.

Andrew Gwynne:

We are committed to transforming the National Health Service so that we diagnose cancer earlier, treat it faster, and improve survival rates.

On 12 September 2024 the National Cancer Audit Collaborating Centre published their State of the Nation Report on Pancreatic Cancer, and the NHS cancer programme is currently considering how to take forward the initial recommendations of that audit. NHS England is also funding a new audit into pancreatic cancer to increase the consistency of access to treatments, and to stimulate improvements in cancer treatment and outcomes for patients.

For people with higher risk due to family history, NHS England is providing options for enhanced pancreatic cancer surveillance. They are also creating pathways to support faster referral routes for people with non-specific symptoms and increasing direct access for general practitioners to diagnostic tests.

■ Polycystic Ovary Syndrome: Sanitary Products

Clive Jones:

[\[13372\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing (a) free and (b) reduced-price sanitary products for women with PCOS and similar conditions.

Karin Smyth:

There are no current plans to carry out an assessment of the potential merits of providing free or reduced-price sanitary products for women with polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) and other gynaecological conditions. The Government is committed to prioritising women's health and improving the diagnosis, treatment, and ongoing care for gynaecological conditions, including PCOS.

Since 2019, the National Health Service has offered period products to every hospital patient who needs them. In January 2020, the Department for Education launched a scheme which makes free period products available for state-funded primary schools, secondary schools, and colleges in England. Since 1 January 2021, a zero rate of VAT has applied to all period products.

■ Prostate Cancer: Screening

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[13276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to continue to support the TRANSFORM prostate cancer screening trial.

Andrew Gwynne:

Research is crucial in tackling cancer, and the Government is strongly committed to supporting research into cancer. The Department spends £1.5 billion each year on research through its research delivery arm, the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), with cancer being the largest area of spend, at over £121.8 million in 2022/23. The NIHR spends more on cancer than any other disease group, reflecting its high priority.

The TRANSFORM trial is an important example of prostate cancer research, as a £42 million screening trial which aims to find ways of detecting prostate cancer earlier. Prostate Cancer UK is leading the development of the trial, with the Government contributing £16 million through the NIHR. The TRANSFORM trial will also aim to address some of the inequalities that exist in prostate cancer diagnosis today, ensuring that at least 10% of the men who are invited to participate in the trial are black, to inform a targeted approach for earlier diagnosis.

The NIHR welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including prostate cancer. 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.

Public Health**Gareth Snell:**[\[12723\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will hold discussions with representatives of the food and drink industry on the impact of their products on public health.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Department engages with the food and drink industry through policies that are aimed at encouraging them to make their products, or overall product portfolios, healthier, by reducing levels of sugar, calories, saturated fat, and salt, reducing portion size, and shifting sales to healthier products. This includes legislation to restrict junk food advertising on television and online, and the locations in supermarkets in which foods and drinks that are high in saturated fat, sugar, or salt can be promoted. In addition, engagement occurs through the voluntary reformulation programme that requires businesses to reduce levels of sugar, calories, and salt in everyday food and drink. The Department will also engage with relevant stakeholders, such as the food industry, in taking forward the ban on the sale of high-caffeine energy drinks to children under the age of 16-years old.

The Department is currently considering what further engagement may be required with the food and drink industry.

■ Sleep Apnoea

Jim Shannon:

[\[14081\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what data his Department holds on the number of people diagnosed with sleep apnea in the last 12 months.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Department can provide the number of hospital admissions where there was a diagnosis of sleep apnoea, although it should be noted that there are likely to be other cases where the condition was diagnosed in a primary care setting. The number of hospital admissions for 2023/24 where there was a diagnosis of sleep apnoea was 21,042. Please also note that this data is a count of episodes, not patients, as a patient may have had more than one admission within the requested timeframe.

■ Steroid Drugs: Side Effects

Jim Shannon:

[\[13769\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of the prolonged use of steroid creams.

Karin Smyth:

The decision to prescribe a particular drug is a clinical one, and should be based on the patient's medical needs. Decisions about what medicines to prescribe are made by the doctor or healthcare professional responsible for that part of the patient's care, and prescribers are accountable for their prescribing decisions, both professionally and to their service commissioners. It is for the general practitioner or other responsible clinician to work with their patient and decide on the course of treatment, with the provision of the most clinically appropriate care for the individual always being the primary consideration.

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) is responsible for continually monitoring the safety of medicines and taking action to minimise risks to patients where necessary. The MHRA has reviewed topical steroid withdrawal reactions, and first communicated about these reactions in September 2021. This communication is available at the following link:

www.gov.uk/drug-safety-update/topical-corticosteroids-information-on-the-risk-of-topical-steroid-withdrawal-reactions.

Since then, the MHRA has continued to monitor reports of topical steroid withdrawal reactions and has undertaken a further review, which was published in May 2024. This review is available at the following link:

www.gov.uk/drug-safety-update/topical-steroids-introduction-of-new-labelling-and-a-reminder-of-the-possibility-of-severe-side-effects-including-topical-steroid-withdrawal-reactions.

Further advice has been sought from dermatologists, the National Eczema Society, and the Commission on Human Medicines, and the MHRA is taking forward a

number of actions, including updated warnings in the product information and the inclusion of information regarding the potency of topical steroids on the packaging. The MHRA is engaging with the British Association of Dermatologists who have released an updated statement. The statement is available at the following link:

<https://cdn.bad.org.uk/uploads/2024/02/22095550/Topical-Steroid-Withdrawal-Joint-Statement.pdf>.

Topical corticosteroid product information contains the following warnings about the dangers of long-term use: 'Long-term use of topical steroids can result in the development of rebound flares after stopping treatment (topical steroid withdrawal syndrome). A severe form of rebound flare can develop which takes the form of a dermatitis with intense redness, stinging and burning that can spread beyond the initial treatment area. It is more likely to occur when delicate skin sites such as the face and flexures are treated. Should there be a reoccurrence of the condition within days to weeks after successful treatment a withdrawal reaction should be suspected. Reapplication should be with caution and specialist advise is recommended in these cases or other treatment options should be considered'.

HOME OFFICE

■ Asylum: Finance

Chris Law:

[13498]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department plans to allocate funding to support (a) refugees and (b) asylum seekers from budgets other than Official Development Assistance.

Seema Malhotra:

The UK reports ODA spending consistent with internationally agreed OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) rules, which includes certain basic support costs for refugees and asylum seekers. The Home Office uses non-ODA funding for all other costs not permitted by the DAC rules.

■ Biometrics: Surveillance

Edward Morello:

[13646]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has made a recent assessment of the potential merits of restricting the use of live facial recognition software.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Live facial technology is being used effectively by some police forces to identify suspects more quickly and accurately. Its use is governed by data protection, equality, and human rights legislation supplemented by specific policing guidance.

At a Westminster Hall Debate on live facial recognition on 13 November, I was clear that the government wants to take time to think carefully about how much support the

police may need from Government and Parliament to set and manage the rules for the use of this technology.

■ Courts: Standards

Claire Young: [\[14370\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking with the Ministry of Justice to (a) reduce court delays and (b) ensure timely hearings.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Home Office recognises the significant delays in the courts system and the impact that this has on victims. The Home Office works closely with the Ministry of Justice and other criminal justice partners to deliver improvements and build a criminal justice system the public can have confidence in.

The Ministry of Justice has overall responsibility for the courts, but we will continue to work collaboratively to support the Ministry of Justice in ensuring that justice can be delivered in a timely manner for all involved.

■ Disclosure and Barring Service: Sussex Police

James MacCleary: [\[13725\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will take steps to reduce the number of people waiting for enhanced DBS checks to be processed by Sussex Police Force.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and Sussex Police are operationally independent. The prompt completion of enhanced DBS checks is an important part of the safeguarding system, and I understand that several measures have already been introduced to reduce application turnaround times at Sussex Police.

These include the DBS funding additional staff to manage increases in volumes of checks referred to Sussex Police, whilst also funding overtime at the force to minimise the impact while new staff are recruited and trained. Further support is provided through the implementation of training groups and buddies to progress staff through training stages more effectively, the funding of a dedicated training/assessor, and assistance from other forces where appropriate.

The DBS is closely monitoring the performance of Sussex Police and will continue to implement support wherever possible to ensure delays are minimised.

■ Employment: Fire Prevention

Jim Shannon: [\[13458\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of Government's fire safety in the workplace guidance; and if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of updating this guidance.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Article 50 of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (FSO) places a legal duty on the Secretary of State to ensure that such guidance, as she considers appropriate, is available to assist Responsible Persons in the discharge of the duties imposed on them by articles 8 to 22, and by regulations made under article 24, of the FSO.

The Home Office publishes a suite of guidance to meet this requirement and support Responsible Persons in meeting their duties under the FSO. This includes specific guidance on fire safety in the workplace. Work is underway to update the original suite of 12 guides published by the Home Office to ensure they reflect current legal requirements, standards, technical innovations and industry best practice.

Over the last 3 years, we have published 10 new or revised guides, and work is progressing well to revise the original suite (which includes workplace fire safety guidance), with publication expected over the next 2 years.

■ Fast Food: Delivery Services**James McMurdock:**[\[13701\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an estimate of the numbers of delivery drivers working illegally in the UK.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Home Office is not able to make an estimate of the number of delivery drivers working illegally in the UK due to the difficulty in estimating the exact size of the irregular population.

No government has produced any official estimates since 2005. As described in [joint work between the Office for National Statistics \(ONS\) and the Home Office](#), the definition and coverage of the irregular population is complex.

James McMurdock:[\[13702\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to stop illegal delivery drivers working for food delivery companies.

James McMurdock:[\[13703\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions her Department has had with major food delivery companies on steps to tackle the employment of illegal workers.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Home Office is determined to clamp down on illegal working, including in the gig economy. It is already a criminal offence to work illegally in the UK, and a person's permission to stay can also be cancelled.

The Home Office and the Department for Business and Trade continue to work closely with the main food delivery platforms to ensure they understand their responsibilities in using riders who have the right to work in the UK. Deliveroo, Uber

Eats, and Just Eat have already introduced – or have confirmed they will soon introduce – right to work checks on registered substitutes to prevent illegal drivers working for their companies.

■ Foreign Nationals: Offenders

Shaun Davies: [\[13532\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential implications for her policies of individual appeals to (a) introducing and (b) executing deportation orders on people convicted of criminal offences.

Dame Angela Eagle:

In most deportation cases, there is no right of appeal unless the person concerned makes a human rights or protection claim, in which case there is a right of appeal against a decision to refuse the claim.

Where a person who has permission to stay in the UK under the EU Settlement Scheme is threatened with deportation, there is a right of appeal against the decision to make a deportation order against them, in compliance with the Agreement on the Withdrawal of the UK from the EU.

Shaun Davies: [\[13555\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many offenders who have been ordered to be deported following their prison sentence remain in the country by (a) offence and (b) country of birth.

Dame Angela Eagle:

We are committed to delivering justice for victims and safer streets for our communities.

Any foreign national offender (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 directly from prison.

The latest statistics on FNO removals and on FNOs subject to deportation action are available here: [Immigration Enforcement data: Q2 2024 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-enforcement-data-q2-2024).

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.

■ Fraud

Liam Conlon: [\[13599\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to tackle (a) financial scams and (b) fraud nationally.

Dan Jarvis:

This Government is committed to working with law enforcement, civil society and industry to better protect the public and businesses from this appalling crime.

We have committed to completing the outstanding commitments of the Fraud Strategy set out by the previous government and are determined to do more. We will be working closely with partners to develop our new, expanded strategy over the coming months. Details of our approach will be set out in due course.

In the meantime, the Government brought together key partners across law enforcement, industry and victim groups at the Joint Fraud Taskforce last month, launching an Insurance Fraud Charter with key insurance firms to reduce insurance fraud.

In parallel, we have taken steps to ensure a new corporate criminal liability offence of Failure to Prevent Fraud comes into effect next year and played a central role in the adoption of the first ever UN resolution on fraud, which will strengthen the international response.

■ Home Office: Serco**Rupert Lowe:**[\[13558\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much was paid by her Department to Serco in each of the last 10 years.

Seema Malhotra:

I refer the Honourable Member to the answer provided in PQ 15558.

■ Migrants: Homelessness**Neil Coyle:**[\[14078\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many assessments for destitution her Department has made for people with no recourse to public funds in the last six months.

Seema Malhotra:

The Home Office publishes statistics, as part of the department's migration transparency data, setting out the number of Change of Conditions applications made by those seeking to have their No Recourse to Public Funds condition lifted. This data, for the period up until June 2024, can be found in tab CoC_05 of the immigration and protection data:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-and-protection-data-q2-2024>.

The data includes statistics for other routes, including destitution consideration for fee waiver applications. Whilst the data can be filtered to provide a breakdown of age group; nationality; and gender it cannot be filtered in a way so as to determine how many applications were granted on the basis of destitution, and that information could only be obtained for the purposes of this question at a disproportionate cost.

■ Offenders: Deportation

Shaun Davies:

[\[13554\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish a breakdown of criminal offenders who were ordered to be deported at the end of their prison sentence by (a) shortest prison sentence imposed, (b) average prison sentence imposed, (c) longest prison sentence imposed and (d) criminal offence convicted in each of the last six years.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Home Office publishes data on returns of foreign national offenders (FNOs) in the '[Immigration System Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'. Data on quarterly numbers of returns of FNOs are published in table Ret_02a of the '[returns summary tables](#)'. Information on how to use the dataset can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbook. The latest data reports up to the year ending June 2024.

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

Information about sentence length and offence type are not currently included in our published statistics and could only be obtained for the purposes of this question at a disproportionate cost. 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, the resources required to compile the statistics, as well as quality and availability of data. These reviews allow us to balance the production of our regular statistics whilst developing new statistics for future release.

■ Police: Finance

Claire Young:

[\[14368\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will review the funding formula for police forces to ensure that it is proportionate to (a) population and (b) demand.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The government will consider police funding, including the allocation of funding to forces including, in the round as part of phase 2 of the Spending Review.

■ Police: Training

Alex Mayer:

[\[13897\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has had discussions with police forces on the provision of training on potential links between domestic violence and violence against animals.

Jess Phillips:

The Government will treat violence against women and girls (VAWG) as a national emergency. We have set out our ambition to halve VAWG in a decade using every available lever.

Committing violence towards a pet or an assistance animal or using them to control or coerce a victim should be considered as risk factors for domestic abuse and must be treated seriously by the police. It is essential that every force has the right specialist capability to properly investigate these crimes taking into account the relevant risk factors.

We are committed to ensuring policing have the right skills and training to respond appropriately to victims of VAWG. We are working closely with the College of Policing and the National Police Chiefs' Council to strengthen police training for all forms of VAWG, including domestic abuse.

■ Sexual Offences: Languages**Rupert Lowe:**[\[13879\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will provide a breakdown of the primary language of registered sexual offenders.

Jess Phillips:

Qualifying offenders (i.e., those convicted for an offence in Schedule 3 to the Sexual Offences Act 2003) are required to notify personal details to the police. This system is often referred to as the 'sex offenders' register' and requires offenders to provide specified details, including their passport (or passports, if they are dual nationals), on an annual basis and whenever those details change.

In addition, the data provided to the police, and other relevant information is stored on the ViSOR database which allows for the recording and sharing of biographical information and information relevant to the offender's risk between the police and other relevant agencies. MAPPS is a Home Office-led project to replace the ViSOR database to improve multi-agency information sharing. Information about the languages spoken by registered sex offenders is not collated centrally.

■ Sexual Offences: Nationality**Rupert Lowe:**[\[13613\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of collecting data on the nationality at birth of people on the sex offenders register.

Jess Phillips:

Qualifying offenders (i.e. those convicted for an offence in Schedule 3 to the Sexual Offences Act 2003) are required to notify personal details to the police. This system is often referred to as the 'sex offenders' register' and requires offenders to provide specified details, including their passport (or passports, if they are dual nationals) details annually and whenever those details change.

In addition, the data provided to the police, and other relevant information, is on stored on the ViSOR database which allows for the recording and sharing of biographical information and information relevant to their risk between the police and other relevant agencies. MAPPS is a Home Office-led project to replace the ViSOR database to improve multi-agency information sharing.

■ Tobacco: Smuggling

Sir John Hayes:

[\[13397\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate her Department has made of how many illegal cigarettes were smuggled into the UK in 2023.

Seema Malhotra:

The transparency data showing the total amount of illegal cigarettes seized by Border Force in 2023 is available at the following page:

[Border Force Transparency 2023](#)

Qty of Cigarettes (sticks)

Q1 156,104,848

Q2 197,641,347

Q3 259,625,932

Q4 210,205,139

Total 823,577,266

■ Undocumented Migrants: English Channel

Rupert Lowe:

[\[13563\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the transparency data published by her Department entitled Small boat arrivals: last 7 days, if she will make it her policy to include information on the sex of migrants in this data.

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, the resources required to compile the statistics, as well as quality and availability of data.

The Home Office publishes quarterly statistics on detected small boat arrivals to the UK in the ' [Irregular migration to the UK statistics](#) ' release. Quarterly data on detected small boat arrivals by sex is published in table Irr_D01 of the ' [Irregular migration to the UK detailed datasets](#) ' with the latest data up to the end of June 2024. Data for July to September 2024 will be published on 28 November 2024.

■ Undocumented Migrants: Housing

Rupert Lowe: [\[13616\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department places limits on the movements of irregular migrants housed in (a) hotels and (b) other accommodation.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Home Office has a statutory obligation to provide support and accommodation to destitute asylum seekers while their claim for asylum is being considered.

Asylum seekers housed in asylum accommodation are not detained but are subject to the same laws as UK citizens throughout their time in this country

■ Visas: Offenders

Sir John Hayes: [\[13400\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many foreign nationals have been refused visas because of criminal convictions in their home countries in each of the last five years.

Seema Malhotra:

The Home Office publishes data on entry clearance visas in the '[Immigration System Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'. Data on visas refused are published in table 'Vis_D02' of the [detailed entry clearance visas dataset](#). However, this information is not broken down by reason for refusal. Further information on how to use the dataset can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbook. The latest data relates up to the end of June 2024.

■ Vulnerable Adults: Fraud

Liam Conlon: [\[13600\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to protect (a) people with dementia and Alzheimer's and (b) other vulnerable people from (i) financial abuse, (ii) fraud and (iii) scammers.

Dan Jarvis:

The impact of fraud extends beyond financial losses. It is important that victims of fraud receive the critical support that they are rightly entitled to.

Improving support for victims is a key part of the Fraud Strategy and the replacement of Action Fraud over the course of 2025 will improve the service victims receive.

All 43 police forces in England and Wales have now also rolled out the National Economic Crime Victim Care Unit service to ensure victims receive tailored support. Furthermore, we are supporting National Trading Standards in the rollout of their Multi Agency Approach to Fraud, bringing together local services to improve support to the most vulnerable victims.

Through the Fraud Strategy we also continue to tackle the ways in which vulnerable people might be targeted by fraudsters. We are working with Ofcom to stop malicious number spoofing and prevent mass texting services from abuse by fraudsters.

Under our Telecommunications Charter, the industry has introduced firewalls that detect and stop scam texts from reaching customers. Finally, we legislated to require the Payment Systems Regulator (PSR) to introduce mandatory reimbursement for APP scams, ensuring more victims get their money back.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Affordable Housing: Young People

Alex Easton: [\[13671\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to increase the (a) affordability and (b) availability of housing for young people.

Matthew Pennycook:

With regard to the supply of social and affordable housing, I refer the Hon Member to the answer given to Question UIN [11383](#) on 31 October 2024.

To support first-time buyers, the Government has committed to introducing a permanent, comprehensive mortgage guarantee scheme and to giving first-time buyers the first chance to buy homes.

The Renters' Rights Bill will provide more security for tenants and empower them to challenge poor practice and unreasonable within-tenancy rent increases without fear of eviction.

■ Building Regulations

Tom Hayes: [\[13695\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to respond the consultation on Future Homes and Buildings Standard.

Alex Norris:

The Future Homes and Buildings Standards consultation was published in December 2023 and closed in March 2024, and a government response has not yet been issued. We fully support the need for low carbon homes, fit for a net zero future. We are reviewing proposals and feedback from the Future Homes and Buildings Standards consultation and will publish the government response in due course.

■ Buildings: Repairs and Maintenance

Tom Hayes: [\[13696\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make it her policy to reform (a) planning policy and (b) permitted development rights to support the high quality retrofit of existing buildings.

Matthew Pennycook:

Improving energy efficiency and decarbonising buildings is a crucial element in our mission to make Britain a clean energy superpower. The National Planning Policy Framework encourages the reuse of existing resources, including through the conversion of existing buildings. It also expects local authorities to support applications for energy efficiency and low carbon heating improvements to existing buildings, where these do not already benefit from permitted development rights. We continue to keep permitted development rights under review.

■ **Community Ownership Fund****Kevin Hollinrake:**[\[13501\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Answer of 16 October 2024 to Question HL1248, on Community Ownership Fund, what the status is of Community Ownership Fund grants which were applied for before the General Election.

Kevin Hollinrake:[\[13502\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Answer of 16 October 2024 to Question HL1248, on Community Ownership Fund, what her Department's planned timetable is for determining whether the Community Ownership Fund will be open to future applications.

Alex Norris:

I refer the hon Member to the answer given to Question UIN [11941](#) on 8 November 2024.

■ **Disabled Facilities Grants: Lincolnshire****Sir John Hayes:**[\[13394\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how much funding has been provided via the Disabled Facilities Grant in (a) South Holland and the Deepings constituency and (b) Lincolnshire in the last three years.

Rushanara Ali:

South Holland and the Deepings constituency is part of Lincolnshire. Government provided the following Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) funding to South Holland, South Kesteven (which covers Deeping) and to Lincolnshire for each financial year since 2022-2023.

DFG ALLOCATION

	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
South Holland	£772,382	£839,780	£842,476
South Kesteven	£975,298	£1,060,402	£1,063,807

DFG ALLOCATION

Lincolnshire	£6,976,485	£7,585,253	£7,609,604
--------------	------------	------------	------------

This information is publicly available on the Foundations website: [Disabled Facilities Grant Annual Allocations](#).

■ **History: Judaism**

Rachel Blake: [\[13712\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what progress her Department has made on establishing a Jewish History Month.

Alex Norris:

This Government is committed to celebrating the positive contributions to society made by this country's faith and belief groups, including our Jewish communities. We are proud of the contribution that Jewish people have made and continue to make to the UK in so many areas of life.

We continue to support Britain's Jewish communities on areas such as Holocaust education, our commitment to the Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre, and our resolve to tackle antisemitism in all its forms.

Initiatives to mark specific cultural events or history months are best led from within the community, and the Government is fully supportive of these efforts.

■ **Housing: Energy**

Tom Hayes: [\[13693\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Written Statement of 13 December 2023 on Planning – Local Energy Efficiency Standards Update, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of reversing the effects of that Statement.

Alex Norris:

The Written Ministerial Statement my honourable friend has asked about sets out that local authorities may set higher energy efficiency standards than the planned Building Regulations. Local authorities must, though, ensure that development remains viable and that the performance targets of increased standards are expressed in the same terms as are used in the Building Regulations.

The Written Ministerial Statement was recently the subject of a judicial review. The judgement from the High Court may be appealed and, while legal proceedings are ongoing, I cannot comment further.

■ Housing: Foreign Nationals

Rupert Lowe:

[13617]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what information her Department holds on the number and proportion of residential properties that were bought by non-UK nationals in each of the last 20 years.

Matthew Pennycook:

HM Land Registry (HMLR) registers legal ownership, interests and mortgages against land and property in England and Wales. The Register of Title held by HMLR does not record the nationality of individuals who own land or property.

HMLR publishes a dataset about non-UK companies or corporate bodies that own land in England and Wales. This is publicly available via GOV.UK [here](#).

■ Leasehold: Service Charges

Rachel Gilmour:

[13710]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if her Department will bring forward legislation to prohibit the imposition of non-disclosure agreements on people who (a) successfully challenge (i) landlords and (ii) managing agents over (A) service charges and (B) major works bills and (b) agree an out of court settlements.

Rachel Gilmour:

[13711]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will bring forward legislation to (a) standardise service charge (i) item descriptions and (ii) terminology used and (b) include references to (A) Schedule of Rates codes and (B) regulatory standards where applicable.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government recognises that Non-Disclosure Agreements are sometimes used for out of court settlements between leaseholders and their managing agent or landlord. It considers that in the vast majority of cases these should be unnecessary and only be used where they are acceptable to both parties. The Government expect landlords and their agents to be transparent with leaseholders on how the service charges are made up.

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.

The Government is committed to ensuring that those living in the rented and leasehold sectors are protected from abuse and poor service at the hands of unscrupulous property agents. The Government will set out its position on the regulation of letting, managing and estate agents in due course.

■ Local Government Finance

Andrew Rosindell: [\[13412\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of reforming the local government funding formula.

Jim McMahon:

After years of delays to much needed fair funding reform, the Government will update and improve the approach to funding allocations within the Local Government Finance Settlement by redistributing funding to ensure that it reflects an up-to-date assessment of need and local resources.

This will start with a deprivation-based approach in 2025-26 with additional funding targeted to the places that need it most. Broader redistribution of funding will follow through a multi-year settlement from 2026-27.

We will be publishing a policy statement in late November, where we will set out our intentions for reform of the local government finance system.

■ Parking: Debt Collection

Naz Shah: [\[12733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will take steps to prevent (a) parking debt collectors and (b) legal firms from adding £70 to existing parking charges of £100 per PCN; and whether she plans to ban debt recovery fees.

Alex Norris:

The Parking (Code of Practice) Act 2019 places a duty on the Government to prepare a code of practice containing guidance about the operation and management of private parking facilities. We will announce our plans for the new Code, including the position on debt recovery fees, in due course.

■ Planning Authorities: Staff

Tom Hayes: [\[13694\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to improve the terms of employment as a local authority planning officer.

Matthew Pennycook:

Proactive planning is vital to delivering the housing we desperately need and to support economic growth. The Government recognise that local authority planning

departments face capacity and capability challenges due to prolonged underfunding of services and that this has placed significant strain on the planners that provide these services.

Within weeks of taking office, the Government consulted on increasing planning fees to put planning services on a firmer footing and to reflect the real costs. We have now gone further and committed an additional £46 million in the spending review to fund 300 additional planners in local government and to support local planning authorities to deliver the essential reforms to local plans and development management.

Planning officers play a vital role, and I wrote to the President of the RTPI to underline the value we place on them and the work they do.

■ Right to Acquire Scheme

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[13579\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she has made a recent assessment of the potential merits of revising the discount offered through the Right to Acquire scheme.

Matthew Pennycook:

No such assessment has been made. Discount levels under the Right to Acquire scheme remain unchanged, and eligible tenants of housing association properties are able to apply for a discount of between £9,000 and £16,000 on the price of their property depending on where they live.

■ Road Signs and Markings

Nick Timothy:

[\[13624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what her Department's policy is on the renaming of street signs to remove colonial or imperialist references; and what guidance her Department issues local authorities on the rights of local residents to approve or veto such changes.

Matthew Pennycook:

Changes to street names are a local matter. Section 81 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 replaced the previously inconsistent arrangements for the renaming of streets. It enables local authorities to make changes to street names if they determine they command 'sufficient local support' and sets an expectation of local engagement prior to any change. At present the Government does not consider there is a need for further guidance to support Local Authorities in doing so. The Government intends to monitor the operation of these arrangements.

■ Social Rented Housing: Fire Prevention**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[13411\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to work with relevant authorities to improve social housing fire defences in Romford constituency.

Alex Norris:

This government has committed to accelerating remediation of unsafe housing in response to the Grenfell Tower fire.

Registered Providers of social housing are responsible for making sure their buildings are made safe in a proportionate and timely way. We expect all Registered Providers to identify and assess their housing stock and to remediate their buildings quickly. We are working with the regulators to make sure that this happens.

Work to fix unsafe cladding has been too slow. Ministers recently met regulators and other industry partners to press for action to make buildings safe. We are contacting all metro mayors in England to ask for their support in implementing local remediation acceleration plans. We will announce further steps to accelerate remediation shortly.

■ Social Rented Housing: Lifts**Apsana Begum:**[\[10159\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward regulations on the (a) sourcing and (b) stocking of repair parts for lifts by registered social housing providers.

Matthew Pennycook:

Registered providers of social housing are required to meet the regulatory standards set by the Regulator of Social Housing. The Safety and Quality Standard requires providers to provide an efficient, effective and timely repairs, maintenance and planned improvements service for the homes and communal areas for which they are responsible, which could include lifts.

The Government recently committed to introducing a competence and conduct standard to ensure that social housing staff have the right skills and experience and that social housing tenants can hold their landlords to account for their high quality services and homes. We will also bring forward a consultation as soon as possible setting out plans for a reformed Decent Homes Standard, which will apply to both the social and private rented sectors.

■ Towns Fund: Runcorn**Mike Amesbury:**[\[13491\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when Runcorn receive the initial allocation of funding from the Long Term Plan for Towns scheme.

Alex Norris:

As set out at the Autumn Budget, the Long-Term Plan for Towns will be retained and reformed as part of a new regeneration programme.

Halton Borough Council received an initial £50,000 capacity payment in April 2024.

Following feedback that the previous programme timelines were too short and not conducive to the level of engagement places wished to undertake with their communities, it was confirmed at Budget that we will make available a further £200,000 of capacity funding in the financial year 2025/26. This will support the development of plans in line with a revised prospectus that will be published in due course.

Delivery grant funding will therefore begin in the financial year 2026/27.

■ Voting Rights: British Nationals Abroad**Melanie Ward:**[\[13707\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of utilising (a) High Commissions and (b) Consulates to facilitate British Overseas Voters ability to vote.

Rushanara Ali:

No such assessment has been made at this time. We are focused at present on delivering on our manifesto commitments to strengthen our democracy and encourage participation – including by giving 16- and 17- year olds the right to vote in all elections.

JUSTICE**■ Independent Sentencing Review****Dr Kieran Mullan:**[\[13518\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether her Department has provided guidance to the Independent Sentencing Review 2024 to 2025 on (a) when and (b) how evidence should be collected from third parties.

Dr Kieran Mullan:[\[13519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether her Department has provided guidance to the Independent Sentencing Review 2024 to 2025 on whether it should collect evidence on public opinion on sentencing.

Dr Kieran Mullan:[\[13525\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will require the Chair of the Independent Sentencing Review to publish the evidence it receives on that review.

Dr Kieran Mullan:

[\[13526\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether her Department has allocated funding for commissioning primary research to the Independent Sentencing Review.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

This Government has delivered on a manifesto commitment to bring sentencing up to date and ensure the framework is consistent, by launching an Independent Review of Sentencing on 22 October 2024.

The Review will be guided by the Terms of Reference published on 21 October 2024. In developing their recommendations, the independent Chair and panel will consider how to collect and publish evidence.

The Department has not provided guidance, and it will be up to the independent Review, with the expectation that views of a diverse range of stakeholders, including the public, will be important.

The Review has published an eight-week Call for Evidence to gather evidence from all those with an interest, closing early January 2025. The Review is estimated to run for 6 months and should submit its findings in full by Spring 2025. Following the publication of the report, and recommendations, the Government intends to respond to the Review.

The Ministry of Justice has allocated funding for the Independent Sentencing Review; it will be for the Review to consider how it meets its Terms of Reference, including if it wishes to commission primary research.

Dr Kieran Mullan:

[\[13521\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether her Department has put in place a policy on (a) disclosure and (b) transparency between the Independent Sentencing Review 2024 to 2025 and (i) Ministers and (ii) other members of her Department.

Dr Kieran Mullan:

[\[13522\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether her Department has provided guidance to the Independent Sentencing Review 2024 to 2025 on how members of the public should be able to participate in the Independent Sentencing Review 2024 to 2025.

Dr Kieran Mullan:

[\[13523\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether her Department has provided guidance to the Independent Sentencing Review 2024 to 2025 on how hon. Members should be able to participate in the Independent Sentencing Review 2024 to 2025.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The Review will be guided by the Terms of Reference published on 21 October 2024. In developing their recommendations, the independent Chair and panel will consider how to collect evidence and launched a call for evidence on 14 November.

The Department has not provided formal guidance, and it will be up to the independent review, with the expectation that views of a diverse range of stakeholders will be important, including the public and hon. Members.

A memorandum of understanding has been developed to establish and govern the relationship between the Independent Sentencing Review, and the wider Department and Ministers.

■ Independent Sentencing Review: Public Appointments

Dr Kieran Mullan: [\[13516\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the process will be for appointing members to the expert panel to the Independent Sentencing Review 2024 to 2025.

Dr Kieran Mullan: [\[13517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, when the expert panel to the Independent Sentencing Review 2024 to 2025 will be (a) appointed and (b) announced.

Dr Kieran Mullan: [\[13520\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether (a) victims and (b) the (i) family and (ii) friends of victims of crime will be represented on the expert panel for the Independent Sentencing Review 2024 to 2025.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The Review will be chaired by the former Lord Chancellor, the Rt Hon David Gauke, supported by a panel which includes expertise drawn from prisons and probation operations, prosecution, academia, law enforcement, victims, and the judiciary.

The process for the appointment of the panel follows the usual public law principles which are applicable to all ministerial decision-making, and within the scope of direct ministerial appointments. Appointments must be rational, procedurally fair, and non-discriminatory.

This Sentencing Review aims to ensure that there is always a place in prison for violent offenders, and victims will always know that justice will be done. It will also aim to ensure that sentences are consistent and make sense to victims and the public. That is why a victims' representative forms part of the multidisciplinary panel conducting the Review.

Following the launch of the Review on 22 October, appointments were finalised in early and mid-November, and subsequently published on 14 November on GOV.UK.

■ Injunctions

John Glen: [\[13432\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether she plans to reform the law on super-injunctions; and whether she has had discussions with the Law Officers on super-injunctions.

Heidi Alexander:

There are no plans to reform the law. The courts determine individual applications for interim injunctions to restrain publication of confidential information (and the existence of the injunction) on the merits of each case, and in accordance with the law and specific Practice Guidance.

The Practice Guidance on Interim Non-Disclosure Orders was issued by the then-Master of the Rolls as part of the implementation of the Superinjunctions Committee's recommendations, which he chaired and whose final report was published in 2011. It provides detailed guidance on the law, principle of open justice and model court orders.

The Ministry of Justice has had no recent discussions with the Law Officers on this topic.

■ Magistrates: Shropshire

Shaun Davies:[\[13551\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many justices of the peace served at Telford Magistrates Court in each of the last six years.

Heidi Alexander:

Magistrates that sit at Telford Magistrates' Court are appointed to the Shropshire Bench. The Shropshire Bench covers Telford and Kidderminster Magistrates Court and the magistrates may be required to sit at any of these courts. The table below shows the number of magistrates on the Shropshire Bench (existing members and new appointments) for the years requested:

2024	76
2023	75
2022	82
2021	87
2020	82
2019	91

The Staffordshire and West Mercia Advisory Committee on Justices of the Peace's recruitment plans are published here: [Advisory Committee Recruitment Plan - Magistrates Recruitment](#).

■ Ministry of Justice: Industrial Disputes

Nick Timothy:[\[13628\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what industrial disputes are ongoing within (a) her Department and (b) each of the arm's length bodies connected to her Department;

how many (i) staff and (ii) contractors are involved in each dispute; what the form of industrial action is in each dispute; which recognised trade union is involved in each dispute; what the substantive matter is that is being disputed in each case; and what steps she plans to take to end each dispute.

Alex Davies-Jones:

No Ministry of Justice (excluding HMPPS) recognised trade union, or trade union recognised by Ministry of Justice contractors, currently holds a mandate to call industrial action.

HMPPS has one industrial dispute. NAPO (National Association of Probation Officers) is in dispute with HMPPS on pay and workload. Industrial action would potentially range from refusal to work overtime to days of strike action. HMPPS is in full pro-active engagement with NAPO to avert this.

The intention of HMPPS is to resolve the workload situation through resetting the work of probation with some tasks already removed.

On pay, at present, NAPO is content that without prejudice talks for 25/26 will commence in the near future. On workload reduction they are actively engaged in talks with HMPPS.

■ **Police National Computer**

Dr Kieran Mullan:

[\[13530\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to her Department's publication entitled Number of working-age individuals with a record on the PNC, published on 28 October 2024, what proportion of these records relate to individuals that (a) are convicted, (b) facing pending prosecutions, (c) been issued cautions, (d) involved in cases where no further action was required (e) been arrested but not charged and (f) are deceased.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The information requested is provided in the table attached. This table includes data on the:

- Proportion of the records on the Police National Computer (PNC) in each category specified, by offenders of working age.

This analysis looks at the proportion of records that fall into the categories a – d. It does not provide the proportion of individuals as each individual offender may have a record in each category. It is not possible to answer parts (e) and (f), as the Ministry of Justice extract of the PNC does not contain the information required. Arrest information (part e) is a matter for the Home Office.

Attachments:

1. Table [2024-11-19 PQ 13530 table.xlsx]

■ Prison Sentences

Darren Paffey:

[13943]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, when she plans to publish an action plan for imprisonment for public protection sentences.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

I am pleased to announce that on 15 November, the Lord Chancellor laid the first IPP Annual Report and a newly updated IPP Action Plan before Parliament. The Report and Plan can be accessed using the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hmpps-annual-report-on-the-ipp-sentence-2023-to-24>.

The Government is committed to ensuring that the updated Plan drives effective frontline delivery in our prisons, to ensure that those serving IPP sentences are given every chance to make further progress in reducing their risk and eventually obtaining a release direction from the Parole Board in a way that prioritises public protection.

We are also committed to ensuring that the Plan improves the support for IPP offenders to comply with licence in the community, so that they can see the eventual termination of the licence and a definitive end to their sentence.

We will review the IPP Action Plan annually and will continue thoroughly to scrutinise the progress made.

■ Prisoners: Social Media

Rupert Lowe:

[14143]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will make an estimate of the number of people in prison for offences related to the use of social media broken down by offence.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Information as to whether social media was used (at any point) in the commission of an offence is not centrally recorded – therefore the information requested could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

■ Reoffenders: Foreign Nationals

Rupert Lowe:

[13567]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 11 November 2024 to Question 12200 on Reoffenders: Foreign Nationals, if she will break down that data by crime category.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Data on the reoffending rate of foreign national offenders, broken down by the crime category of the index offence, can be found in the attached table.

We refer all foreign national offenders in receipt of custodial sentences to the Home Office. Those sentenced to 12 months, or more are automatically considered for deportation.

Foreign national offenders who commit crime should be in no doubt that the law will be enforced and, where appropriate, we will work with the Home Office to pursue their deportation. This will help to manage prison pressures, keep the public safe and reduce crime. We are currently on track to remove more foreign national offenders this year than at any time in recent years and we are working across government to explore the ways we accelerate this work further.

Attachments:

1. Table [2024-11-19 PQ 13567 table.xlsx]

■ **Reparation by Offenders**

Darren Paffey:

[\[13940\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what her planned timeline is for the implementation of steps to transition toward restorative justice is; and what the key milestones toward this will be.

Alex Davies-Jones:

Restorative justice can, when delivered in the right circumstances, improve victim satisfaction and reduce reoffending. This not only benefits the victims and the offender but also their community.

That is why, under the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime ('the Victims' Code'), all adult victims must be told about the option of restorative justice and how to access it. We also provide Police and Crime Commissioners with grant funding for victim support services, including restorative justice services. They are best placed to assess local need and commission services based on the needs of the population in the local area.

Restorative justice can also already be used as part of out of court resolutions, depending on the circumstances of the case.

■ **Young Offender Institutions: Education**

Ben Goldsborough:

[\[13886\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps her Department is taking to improve young offenders institutions' grades for overall effectiveness under the education inspection framework.

Ben Goldsborough:

[\[13887\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether her Department plans to take steps to increase the number of hours that children in young offender institutions have access to education.

Ben Goldsborough:

[\[13892\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will issue guidance to staff in young offenders institutes to ensure that the allocation of courses is based on the educational needs of young offenders.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The Government has inherited a criminal justice system in crisis. This has placed an unacceptable strain on the Children and Young People Estate. We are determined to tackle the challenges – giving staff the support they need to reduce violence, increase access to education and help these children to turn their lives around.

Following the Education Thematic Review recently published by Ofsted and H M Inspectorate of Prisons, education delivery in young offender institutions, as well as wider performance, is under review.

The Youth Custody Service (YCS) is committed to promoting the development of each child in its care by delivering a range of learning and enrichment activities that are individualised, responsive to children's needs, and aligned with trauma-informed care. This is an integrated whole-systems approach involving various professionals. Education providers are working alongside subject-matter experts (Heads of Education, Skills and Work) and Governors to develop broad and balanced curriculums that facilitate the holistic development of all children in the YCS's care. This includes access to vocational training and creative learning.

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.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY**■ Artificial Intelligence: Legislation****Chi Onwurah:**[\[13477\]](#)

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

Feryal Clark:

AI assurance supports organisations to demonstrate their compliance with existing – and future – standards and regulations. To complement the existing focus on proportionate, sector-specific regulation, the UK Government remains focused on its intention to introduce binding requirements on the handful of companies developing the most powerful AI systems, as announced in the King's Speech. These proposals will build on the voluntary commitments already secured at the Seoul and Bletchley AI Safety Summits and build on the government's ongoing commitment to ensure that the UK's regulators have the expertise and resources to effectively regulate AI in each of their respective domains.

■ Chronic Fatigue Syndrome: Research

Steve Race: [\[13583\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if he will take steps to prioritise research funding for myalgic encephalomyelitis.

Steve Race: [\[13585\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if he will prioritise funding for research on the impact of myalgic encephalomyelitis on women.

Feryal Clark:

UK Research and Innovation's (UKRI) Medical Research Council (MRC) has invested in research into Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME/CFS) for many years, awarding £6.6 million in this area since 2012.

This includes through DecodeME, the world's largest ME/CFS study, via strategic co-funding with the National Institute of Health and Care Research (NIHR), which aims to find genetic factors to better understand ME/CFS disease pathways and unlock future treatment pathways. Initial results of the DecodeME study, [posted on NIHR Open Research](#), include consideration of the impact of ME/CFS on women.

UKRI continue to encourage high-quality proposals across their funding opportunities, maintaining an open highlight notice to encourage ME/CFS research. MRC also co-funded the ME/CFS Priority Setting Partnership to identify research priorities for ME/CFS, led by people with ME/CFS, their carers and clinicians, and facilitated by Action for M.E.

■ Mobile Phones: South Derbyshire

Samantha Niblett: [\[13977\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he is taking to help improve phone signal in (a) South Derbyshire constituency and (b) rural areas.

Chris Bryant:

Although I am aware that official reports of mobile coverage often vary substantially from people's experience on the ground, Ofcom reports that 95% of the pre-boundary change South Derbyshire constituency area has 4G geographic coverage from all four mobile operators, and that basic (non-standalone) 5G is available from at least one mobile operator outside 93% of premises.

This Government wants all areas of the UK to benefit from reliable and good quality mobile coverage. Our ambition is for all populated areas, including rural areas, to have higher-quality standalone 5G by 2030, and to increase 4G coverage to 95% of the UK landmass by the end of 2025 through the Shared Rural Network programme. We are committed to ensuring we have the right policy and regulatory framework to support investment and competition.

■ Pornography: Gower**Tonia Antoniazzi:** [\[14063\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact on young people in Gower constituency of differences in the level of regulation of pornographic content accessed (a) online and (b) offline.

Feryal Clark:

The Online Safety Act imposes duties on user-to-user services and publishers of pornography to prevent children encountering pornographic content online.

Ofcom can enforce duties on publishers of pornography from early 2025. The age assurance duties for user-to-user services will come into effect by summer 2025.

Additionally, the Independent Pornography Review will assess the effectiveness of pornography legislation, regulation and enforcement, including online and offline regulation. We expect that the independent review will finalise towards the end of this year.

■ Technology: Small Businesses**Mrs Sureena Brackenridge:** [\[13949\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment he has made of the contribution of small and micro tech companies to the UK economy.

Feryal Clark:

Whilst DSIT hasn't conducted specific analysis on the impact of small and micro tech companies on the economy, DSIT recognises that these businesses form a large part of the digital sector. Businesses classified as micro or small by employment band made up 91.9% and 6.4% of the businesses in the UK digital sector [respectively in 2023](#). The digital sector as a whole contributed £158.3bn in Gross Value Added (GVA) to the [UK economy in 2022, 7.2% of total UK GVA](#).

TRANSPORT**■ Aviation and Railways: Costs****Chris Hinchliff:** [\[14168\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment her Department has made of the potential economic impact of differences in the cost per mile of domestic (a) plane and (b) train travel; and if her Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of taking steps to equalise costs to ensure it is never cheaper to travel by plane than train for domestic purposes.

Mike Kane:

The UK aviation market operates predominantly in the private sector. Airlines' business models can at times accommodate more flexible pricing than the railway.

The Government sets the percentage that regulated rail fares can be increased each year. Regulated fares make up around 45 per cent of rail fares and include commuter fares, such as season ticket and shorter-distance peak return, alongside longer-distance off-peak returns. The increase in regulated fares for 2025 will be the lowest absolute increase in three years and delivers a fair balance between passengers and taxpayers.

■ **Bicycles: Facilities**

Steve Race:

[\[14390\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to provide (a) residents and (b) workers with access to spaces for (i) shared bike schemes and (ii) other bike storage facilities.

Mike Kane:

As part of its statutory consultee role for large-scale planning applications, Active Travel England (ATE) assesses the quantity and quality of cycle parking in new residential, retail and business developments alongside measures that would secure access to shared cycle schemes. In particular, ATE applies the best practice parking standards set out in chapter 11 of LTN 1/20 and reviews development travel plans to ensure that bike share schemes can be accessed where the size and location of development will engender demand.

Operations and access to spaces for dockless cycle schemes are for local authorities to manage, working with e-cycle scheme operators. Funding for public-accessible cycle storage has been made available from a range of local transport funds, including the Active Travel Fund and City Regional Sustainable Transport Settlement.

■ **British Transport Police: Labour Turnover and Recruitment**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[13755\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to help improve (a) recruitment and (b) retention in the British Transport Police.

Mike Kane:

The British Transport Police (BTP) are dedicated to building a modern, inclusive, and resilient force that reflects the communities it serves. Their latest headcount figures show the Force is successful at maintaining staff and officer numbers at a consistent level.

The Force has focussed on leadership development to foster a culture of empowerment, empathy and support. They have introduced a new well-being programme for the workforce, and they are investing in technology, training and facilities to equip their officers with the necessary tools for the dynamic environment they operate in every day.

BTP is also committed to creating a more representative workforce and have an outreach programme to encourage applications from candidates in underrepresented groups.

BTP is launching a pilot in London for new recruits to join BTP as part time police constables. This is a commitment from BTP's Learning and Development Strategy to attract high calibre applicants, from a range of backgrounds, who would otherwise not be able to apply or consider becoming a police officer.

■ **Bus Services: Gosport**

Dame Caroline Dinenege:

[\[14036\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of changes to the level of the bus fare cap on rates of bus travel in Gosport constituency.

Mike Kane:

In the Budget on 30 October, the government confirmed it will invest over £150 million to introduce a new £3 cap on single bus fares in England outside London from 1 January until 31 December 2025. Under the plans of the previous administration, the current £2 cap on bus fares had been due to expire on 31 December 2024, and prior to the Budget, there was no further funding available to maintain the cap beyond this point.

Considering all its impacts, the fare cap is not financially sustainable for taxpayers and bus operators at £2. Capping fares at £3 will keep bus travel affordable while ensuring the cap is fair to taxpayers, helping millions of people access better opportunities, travel for less and protect vital bus routes, including in Gosport.

■ **Bus Services: Temperature**

Alex Mayer:

[\[13546\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking with bus operators to help protect the safety of (a) passengers and (b) bus staff during heatwaves.

Mike Kane:

The Public Service Vehicles (Conditions of Fitness, Equipment, Use and Certification) Regulations 1981 sets out the requirements for public service vehicles in relation to the equipment on board and vehicle specification. It makes clear that 'adequate ventilation shall be provided for passengers and the driver without the necessity for opening any main window or windscreen'. Bus operators are required ensure their fleet complies with these regulations.

■ **Chiltern Railways: Standards**

Freddie van Mierlo:

[\[13946\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of services provided by Chiltern Rail from Haddenham and Thame Parkway station.

Mike Kane:

The Department monitors the adequacy of train services from all train stations, including Haddenham and Thame Parkway.

Chiltern Railway provide a frequent service with three trains per hour during peak times and two trains per hour during the off-peak service from Haddenham and Thame Parkway to other stations along the Chiltern Mainline route between London Marylebone and Birmingham Moor Street. When planning the timetable, operators look at several factors including passenger demand and infrastructure constraints, as well as operational considerations, such as, fleet or driver availability. The goal is to provide an efficient and reliable service for all passengers and the Department regularly reviews operational performance across the rail network.

Driving: Standards**Max Wilkinson:**[\[14381\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she plans to implement the policies in her Department's policy paper entitled The plan for drivers, published on 2 October 2023.

Lilian Greenwood:

"The Plan for Drivers" was published by the previous government. The Department is considering the measures within it in the light of this Government's priorities.

East West Rail Line: Marketing**Alex Mayer:**[\[13903\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her Department is holding discussions with (a) East West Rail Company and (b) rail operators on branding for trains on East West Rail.

Mike Kane:

The Department is considering options for the branding on trains for Connection Stage One (CS1) East West Rail services between Oxford, Bletchley and Milton Keynes and is holding discussions with the relevant parties, this has included Chiltern Railways and East West Rail Company who are supporting preparations for EWR CS1 Services.

Electric Vehicles: Charging Points**Edward Morello:**[\[13933\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to accelerate the rollout of public charging points.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Government is committed to accelerating the roll-out of charging infrastructure so that everyone, no matter where they live or work, can make the transition to an

electric vehicle (EV). As of 1 November, there are over 71,000 publicly available charging devices in the UK.

The Local EV Infrastructure (LEVI) Fund supports local authorities in England to work with industry to transform the availability of EV charging for drivers without off-street parking and will support the installation of tens of thousands of local chargers. The Government confirmed in the October 2024 Budget that it will continue to support the uptake of EVs by investing over £200 million in 2025/26 to accelerate chargepoint rollout.

Alex Easton:

[\[13941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to accelerate the rollout of public electric vehicle charge points; and what steps she plans to take to ensure sufficient infrastructure to meet the growing demand for electric vehicles.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Government is committed to accelerating the roll-out of charging infrastructure so that everyone, no matter where they live or work, can make the transition to an electric vehicle (EV). As of November, there are over 71,000 publicly available charging devices in the UK. The £381 million Local EV Infrastructure (LEVI) Fund currently supports local authorities in England to work with industry to transform the availability of EV charging for drivers without off-street parking and will support the installation of tens of thousands of local chargers.

The Government also confirmed in the October 2024 Budget that it will continue to support the uptake of EVs by investing over £200 million in 2025/26 to accelerate EV chargepoint rollout.

■ **Electric Vehicles: Northern Ireland**

Robin Swann:

[\[13858\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will have discussions with the Northern Ireland Executive on (a) establishing a watchdog to regulate the cost of charging electric vehicles and (b) encouraging electric vehicle use.

Lilian Greenwood:

We are committed to the transition from internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles to electric vehicles, as this will drive economic growth, help the UK meet its climate change obligations and improve air quality.

To support that transition, the Department for Transport continues to work closely with the Northern Ireland Executive. Transport is a devolved matter, so this would be the decision of the Executive.

■ **High Speed 2 Line: Nature Conservation**

Rupert Lowe:

[\[13582\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, which wildlife protection projects relate to HS2 works; and what the cost is of each.

Lilian Greenwood:

HS2 must meet regulatory and legal requirements to protect existing wildlife and is also committed to a target of 'No Net Loss' in biodiversity. HS2 Ltd therefore deploys an adaptive approach to wildlife protection and environmental mitigation. The design and construction of HS2 is required to meet legislative and regulatory requirements, and HS2 Ltd's proposals for mitigation are subject to review, inspection and guidance from the regulators to ensure mitigations are in place to protect wildlife.

HS2 is an integrated scheme where routine wildlife protection costs are accounted for within the overall costs, except for a number of specific structures. It is therefore not feasible to immediately isolate a proportion of the costs for the mitigation required for wildlife protection, which is an ongoing responsibility as construction continues and circumstances on the ground continue to develop.

Once constructed, the new HS2 railway will result in over 33 km² of habitats being in place for species to use, a significant amount of which is directly provided as part of HS2's commitment to wildlife protection.

Ports: Electrification**Melanie Onn:**[\[13494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to develop the electrification of ports.

Mike Kane:

The new Government's manifesto made it clear that the "grid has become the single biggest obstacle to the deployment of cheap, clean power generation and the electrification of industry." My Department meets regularly with ports and District Network Operations (DNOs) to understand the challenges they face in relation to electrification, to signpost information and to raise their concerns across government. As a mission driven government, the Secretary of State for Transport attends the Clean Energy Mission Board, which is chaired by DESNZ Secretary of State, a key focus of which grid investment and connection's process reform.

Melanie Onn:[\[13760\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the potential cost to the public purse of the electrification of onshore marine ports.

Mike Kane:

We are committed to Britain becoming a Clean Energy Superpower and ports are a key part of that mission. Ports are primarily private entities and the cost of electrification of onshore marine ports varies from port to port depending on the port's needs. The cost can be significantly higher or lower depending on the electricity demand and the distance from a connection point.

■ Railways: Crime Prevention

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[13754\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to help prevent (a) violent crime and (b) theft of personal property on railway infrastructure.

Mike Kane:

Tackling violent crime is a priority for the British Transport Police (BTP) and they are committed to taking action to prevent the theft of personal property. BTP works closely with rail industry partners to ensure that passengers and rail staff feel safe on the network.

The BTP tackles violent crime through specialist policing capabilities designed specifically to prevent crime and harm on the railways and strong partnerships with Home Office forces. They utilise a range of policing techniques including overt and covert patrols at hot spot locations, regular high-visibility patrols across the network and use internal and external intelligence to assist in targeting locations.

To help prevent theft from passengers BTP officers conduct high-visibility patrols on trains, stations, and platforms, particularly in areas with higher crime rates. These patrols serve as a deterrent and allow officers to spot and address suspicious behaviour early on.

BTP frequently runs campaigns to remind passengers to stay vigilant and keep their belongings secure. This includes visible signage, announcements, and social media alerts with tips for safeguarding personal items.

■ Railways: Standards

Rupert Lowe:

[\[14186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the total number of minutes is that trains have been delayed in each of the last 10 years.

Mike Kane:

DELAYS AFFECTING TRAINS IN GREAT BRITAIN

Year	Total Number of Delay Minutes
01/04/14 - 31/03/15	12,939,361
01/04/15 - 31/03/16	13,681,340
01/04/16 - 31/03/17	14,685,985
01/04/17 - 31/03/18	14,830,151

DELAYS AFFECTING TRAINS IN GREAT BRITAIN

01/04/18 - 31/03/19	16,743,884
01/04/19 - 31/03/20	16,952,755
01/04/20 - 31/03/21	6,745,965
01/04/21 - 31/03/22	10,486,810
01/04/22 - 31/03/23	13,734,944
01/04/23 - 31/03/24	15,499,548

Note:

Delay minutes affecting all passenger operators, excluding private or charter operators.

Includes all delay minutes which are allocated to incidents which are attributed a reason and a responsible owner.

■ Railways: Tickets

Josh Babarinde: [\[13592\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she plans to take steps through Great British Railways, once the network is nationalised, to reduce the role of commission-charging railway ticketing websites.

Mike Kane:

We have no plans to reduce the role of independent retailers once rail operators are brought into public ownership.

Independent retailers add significant value to the marketplace in driving innovation and the Government wants to see them continuing to do so in the future.

■ Road Traffic Control: Complaints

Laurence Turner: [\[14413\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her Department holds information on the number of objections made to Traffic Regulation Orders.

Lilian Greenwood:

I can confirm the Department holds information on the number of objections made to Traffic Regulations Orders and is able to supply it in respect of any defined time period in the last 5 years.

■ Road Traffic Offences**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:** [\[13782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of strengthening legal penalties for motorists at fault in hit-and-run incidents.

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.

■ Roads: Safety**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:** [\[13780\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to improve road safety for (a) cyclists and (b) pedestrians.

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.

■ Shadow Great British Railways: Public Appointments**Alex Mayer:** [\[13905\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what her Department's planned timetable is for appointing the CEO of Shadow Great British Railways.

Mike Kane:

Laura Shoaf has been appointed as Chair of Shadow Great British Railways. In this role she convenes the leaders of Network Rail, DfT's Operator of Last Resort and DfT's Rail Services Group who maintain their existing accountabilities.

As Shadow Great British Railways is not an organisation in its own right, there are no plans to appoint a CEO.

■ UK Shipping Office for Reducing Emissions: Finance**Melanie Onn:** [\[13495\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of UK SHORE funding; and what is the status of the future of that funding.

Mike Kane:

The UK SHORE programme has funded over 150 projects and has leveraged over £100m private investment, supporting all levels of research and development including feasibility studies, trials and demonstrations in a commercial environment. The funding is benefitting all 12 regions in the UK, supporting over 350 organisations, including over 200 SMEs.

All projects are detailed on Innovate UK's [website](#) and we are conducting an independent evaluation assessment of the programme which is measuring its impact and helping us shape future support as well as policy.

Following the Autumn Budget on 30 October 2024, DfT now has its budget for the next Financial Year (2025 / 2026). We are waiting for the internal business planning process to conclude before we can confirm what that means in terms of funding for individual programmes.

TREASURY

■ Agriculture: Inheritance Tax

Gareth Davies:

[\[13620\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to page 41 of her Department's document entitled Autumn Budget 2024, Policy Costings, published on 30 October 2024, what the evidential basis is for the Exchequer impact of changes to agricultural property relief and business property relief being £495 million in 2027-28; and what the split is between the two reliefs.

James Murray:

The costing methodology for reforming agricultural property relief and business property relief from 6 April 2026 by maintaining 100% relief for the first £1m of combined assets and 50% relief thereafter, and 50% relief for "not listed" shares on the markets of a recognised stock exchange is published in the Autumn Budget 2024 Policy Costing Document on page 41:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6721d2c54da1c0d41942a8d2/Policy_Costing_Document_-_Autumn_Budget_2024.pdf.

Gareth Davies:

[\[13621\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 2.51 of the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 October, whether (a) non-residential agricultural buildings, (b) farm vehicles, (c) farm tools, (d) livestock and (e) chemicals and fertiliser stock are included in the valuation of an estate and its assets.

James Murray:

I can confirm that (a) non-residential agricultural buildings, (b) farm vehicles, (c) farm tools, (d) livestock and (e) chemicals and fertiliser stock are all included in the valuation of the agricultural and business assets of an estate.

Victoria Atkins:

[\[14313\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 11 November 2024 to Question 12741 on Business: Inheritance Tax, how many and what proportion of the estates that claimed both agricultural property relief and business property relief (a) were family farms and (b) would have paid inheritance tax under the changes made at the Autumn Budget 2024.

James Murray:

When estates include a claim for both APR and BPR, the estate may not consist entirely of a farming business and its working capital. HMRC estimates that of the population of estates that claimed both APR and BPR in 2021-22, almost a quarter included a BPR claim for shares on the Alternative Investment Market (AIM). It is likely that those particular assets contained within those estates represent, at least in part, investment portfolios set up in order to minimise inheritance tax liabilities, rather than being comprised solely of farming businesses. It is also possible that any claim for BPR is for a business unconnected to any farming activities.

More information is available in the Chancellor's recent letter to the Chair of the Treasury Select Committee:

<https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/45691/documents/226235/default/>.

Victoria Atkins:**[14314]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 11 November 2024 to Question 12741 on Business: Inheritance Tax, what the combined value of assets qualifying for relief was in the estates that claimed both agricultural property relief and business property relief.

James Murray:

In 2021-22, the total combined value of agricultural and business property relief (APR, BPR) from those estates that claimed both reliefs was £1.6 billion.

When estates include a claim for both APR and BPR, the estate may not consist entirely of a farming business and its working capital. HMRC estimates that of the population of estates that claimed both APR and BPR in 2021-22, almost a quarter included a BPR claim for shares on the Alternative Investment Market (AIM). It is likely that those particular assets contained within those estates represent, at least in part, investment portfolios set up in order to minimise inheritance tax liabilities, rather than being comprised solely of farming businesses. It is also possible that any claim for BPR is for a business unconnected to any farming activities.

More information is available in the Chancellor's recent letter to the Chair of the Treasury Select Committee:

<https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/45691/documents/226235/default/>.

Victoria Atkins:**[14315]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 11 November 2024 to Question 12741 on Business: Inheritance Tax, how many and what proportion of the estates that claimed both agricultural property relief and business property relief were (a) working farms and (b) other claimants.

James Murray:

When estates include a claim for both APR and BPR, the estate may not consist entirely of a farming business and its working capital. HMRC estimates that of the population of estates that claimed both APR and BPR in 2021-22, almost a quarter included a BPR claim for shares on the Alternative Investment Market (AIM). It is

likely that those particular assets contained within those estates represent, at least in part, investment portfolios set up in order to minimise inheritance tax liabilities, rather than being comprised solely of farming businesses. It is also possible that any claim for BPR is for a business unconnected to any farming activities.

■ Banking Hubs

Lewis Cocking:

[\[13514\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps her Department plans to take to support the establishment of Banking Hubs in town centres that no longer have any bank branches.

Tulip Siddiq:

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

The specific location of these hubs is determined independently by LINK, the operator of the UK's largest ATM network. LINK considers certain criteria, such as whether another bank branch remains nearby, the local population, the number of cash-accepting businesses and the financial vulnerability of the community. An assessment of a community's cash access needs can be requested on LINK's website.

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

■ Budget October 2024

Esther McVey:

[\[13424\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what businesses have made representations to her about the Autumn Budget 2024.

Tulip Siddiq:

Ahead of the Autumn Budget, the Treasury received 633 written representations from stakeholders. Ministers and officials also met with a broad range of businesses and representative bodies. This includes meetings that the Chancellor and Financial Secretary had with Heads of the Federation of Small Businesses, Confederation of British Industry, Institute of Directors, British Chambers of Commerce and Make UK.

■ Development Aid

Chris Law:

[\[13499\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she take steps to increase Official Development Assistance above 0.5% of gross national income.

Darren Jones:

The government has set departmental budgets for 2024-25 and 2025-26 to enable the UK to spend 0.5% of GNI on ODA in calendar years 2024 and 2025. On current forecasts, this will mean spending £13.7bn on ODA in 2024. The government remains committed to restoring ODA spending to 0.7% of GNI as soon as fiscal circumstances allow. As set out at Budget, the OBR's latest forecast shows that the ODA fiscal tests are not due to be met within the Parliament. The government will continue to monitor future forecasts closely, and each year will review and confirm whether a return to spending 0.7% GNI on ODA is possible against the latest fiscal forecast. These plans strike an appropriate balance between fiscal responsibility at home and our responsibility to support the most vulnerable, and ensure that the UK remains one of the most generous global donors of development assistance, using ODA resources to save lives whilst tackling key global challenges such as climate change, conflict, and epidemics.

■ Employers' Contributions: Charities

Dan Carden:

[\[14321\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of exempting charities from the increase to employer National Insurance contributions.

James Murray:

The Government recognises the important role charities play in our society, and has made it a priority to reset the relationship with civil society by developing a Civil Society Covenant.

To repair the 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 recognises the need to protect the smallest businesses and charities, which is why we have more than doubled the Employment Allowance to £10,500, meaning more than half of employers with NICs liabilities either gain or see no change next year. Charities will still be able to claim employer NICs reliefs including those for under 21s and under 25 apprentices, where eligible.

More broadly, within the tax system, we provide support to charities through a range of reliefs and exemptions, including reliefs for charitable giving, with more than £6 billion in charitable reliefs provided to charities, CASCs and their donors in 2023 to 2024.

■ Employers' Contributions: Prisons and Probation

Liz Saville Roberts:

[\[14317\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate she has made of the total value of increased employer national insurance contributions from outsourced private suppliers within the prison and probation service for the next 12 months.

James Murray:

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

A Tax Information and Impact Note that covers the employer NICs changes was published by HMRC on 13 November.

■ Employers' Contributions: Small Businesses

David Reed:

[\[13652\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 2.40 of the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 October, whether she has made an assessment of the long-term impact of national insurance increases on the ability of SMEs to invest in (a) growth, (b) innovation and (c) job creation.

James Murray:

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.

A Tax Information and Impact Note regarding these changes was published by HMRC on 13 November.

■ Housing: Insurance

Graeme Downie:

[\[13672\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will take steps to ensure an effective housing insurance market.

Tulip Siddiq:

The UK's home insurance market is competitive, with many providers offering a wide variety of insurance products to suit the needs of customers. The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), the independent regulator of financial services, has a statutory objective to promote competition in the interests of consumers.

FCA rules require firms to offer products that deliver fair value to consumers (i.e. if the price a consumer pays for a product or service is reasonable compared to the overall benefits they can expect to receive). The FCA monitors firms to ensure they comply with its rules and has powers to take action if necessary.

■ Money

Tim Roca: [\[13721\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what her policy is on (a) access to cash, (b) businesses being required to use cash and (c) helping vulnerable people reliant on cash infrastructure adapt to a cashless society.

Tulip Siddiq:

The Government recognises that cash continues to be used by millions of people across the UK, including those who may be in vulnerable groups. The Financial Conduct Authority has recently assumed regulatory responsibility for protecting access to cash, and its new rules went live on 18 September. The rules require the UK's largest banks and building societies to assess the impact of a closure of a relevant cash withdrawal or deposit facility and put in place a new service if necessary.

It is for each business to decide on the forms of payment it chooses to accept, based on a variety of factors, including cost and customer preferences. Research published by the Financial Conduct Authority found that 98 per cent of small businesses surveyed would never turn customers away if they needed to pay in cash. The new rules by the Financial Conduct Authority will also support businesses to accept cash by ensuring they have reasonable access to deposit facilities.

The Government also recognises that promoting digital inclusion is essential to building the skills and confidence people need to participate in a modern digital economy and the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, as the lead department, is considering barriers to this.

■ National Income

Rupert Lowe: [\[13562\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the reasons for which GDP per capita has fallen since 2022.

Tulip Siddiq:

The UK economy has flatlined in recent years and GDP per capita remains lower than pre-pandemic levels. Consistently low productivity (GDP per hour) growth since 2010 has been the key driver behind the UK's weaker economic performance over that period. This has undermined living standards and contributed to the challenging fiscal position.

At the recent Budget, the Chancellor set out plans to address this challenge, and deliver on the mission to grow the economy, by restoring economic stability and increasing investment. This is part of the government's commitment to deliver a

decade of national renewal by fixing the foundations of the economy and rebuilding Britain, making every part of the country better off.

■ Private Rented Housing: Energy Performance Certificates

Tom Hayes: [\[13679\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make it her policy to allow improvements made to increase the energy performance rating of rental properties to be tax deductible against rental income.

James Murray:

The Government currently offers several schemes to support landlords and tenants in improving energy efficiency, including VAT relief on Energy-Saving Materials (ESMs), the Boiler Upgrade Scheme (BUS) and the Home Upgrade Grant (HUG).

Repair or maintenance work which also improves the energy efficiency of a rented property is generally already a deductible expense.

■ Revenue and Customs: ICT

Brian Leishman: [\[13581\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the policy paper entitled Capital Gains Tax—rates of tax, published by HMRC on 6 November 2024, if she will publish a breakdown of the £600,000 required to make changes to IT systems.

James Murray:

HMRC do not provide detailed costs related to policy changes. The costs given represent a high level cost estimate for the changes required to HMRC IT systems to deliver this policy change which follow a recognised standard methodology.

■ Small Businesses: Innovation

David Reed: [\[13653\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what fiscal steps she is taking to encourage (a) innovation and (b) entrepreneurship among SMEs.

James Murray:

Small businesses and entrepreneurs are vital to high streets and communities, and essential to the success of the Government's growth mission.

At the Budget, the Government announced we would be continuing funding for key business support programmes in 2025-26: Growth Hubs in England, and the Help to Grow: Management programme. We also announced we are extending Made Smarter Innovation with up to £37m funding. Funding for the Made Smarter Adoption programme will double to £16 million in 2025-26, supporting more small manufacturing businesses to adopt advanced digital technologies and enabling the programme to be expanded to all nine English regions.

Prior to the Budget, the Government also extended the Enterprise Investment Scheme and Venture Capital Trust schemes to 2035. The schemes are designed to

encourage investment into new or young companies through tax-relief incentives, encouraging innovation, creating jobs and stimulating economic growth.

■ Stamp Duty Land Tax

Tom Hayes:

[13687]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will bring forward legislative proposals to amend Stamp Duty so that rates of duty depend on the energy performance of the property.

James Murray:

Stamp Duty Land Tax (SDLT) is a transaction tax paid on the purchase of a property or land in England and Northern Ireland. The level at which purchasers of residential property start paying Stamp Duty Land Tax (SDLT) is currently £250,000 and this is due to revert to £125,000 on 1 April 2025. For first-time buyers, the nil-rate band is currently £425,000 and the purchase price limit for accessing the relief is currently £625,000. On 1 April 2025, these rates will revert to £300,000 and £500,000 respectively. Introducing incentives based on the energy performance of properties would add significant complexity to the operation of the current system. The Government therefore has no plans to introduce incentives based on the energy performance of properties.

The Government keeps all taxes under review as part of the usual tax policy making process and welcomes representations to help inform future decisions on tax policy. Any changes are generally announced at fiscal events, where decisions are taken in the round.

■ Tobacco: Counterfeit Manufacturing

Sir John Hayes:

[13398]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate her Department has made of the value of the counterfeit cigarette market.

James Murray:

HMRC estimated that the illicit tobacco market cost £2.2bn in lost excise duty and VAT for the year 2022/23. Cigarettes account for £0.7bn of this amount. We do not have an estimate relating to specifically counterfeit cigarettes. Further details can be found in the [Measuring Tax Gaps 2024](#) publication.

■ Treasury: Industrial Disputes

Nick Timothy:

[13625]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what industrial disputes are ongoing within (a) her Department, (b) HMRC, (c) the Valuation Office Agency and (d) each of the other arm's length bodies connected to her Department; how many (i) staff and (ii) contractors are involved in each dispute; what the form of industrial action is in each dispute; which recognised trade union is involved in each dispute; what the substantive matter is that is being disputed in each case; and what steps she plans to take to end each dispute.

Darren Jones:

(a) No recognised trade union currently holds a mandate to call industrial action in **HM Treasury**.

(b) PCS are in a formal trade dispute with **HMRC** and have issued a formal notice of their intention to ballot 238 members in the Benton Park View Office in Newcastle.

How many (i) staff and (ii) contractors are involved in each dispute;

238 AA and AO Grade PCS members will be balloted for strike action. The ballot opens 18 November and closes at noon 9 December. No contractors are involved in the dispute.

What the form of industrial action is in each dispute;

Members are being balloted for strike action

Which recognised trade union is involved in each dispute;

PCS

What the substantive matter is that is being disputed in each case; and what steps to be taken to end each dispute:

The dispute relates to the dismissal of 3 trade union representatives from Benton Park View office and PCS's request for reinstatement of those dismissed. HMRC's established guidance and procedures for dealing with issues of misconduct have been followed in relation to these cases and HMRC has held colleagues to the same standards of conduct we expect from all HMRC employees. There are specific formal and legal routes for the dismissed employees to seek redress if they believe that their employment rights have been infringed. All three cases have ongoing Employment Tribunal claims.

(c) **VOA** - no industrial disputes to report

(d) In relation to HM Treasury **arm's length bodies** please see below responses:

UK Debt Management Office – no industrial disputes to report

National Infrastructure Commission– no industrial disputes to report

UK Government Investments - no industrial disputes to report

Office for Budget Responsibility - no industrial disputes to report

Government Internal Audit Agency - no industrial disputes to report

WALES■ **Wales Office: Buildings****Sir Ashley Fox:**[\[13970\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to the Answer of 22 October 2024 to Question 9283 on Wales Office: Buildings, what the average number of staff was that

attended her Department's headquarters in the most recent working period for which figures are available.

Dame Nia Griffith:

The average number of staff attending the Department's HQ building in the most recent working period for which figures are available is 62%.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Access to Work Programme

Laurence Turner:

[\[14412\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 4 September 2024 to Question 3558 on Access to Work Programme, whether applicants who have been assigned a Case Manager can correspond with that Case Manager in writing.

Alison McGovern:

Applicants can correspond with their allocated Access to Work case manager in writing via email once it has been established that communication by email is required as a reasonable adjustment due to the applicant's disability or health condition.

■ Child Maintenance Service: Standards

Ian Sollom:

[\[13952\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to increase the percentage of applications cleared by the Child Maintenance Service within six weeks.

Andrew Western:

In the year to June 2024 there were 138,000 new applications to the Child Maintenance Service, an increase of 10% since June 2023.

The Department's most recently published statistics show that 76% of applications received were cleared within 6 weeks (up to the quarter ending March 2024).

The Department publishes quarterly statistics for the [Child Maintenance Service](#). Please see tables 1 and 2 of the [national tables](#) for more information on applications.

Additional resources have been deployed to process new applications in order to meet increased customer demand. Service Modernisation improvements have been made to processes and systems to increase automation and allow both receiving and paying parents to manage their application online. This allows us to serve them faster as well as freeing up resources to help customers who need greater support.

Ian Sollom:

[13954]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has made an assessment of the adequacy of the performance of the Child Maintenance Service since the reforms announced in February 2024.

Andrew Western:

On the 26 February 2024, regulations came into place to remove the £20 Child Maintenance Service application fee as part of the Government's response to help with the cost-of-living increase.

This has resulted in an increase in applications in the quarter to March and June 2024. In the quarter ending June 2024 there were 39,000 new applications, an increase of 6,400 applications compared with the quarter to June 2023.

The Department publishes quarterly statistics for the [Child Maintenance Service](#). Please refer to table 1 and 2 of the national tables for data on applications and intake [national-tables-child-maintenance-service-to-june-2024.ods](#)

Additionally, the DWP was given the legal power to write off low level debt under £7.00 (£6.99 and less), where a Direct Pay and Collect and Pay case has closed, there is no ongoing liability, and no payment has been received in the previous 90 days.

Since the reform was introduced, the DWP has written off low level debt which was not cost effective for the service to chase. Therefore, this has protected the cost to the public.

The DWP is still committed to gathering debt and has recently consulted on new measures to improve enforcement. The results of this consultation will be published in due course.

■ Children: Maintenance

Ian Sollom:

[13951]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what data her Department holds on the number of parents who did not receive their child maintenance payments on time in the last 12 months.

Andrew Western:

The Child Maintenance Service does not hold data on the timeliness of payments; however, we do hold data on the number of Child Maintenance arrangements on the statutory scheme and the collection of maintenance.

The Department publishes the quarterly statistics for the [Child Maintenance Service](#). Please refer to tables 4 and 5 of the National Tables for data on child maintenance arrangements and collection: [national-tables-child-maintenance-service-to-june-2024.ods](#)

The Department 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.

■ Pension Credit

Jim Shannon:

[13456]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an estimate of the number of pension credit claims received between January and November (a) 2024 and (b) 2023.

Emma Reynolds:

In 2024 we have received approx. 206,000 claims up to and including week commencing 16 Sept 2024, this figure includes data published by the Department on the 27 of Sept 2024. The Department has announced it will publish updated Pension Credit application and award statistics on 28 November 2024. Releases will be quarterly, including Pension Credit application, clearance, and award/non-award volumes data from 1 April 2024, up to the most recent data available before each publication. The previous publication can be found here: [Weekly Pension Credit claims received from 1 April 2024 to 22 September 2024 - GOV.UK](#)

In 2023 for the same period, we received 201,000 claims, with an additional 22,000 claims made after this period and up to the end of October 2023.

Please Note:

- The figures presented have been collected for internal departmental use only and have not been quality assured to the same extent as Official Statistics
- Intakes have been rounded to the nearest 1000
- Data for 2023 is from two different sources, data from Jan 23 to end of March 23 and data from Apr 23 onwards
- Methodology changes for intakes from 03.04.2023, impacting quality of data for 2023

■ Pension Credit: Expenditure

Helen Whately:

[14310]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 3 September 2024 to Question 4038 on Pension Credit: Expenditure, what estimate she has made of the additional cost to the public purse of the associated allowances for Pension Credit if all people eligible for claiming it did.

Emma Reynolds:

No estimate has been made by the department as the requested information is not available. We are unable to quantify the value of all passported benefits.

■ Personal Independence Payment: Patients

Ruth Cadbury: [\[13504\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of financial support available to individuals in hospital whose personal independence payments are paused.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Where an adult age 18 or over is maintained free of charge while undergoing medical or other treatment as an in-patient in a hospital or similar institution funded by the NHS, payment of (but not entitlement to) Personal Independence Payment (PIP) ceases after 28 days. This is on the basis that the NHS is responsible for not only the person's medical care but also the entirety of their disability-related extra costs and to pay PIP in addition would be a duplication of public funds intended for the same purpose. Once someone is discharged from hospital, payment of PIP recommences from the date of discharge.

Entitlement and payment of the standard allowance of Universal Credit will not change if a customer goes into hospital for treatment and/ or care, regardless of the duration of the stay. If the customer has been found to have limited capacity for work or work-related activity, this element will continue to be paid alongside the Universal Credit standard allowance.

■ State Retirement Pensions: National Insurance Contributions

Graeme Downie: [\[13869\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she has taken to support people with insufficient national insurance (a) contributions and (b) credits to qualify for the new State Pension.

Emma Reynolds:

To qualify for any payments of the new State Pension, people usually need at least 10 qualifying years of National Insurance contributions or National Insurance credits when they reach State Pension age. The contributions could be as a result of employment, self-employment or people could make voluntary National Insurance Contributions. There is also a wide range of National Insurance credits available, ensuring people can achieve the best possible State Pension outcome. In some circumstances, years built while living in countries with a reciprocal arrangement can be taken into account.

The Government makes personalised information available through the online Check Your State Pension Forecast service, which includes details about an individual's National Insurance record and their State Pension eligibility.

The Government also provides support to older people on low incomes. Pension Credit provides a safety net for those most in need and is not based on National Insurance contributions. Pension Credit is a means tested benefit which targets help at the poorest pensioners and is a passport to other financial support including the

Winter Fuel Payment, help with housing costs, council tax, heating bills and a free TV licence for those over 75.

■ State Retirement Pensions: Women

John McDonnell:

[\[14001\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has made an assessment of the potential implications for her policies of changes to Civil Procedure Rules on alternative dispute resolution; and if she will have discussions with CEDAWinLAW on mediation.

Emma Reynolds:

The Civil Procedure rules are a matter for the Ministry of Justice. MOJ is working to increase the number of legal disputes resolved without the need for a judicial decision. They will monitor the impact of the changes and will continue engaging with stakeholders as they keep all methods of alternative dispute resolution under review to explore opportunities to increase take up both before and after legal proceedings have started. The Secretary of State has not made an assessment of them.

With reference to CEDAWinLaw, in the Judicial Review on changes to State Pension age, both the High Court and Court of Appeal found there was no discrimination on any grounds.

There is no subsisting legal dispute, so it would not be appropriate for the Secretary of State to enter into mediation with this group.

David Smith:

[\[14420\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department has made an estimate of the number of women born in the 1950s affected by State Pension age changes in (a) North Northumberland constituency and (b) Northumberland.

Emma Reynolds:

ONS population estimates suggest that in 2021 there were approximately 7,630 females born in the 1950s currently resident in the North Northumberland constituency, and 23,639 females currently resident in Northumberland.

■ Workplace Pensions

Neil Duncan-Jordan:

[\[14261\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many workers are included in auto enrolled pensions.

Emma Reynolds:

Automatic enrolment has succeeded in transforming pension saving with over 11 million employees having been automatically enrolled into a workplace pension since 2012. These statistics are available from The Pensions Regulator and are updated on a monthly basis in their [Automatic enrolment declaration of compliance report](#).

The department's regular publication of data, including the [Workplace Pension Participation and Savings Trends](#), is available on GOV.UK. This publication includes a wide range of data on pension participation. Overall, 80% (22.3m) of employees in Great Britain are benefiting from participating in a workplace pension as of 2023. Considering only employees eligible for automatic enrolment, 88% (20.7m) of employees are participating.

Neil Duncan-Jordan:

[14262]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the average pension paid for members of auto enrolled schemes is.

Emma Reynolds:

The data requested for the average pension paid to members of automatic enrolment schemes is not available.

The department publishes the [Pensioners' Income Series](#). This provides estimates on the level and source of pensioners' incomes, including income from occupational pensions (this is a wider definition than automatic enrolment schemes).

In the 2022/23 financial year, 62% of pensioner benefit units were in receipt of occupational pension income. Of the pensioner benefit units receiving this income, the median amount received was £210 per week and the mean amount received was £314 per week, with 6% of pensioner benefit units receiving £900 or more per week.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ 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.

HOME OFFICE

■ Police Reform

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Yvette Cooper): [\[HCWS232\]](#)

This Government has set out its Safer Streets Mission, which is committed to reducing violence against women and girls and knife crime and restoring confidence in our police service. A key part of this Mission will see Government taking a more active leadership role on policing and crime.

Our police officers and staff perform an invaluable public service. They provide the safety and security on which everything else depends. Our brave police are emphatic about the importance of preventing crime and disorder and every day seek to deliver impartial policing that the public can trust. At its best, policing in England and Wales is truly world class.

However, confidence in policing has fallen in recent years. Visible neighbourhood policing has been decimated. At the same time, crime has become more complex, and policing lacks the systems and technology to respond. Police, and the public they serve, need a system that is fit for purpose and fit for the future.

If we want our Mission to succeed, we need to reform policing to ensure it can operate effectively and efficiently. We must look at changes to the system which can be delivered

as a priority, preserving those vital elements of policing by consent and operational independence, so that we can begin to support forces in improving the service they provide for the public.

I outline some of the core components of our long-term plans for necessary and overdue reforms below. However, this will be a joint programme of work between Government and policing in recognition that the challenge of rebuilding confidence is a shared one and we will work closely with policing over the coming months to develop the detail of these proposals. I am grateful for the support and enthusiasm from policing system leaders on this important work to date and look forward to driving it forward together. Working closely, and in partnership with, policing, we intend to publish a Police Reform White Paper next year, outlining our plans for bold and comprehensive reforms to the policing system.

Our new Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee will include, amongst other things, the restoration of patrols to town centres, the delivery of thousands of additional policing personnel into neighbourhood policing roles and the assurance that every community has a named officer to turn to.

Halving knife crime and violence against women and girls requires effective cross-system working. Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) and Mayors in different corners of the country have driven important local work on crime prevention, which the Home Office must take a more active role in supporting. In terms of preventing crime, we are driving new action from curbing knife sales to tackling mobile phone theft, but we need to go much further both locally and nationally for the Mission to be met.

To drive up performance and standards and ensure communities can have confidence in their local police force, a new Performance Unit will be established in the Home Office. The Unit will harness national data to monitor performance and direct improvements, underpinned by a performance framework developed with the College of Policing, policing inspectorate (HMICFRS), National Police Chiefs' Council and PCCs.

We are determined to work with policing to consult on the creation of a new National Centre of Policing to bring together crucial support services, such as IT and forensics, that local police forces can draw upon, to raise standards and improve efficiency. Looking further ahead, and having heard representations from policing, we will explore additional opportunities to expand the remit of this new body, including around those operational responsibilities where effective coordination is critical for success.

The 2025-26 police funding settlement for police forces, including full details on government grant funding and precept, will be set out to Parliament in the normal way before Christmas. But as part of that settlement, I am confirming today that direct central government funding for policing next year will increase by over half a billion pounds. This includes an increase of over £260m in the core grant for police forces, and additional funding for neighbourhood policing and counter terrorism. The Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government will confirm the details on the precept limit in a policy statement later this month.

Next steps

Police leaders support the need for reform and the Government is committed to working with them to bring the change needed to reconnect policing with the communities they serve. These key areas for reform are pivotal if we are to deliver effective and efficient policing. Collaboration will be key, and the Home Office will continue to engage across Government and with the sector in developing this ambitious reform programme. We will present our White Paper to Parliament next year ahead of legislation in due course.

We have a unique opportunity ahead of us to shape and implement the changes policing needs to deliver our priorities and keep the public safe. I look forward to working with policing on this ambitious programme of reform.