



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 20 November 2024 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:27 P.M., 20 November 2024). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

Questions marked thus **[R]** indicate that a relevant interest has been declared.

Questions with identification numbers of **900000 or greater** indicate that the question was originally tabled as an oral question and has since been unstarred.

ANSWERS

ATTORNEY GENERAL

■ **Insolvency: Assets**

Torsten Bell:

[\[13792\]](#)

To ask the Solicitor General, pursuant to the Answer of 25 October to Question 9653 on Insolvency: Assets, in addition to the registered freehold titles that the Bona Vacantia Division is dealing with, how many registered freehold titles are vested in the Crown following dissolution of companies via (a) striking off by the Registrar of Companies and (b) formal liquidation.

Sarah Sackman:

The Bona Vacantia Division (“the Division”) of the Government Legal Department acts on behalf of the Treasury Solicitor (the Crown’s Nominee for bona vacantia).

The Division is not automatically informed of the assets of a company on dissolution and the Division only becomes aware of vesting with a referral from an interested party.

The Division is currently dealing with 372 registered freehold titles which appear to have vested as bona vacantia following dissolution via striking off by the Registrar of Companies or formal liquidation (this is the figure as of 15 November 2024, compared to the figure of 380 as of 17 October 2024). As regards leasehold titles, the Division is currently dealing with 66 registered leasehold titles.

At any one time the Division will also be dealing with a number of cases where the land is either unregistered or where the nature of the interest in the land referred to the Division requires clarification. The Division is currently dealing with 76 such cases.

BUSINESS AND TRADE

■ **Beer: Lincolnshire**

Sir John Hayes:

[\[13732\]](#)

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

Gareth Thomas:

Independent brewers, including those in Lincolnshire, are at the heart of many of our communities and important for economic growth.

The government is reducing alcohol duty on qualifying draught products, representing an overall reduction in duty bills of over £85m a year and will consult on ways to encourage small brewers to retain and expand their access to UK pubs, maximising drinkers’ choice and local economies.

This Government will be publishing our Small Business Strategy next year. This will set out our vision for all small businesses, from boosting scale-ups to growing the co-operative economy.

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

■ Companies

Rupert Lowe: [\[14543\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how many companies were (a) registered and (b) liquidated on each day in 2024.

Justin Madders:

Official statistics on company incorporation and liquidation are published quarterly. These are made publicly available online by Companies House. We have excerpted and reproduced the relevant figures for your convenience below:

DATE	INCORPORATIONS	TOTAL LIQUIDATIONS
2024 Jan-Mar	244,717	7,622
2024 Apr-Jun	217,815	9,115
2024 Jul-Sep	191,683	8,658

The most recent complete datasets can be found here:

[Incorporated companies in the UK July to September 2024 - GOV.UK](#)

Statistics for previous periods are available [here](#).

■ Conditions of Employment: Insolvency

Dr Simon Opher: [\[14404\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make it his policy to strengthen employee rights for those who were employed by an employer that has become insolvent.

Justin Madders:

When an employer enters insolvency, the Government's Redundancy Payments Service (RPS) can pay statutory amounts owed to employees from the National Insurance Fund. These include redundancy pay, holiday pay, arrears of pay, compensatory notice pay and pension contributions.

In 2023-24 RPS paid out more than £490 million in redundancy and related payments, with claims processed in an average of 10 days.

It is important to ensure that employees are not left in vulnerable situations where their employer has become insolvent. It is also important to ensure that the framework provides good value for taxpayers.

■ Export Controls: Annual Reports

Liam Byrne: [14447]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, when he plans to publish the UK Strategic Export Controls Annual Report 2023.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

The UK Strategic Export Controls Annual Report 2023 is due to be published by the end of this year. It will be laid before Parliament and made available on Gov.uk at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/united-kingdom-strategic-export-controls-annual-report>.

■ Foreign Investment in UK: Lincolnshire

Sir John Hayes: [13733]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment he has made of the economic impact of foreign direct investment projects in Lincolnshire in the last five years.

Sarah Jones:

The Department for Business and Trade (DBT) looks to encourage investment across the UK, working closely with relevant economic development and inward investment officers across the whole of the Lincolnshire region.

Investment into the region has seen 1,295 new jobs were created in the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) area in 2021-22, 1,159 in 2022-23 and 198 in 2023-24. Statistics at LEP level are not available for previous years.

The estimated economic impact of FDI in the UK in 2023-24 was £5.8bn and analysis shows that FDI has a net economic benefit to the whole of the UK.

■ Office for the Pay Review Bodies

Alex Burghart: [13801]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the letter of 30 September 2024 from the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster letter to the Senior Salaries Review Body, when the Office for Pay Review Bodies was set up.

Justin Madders:

The Office of Manpower Economics was set up in 1971. Its name was changed to the Office for the Pay Review Bodies on 1 October 2024, to reflect better the role of the organisation.

■ Trade

Clive Jones: [13884]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, pursuant to his Answer on 24 October 2024 to Question 8573 on Trade, if he will publish his trade strategy prior to the conclusion of trade negotiations.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

As recently outlined in the Chancellors budget, we intend to publish the Trade Strategy in the Spring.

Trade Agreements**Clive Jones:**[\[13917\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 28 October 2024 to Question 10718 on Trade Agreements, whether he plans to include labour rights protections in prospective trade agreements.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

The Government will protect our labour standards in new trade agreements. To date, we have secured chapters on labour in FTAs with Australia and New Zealand, and within CPTPP. The UK also has labour provisions in a range of other agreements. We will continue to work internationally to strengthen workers' rights and enhance labour standards globally.

Clive Jones:[\[13918\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 28 October 2024 to Question 10718 on Trade Agreements, what opportunities he plans to provide to parliamentarians to scrutinise proposed free trade agreements.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

As well as meeting our statutory obligations under CRaG, the Government will continue to provide additional information and time to support parliamentary scrutiny of FTAs. This includes running a call for evidence on proposed new negotiations, publishing negotiating objectives and publishing regular updates throughout negotiations. Following signature of a new FTA, the Government will publish the full treaty text along with an Impact Assessment and explanatory memorandum and allow a reasonable period of time for Parliament to consider the agreement before commencing the formal CRaG scrutiny period.

Trade Agreements: Gulf Cooperation Council**Clive Jones:**[\[13885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 11 November 2024 to Question 12540 on Trade Agreements: Gulf Cooperation Council, whether his Department has made an assessment of the extent to which the supply chains of Gulf Cooperation Council member states use forced labour.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

The UK remains committed to eradicating forced labour in global supply chains, in line with Sustainable Development Goal 8.7, and commitments made through the G7. No company should have forced labour in its supply chains.

Trade deals like the UK-GCC FTA will be aligned with the trade and industrial strategies. This Government is committed to working with international partners to ensure global supply chains are free from human and labour rights abuses.

■ Trade Agreements: Human Rights

Clive Jones: [\[13888\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make it his policy to include human rights clauses in trade agreements.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

The UK is a leading advocate for human rights around the world. This work takes place separately to negotiations on Free Trade Agreements.

While aspects of trade policy can provide the opportunity to address other issues in our bilateral relationships, Free Trade Agreements are not generally the most effective or targeted tool to advance human rights issues.

■ Trade Agreements: Parliamentary Scrutiny

Clive Jones: [\[13883\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 31 October 2024 on Question 11149 on Trade Agreements: Parliamentary Scrutiny, if he will announce his plans for scrutiny arrangements of trade deals prior to the conclusion of the negotiations of those deals.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

The Government will continue to fulfil commitments set out under the current scrutiny framework for free trade agreements (FTAs).

■ Whisky: India

Andrew Rosindell: [\[14026\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what progress he has made on (a) a free trade agreement and (b) reducing trade tariffs applicable to Scottish whiskey with India.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

At the G20 on 18 November, the Prime Minister met Prime Minister Modi to announce that the UK will relaunch trade talks in the new year with India – one of the fastest growing economies in the world.

Work is underway across government to prepare for negotiations. Our trade programme, including negotiations with India, is driven by stakeholder engagement, including with the Scotch Whisky Association.

CABINET OFFICE**■ Committee on the Grant of Honours, Decorations and Medals****Mr Richard Holden:**[\[13824\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, when the Committee on the Grant of Honours, Decorations and Medals last met.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

The Committee on the Grant of Honours, Decorations and Medals (known as the HD Committee) which is the policy-making body for the honours system, last met on 19th November 2024.

■ House of Lords: Reform**Alex Burghart:**[\[13799\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, when he plans to bring forward legislative proposals to enact reforms to the House of Lords other than those set out in the House of Lords (Hereditary Peers) Bill.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

The Government's manifesto set out a number of commitments to reform of the House of Lords. The manifesto was clear that, as an immediate reform, it would introduce legislation to remove the right of hereditary peers to sit and vote in the House of Lords. The House of Lords (Hereditary Peers) Bill has now completed its passage through the House of Commons and had its first reading in the House of Lords on 13 November 2024.

This is the first step in reform of the House of Lords and it is right that the Government focuses on completing the passage of this Bill.

■ Public Sector: Logos**Mr Richard Holden:**[\[14068\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that public sector bodies use the King's cypher rather than Queen Elizabeth II's cypher.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

The Cabinet Office, in collaboration with the Royal Household and the College of Arms, has developed and issued guidance on the use of all state symbols, including the royal cypher.

This guidance is intended for use by the entire public sector.

■ Statistics: UK Relations with EU**Alex Burghart:**[\[13803\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Office for Statistics's press release entitled New partnership between statistical authorities of the UK and the

EU, published on 9 October 2024, what role Ministers had in approving this arrangement; and if he will publish the text of the agreement and any associated documentation.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

Article 730 of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) negotiated between the UK and EU in 2021 provides that 'Eurostat and the United Kingdom Statistics Authority may establish an arrangement that enables cooperation on relevant statistical matters'.

The 2024 Lievesley Review of the UK Statistics Authority included a recommendation to prioritise the establishment and signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with Eurostat in line with Article 730 of the TCA. The Government's response, led by then Minister Baroness Neville Rolfe, was to agree and stated that: 'The Cabinet Office supports these recommendations. Given the UKSA's international standing there should be a continued emphasis on their role as a thought leader among our international peers.'

Following the July election Cabinet Office Ministers have received progress reports on activity to deliver against this recommendation and welcome the new arrangements that are now in place.

The publication of the text is a matter for the Office for National Statistics, which operates independently as a Non Ministerial Department.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Charities: Political Activities

Nick Timothy:

[13998]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will have discussions with the Charity Commission on the (a) conflicts of interest and (b) reputational risks of the non-charitable arms of charities engaging in party political campaigning.

Stephanie Peacock:

Ministers and officials meet regularly with the Commission to discuss matters of mutual interest. Charities are permitted to establish or maintain close connections with non-charitable campaigning organisations to support their charitable purposes, provided this is in the charity's best interests.

The Charity Commission has published [guidance for charities with a connection to a non-charity](#) to help charity trustees carefully manage any risks related to conflicts of interest and protect the charity's reputation. Trustees have a legal duty to protect the charity's assets, reputation, and beneficiaries. Any link with a non-charity should not compromise the charity's independence or public image. Trustees must also be mindful of the potential risks to the charity's reputation, particularly regarding political partisanship.

If concerns arise that a charity may be acting in a politically partisan manner or outside its charitable objectives, the Charity Commission can investigate and take regulatory action as necessary.

■ **Gambling: Marketing**

Sir Iain Duncan Smith:

[\[13730\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make an assessment of the potential implications for her policies of Ipsos and the University of Bristol's report entitled Drivers of Gambling Marketing Restrictions – An International Comparison, published in November 2024.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Government is committed to strengthening protections to ensure that people can reduce the risks that can ensue from harmful gambling. We are committed to reviewing the best available evidence on the impact of gambling advertising from a wide range of sources in order to ensure there are robust protections in place to protect those at risk. The department has noted the report from Ipsos and the University of Bristol on marketing restrictions in international jurisdictions.

■ **Music Venues: VAT**

Steff Aquarone:

[\[14512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of cutting VAT for grassroots music venues.

Chris Bryant:

The Government response to the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee's report on grassroots music venues sets out our commitment to working across the music sector to support the sustainability of grassroots music. In particular, the Government is urging the live music industry to introduce a voluntary levy on tickets for stadium and arena shows, to help safeguard the future of the grassroots music sector. As part of our support for the sector, we are continuing to fund Arts Council England's successful Supporting Grassroots Music Fund which provides grants to grassroots music venues, recording studios, promoters and festivals of live and electronic music in England.

As set out in the Government response, we have no plans to introduce a cut to VAT based on venue capacity or to undertake a bespoke economic analysis of the impact of a VAT cut to 10% on tickets.

In July 2024 the Government published an audit of public spending. This set out £22 billion of in-year pressures. These pressures were not limited to 2024–25, with the vast majority recurring in future years.

The Government is now fixing the foundations by delivering economic and fiscal stability, supporting public services, boosting investment, and setting the public finances on a sustainable path. These are essential foundations for long-run economic growth, and require tough decisions on tax, spending and welfare.

■ Sports and Voluntary Work: Women

Samantha Niblett:

[\[14253\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what plans she to encourage more (a) women and (b) women of minority backgrounds into (i) sports coaching careers and (ii) voluntary roles.

Stephanie Peacock:

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

Coaches play an important role in facilitating sporting activity and acting as a source of encouragement for people to remain active. UK Sport's female Coaches Leadership Programme resulted in the number of women coaching in Olympic and Paralympic sport to double since 2020.

Sport England has also supported the voluntary sector by developing a vision for volunteering, which sets a clear and ambitious direction to increase the diversity of volunteers in sport and physical activity.

Karen Carney's 2023 review of women's football highlighted the lack of representation of individuals from diverse backgrounds throughout women's football both on and off the pitch. The Football Association released its 2024-28 strategy for Women and Girls' Football in October, which includes a commitment to increase the number of players and workforce from underrepresented communities within all roles in the game. We will continue to monitor progress here.

■ Swimming Pools: Closures

Rupert Lowe:

[\[13922\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, how many public pools closed in each of the last ten years.

Stephanie Peacock:

Since 2015, 279 swimming pools on sites owned by Local Authorities have closed. At the same time, 248 swimming pools have opened. Facilities may close for a number of reasons: this can include the rationalisation of multiple older facilities into a modern, better located facility.

The breakdown for closures per year is as follows:

- 2015: 40
- 2016: 36
- 2017: 31
- 2018: 23
- 2019: 31
- 2020: 40

- 2021: 27
- 2022: 27
- 2023: 20
- 2024 (as of end of August) : 4

DEFENCE

■ Antitank Missiles: Procurement

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[14021\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether stockpiles of NLAW armoury are being replenished.

Maria Eagle:

Yes. In December 2022, a contract was signed for several thousand Next Generation Light Anti-Tank Weapon (NLAW) systems to be delivered to the UK Armed Forces, and deliveries have commenced.

■ Armed Forces Compensation Scheme

Anna Dixon:

[\[14204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of making the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme available to all veterans.

Al Carns:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave her on 30 October 2024, to Question 10637.

Attachments:

1. Armed Forces Compensation Scheme [10637 - Armed Forces Compensation Scheme.docx]

■ Army: Recruitment

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[13750\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will take steps to streamline the recruitment for military personnel.

Luke Pollard:

The new Government is focused upon improving Armed Forces recruitment, modernising and refining our policies and processes to attract the best possible talent.

Recent policies have included a 35% pay increase for new recruits; one of the largest pay increases in the last 20 years for existing personnel; scrapping over 100 outdated medical policies; a commitment to create a new military direct-entry cyber pathway; and setting an ambition to make a conditional offer of employment to candidates within 10 days, and a provisional training start date within 30 days.

These activities and their impacts will inform the development of the Armed Forces Recruitment Programme which is being implemented to further improve the speed with which highly motivated and capable people can join our Armed Forces.

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[13751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many military personnel have (a) been recruited into the Armed Forces and (b) not passed basic training in each of the last 10 years.

Luke Pollard:

The new Government inherited a very challenging recruitment and retention position for all Services, and has made improving recruitment and readiness of our Armed Forces an early priority. The Defence Secretary has already made announcements to improve recruitment and further announcements will be made by the Ministry of Defence in due course.

The requested information is provided in the attached spreadsheet.

Attachments:

1. Armed Forces Personnel; Basic training not passed [13751 - Armed Forces Personnel - Basic Training not Passed.xlsx]

■ **Ministry of Defence Police: Labour Turnover and Recruitment**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[13752\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to increase recruitment and retention in the Ministry of Defence Police.

Al Carns:

Officer recruitment is dependent on a number of factors including operational need and changes in Defence priorities. As a result, our recruitment targets fluctuate throughout the year. Recruitment is kept under constant review and is driven by Defence requirements and takes account of the number of leavers and joiners at any given time.

There are currently recruitment and retention issues affecting policing nationally. To counteract this, we target our recruitment campaigns in locations facing the most acute recruitment challenges, and we use a variety of outreach methods to promote opportunities to join the Force, including social media; events; briefings; and our recruitment website.

■ **Ministry of Defence: Equality**

Sir John Hayes:

[\[13742\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost to the public purse was of staff diversity networks in his Department in each of the last five years.

Al Carns:

The Ministry of Defence does not routinely collate information on staff network costs and collating this information could only be done at disproportionate cost.

Information on spending and staffing can be found in the Department's annual report and accounts: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ministry-of-defence-annual-report-and-accounts-2023-to-2024>

■ Ministry of Defence: Recruitment

Andrew Rosindell: [\[13749\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department spent on external recruitment consultants in each of the last 5 years.

Maria Eagle:

Since entering Government, we have taken immediate action to stop all non-essential Ministry of Defence consultancy spending. The information requested specifically on external recruitment consultants is not held centrally.

■ USA: Veterans

Dr Andrew Murrison: [\[13743\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answers of 6 November to Questions 11571 and 11572 on USA: Veterans, how many Camp Lejeune veterans have applied through the War Pension Scheme.

Al Carns:

It is worth noting that the US compensation scheme was running for almost two years before the new MOD Ministerial team were informed. The information requested is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Dr Andrew Murrison: [\[13744\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answers of 6 November to Questions 11571 and 11572 on USA: Veterans, what epidemiological studies he plans to commission for (a) service personnel and (b) dependents who may have been contaminated while living at Camp Lejeune.

Al Carns:

We take the safety of our personnel very seriously and any veteran that may have served at Camp Lejeune during this period and believes that their health was affected can apply for compensation under the War Pension Scheme. It is worth noting that the US compensation scheme was running for almost two years before the new Ministry of Defence (MOD) Ministerial team were informed.

The MOD does not currently plan to commission epidemiological studies for Service personnel and dependants who may have been exposed to contaminated water while living at Camp Lejeune.

The MOD does not hold information on British personnel affected by water contamination at US Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune between 1953 and 1987; however, we are making every effort to ensure Serving personnel and veterans are aware of their rights moving forward. I continue to encourage anyone who was based

at Camp Lejeune between 1 August 1953 and 31 December 1987 to write to the MOD so that we may provide them with advice.

■ **Veterans: Radiation Exposure**

Andrew Bowie: [\[13450\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the review of the eligibility criteria for the Nuclear Test Medal was completed in time for Nuclear Test Veterans to receive their medal before Remembrance Day.

Al Carns:

The review of Nuclear Test Medal eligibility was conducted at pace. The expanded qualifying criteria were ratified by the Honours and Decorations Committee and approved by His Majesty The King on 6 November 2024. Those who directly supported the American atmospheric tests, which were conducted in the same time period as the independent UK atmospheric tests (1952 – 1967), are therefore now eligible for the first time.

I had the pleasure of presenting the first Nuclear Test Medal, using the expanded eligibility criteria, on Thursday, 7 November 2024, to Squadron Leader Peters, one of the RAF pilots who took part in Operation BAGPIPES. The Ministry of Defence has written to the relatives of two other former RAF personnel, now deceased, who participated in the American tests to advise that their applications have now been approved, and medals have been dispatched.

EDUCATION

■ **Childcare: Employers' Contributions**

Laura Trott: [\[14324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the impact of increasing employers National Insurance contributions on childcare costs for working parents.

Stephen Morgan:

I refer the right hon. Member for Sevenoaks to the answer of 11 November 2024 to Question [12804](#).

■ **Curriculum and Assessment Review**

Laura Trott: [\[14393\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what her planned timetable is for publishing the recommendations of the Curriculum and Assessment review.

Catherine McKinnell:

The timetable for the independent Curriculum and Assessment Review may be found in the terms of reference available here:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66d196b7d107658faec7e3db/Curricul>

[um and assessment review - aims terms of reference and working principles.pdf.](#)

■ Department for Education: Buildings

Sir Ashley Fox:

[13051]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 30 October 2024 to Question 9068 on Department for Education: Buildings, how many civil servants are assigned to work in her Department's headquarters in London; and how many individual desks are available in that office.

Janet Daby:

I refer the hon. Member for Bridgewater to the answer of 20 November 2024 to Question [9067](#).

■ Department for Education: Civil Servants

Sir Ashley Fox:

[9067]

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

Janet Daby:

The table below uses September's HR workforce data, and includes all staff.

SITE NAME	LOCATION	CAPACITY (DESK ONLY)	SEPTEMBER HR STAFF
			DATA
3 Glass Wharf (Bristol)	Bristol	122	351
Eastbrook House (Cambridge)	Cambridge	40	49
Cheylesmore House (Coventry)	Coventry	694	1089
Trafalgar House (Croydon)	Croydon	40	53
Bishopsgate House (Darlington)	Darlington	323	674
7/8 Wellington Place (Leeds)	Leeds	48	130
Sanctuary Buildings (London)	London - Sanctuary Buildings	940	2080
Piccadilly Gate (Manchester)	Manchester	480	1136

SITE NAME	LOCATION	CAPACITY (DESK ONLY)	SEPTEMBER HR STAFF DATA
Newcastle Civic Centre (Newcastle)	Newcastle	51	142
Unity Square (Nottingham)	Nottingham	120	365
St Paul's Place (Sheffield)	Sheffield	767	1447
Clarendon Road (Watford)	Watford	24	44
Total	14	3649	7560

■ Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023: Judicial Review

Laura Trott: [\[14323\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate she has made of the cost to the public purse of the judicial review of her decision to pause the implementation of the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act.

Janet Daby:

I refer the hon. Member for Sevenoaks to the answer of 18 November 2024 to Question [13264](#).

■ Home Education

Steve Darling: [\[13839\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps the Government is taking to ensure local authorities have the necessary (a) resources and (b) training to effectively safeguard children receiving elective home education.

Steve Darling: [\[13840\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to ensure families that opt for elective home education have access to adequate (a) resources and (b) guidance to support the educational needs of their children.

Steve Darling: [\[13841\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of recent trends in the number of families choosing elective home education for their children on (a) local authorities, (b) schools and (c) the wider educational system.

Steve Darling:

[\[13843\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to ensure children with special educational needs and disabilities that are educated at home receive appropriate support.

Stephen Morgan:

The department has collected termly data from local authorities concerning their cohorts of home-educated children since autumn 2022.

The most recent published data shows an estimated 92,000 children in home education in October 2023, a rise of around 12,000 from the previous year. The most common reasons for home education are religious, philosophical, mental health and dissatisfaction with schools. The department has used this data to analyse trends in the growth and motivations behind parents opting to home-educate. This analysis has helped to identify impacts on the school system and local authority resources. For instance, in relation to numbers of school attendance orders issued and types of support offered to home-educating families. It also enables the department to better understand the educational journeys of these children.

The government provides funding through the local government financial settlement, enabling local authorities to carry out their duties toward children not on a school roll. This includes overlap with children's social care teams, whose work includes those children not in school and their safeguarding.

The government's elective home education guidance contains information about safeguarding children, as well as the principles of a suitable education. This guidance should be read in conjunction with other documents such as 'Working together to safeguard children' and 'Keeping children safe in education'. The department's elective home education guidance is currently under review following a consultation and an updated version will be published in due course.

The department's guidance is clear that parents who choose to home-educate are responsible for the costs of doing so. When a child who is moved into home education has an education, health and care plan, it is the local authority's duty to ensure that the educational provision set out in that plan is provided to the child, unless the child's parents have arranged for them to receive a suitable education in some other way, in which the responsibility for the educational provision rests with the parents.

The government is committed to a system of registration of children who are not in school, including those who are home-educated. It intends to introduce this system as part of the Children's Wellbeing Bill, as announced in this year's King's Speech. Registers will aid local authorities in their duties to identify those children who are receiving their education otherwise than at school and ensure that those children are receiving a suitable education.

The statutory requirements to maintain registers and provide data to my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education will ensure the department obtains more

robust and thorough data on home education issues that will further inform policy development and identification of those children who most need support. The measures in the Bill will include a requirement on local authorities to provide support to those home educating families who request it. A full new burdens assessment will be conducted in anticipation of the measures coming into force, to ensure that local authorities are equipped with the training and resources needed to comply with these new duties.

■ Private Education: Special Educational Needs

Neil O'Brien: [14465]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the policy paper titled Applying VAT to private school fees, published on 30 October 2024, what discussions she has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the potential impact of the expected increase in the number of pupils with SEND at state schools in each (a) age group and (b) region.

Neil O'Brien: [14486]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the policy paper entitled Applying VAT to private school fees, published on 30 October 2024, what assessment she has made of the number of pupils with SEND that will move from the private education sector to the state education sector as a result of the introduction of VAT on private school fees.

Neil O'Brien: [14487]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the policy paper entitled Applying VAT to private school fees, published on 30 October 2024, what the direct cost of pupils with SEND moving from private schools to state schools as a result of introducing VAT on private school fees will be to the state education sector.

Neil O'Brien: [14488]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to support state schools as pupils transfer from their independent school to a state school as a result of the Government's introduction of VAT on private school fees.

Stephen Morgan:

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

This overall assessment considers but does not provide a breakdown of impacts by region or pupil characteristics, including special educational needs and age. The government predicts that, in the long-run steady state, there will be 37,000 fewer pupils in the private sector in the UK as a result of the removal of the VAT exemption applied to school fees. This represents around 6% of the current private school population. This movement is expected to take place over several years. Of this

number, the government estimates an increase of 35,000 pupils in the state sector in the steady state following the VAT policy taking effect, with the other 2,000 consisting of international pupils who do not move into the UK state system, and domestic pupils moving into homeschooling. This state sector increase represents less than 0.5% of total UK state school pupils, of which there are over 9 million. The government expects the revenue costs of pupils entering the state sector in England to steadily increase to a peak of around £300 million per annum after several years.

The impact on individual local authorities will interact with other pressures and vary. Local authorities have a statutory duty to provide full-time education for all children of statutory school age in their area, suitable for their age, aptitude, ability and any special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The department works with local authorities to help them fulfil their duty to secure school places. Requirements for state-funded places for children that would have attended a private school will be addressed in each local authority through normal processes.

■ Universities: Employers' Contributions

Laura Trott:

[\[14394\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the increase in employer National Insurance contributions on universities.

Laura Trott:

[\[14395\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate she has made of how much the increase to employers National Insurance contributions will cost universities.

Janet Daby:

The department is aware that higher education (HE) providers will have to pay increased National Insurance contributions. As my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer set out in the Autumn Budget 2024, raising the revenue required to fund public services and restore economic stability requires difficult decisions. That is why the government has asked employers to contribute more.

The Office for Students (OfS) is responsible for monitoring and reporting on the financial sustainability of the HE sector. The OfS has made its own estimate of the impacts in their update published on 15 November 2024. This update is available here: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/s32lw2vq/financial-sustainability-of-higher-education-providers-in-england-november-2024-update.pdf>.

It is clear that the UK needs to put its world-leading HE sector on a secure footing in order to face the challenges of the next decade and ensure that all students have confidence they will receive the world-class HE experience they deserve. In line with this approach, from August 2025, the government will be increasing the maximum cap for tuition fees by 3.1%, in line with forecast inflation.

The government recognises the impact the cost of living crisis has had on students and is also increasing the maximum loans for living costs for the 2025/26 academic year by 3.1%, to ensure that more support is targeted at students from the lowest income families. The department plans to publish an assessment of impacts of the planned tuition fee and student finance changes shortly.

The department expects the HE sector to demonstrate that, in return for the increased investment that students are being asked to make, they deliver the very best outcomes both for those students and for the country. We are calling for providers to go further and play a stronger role in expanding access and improving outcomes for disadvantaged students.

The department knows how vital securing a sustainable future for the HE sector is for the success of students. We will set out our longer-term plans for HE reform by next summer.

■ Vocational Guidance: Rural Areas

Stuart Anderson:

[\[13848\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to increase access to careers advice in rural communities.

Janet Daby:

The National Careers Service in England provides free, up to date, impartial information advice and guidance on careers, skills and the labour market, helping customers make informed choices about their career options, whatever their age, ethnic group and background.

The service is delivered via three channels. These are face to face, telephone and webchat. It is delivered by local, community-based contractors in nine geographic areas, drawing on localised labour market information to provide guidance, helping those who face barriers, including those within rural communities.

The National Careers Service website gives customers 24/7 access to information and advice. Careers advisers are co-located in the majority of Jobcentre Plus offices, providing specialist careers guidance.

The service operates in other settings including community centres, training providers, libraries. A recent initiative in the South West used a specially equipped bus to take careers advice directly to local communities. In some rural settings, where travel can be an issue, telephone appointments are arranged. Virtual jobs fairs and online webinars are offered for customers who may find it difficult to access face to face workshops.

Looking ahead, alongside the Department for Work and Pensions we are working in England to bring together Jobcentre Plus with the National Careers Service to create a greater awareness and focus on skills and careers, as well as join-up between employability and careers provision, enabling everyone to access and progress in good, meaningful work.

The new service will be a one-stop shop for anyone, including those in rural areas, who wants to look for work, wants help to increase their earnings, or who wants help to change their career or re-train. Employment and careers support will be available to all, not just those on benefits, who want support to find or progress in work.

The department will ensure the service is responsive to local employers, inclusive for all users, and works in partnership with other local services. We will set out more details about this and other labour market reforms through our forthcoming White Paper to Get Britain Working.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

■ **British Coal Staff Superannuation Scheme: Wales**

David Chadwick:

[\[13947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how many former British Coal employees were recipients of the British Coal Staff Superannuation Scheme in (a) Brecon, Radnor and Cwm Tawe constituency, (b) Neath and Swansea East constituency, (c) Aberafan Maesteg constituency, (d) Merthyr Tydfil and Aberdare constituency and (e) Wales on 12 November 2024.

Sarah Jones:

The number of members of the British Coal Staff Superannuation Scheme in the constituencies and in Wales is as follows:

(a) Brecon, Radnor and Cwm Tawe constituency - 151

(b) Neath and Swansea East constituency – 172

(c) Aberafan Maesteg constituency – 131

(d) Merthyr Tydfil and Aberdare constituency - 376, and

(e) Wales – 4,048.

This information is from the scheme trustees and correct as at 30 October 2024.

Some of these scheme members will not yet be in receipt of their pension, but we do not have a breakdown of that information at constituency level.

■ **Construction: Materials**

Tom Hayes:

[\[13908\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to support industry to reduce the embodied carbon emissions related to the (a) production and (b) use of new construction materials.

Sarah Jones:

Ministers are considering options to reduce embodied emissions in industry by growing the demand for construction materials such as low carbon steel, cement and concrete. This includes resolving questions such as how embodied emissions in products are measured.

The Government will consult on options for answering these questions in due course.

The Government has established a Circular Economy Taskforce to support the efficient use of construction materials to reduce embodied carbon. Alongside this, Government continues to collaborate with industry groups to promote the efficient, circular use of construction materials, supporting research to enable this.

■ Energy Performance Certificates: Buildings

Tom Hayes:

[\[13911\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to incentivising energy performance-related improvements of commercial buildings in the private sector.

Sarah Jones:

Minimum energy efficiency standards in non-domestic buildings have improved energy efficiency and Government has consulted on strengthening them. We will publish our government response early next year. In addition, our Energy Savings Opportunity Scheme requires large businesses to undertake energy audits and encourages improvements.

There are also incentives to decarbonise with grants to small businesses through the Boiler Upgrade Scheme and the Industrial Energy Transformation Fund offers up to £500 million to support existing firms to decarbonise and grow, with the government recently confirming £163 million in phase 3 funding to invest by 2028. More detail on the Government's approach to decarbonising non-domestic buildings, including through the Warm Homes Plan, will be published in due course.

■ Energy: Meters

Rachel Gilmour:

[\[13865\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of (a) PeakSave and (b) other energy tariff rates for communities without the signal needed to install a smart meter.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government has made no such specific assessment, as tariffs and energy contracts are a commercial matter for suppliers. However, the Government does want consumers to have access to a range of tariffs, so they can choose the contract that best suits their needs and can help to reduce energy bills. In circumstances where a supplier may not currently be able to offer a smart meter, Ofgem has been clear that suppliers are obligated under their licence conditions to ensure that a suitable metering system is installed.

■ Mineworkers' Pension Scheme: Cannock Chase**Josh Newbury:**[\[14209\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how many recipients of pensions under the Mineworkers' Pension Scheme in Cannock Chase constituency will be affected by the Government's return of money from the investment reserve fund to the scheme.

Sarah Jones:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave on 12 November to Question UIN 12551.

■ Ofgem: Publications**Sir Bernard Jenkin:**[\[13729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what definition his Department uses for socio-economic welfare, the context of publications by Ofgem.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

Socio-economic welfare is a standard economic tool that aims to identify how much better off the country would be if an improvement is made by tracing the effects on the economy. In this regard, Ofgem uses the same definitions of welfare as used in other areas of government.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ Agriculture and Floods: Finance****Dr Neil Hudson:**[\[12794\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions his Department has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on (a) farming and (b) flood funding for the remainder of this Parliament.

Daniel Zeichner:

Defra's farming budget will be £2.4 billion in 2025/26. This will include the largest ever budget directed at sustainable food production and nature's recovery in our country's history: £1.8 billion for environmental land management schemes. This funding will deliver improvements to food security, biodiversity, carbon emissions, water quality, air quality and flood resilience. We will work with the sector to continue to roll out, improve and evolve these schemes, to make them work for farming and nature.

Protecting communities around the country from flooding is one of the Secretary of State's five core priorities, which is why we set up a Flood Resilience Taskforce to provide oversight of national and local flood resilience and preparedness ahead of and after the winter flood season. Across England, we will invest £2.4 billion over the next two years to improve flood resilience, by maintaining, repairing and building flood defences.

Longer term funding decisions as regards funding for farming and floods will be made at the next Spending Review.

■ Agriculture: Subsidies

Nick Timothy: [\[14230\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to (a) continue and (b) replace the Fruit and Vegetables Aid Scheme after 2025.

Daniel Zeichner:

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

Nick Timothy: [\[14232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of closing the Fruit and Vegetable Aid Scheme on UK farming, in the context of the continuation of the equivalent scheme in the EU.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Government appreciates and values the vital work of the horticulture industry and recognises its role in maintaining a secure food supply.

As part of our mission-driven Government, and in partnership with the sector, Defra is considering how we can achieve our ambitious, measurable and long-term goals for the sector, including how to recognise the sector's diversity and specialist needs.

Tim Farron: [\[14281\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to support farmers with the phase-out of the direct payments under the Basic Payment Scheme.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Government has committed to support farmers through a farming budget of £5 billion over two years, including £2.4 billion in 2025/26. This will include the largest ever budget directed at sustainable food production and nature's recovery in our country's history.

We are continuing to phase out delinked payments. Instead, we are targeting additional investments away from direct payments towards the farms least able to adapt, with Environmental Land Management (ELM) schemes remaining at the centre of our offer for farmers. Phasing out delinked payments will allow us to focus investment on ELM schemes, which will be funded with £1.8 billion in 2025/26. This funding will deliver improvements to food security, biodiversity, carbon emissions, water quality, air quality and flood resilience. It will enable farmers to make their businesses more sustainable and resilient, including those who have been often ignored such as small, grassland, upland and tenant farmers.

We are providing advice via the Resilience Scheme, which can help adaptation by those farms most affected by reducing delinked payments. We will work with the sector to continue to roll out, improve and evolve our ELM schemes, to make them work for farming and nature.

■ Agriculture: Water

Ben Goldsborough:

[\[13932\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, (a) how many and (b) what value of water resource management grants were (i) granted and (ii) rejected by the Rural Payments Agency in each of the last 10 financial years.

Daniel Zeichner:

The following table lists the answer:

QTY REJECTED	VALUE REJECTED	QTY GRANTED	VALUE GRANTED	
2017/18	0	£ -	2	£215,974.42
2018/19	11	£1,708,260.72	121	£8,912,028.96
2019/20	14	£20,762.30	179	£ 311,127.36
2020/21	5	£5,374.00	201	£ 203,902.00
2021/22	0	£ -	0	£ -
2022/23	103	£3,287,841.96	381	£2,698,059.35
2023/24	19	£2,047,450.67	423	£6,811,257.63
2024/25	7	£393,871.55	329	£1,673,697.22

■ Agriculture: Young People

Mike Amesbury:

[\[13815\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to encourage (a) young people and (b) new entrants into farming.

Daniel Zeichner:

Attracting bright new talent into land-based careers and having a skilled workforce in place is vital for the future of UK food and farming.

Defra works closely with *The Institute for Agriculture and Horticulture* (TIAH) which is encouraging young people and new entrants into farming in its capacity as an industry led professional body for the farming industry. This includes leading a cross-industry initiative to address common negative misconceptions about the sector and providing free TIAH membership for students. TIAH is also developing online

capabilities to support matching mentees with mentors, and those looking for land with those who wish to provide access to land.

Furthermore, the Government has launched Skills England to ensure there is a comprehensive suite of apprenticeships, training and technical qualifications for individuals and employers to access, which are aligned with skills gaps and what employers need. It will work with its partners to ensure that regional and national skills needs are met.

■ Animal and Plant Health Agency: Staff

Valerie Vaz:

[\[13765\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many inspectors work for the Animal and Plant Health Agency; and if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of the number of inspectors for protecting the UK's biosecurity.

Daniel Zeichner:

Below is the number of inspectors the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) has in post at Executive Officer (EO) and Higher Executive Officer (HEO) grade, along with the number of Senior Executive Officers (SEO) who also support delivery. APHA also has apprentice plant health inspectors.

The numbers are subject to change as APHA has several vacancies which it is recruiting to fill, and has potential new starters who are going through the security checks and onboarding process. They are not included in the figures until they have started working for APHA.

	INLAND	APPRENTICE 18
EO	105	
Contractor	3	
HEO	102	
SEO	12	
	Imports	Apprentice 20
EO	71	
Contractor	10	
HEO	32	
SEO	5	

Total - 378

GB plant health services have increased the number of plant health inspection staff to service the demand for import checks in England and Wales of EU plants and plant products. Inspector levels are being monitored to ensure these meet demand and deliver checks in line with set Service Level Agreements and ensure minimal trade disruption. Border Control Posts (BCPs) are designed to handle high volumes of imported sanitary and phytosanitary goods with inspectors working shifts to carry out reliable checks which minimise friction on traffic flow. Checks at BCPs are handled by trained staff ensuring inspections are undertaken safely and efficiently.

■ **Avian Influenza: Disease Control**

Dr Danny Chambers:

[\[13643\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking with his EU counterparts on ending restrictions on the import of poultry products from avian influenza disease control zones in EU countries.

Daniel Zeichner:

Protecting both animal and human health is a top priority. Imports from EU zones restricted due to high pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) cannot meet the necessary animal health requirements, and therefore Import Health Certificates cannot be issued. However, imports from non-restricted areas remain permitted.

The department remains in close contact with EU counterparts to ensure restrictions are science-based and proportionate, with the aim of resuming trade as soon as conditions allow.

■ **Boats: Synthetic Fibres**

Neil Duncan-Jordan:

[\[13980\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will consider the potential merits of launching a pilot project in Poole to recover (a) stranded and (b) sunken glass fibre boats to help ensure that they do not pollute local waters.

Emma Hardy:

Sunken or stranded boats within Poole Harbour, and pollution arising from them, fall within the responsibility of the Poole Harbour Master's Office. We encourage the public to report pollution via our incident hotline, by calling 0800 80 70 60 at any time.

The UK is leading action under the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic (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](#).

■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Staff

Rupert Lowe: [11795]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many staff in their Department work outside of the UK; where those staff work; and what the cost is of salaries for those staff.

Daniel Zeichner:

Information on civil servants employed by Defra working overseas and the median salary for overseas posts are available at the following link: https://civil-service-statistics.jdac.service.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/data_browser_2024/index.html

Information on the precise location of staff working overseas is not published.

■ Fisheries: Territorial Waters

Rupert Lowe: [13106]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of banning all foreign supertrawlers from UK waters.

Daniel Zeichner:

If foreign vessels were prohibited from fishing in UK waters without clear evidence of their negative impacts, we could expect reciprocal action to be taken against UK vessels.

For actions relating to the EU, the Trade and Cooperation Agreement sets out very clearly that measures should not be discriminatory.

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We are, however, taking a broader approach to improving the sustainability of our fisheries through our Marine Protected Area management policy and the introduction of Fisheries Management Plans.

■ Floods: Telford

Shaun Davies: [13533]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much funding there was for the frequently flooded fund for Telford in each year for which data is available; and what the size of the fund will be in each of the next three years.

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.

Food: Origin Marking**Lee Barron:**[\[14263\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to prevent retailers from misrepresenting the origin of (a) meat and (b) dairy products that are not (i) raised and (ii) produced in the UK.

Daniel Zeichner:

The UK maintains high standards on the information provided on food labels and packaging so that consumers can have confidence in the food that they buy.

Country of origin information is required for fresh and frozen meat of beef, sheep, goat, pigs and poultry, as well as uncut fresh fruit and vegetables, honey, olive oil, wine and some fish products. The fundamental principles of our food labelling rules are that information provided to the consumer must not mislead and must enable consumers to make informed decisions. Under existing food labelling rules, food that is not of UK origin cannot be labelled in a way, such as with pictures or words, that states or suggests it is of UK origin. This includes the way in which foods are arranged and the setting in which they are displayed.

If processed food products made in the UK provide that origin information to the consumer, the information must also make clear if the primary ingredient is not from the UK e.g. label with 'British cheese made with milk from Ireland'. Shops will often voluntarily label their British cheese, hams and bacon when they are made from British milk and meat, helping shoppers easily identify and buy great British produce.

Lithium-ion Batteries: Explosions**Alistair Strathern:**[\[13282\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with the Environment Agency on the impact of lithium-ion battery explosions.

Mary Creagh:

I have discussed the risks that incorrect disposal of waste batteries can have at a senior level with the Environment Agency, including in the context of fires at waste sites.

■ Meat: Australia**Dan Norris:**[\[13162\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the potential impact of the import of (a) beef, (b) lamb and (c) mutton through the free trade agreement between the UK and Australia on UK farmers.

Daniel Zeichner:

This Government's commitment to farmers and the vital role they play, remains steadfast. We will never forget that farmers are the beating heart of our great country. It is their hard work that puts food on our tables and stewards our beautiful countryside.

The Government's estimate of the potential economic impact of the UK-Australia Free Trade Agreement (FTA) can be found in the published Impact Assessment (IA), and suggests that gross output could be reduced by around 3% for beef and 5% for sheepmeat. Since the FTA came into force on the 31st May 2023, imports from Australia have not yet reached the levels estimated in the IA. Australia continues to focus on geographically closer markets and used 20% of its sheepmeat quota and 8% of its beef quota in 2023 since the FTA has been in force.

■ Noise: Nuisance**Mrs Lorraine Beavers:**[\[14177\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department is taking steps to simplify the process for the issuance of abatement notices by the Environment Agency.

Emma Hardy:

Defra is responsible for the domestic legislation covering Statutory Nuisance under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, whilst Local Authorities environmental health departments are the main enforcers of the Statutory Nuisance regime and associated legislation.

It is Local Authorities, not the Environment Agency, that issue abatement notices if a statutory nuisance is found to have happened; is happening, or will happen in the future.

■ Plastics: Treaties**Alex Easton:**[\[13351\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an estimate of the amount of funding that will be required to meet the UK's potential obligations under the proposed UN global plastics treaty.

Emma Hardy:

The UK is a leader on efforts to end plastic pollution. We already have a broad range of measures in place domestically that we are using, alongside ongoing industry and

private sector engagement, as the basis to drive ambition across the proposed provisions of the UN Plastic Pollution Treaty. The Treaty is still under negotiation, with the UK committed to playing a leading role at the forthcoming fifth intergovernmental negotiating committee to ensure an effective treaty is agreed.

Sarah Dyke:

[\[14244\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of levels of international funding needed to support new financial mechanisms that would be required under the Global Plastics Treaty.

Emma Hardy:

The Government is committed to playing a leading role at the forthcoming fifth intergovernmental negotiating committee to ensure an effective plastic pollution treaty is agreed which addresses the full lifecycle of plastics.

Funding will be needed from all sources, public and private, to support an effective treaty and should leverage synergies with funding to support other global environmental challenges. The level of funding will depend on the outcomes of negotiations on control measures and the associated assessments of the support required for their implementation.

Sarah Dyke:

[\[14245\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero on negotiations on the Global Plastics Treaty in South Korea.

Emma Hardy:

The Secretary of State has regular discussions with Cabinet colleagues on a range of issues, and Cabinet discussions are considered confidential.

Sarah Dyke:

[\[14247\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what position the UK will take on (a) chemical recycling and (b) a mass balance approach in negotiations on the Global Plastics Treaty.

Emma Hardy:

At the fifth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to develop a new UN Plastics Treaty, the UK will align with our domestic policy on any provisions related to chemical recycling, including mass balance.

Therefore, where relevant we will recognise that chemical recycling technologies can offer a complementary route to support the transition towards a circular economy, where mechanical recycling is unfeasible or uneconomic and where this waste may otherwise be incinerated.

There are no proposals in the Treaty on the mass balance approach. Through their recent consultation response following Autumn Budget, His Majesty's Treasury confirmed acceptance of using a mass balance approach to calculate chemically

recycled content in plastic packaging for the purposes of the Plastic Packaging Tax in the UK.

■ Rivers: Sewage

Monica Harding: [\[13669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to reduce sewage discharges into (a) the River Mole and (b) other rivers.

Emma Hardy:

For too long, water companies have discharged record levels of sewage into our rivers, lakes and seas.

That is why we are placing water companies under special measures through the Water Bill, which will strengthen regulation, including delivering new powers to ban the payment of bonuses for polluting water bosses and bringing criminal charges against persistent law breakers.

We are also carrying out a full review of the water sector to shape further legislation that will transform how our water system works and clean up rivers, lakes and seas for good.

With respect to the Mole catchment, the Environment Agency has carried out inspections at six sewage treatment works this financial year. Where permit non-compliance has been found, they have worked with Thames Water to ensure most issues are rectified immediately. Outstanding issues remain under investigation and future action will be considered in line with the Enforcement and Sanctions Policy.

■ Seagulls

Rupert Lowe: [\[14188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of removing the protected status of seagulls.

Mary Creagh:

The Government has no plans to change the legal protections for gull species. The Joint Nature Conservation Committee Seabird Census (2015-2021) and the 2024 Birds of Conservation Concern report indicate substantial population declines due to, for example, avian influenza and prey availability. This includes gull species such as herring and lesser black-backed gulls.

All wild birds in England, including gulls, are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. In exceptional cases Natural England can issue licences for the management of protected species, including gulls, for certain purposes such as protecting public health and safety or for conservation.

■ Water Abstraction: Licensing

Ben Goldsborough: [\[13929\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many Water Abstraction Licences were operational in each of the last 10 financial years.

Emma Hardy:

The table below shows the number of water abstraction licences (temporary, full and transfer) live for all or part of the financial year for each of the last ten financial years.

FINANCIAL YEAR	NO. OF WATER ABSTRACTION LICENCES
1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015	18234
1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016	18027
1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017	17765
1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018	17249
1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019	17100
1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020	16940
1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021	17184
1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022	17386
1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023	17814
1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024	17779

Ben Goldsborough: [\[13930\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many Water Abstraction Licences were not renewed in each of the last 10 financial years.

Emma Hardy:

FINANCIAL YEAR	NUMBER OF WATER ABSTRACTION LICENCES THAT WERE NOT RENEWED BECAUSE NO RENEWAL APPLICATION WAS RECEIVED, THE APPLICATION WAS WITHDRAWN OR REJECTED AS INCOMPLETE	NUMBER OF WATER ABSTRACTION LICENCES THAT WERE NOT RENEWED BECAUSE THE APPLICATION WAS REFUSED
2016-2017	145	0
2017-2018	191	7

FINANCIAL YEAR	NUMBER OF WATER ABSTRACTION LICENCES THAT WERE NOT RENEWED BECAUSE	
	NO RENEWAL APPLICATION WAS RECEIVED, THE APPLICATION WAS WITHDRAWN OR REJECTED AS INCOMPLETE	NUMBER OF WATER ABSTRACTION LICENCES THAT WERE NOT RENEWED BECAUSE THE APPLICATION WAS REFUSED
2018-2019	47	1
2019-2020	39	0
2020-2021	40	0
2021-2022	71	1
2022-2023	43	0
2023-2024	102	2

Ben Goldsborough:[\[13931\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many Water Abstraction License applications were (a) made and (b) granted in each of the last 10 financial years.

Emma Hardy:

a) Applications for new full licences, normal variations and substantial variations:

	2015- 2016	2016- 2017	2017- 2018	2018- 2019	2019- 2020	2020- 2021	2021- 2022	2022- 2023	2023- 2024	2024- 2025	TOTAL
Total	206	320	311	682	1260	425	483	243	265	219	4475

b) Of those applications, granted licences below:

	2015- 2016	2016- 2017	2017- 2018	2018- 2019	2019- 2020	2020- 2021	2021- 2022	2022- 2023	2023- 2024	2024- 2025	TOTAL
Total	64	254	280	288	406	553	495	556	318	146	3370

■ **Water: Pollution**

Sir Julian Smith:[\[13212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans his Department has to update its policy guidance on metal mine pollution to reflect the primary risk from sediment contamination in river channels and floodplains.

Emma Hardy:

There is no specific policy guidance on metal mine pollution. The Environment Agency (EA) considers the primary risk from abandoned metal mines to be pollution of rivers and estuaries, with around 1,500km of rivers polluted by metals. The government has a long-term statutory target to halve the length of rivers polluted by six target substances from abandoned metal mines by 31 December 2038. The six target substances which pose the greatest threat to, or via the aquatic environment are cadmium, lead, nickel, zinc, copper, and arsenic.

Through the Water and Abandoned Metal Mines Programme - a partnership between Defra, the EA and the Coal Authority - government is taking action to develop mine water treatment schemes and diffuse interventions to prevent metals from abandoned metal mines and metal mine waste heaps from entering local river systems.

Where contamination from abandoned metal mines impacts land rather than water then this is covered by the Government's policy on land contamination including the [Land Contamination Risk Management Framework](#) which sets out the approach on how to assess and manage risks from land contamination and the statutory contaminated land regime (Part 2A of the Environment Act 1990, supporting Regulations and Statutory Guidance).

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Ambulance Services: Finance****Mr Toby Perkins:****[14057]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether any of the increased funding for the NHS, as announced in the Autumn Budget 2024, is ring-fenced for ambulance services.

Karin Smyth:

The National Health Service's funding increases have not been ring-fenced in that way. Ring-fencing funding restricts the freedom of integrated care boards to take decisions based on the specific circumstances of their local populations.

■ Ambulance Services: Standards**Mr Toby Perkins:****[14056]**

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

Karin Smyth:

The Government has committed to supporting the National Health Service to improve performance and achieve the standards set out in the NHS Constitution, including for ambulance response times.

As a first step, my Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, appointed Professor Lord Darzi to lead an independent investigation of the NHS'

performance. The investigation's findings were published on 12 September and will feed into the Government's work on a 10-Year Health Plan to radically reform the NHS and build a health service that is fit for the future.

Ahead of this winter, NHS England has set out the priorities for the NHS to maintain and improve patient safety and experience, including actions to support patient flow and ensure ambulances are released in a timely way. NHS England's winter letter is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/winter-and-h2-priorities>

■ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: Waiting Lists

Luke Murphy:

[13859]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Department is taking to reduce (a) the backlog of ADHD diagnosis and (b) improve waiting times for assessments.

Stephen Kinnock:

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

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

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

■ Autism: Diagnosis

Rupert Lowe:

[13926]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have been diagnosed with autism in each of the last ten years.

Stephen Kinnock:

The information requested isn't held centrally. Some relevant information, drawn from the Mental Health Service Data Set, is published by NHS England in the Autism Waiting Times Statistics. However, this data only represents a partial picture of the numbers of people who are referred for suspected autism and are recorded with an

autism diagnosis following an assessment. The Autism Waiting Times Statistics are available at the following link:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/autism-statistics>

NHS England continues to work with providers and partner organisations to improve the data quality.

■ Cancer: Young People

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:

[14280]

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

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:

[14284]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that young people with cancer have equity of access to (a) age-appropriate and (b) specialist psychological support.

Andrew Gwynne:

We are committed to getting the National Health Service diagnosing cancer earlier and treating it faster so that more patients survive. This includes children, teenagers and young adults (CTYA).

NHS England has published service specifications that set out the service standards required of all providers of CTYA cancer services. The requirements include ensuring that every patient has access to specialist care and reducing physical, emotional, and psychological morbidity arising from treatment for childhood cancer. The specifications are available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/commissioning/spec-services/npc-crg/group-b/b05/>

Children's cancer care is managed by principal treatment centres (PTCs) who ensure quality care. Each PTC has a multi-disciplinary team which meets at least weekly and includes a specific focus on the psychosocial needs of patient. The multi-disciplinary team ensures that each service user is assessed for psychological needs and can access any psychosocial support that is required.

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

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence has set out guidance for general practitioners on the symptoms of cancer in CTYA, recommending referral within 48 hours for those presenting with potential cancer symptoms. To support timely investigation after referral, we are working with the NHS to maximise the pace of the roll-out of additional diagnostic capacity, including via the roll out of community diagnostic centres.

■ Care Homes: South Holland and the Deepings**Sir John Hayes:**[\[14008\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of care homes in South Holland and the Deepings constituency are rated (a) good and (b) excellent by the Care Quality Commission.

Stephen Kinnock:

There are currently 36 care homes registered with the Care Quality Commission in South Holland and The Deepings constituency. Data from 1 November 2024 shows that two care homes, or 6%, are rated Outstanding, and 24 care homes, or 67%, are rated Good.

■ Care Workers: Coronavirus**Rupert Lowe:**[\[13598\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will issue an official apology to social care workers that were dismissed during the pandemic for not being vaccinated.

Stephen Kinnock:

Social care workers are employed by individual employers, and it is down to these employers to decide whether to hire or dismiss staff, not the Government. Making vaccination a condition of deployment (VCOD) was supported by the best available clinical evidence at the time. VCOD was kept under review, and the decision to revoke it was made after considering the latest public health evidence, which had changed significantly since VCOD was introduced.

■ Continuing Care: Waiting Lists**Max Wilkinson:**[\[13791\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of waiting times for accessing services through the NHS Continuing healthcare programme on patient outcomes; what assessment he has made of the potential impact of Liaison Care on those waiting times; and what further steps his Department is taking to improve waiting times for the NHS Continuing healthcare programme.

Stephen Kinnock:

Statutory guidance and assurance regimes are in place so that people are assessed and receive care in a timely way. For example, NHS England's assurance standard requires that integrated care boards (ICBs) must ensure that more than 80% of cases proceed to a full assessment of eligibility, and that the eligibility decision should be made within 28 days of being notified of potential NHS Continuing Healthcare (CHC) eligibility. Nationally, 72% of referrals were completed within 28 days during July to September 2024.

Once an individual has been referred for a full assessment of NHS CHC eligibility, the ICB is responsible for coordinating the process until the eligibility decision has been made. The ICB should identify a coordinator who may be either from the ICB or an external organisation. An individual should not be left without appropriate support while they await the outcome of the assessment and decision-making process.

■ Dementia: Ashfield

Lee Anderson:

[\[13235\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to improve dementia care services in Ashfield and Mansfield constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

Key priorities for Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) are to deliver the national target of a dementia diagnosis rate of 66.7%, reduce waiting to time for memory assessment services and to improve access to post-diagnostic support. A Dementia strategy for Nottingham and Nottinghamshire will be updated following the Government's publication of the 10-Year Health Plan expected in spring 2025.

Ongoing dementia care services include a Dementia Wellbeing Service provided by Alzheimer's Society, across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, including Mansfield and Ashfield. The service aims to support patients and carers through several interventions including cognitive stimulation therapy, carer training, 1:1 and group support.

The two Ashfield Primary Care Networks (PCN), North & South, piloted an Admiral Nurse within general practices. An Admiral Nurse is a specialist Dementia Nurse supporting patients and carers to live well with Dementia. Following a successful pilot, Ashfield North Primary Care Network have chosen to retain the role to support patients and carers within the network's practices. Rosewood PCN in Mansfield has recruited a dementia specialist Occupation Therapist to support patients and carers living with dementia within their network of practice.

■ Dementia: Health Services

Liam Conlon:

[\[13601\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve dementia care and support for (a) patients and (b) families post-diagnosis in (i) England and (ii) Beckenham and Penge constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

NHS England is committed to delivering high quality care and support for every person with dementia, and central to this is the provision of personalised care and support planning for post diagnostic support.

The Department has produced guidance on what to expect from health and care services following a dementia diagnosis, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/after-a-diagnosis-of-dementia-what-to-expect-from-health-and-care-services/after-diagnosis-of-dementia-what-to-expect-from-health-and-care-services>

There has been a longstanding priority in the London Borough of Bromley, including Beckenham and Penge, to ensure fast and effective dementia diagnostic services, as well as a strong community support offer which is provided by the Bromley Dementia Support Hub and MindCare Dementia respite service. These services are delivered through a partnership of National Health Service and voluntary sector partners to ensure that there is a tailored offer of support for those who need it.

The Bromley Dementia Support Hub, together with the MindCare Dementia Service provided by South-East London Mind, and in partnership with the Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust, Bromley Well, and Age UK Bromley and Greenwich, offers a range of support services and stimulating activities both in-person and online for people living with dementia, and their friends and family carers.

■ **Dementia: Music Therapy**

Pippa Heylings: [13861]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish a new dementia strategy which references the use of music to support people living with dementia.

Pippa Heylings: [13862]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish a social care strategy which includes support for the use of musical techniques for people living with dementia.

Stephen Kinnock:

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's Quality Standard on Dementia, published in June 2019, recommends that therapeutic use of music be considered as a means of non-pharmacological intervention for people with dementia. Localities should take account of this guidance.

The Department funds research on the use of musical techniques for people living with dementia via the National Institute for Health and Care Research. This includes a major study investigating how music therapy can reduce patient distress and physical assaults on National Health Service inpatient wards for people with dementia. The study is called MELODIC, and will create a programme of music therapy which will be piloted on two NHS mental health wards at the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust.

■ **Dementia: Reading West and Mid Berkshire**

Olivia Bailey: [13996]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answers of 11 November 2024 to Questions 12677, 12678 and 12679 on Dementia: Reading West and

Mid Berkshire, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of collecting data on dementia diagnosis and care centrally.

Stephen Kinnock:

Local systems rarely hold data by Parliamentary constituency. However, NHS England collects data on the number of people referred for assessments for dementia. This includes data about people diagnosed with dementia, including those who receive medication and care plan reviews. This data is collected centrally and published monthly by NHS England at a national level, and is available at the following link:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/primary-care-dementia-data/>

Data on the number of people aged 65 years old and over with a diagnosis of dementia, or who have a prescription for antipsychotic medication, is published monthly by NHS England at regional, integrated care board (ICB), and local authority level.

NHS England has developed an internal dashboard of memory service data for management information purposes. This supports ICBs to provide services appropriate for their local population, providing high quality care and support for each person with dementia.

■ **Dental Services**

Anna Sabine:

[\[14223\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what resources she is allocating to Integrated Care Boards to help them achieve an increase in the number of NHS dental appointments.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Government plans to tackle the challenges for patients trying to access National Health Service dental care with a rescue plan to provide 700,000 more urgent dental appointments and recruit new dentists to the areas that need them most. We have also introduced the Golden Hello scheme which will see up to 240 dentists receiving payments of £20,000 to work in areas that need them most for three years. To rebuild dentistry in the long term and increase access to NHS dental care, we will reform the dental contract, with a shift to focus on prevention and the retention of NHS dentists.

NHS England is responsible for issuing guidance to integrated care boards on dental budgets, including ringfences. NHS England will publish planning guidance for 2025/26 in due course.

■ **Dentistry: Employers' Contributions**

Dr Ben Spencer:

[\[13809\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of the proposed increase in the rate of employer

National Insurance contributions on (a) trends in the level of recruitment and (b) the provision of care in dentistry.

Dr Ben Spencer: [\[13810\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to paragraph 2.40 of the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 October 2024, whether he has made an estimate of the number of dental practices that will close as a result of the proposed increase in the rate of employer National Insurance contributions.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 18 November 2024]: We have taken necessary decisions to fix the foundations in the public finances at Autumn Budget 2024, which enabled the Spending Review settlement of a £22.6 billion increase in resource spending for the Department from 2023/24 outturn to 2025/26.

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

■ Dentistry: Students

Mark Swards: [\[13627\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment with Cabinet colleagues of the potential merits of making tuition free for dental students; and what steps he is taking to ensure that dentists receive adequate funding to treat NHS patients.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Government is determined to rebuild National Health Service dentistry, but it will take time and there are no quick fixes. Strengthening the workforce is key to our ambitions.

The Government will make sure the NHS has the staff it needs to be there for all of us when we need it. We have no plans to make tuition free for dental students. From year five of an undergraduate course, and from year two of a graduate-entry course, dental students can access the NHS Bursary. This is non-repayable and comprises payment for tuition fees and, where eligible, further grants and allowances.

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

■ Family Hubs

Luke Taylor: [\[14360\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to publish a 2024 progress report for the Family Hubs and Start for Life programme; and what steps

he is taking to ensure that the programme continues to support (a) (i) perinatal and (ii) infant mental health and (b) parent-infant relationships.

Andrew Gwynne:

Launched in August 2022, the three-year Family Hubs and Start for Life programme provides approximately £300 million to 75 local authorities in England with high levels of deprivation. The joint Department of Health and Social Care and Department for Education programme has created a network of Family Hubs with Start for Life services, which support the period from conception to the age of two years old, providing families with the support they need when they need it.

While the Government does not have plans at this stage to publish a progress report on the Family Hubs and Start for Life programme, two national, independent evaluations are underway to understand implementation and impact.

At the 2024 Autumn Budget, my Rt. Hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced £69 million to continue delivery of a network of Family Hubs. The Department will confirm Start for Life funding for 2025/26 in due course, including support for perinatal mental health and parent-infant relationship services.

■ **Gambling: Suicide**

Adam Jogee:

[\[13540\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to tackle gambling-related suicide in (a) Newcastle-under-Lyme and (b) Staffordshire.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Government has committed to tackling suicide. We will recruit an additional 8,500 new mental health workers, and these new staff will be specially trained to support people at risk from suicide. The five-year Suicide Prevention Strategy for England identifies gambling as a common risk factor, lists actions to reduce suicides as a result of gambling, and will explore opportunities to go further.

The Government is committed to reducing gambling-related harms through regulatory reform to strengthen protections. Through the Health Mission, we are supporting people to live healthier lives for longer, with a greater emphasis on the prevention of avoidable health harms. We continue to work closely with Department for Culture, Media and Sport, to consider how best to achieve this. The Department of Health and Social Care is focused on ensuring that those experiencing gambling-related harms can access the right care at the right time. We are working closely with NHS England to capitalise on opportunities to improve and expand treatment and support services.

■ **General Practitioners**

Ian Byrne:

[\[14119\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help GPs meet the needs of patients.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Government is providing £82 million to fund the recruitment of more than 1,000 newly qualified general practitioners, via the additional roles reimbursement scheme (ARRS), so patients can get the care they need.

The ARRS provides funding for several additional roles to help create bespoke, multi-disciplinary teams. All these roles are in place to assist general practice doctors in reducing their workload and assisting patients directly with their needs, allowing doctors to focus on more complex patients and other priorities, including continuity of care.

This government will bring back the family doctor for those who would benefit from seeing the same clinician regularly, for example, those living with chronic illness. This will improve continuity of care, which is associated with better health outcomes and fewer accident and emergency attendances.

Mr Toby Perkins:[\[9425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase the number of GP appointments.

Stephen Kinnock:

We know that patients are finding it harder than ever to see a general practitioner (GP) and we are committed to fixing the crisis in GPs. Our plan will require both investment and reform. Firstly, we will increase the proportion of funding for GPs, starting with a commitment to recruit over 1,000 newly qualified GPs through an £82 million boost to the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme. This will increase the number of appointments delivered in general practice, secure the future pipeline of GPs, and take pressure off those currently working in the system. Additionally, we will deliver a modern booking system to end the 8:00am scramble for GP appointments and bring back the family doctor by incentivising GPs to see the same patient.

We have committed to develop a 10-Year Health Plan, to deliver a National Health Service fit for the future, with input from the public, patients, health staff, and our stakeholders as we develop the plan. More information is available at the following link:

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

■ General Practitioners: Employers' Contributions**Joe Robertson:**[\[13709\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to paragraph 2.40 of the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 October, whether he has made an estimate of the overall cost to GP practices of the proposed increase to employer National Insurance contributions.

Stephen Kinnock:

We have taken necessary decisions to fix the foundations in the public finances at the Autumn Budget 2024, which enabled the Spending Review settlement of a £22.6

billion increase in resource spending for the Department from 2023/24 outturn to 2025/26. The employer National Insurance rise will be implemented in April 2025, and the Department will set out further details on the allocation of funding for next year at the earliest opportunity.

Primary care providers, including general practice, dentistry, pharmacy, and eye care, are valued independent contractors who provide nearly £20 billion worth of services in the National Health Service. Every year we consult with each sector both about what services they provide, and the money providers are entitled to in return under their contract. As in previous years, this issue will be dealt with as part of that process.

■ **General Practitioners: Scotland**

Andrew Bowie:

[\[12959\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the impact of the proposed increase in national insurance contributions on general practices in Scotland.

Stephen Kinnock:

We have taken necessary decisions to fix the foundations in the public finances at Autumn Budget 2024, which enabled the Spending Review settlement of a £22.6 billion increase in resource spending for the Department from 2023/24 outturn to 2025/26. The employer national insurance rise will be implemented in April 2025, with the Department setting out further details on allocation of funding for next year in due course.

Whilst the Department holds some reserved functions, health is predominantly devolved. This includes the National Health Service in Scotland, which is therefore the responsibility of the Scottish Government.

It is for the devolved governments to allocate their funding across devolved areas as they see fit, and they are accountable to their respective legislatures for the decisions they take.

■ **Genito-urinary Medicine: Internet**

Tom Hayes:

[\[14764\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to restore the Government's Sexwise website.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Department has no plans to restore the Government's Sexwise website.

Extensive sexual and reproductive health information is readily available from other sources, which provide quality up-to-date information for the general public and healthcare professionals. These include, but are not limited to:

- the National Health Service website, which is available at the following link: <https://www.nhs.uk/> ;

- the Contraception Choices website, which is available at the following link: <https://www.contraceptionchoices.org/> ;
- the British Association for Sexual Health and HIV website, which is available at the following website: <https://www.bashh.org/> ;
- the British HIV Association website, which is available at the following link: <https://www.bhiva.org/> ;
- the Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare website, which is available at the following link: <https://www.fsrh.org/> ;
- the Terrence Higgins Trust website, which is available at the following link: <https://www.tht.org.uk/> ;
- the Brook website, which is available at the following link: <https://www.brook.org.uk/> ; and
- the Sexual health service finder, which is available on the NHS.UK website, at the following link: <https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/sexual-health-services/find-a-sexual-health-clinic/>.

■ Glaucoma and Macular Degeneration: Medical Treatments

Ian Byrne:

[14123]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of patients waiting longer than 18 weeks for treatment for (a) wet macular degeneration and (b) glaucoma in (i) England, (ii) Merseyside and (iii) Liverpool.

Stephen Kinnock:

The classification codes required to identify pathways where patients may have glaucoma or macular degeneration do not allow for distinction between the two conditions.

The following table provides an estimate of the number of patients who have been waiting longer than 18 weeks for treatment specifically for wet macular degeneration and glaucoma in England, Merseyside, and Liverpool, via the latter's integrated care boards (ICBs), as a snapshot for the week ending 10 November 2024, extracted on 15 November 2024:

	NUMBER OF PATHWAYS GREATER THAN 18 WEEKS		
England	Cheshire and Merseyside ICB	NHS Liverpool	Sub ICB
Glaucoma or macular degeneration	765	61	7

Source: Waiting List Minimum Data Set (WLMDS), NHS England.

However, these figures may include patients that also have other conditions, as full coding for glaucoma and macular degeneration procedures requires diagnostic codes that are not available in the WLMDS.

The WLMDS is weekly management information that is subject to less validation than the monthly official statistics. There may be issues regarding the quality and completeness of the recorded data, which is not routinely reviewed centrally.

■ Health: Cycling

Steve Race:

[14389]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the potential impact of cycle commuting on (a) mental health and (b) healthy behaviours.

Andrew Gwynne:

Public Health England's 2018 cycling and walking evidence review confirms positive impacts on both mental health and healthy behaviours. This review is available at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5bf41840e5274a2af47c464e/Cycling_and_walking_for_individual_and_population_health_benefits.pdf

Evidence shows that cycling can reduce stress and lower risk factors for mental health conditions. It can also encourage other healthy behaviours by integrating physical activity into daily routines.

The Department of Health and Social Care is currently working with the Department for Transport and Active Travel England on an evidence review, which will further examine active travel's effects on mental health, physical health, and health inequalities as well as effective behaviour-change techniques. Findings are expected by mid-2025.

■ Hospices

Rebecca Paul:

[14406]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what short-term steps his Department is taking to help support hospices to maintain levels of service; and whether his Department is taking long-term steps to reform funding for hospices.

Stephen Kinnock:

Most hospices are charitable, independent organisations which receive some statutory funding from the National Health Service. The amount of funding each charitable hospice receives varies both within and between integrated care board (ICB) areas. This will vary depending on demand in that ICB area but will also be dependent on the totality and type of palliative and end of life care provision from both NHS and non-NHS services, including charitable hospices, within each ICB area.

We do understand that, financially, times are difficult for many voluntary and charitable organisations, including hospices, due to a range of concurrent cost pressures. I recently met NHS England and discussions have begun on how to reduce inequalities and variation in access to, and the quality of, palliative and end of life care. We will consider next steps on palliative and end of life care, including funding, in the coming months.

Additionally, we have committed to develop a 10-Year Health Plan to deliver an NHS fit for the future, by driving three shifts in the way health care is delivered. We will carefully be considering policies, including those that impact people with palliative and end of life care needs, with input from the public, patients, health staff and our stakeholders as we develop the plan. More information about how to input into the 10-Year Health Plan is available at the following link:

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

■ Hospices: Children

Damian Hinds: [\[13774\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will revert to central grant funding from NHS England for children's hospices.

Damian Hinds: [\[13775\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, further to the Answer of 31 July 2024 to Question 764, when he plans to make a further announcement on the Children's Hospice Grant.

Stephen Kinnock:

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

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

■ Hospices: Community Care

Rachel Gilmour: [\[13866\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has for the role hospices will play in shifting care into the community.

Stephen Kinnock:

We have committed to develop a 10-Year Health Plan to deliver an National Health Service fit for the future, by driving three shifts in the way health care is delivered. We

will carefully be considering policies, including those that impact people with palliative and end of life care needs, with input from the public, patients, health staff, and our stakeholders as we develop the plan.

One of the three shifts that the plan will deliver is around the Government's determination to shift more healthcare out of hospitals and into the community. This includes our commitment to trial neighbourhood health centres, to ensure that patients receive personalised care in the most appropriate setting. Palliative and end of life care services, including hospices, will play an important role in our considerations of the services those centres should host. More information about how they can input into the 10-Year Health Plan is available at the following link:

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

■ Hospices: Finance

Daisy Cooper:

[6542]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether hospice funding will be included in his Department's 10-year plan for health and care.

Daisy Cooper:

[6543]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what data his Department (a) collects and (b) holds on the number of people waiting for places in hospices run by charitable organisations.

Stephen Kinnock:

We want a society where every person, as well as their families and carers, receives high-quality, compassionate care, from diagnosis through to end of life.

I recently met NHS England and discussions have begun on how to reduce inequalities and variation in access to, and the quality of, palliative and end of life care in England. We will consider next steps on palliative and end of life care, including hospice funding, in the coming months.

We have committed to develop a 10-Year Health Plan to deliver a National Health Service fit for the future, by driving three shifts in the way health care is delivered. We will carefully be considering policies, including those that impact people with palliative and end of life care needs, with input from the public, patients, health staff, and our stakeholders, including those in the hospice sector, as we develop the plan.

The engagement process has been launched, and I would encourage the palliative and end of life care sector, including hospice providers, service users and their families, 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. More information is available at the following link:

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

The Department does not collect or hold data on the number of people waiting for places in hospices run by charitable organisations.

■ Integrated Care Boards: Finance**Dame Caroline Dinéage:** [\[14043\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is providing financial resources to integrated care boards to allow them to allocate resources effectively.

Karin Smyth:

The Department provides funding to NHS England, which in turn allocates a large part of its funding to the integrated care boards. Planned spend by integrated care boards is currently £141 billion for the financial year 2024/25, with boards responsible for the strategic commissioning of services to meet the needs of their local populations.

■ IVF: LGBT+ People**Sarah Coombes:** [\[13597\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to take steps to help reduce the cost of IVF for female same-sex couples.

Karin Smyth:

The Government has signed secondary legislation into law on 31 October 2024 to update the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act, which removes additional screening costs for female same sex couples undergoing reciprocal in-vitro fertilisation.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence is currently reviewing the fertility guideline and will consider whether the current recommendations for access to National Health Service-funded treatment are still appropriate. We expect this review to be published in 2025. NHS England will be providing advice on this issue, and the Government will be considering future policy options soon.

■ Lung Cancer: Medical Treatments**Jim Shannon:** [\[14080\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people were being treated for lung cancer in August 2024.

Karin Smyth:

The number of people who received either a first or subsequent treatment for lung cancer in August 2024 was 4,672.

■ Medicine: Training**Jayne Kirkham:** [\[14418\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of increasing the NHS Bursary living allowance to match the Student Finance England maintenance loan.

Karin Smyth:

The NHS Bursary funding arrangements are reviewed annually ahead of the start of each academic year.

We have applied an uplift of 2% to all NHS Bursary maintenance grants and allowances for the academic year 2024/25. This is the first time the maintenance grant has been uplifted since 2015.

■ Mental Health Services**Sojan Joseph:****[13956]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that all integrated care boards meet the mental health investment standard.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 18 November 2024]: The NHS Operational and Planning Guidance for 2024/25 makes clear that integrated care boards are expected to continue to meet the Mental Health Investment Standard by increasing their investment in mental health services in line with their overall increase in funding for the year.

■ Mental Health Services and Respite Care: Carers**Dr Danny Chambers:****[14269]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that (a) emergency respite and (b) mental health support is available for unpaid carers in crisis.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 18 November 2024]: The Government is committed to ensuring that families have the support that they need. We want to ensure that people who care for family and friends are better able to look after their own physical and mental health and wellbeing.

Local authorities have duties to support people caring for their family and friends. The Care Act 2014 requires local authorities to deliver a wide range of sustainable, high-quality care and support services, including support such as respite and breaks for carers. The Better Care Fund also includes funding that can be used for unpaid carer support, including for short breaks and respite services for carers.

As part of the Carers Partnership in the Health and Wellbeing Alliance, the Carers Trust has published a Carer Contingency Campaign Pack. This will help support local carer organisations' work with local partners to deliver carer contingency plans for carers in their area. Further information on the pack is available at the following link:

<https://carers.org/resources/all-resources/150-carer-contingency-campaign-pack-supporting-carers-and-strengthening-local-care-systems>

We know that people, including unpaid carers, with mental health issues are not getting the support or care they deserve, which is why we will fix the broken system to ensure we give mental health the same attention and focus as physical health. This includes recruiting 8,500 more mental health workers, introducing specialist mental health professionals in every school, rolling out Young Futures hubs in every community, and modernising the Mental Health Act.

■ **Mental Health Services: Northern Ireland**

Alex Easton:

[\[13683\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve mental health support for young people in (a) Northern Ireland and (b) the United Kingdom; and whether he is allocating additional resources to ensure (i) timely and (ii) accessible mental health services for young people.

Stephen Kinnock:

As health is a devolved matter, it is for the devolved Governments to decide how best to improve mental health support for children and young people in Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales.

Plans for investment in children and young people's mental health services will be known once the planning round for 2025/26 has concluded following the publication of system allocations and planning guidance for the next financial year. Devolved Governments, including Northern Ireland, will benefit from this additional funding through the Barnett formula.

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

■ **NHS Learning Support Fund**

Jayne Kirkham:

[\[14419\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of allowing medical students in all years of the course to access the Learning Support Fund.

Karin Smyth:

Funding arrangements for students are reviewed annually ahead of the start of each academic year.

■ **NHS: Pagers**

John Glen:

[\[13429\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he is taking steps to end the use of pagers in the NHS.

Karin Smyth:

We are taking steps to improve our NHS through the development of a 10-year plan. One of the big shifts for this plan is transforming the NHS from analogue to digital.

NHS staff should have access to the right technology to enable them to do their job to the best of their ability. Technology moves on and older equipment such as fax machines and pagers must be replaced with tech that is fit for purpose. However, some pagers will remain as NHS trusts are allowed to keep some pagers for emergency situations, such as when Wi-Fi fails or when other forms of communication are unavailable.

■ Palliative Care: Staffordshire**Adam Jogee:**[\[13875\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of palliative care services available to people in (a) Newcastle-under-Lyme and (b) Staffordshire.

Stephen Kinnock:

Integrated care boards (ICBs) are responsible for the commissioning of palliative and end of life care services, to meet the needs of their local populations. To support ICBs in this duty, NHS England has published statutory guidance and service specifications.

Additionally, NHS England has developed a palliative and end of life care dashboard, which brings together all relevant local data in one place. The dashboard helps commissioners understand the palliative and end of life care needs of those their local population, including the ability to filter the available information, such as by deprivation, thereby enabling ICBs to put plans in place to address and track the improvement of health inequalities.

The Government is determined to shift more healthcare out of hospitals and into the community, to ensure that patients and their families receive personalised care in the most appropriate setting, and palliative and end of life care services will have a big role to play in that shift.

■ Parkinson's Disease: Health Professions**Sammy Wilson:**[\[14048\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to include steps to (a) grow and (b) upskill the Parkinson's specialist workforce in the (i) ten year and (ii) long-term workforce plan.

Karin Smyth:

The 10-Year Health Plan will set out how we will deliver a National Health Service that is fit for the future, with a better service for everyone, regardless of condition or service area. We expect that the long-term workforce plan will need to be updated to reflect that plan, so that we train the staff we need to ensure that all patients are cared for by the right professional, when and where they need it.

■ Patients: Homelessness**Mike Amesbury:** [\[13816\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the (a) number of homeless people discharged from hospital to the street and (b) average readmission rates of people discharged from hospital to the street in the last (i) three months, (ii) six months and (iii) 12 months.

Stephen Kinnock:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave on 29 October 2024 to Question [10122](#).

Mike Amesbury: [\[13818\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of its guidance on Discharging people at risk of or experiencing homelessness published with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on 26 January 2024.

Stephen Kinnock:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave on 28 October 2024 to Question [10124](#).

■ Pregnancy: Mental Health Services**Liam Conlon:** [\[13279\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of access to maternal mental health services.

Stephen Kinnock:

People with mental health issues are not getting the support or care they deserve or need, which is why we will fix the system to ensure we give mental health the same attention and focus as physical health, and that people can be confident in accessing high quality mental health support when they need it. We will recruit an additional 8,500 mental health workers to reduce delays and provide faster treatment, which will also help ease pressure on hospitals.

NHS England's three-year delivery plan for maternity and neonatal services commits to offering all women a personalised care and support plan, considering physical health, mental health, and social complexities, with an updated risk assessment at every contact.

Specialist perinatal mental health services are available in all 42 integrated care system (ICS) areas of England. Maternal mental health services are available in 40 of the 42 ICS areas in England, and the last two are being supported by NHS England to ensure they are up and running as soon as possible. There are currently 19 Mother and Baby Units across England, with 153 operational beds.

■ Prisons: Health Services

Carla Denyer:

[\[12006\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 17 October 2024 to Question 8297 on Prisons: Food and Prescription Drugs, what steps he is taking to monitor the adequacy of (a) suicide prevention provision, (b) palliative care, (c) medical emergency care and (d) mental health care in prisons; and whether she has made an assessment of the adequacy of those steps.

Stephen Kinnock:

NHS England, via the regional health and justice teams, has regular meetings with prison healthcare providers to ensure the quality of the services that are provided. These are also supplemented with local partnership boards where governors, commissioners, and providers meet to discuss any issues, risks, and areas of concern. This could include the number of prisoners who are currently under an Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork approach where there is a risk of self-harm, and the overall healthcare provision, including any issues around enablement.

The Dying Well in Custody Framework and supporting self-assessment framework describes a set of national standards for local adoption, and provides a tool for a local multi-disciplinary approach to providing agreed standards of palliative and end of life care to people in prison.

■ Prostate Cancer: Diagnosis

Clive Jones:

[\[14424\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve early diagnosis for prostate cancer.

Andrew Gwynne:

Prostate cancer patients are waiting too long for a diagnosis and treatment. We will improve cancer survival rates and hit all National Health Service cancer waiting time targets so no patient waits longer than they should.

We will find the best way to screen for prostate cancer. The Department is investing £16 million towards the Prostate Cancer UK-led TRANSFORM screening trial seeking to find ways to catch prostate cancer in men as early as possible.

Furthermore, we will support the NHS to transform diagnostic services by providing approximately £1.5 billion of capital funding in 2025/26 for new surgical hubs and diagnostic scanners, to build capacity for over 30,000 more procedures and 1.25 million diagnostic tests. £70 million will be invested on new radiotherapy machines, to improve cancer treatment.

■ Prostate Cancer: Screening

Clive Jones:

[\[14422\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support the national prostate cancer screening programme.

Andrew Gwynne:

There is currently no national prostate cancer screening programme. This is because it is not recommended by the UK National Screening Committees (UK NSC) due to the inaccuracy of the current best test, called the Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA). A PSA-based screening programme could harm some men, as many would be diagnosed with a cancer that would not have caused them problems during their life. This would lead to additional tests and treatments which can also have harmful side effects, for instance sexual dysfunction and incontinence.

The UK NSC is carrying out an evidence review for prostate cancer screening, which includes different potential ways of screening the whole population from 40 years of age onwards, and targeted screening programmes aimed at groups of men identified as being at higher-than-average risk, such as those with a family history, carriers of the BRCA2 gene mutation, and based on ethnicity.

Public Health: Finance**Cat Smith:**[\[14641\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to announce (a) allocations of public health grants to local authorities and (b) the length of the funding cycle; and if he will take steps to ensure that local authorities have adequate notice of public health grants.

Andrew Gwynne:

We will publish local authority public health grant allocations for 2025/26 in due course, with the aim of giving local authorities as much notice as possible to plan.

We will aim to confirm future multi-year allocations later in 2025, following the next phase of the Spending Review in spring.

Social Services: Audit**Max Wilkinson:**[\[14386\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to undertake a national audit of care needs.

Stephen Kinnock:

Local authorities are responsible for assessing individuals' care and support needs and, where eligible, for meeting those needs. Where individuals do not meet the eligibility threshold, they can get support from their local authority to make their own arrangements for care services, as set out in the Care Act 2014.

The Government is committed to building a consensus on the long-term reform needed to build a National Care Service that meets the needs of older people and working age disabled adults.

■ Social Services: Finance

David Taylor:

[\[13085\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of trends in the level of funding in his Department's statistics entitled Adult Social Care Activity and Finance Report, England, 2023-24, published on 31 October 2024.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Adult Social Care Activity Report is published annually by NHS England. This statistics publication is the main data source for our analysis of adult social care expenditure. It includes statistics about overall levels of spending and breaks these down by setting, primary support reason, and age group. It also includes statistics about the unit costs of different types of adult social care.

■ Social Services: Rural Areas

Edward Morello:

[\[13988\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take through social care reforms to help (a) reduce waiting times for and (b) increase access to care services in rural areas.

Edward Morello:

[\[13989\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department plans to take to ensure that people in (a) West Dorset constituency and (b) other rural areas receive equitable access to social care support.

Edward Morello:

[\[13990\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to improve access to social care in underserved regions where the amount of care providers is lower per capita.

Stephen Kinnock:

Local authorities are responsible for assessing individuals' care and support needs and, where eligible, for meeting those needs. Where individuals do not meet the eligibility threshold, they can get support from their local authorities in making their own arrangements for care services, as set out in the Care Act 2014. Local authorities have a further duty to shape their care markets and commission a diverse range of care and support services that enable people to access quality care.

The majority of grant funding for adult social care is distributed to local authorities using the Adult Social Care Relative Needs Formula. This is designed to account for factors that affect the differences in the need for, and cost of, adult social care services that are outside of local authorities' control, including population, income and wealth, informal care support, wages and prices, and population sparsity.

We recognise that there are challenges in adult social care. Lord Darzi's report indicated a growing gap between requests and those receiving publicly funded care,

and some people are waiting too long to get the care they need. Long-term reform is needed in adult social care, and we will work with the sector to create a sustainable care system across all constituencies that supports people to live independent and dignified lives.

In the short term, the Government is providing at least £600 million of new grant funding for social care in 2025/26, as part of the broader estimated real-terms uplift to core local government spending power of approximately 3.2%. We will set out further details at the Local Government Finance Settlement.

In addition, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) local authority assessments consider the performance of the delivery of Care Act 2014 duties. If the CQC identifies that a local authority has failed or is failing its functions to an acceptable standard, my Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has powers to intervene. The CQC has published twelve local authority ratings and reports.

■ UK Foundation Programme

Tim Roca:

[\[14153\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the (a) adequacy of the UK Foundation Programme allocation process and (b) potential impact of changes to the UK Foundation Programme allocation process on levels of satisfaction among applicants in 2023.

Karin Smyth:

The allocation process for the UK Foundation Programme this year was changed to a Preference Informed Allocation method. This new process saw applicants being given a computer-generated rank and the removal of the requirement to sit the Situational Judgement Test. The move to the new system aimed to address concerns about the previous system, including that it was perceived as unfair and stressful for applicants, and that there was lack of standardisation within and across schools. This change was based on extensive stakeholder engagement by the four statutory education bodies in the United Kingdom.

When confirming the move to the new system last year, Health Education England, now part of NHS England, set out that once implemented it would be kept under constant review to make sure it is working well for applicants.

All 9,702 eligible applicants for the 2024 Foundation Programme were allocated to a Foundation School, with 75% of those applicants getting their first preference. This is an improvement on last year when 8,655 applicants were placed and 71% got their first preference.

HOME OFFICE**■ Asylum and Undocumented Migrants: Government Assistance****Rupert Lowe:****[13881]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of (a) asylum seekers and (b) undocumented migrants were eligible for support under (i) Section (A) 95 and (B) 98 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 and (ii) Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 in each of the last ten years; and if she will make an estimate of the total cost to the public purse of that support in the same period.

Dame Angela Eagle:

As has long been the case, the Home Office has a statutory obligation to provide accommodation support to asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute before their claim is decided and those without a valid claim can be removed. By clearing the backlog and increasing removals of those with no right to stay, we can end the use of asylum hotels.

Data on the number of asylum seekers in receipt of support, can be found within the Asy_D09 tab for our most recent stats release: [Immigration system statistics data tables - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-data-tables)[\(opens in a new tab\)](#) [\(opens in a new tab\)](#).

The Home Office publishes information on asylum expenditure in the Home Office Annual Report and Accounts at [HO annual reports and accounts - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/home-office-annual-reports-and-accounts)[\(opens in a new tab\)](#)[\(opens in a new tab\)](#).

The Home Office does not have, and therefore cannot discharge, duties under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989. It is for the local authority where an unaccompanied child is located to consider its duties under the Children's Act 1989.

■ Asylum: Hotels**Sir John Hayes:****[13734]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of asylum seekers being accommodated in hotels are awaiting a decision on their application by (a) nationality, (b) sex and (c) age range.

Dame Angela Eagle:

Data on the number of asylum seekers in receipt of support by nationality, can be found within the Asy_D09 tab for our most recent stats release: [Immigration system statistics data tables - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-data-tables)[\(opens in a new tab\)](#) [\(opens in a new tab\)](#).

■ Asylum: Rented Housing**Sir John Hayes:****[13735]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many properties her Department has rented for the temporary housing of asylum seekers awaiting a decision on their claim for asylum since 5 July 2024.

Dame Angela Eagle:

As was the case under the previous government, the Home Office does not rent properties; it discharges its statutory duties for accommodating destitute asylum seekers through a contract with three main accommodation providers, which was agreed by previous administrations. The providers are responsible for sourcing and acquiring accommodation to meet demand and the estate is subject to daily change.

■ British Nationality: Assessments**Oliver Ryan:**[\[13975\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 1 November 2024 to Question 10959 on British Nationality: Assessments, what her planned timescale is for reviewing the Life in the UK handbook; and if she will take steps to introduce practical citizenship classes to support the integration process.

Seema Malhotra:

The Life in the UK handbook is reviewed periodically to ensure it remains up to date and correct. The current impression of the handbook, published in 2023, was reviewed earlier this year. We aim to publish the next impression, with amendments, before the end of 2024. We expect to finalise the next periodic review of the handbook towards the end of 2025.

The Home Office works with its commercial partners to ensure a range of learning materials are available to support those who wish to study for the Life in the UK test. These include a mobile app, an e-learning zone and study guides available in digital and paper formats.

■ Fire and Rescue Services: Screening**Munira Wilson:**[\[13852\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, which fire brigade services have carried out blood tests on firefighters for (a) cancer and (b) health monitoring purposes; and how much does it cost to carry out such blood tests.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Fire and rescue authorities are responsible for the health and wellbeing of the firefighters they employ, and so it is for those authorities to take the appropriate action to protect their workforce.

As such the decision on whether to carry out blood testing is for individual fire and rescue services to take, and the government does not hold any central data on the results of those tests.

■ Immigration: Detainees**Olivia Blake:**[\[13813\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 23 October 2024 to Question 9238 on Immigration: Detainees, whether the Adults at Risk

review will consider the (a) Immigration (Guidance on Detention of Vulnerable Persons) Regulations 2024 and (b) findings and recommendations of the Brook House Inquiry.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The scope of the Adults at Risk review includes the Immigration (Guidance on Detention of Vulnerable Persons) Regulations 2024.

The review forms part of the response to one of the recommendations of the Brook House Inquiry (Recommendation 9: Review of the operation of Rule 35 of the Detention Centre Rules 2001). The review will not cover all areas of the Brook House Inquiry and will not reassess the findings and recommendations made.

■ **Knives: Sales**

Mr Richard Holden:

[14485]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to prevent the sale of dangerous knives online.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Government is committed to strengthening the law around online sales which is why a rapid review is being conducted into the online sale and delivery of knives and how controls can be strengthened. The review is being taken forward by Commander Stephen Clayman, National Police Chiefs' Council lead for knife crime, at the invitation of the Home Secretary.

The Government has a manifesto commitment and is consulting on proposals to introduce personal liability measures on senior executives of online platforms and marketplaces who fail to take action to remove illegal content relating to knives and offensive weapons. The consultation will run for 4 weeks until 11 December 2024.

On 13 November 2024 we also launched a public consultation about the legal definition of Ninja swords. This consultation will also run until 11 December 2024.

Ninja swords: legal definition and defences:

www.gov.uk/government/consultations/ninja-swords-legal-definition-and-defences

Sale of knives: executive sanctions

www.gov.uk/government/consultations/sale-of-knives-executive-sanctions

■ **Nationality: British Overseas Territories**

Ruth Cadbury:

[13790]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the existing rights for individuals holding British Overseas Citizen status.

Seema Malhotra:

British overseas citizens (BOCs) are subject to UK immigration control, but are eligible for British passports and other consular services.

Many BOCs will have rights, including of residence and travel, that stem from the other nationalities that they hold. BOCs who do not hold, and have not voluntarily lost, any other nationality are able to apply to register as British citizens under section 4B of the British Nationality Act 1981. BOCs are also able to apply to register as British citizens after 5 years of living in the UK, and meeting certain residence requirements under section 4(2) of the British Nationality Act 1981.

■ **Police: Finance**

Edward Morello: [\[13964\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will undertake a review of police funding allocations.

Dame Diana Johnson:

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

■ **Rural Areas: Finance**

Edward Morello: [\[13963\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the potential impact of the current funding model on rural constituencies.

Edward Morello: [\[13965\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps the Department is taking to ensure rural police forces receive adequate funding to meet increasing demands in areas with low-population density.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The majority of public funding for police forces in England and Wales is provided by the Home Office and is agreed by the House of Commons on an annual basis at the police funding settlement. Each year the Home Office produces a Police Grant Report which is published and voted on by Parliament and contains grant funding allocations for the following year to be paid out under the Police Act 1996.

The funding formula used for distributing Home Office Police Main Grant divides funds between different activities that the police undertake. A portion of total funding is also distributed according to population sparsity, to address the specific needs of rural forces. A copy of the most recent Grant Report for 2024-25 has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses and can be found online:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65b913a1ee7d49000d9849d4/E03063051 - Police Grant Report England and Wales 24-25 Accessible.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65b913a1ee7d49000d9849d4/E03063051_-_Police_Grant_Report_England_and_Wales_24-25_Accessible.pdf)

As announced at the Autumn budget 2024, the settlement will increase the core government grant for police forces in 2025-26 and help support frontline policing levels across the country, force level funding allocations for the financial year 2025-26 will be confirmed at the forthcoming police funding settlement. Funding for future years beyond 2025-26 will be set out in phase 2 of the Spending Review.

■ Sham Marriage: Deportation

Shivani Raja:

[\[14530\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that those who exploit immigration marriage fraud to gain entry to the UK are (a) identified and (b) removed from the country.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Government takes abuse of the spouse and partner immigration routes very seriously and is clear that family migration must be based on a genuine and subsisting marriage or relationship.

The marriage referral and investigation scheme, introduced across the UK under the Immigration Act 2014, requires that all proposed marriages and civil partnerships where one or both parties could gain an immigration advantage from it are referred to the Home Office. Under this scheme, where we have reasonable grounds to suspect a sham relationship, the marriage notice period will be extended to allow for further investigation, and for enforcement or casework action to be taken where appropriate.

The Home Office focuses its efforts on disrupting facilitators as well as prosecuting individuals involved in sham marriages and civil partnerships and will consider refusal or cancellation of permission to stay, or removal, following any determination that a relationship is a sham.

Part 9 of the Immigration Rules provides specific grounds for the refusal or cancellation of permission to enter or stay on the basis of any involvement in a sham marriage or sham civil partnership, providing a more robust and consistent framework against which immigration applications are assessed, and reflecting the seriousness of this type of abuse.

Where appropriate and proportionate, enforcement and removal action will be taken. The removal pathways following a sham marriage determination include administrative removal under Section 10 (of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999) and deportation on public policy or conducive grounds.

■ Shoplifting: Finance

Alex Mayer:

[\[13902\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how her Department plans to allocate the funding to tackle shoplifting announced in the Autumn Budget 2024.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Shop theft is at a record high. This Government is taking strong action by removing the threshold for shop theft under £200 and making it a specific criminal offence for assaults on shopworkers.

As announced in the Autumn Budget, and building on current Home Office funding, we will provide the following additional funding to help tackle retail crime:

- £5 million over three years to continue to fund a specialist analysis team within Opal, the National Policing Intelligence Unit for serious organised acquisitive crime, to crack down on organised gangs targeting retailers;
 - £2 million over three years to the National Business Crime Centre, a resource for police and businesses to learn, share and support each other to prevent and combat crime; and
- £100k in 2025-26 for the National Police Chiefs' Council for further training on prevention tactics.

■ **Undocumented Migrants: Curfews**

Rupert Lowe: [\[13878\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a curfew on irregular migrants housed in (a) hotels and (b) other types of accommodation.

Dame Angela Eagle:

I refer the Hon. Member to PQ 13616.

■ **Undocumented Migrants: Health Services**

Rupert Lowe: [\[13876\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the total cost has been of providing private healthcare to irregular migrants in each year since 2018.

Dame Angela Eagle:

Asylum seekers are not provided with private healthcare.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ **Council Housing: Mould and Rodents**

Andrew Rosindell: [\[13740\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she has taken with local authorities to help prevent (a) mould-related illnesses and (b) rodent infestations in housing provided by local authorities.

Matthew Pennycook:

I refer the Hon Member to the answer I gave to Question UIN [11562](#) on 6 November 2024.

■ **Councillors: Conduct**

Jo White: [\[13871\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what guidance her Department provides on the potential sanctions available to local authorities in instances when councillors are found to have breached an authority's code of conduct;

and whether she plans to re-establish the Standards Board for England with sanction powers in including (a) suspension and (b) disqualification from office for serious breaches.

Jim McMahon:

The Government considers that the current local government standards regime is broadly ineffectual, inconsistently applied, and lacking in adequate powers to effectively sanction members found in serious breach of their codes of conduct.

We are actively considering options to strengthen the standards regime for local government and provide councils with more effective means to address serious misconduct by elected members, including a proposal to allow for the suspension of members who violate codes of conduct. We will be consulting with local authorities, sector representative bodies, and other key stakeholders in due course to ensure a wide range of views are heard.

■ **Homelessness**

Grahame Morris:

[\[14450\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 14 November 2024 to Question 13192 on Homelessness, if she will publish her letter of 11 November 2024 addressed to all local authority Chief Executives in England about out-of-area accommodation placements.

Rushanara Ali:

As set out in my answer to Question UIN [13192](#), on 11 November 2024 the Deputy Prime Minister wrote to all local authority Chief Executives in England about out-of-area accommodation placements, including temporary accommodation and housing offers to end a homelessness duty.

The letter referred to section 208 of the Housing Act 1996, reminding local authorities that they are required by law to notify the receiving local authority of any out-of-area placement and that this should be happening in every case. It also highlighted the importance of considering safeguarding arrangements when placing households out of area, including relevant consultation with Children's Services. The letter requested that Chief Executives personally assure themselves that these notifications are happening.

■ **Infrastructure: Departmental Coordination**

Dave Robertson:

[\[13934\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that planned (a) national and (b) local infrastructure is coordinated to ensure minimal disruption to local communities from (i) roadworks and (ii) traffic delays.

Matthew Pennycook:

The government is committed to supporting the effective planning and management of road works to mitigate disruption. Local highways departments play a crucial role in

maintaining and managing the road network within their local areas during development to minimise disruption. As set out in national planning guidance, developers are encouraged to engage with local issues at the earliest opportunity during the application process for national and local infrastructure projects to identify potential impacts of road closures.

■ Local Government Finance

Edward Morello: [\[13987\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make it her policy to review the funding formula for local authorities to increase the distribution of funding provided to communities in rural areas, in the context of levels costs for providing services in sparsely populated areas.

Jim McMahon:

After years of delaying much needed fair funding reform, we 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.

■ Local Government Services: Rural Areas

Edward Morello: [\[13986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to support local authorities in sparsely populated regions, in the context of varying levels of per capita costs for delivering services.

Jim McMahon:

We have announced £1.3 billion of new grant funding in 2025/26 for local government to deliver core services, of which at least £600 million is for social care.

After years of delaying much needed fair funding reform, we 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.

■ Local Government: Hertfordshire

Daisy Cooper: [\[14489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether (a) Ministers and (b) officials from her Department have had recent discussions with Hertfordshire County Council on the two-tier system of local government in that county.

Jim McMahon:

There has been no specific discussion on this topic. The department is always open to hearing from councils about government in their local area.

■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: HOPE not hate

Nick Timothy: [\[13794\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 22 October 2024 to Question 8195 on Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: HOPE not hate, what meetings (a) special advisors and (b) junior civil servants have had with representatives of Hope Not Hate since the general election.

Alex Norris:

(a) I refer the honourable member to the answer to Question UIN [8195](#) on 22 October 2024. (b) I refer the honourable member to the answer to Question UIN [12772](#) on 15 November 2024.

■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Written Questions

Siân Berry: [\[13958\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when she plans to reply to Question 2676 on Council Housing: Finance tabled by the hon. Member for Brighton Pavilion on 30 July 2024.

Matthew Pennycook:

I refer the Hon Member to the answer to Question UIN [2676](#) on 13 November 2024.

Siân Berry: [\[13959\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when she plans to answer Question 2677 on Right to Buy Scheme tabled by the hon. Member for Brighton Pavilion on 30 July 2024.

Matthew Pennycook:

I refer the Hon Member to the answer to Question UIN [2677](#) on 13 November 2024.

■ Planning: Carbon Emissions

Tom Hayes: [\[13857\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will have discussions with the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero on the potential impact of planning policy on target reductions in the UK carbon account, in the context of section 1 of the Climate Change Act 2008.

Matthew Pennycook:

Climate change is one of the greatest challenges facing the world today, and the planning system can play a powerful role in helping to mitigate and adapt to its effects. Our recent consultation on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework consultation sought views on how best to reflect climate change adaptation and mitigation in strengthened planning policies. The consultation closed on the 24 September and officials in my department are currently analysing responses with a view to publishing a government response before the end of the year.

■ **Planning: Reform****John Milne:**[\[13994\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to her Department's closed consultation entitled Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system, updated 24 September 2024, what her planned timetable is for publishing a revised National Planning Policy Framework; and whether she plans to proceed with the recommendation in paragraph 20.

Matthew Pennycook:

The consultation on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework closed on the 24 September and officials in my department are currently analysing responses with a view to publishing a government response before the end of the year.

■ **Second Homes: Council Tax****Rachel Gilmour:**[\[13976\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of the council tax levy for second homes on the chalet industry; and whether chalets will qualify as second homes for the purpose of council tax.

Jim McMahon:

From April 2025 councils will have the power to charge a discretionary premium of up to 100% on dwellings which are unoccupied and substantially furnished. The Government recognises there may be circumstances where it may not be appropriate for a premium to apply. That is why the Government is introducing exceptions to premiums from April 2025. Further information on these exceptions is available in: [guidance](#).

JUSTICE**■ Magistrates' Courts: Closures****Grahame Morris:**[\[14449\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many magistrates courts closed in each year since 2010.

Heidi Alexander:

The table below shows the number of Magistrates' Courts that have permanently closed in each financial year (FY) since 2010/11. The figures do not include integrations, where workload remained in the local area by transferring to a building in close proximity, or courts that are temporarily closed.

FINANCIAL YEAR	MAGISTRATES' COURTS CLOSED
2010/11	1
2011/12	84
2012/13	5
2013/14	4
2014/15	5
2015/16	6
2016/17	40
2017/18	12
2018/19	4
2019/20	4
2020/21	0
2021/22	0
2022/23	0
2023/24	0
2024/25	0

■ Parole Board: Buildings**Sir Ashley Fox:**[\[13968\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many individual desks were occupied in each of the Parole Board's headquarter offices in the most recent four weeks for which

figures are available; and how many staff assigned to each of those offices attended the office in person on average in the same period.

Alex Davies-Jones:

The Parole Board is a nationally dispersed organisation with its headquarters located at 10 South Colonnade. As public servants, the Parole Board is responsible for determining the level of monitoring required on office attendance in accordance with its own HR policies and is not required to report on this to the Ministry of Justice.

■ **Parole Board: Civil Servants**

Sir Ashley Fox:

[\[13969\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many civil servants are assigned to work in the Parole Board headquarter office; and how many individual desks are available in that office.

Alex Davies-Jones:

Parole Board staff are public servants, not civil servants. The Parole Board has 54 desks allocated to it at 10 South Colonnade, London, part of the core Ministry of Justice estate.

■ **Parole Board: Remote Working**

Sir Ashley Fox:

[\[13967\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Answer of 18 September 2024 to Question HL835 on Government Departments: Remote Working, what the requirement is for Parole Board staff to physically attend the office, in terms of average days attending across the working week.

Alex Davies-Jones:

Parole Board staff are not civil servants. As public servants, the Parole Board is independent and sets its own policies on office attendance.

■ **Prisoner Escorts: Crown Court**

Karl Turner:

[\[14292\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 11 November 2024 to Question 12397 on Prisoners Escort, how many penalties for late delivery of a prisoner to the Crown Court were issued in (a) 2024 and (b) 2023.

Karl Turner:

[\[14303\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 11 November 2024 to Question 12397 on Prisoners Escort, how many penalties for late delivery of a prisoner to the Magistrates Court were issued in (a) 2024 and (b) 2023.

Karl Turner:

[\[14304\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 11 November 2024 to Question 12397 on Prisoners Escort, what the average time for a late delivery of a prisoner is to (a) Crown Court and (b) Magistrates Court.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Delays attributable to prisoner escort supplier failure are calculated from the point at which court proceedings are ready to commence, provided this is within the agreed court start times and the delay is greater than 15 minutes. Penalties (known as service credits) are applicable for every subsequent 15 minutes of delay, or part thereof, whereupon the supplier is penalised for a full 15 minutes.

The following information relates to application of service credits for late delivery of a prisoner to either the Crown Court or a magistrates' court.

In 2023, out of 299,470 journeys to court undertaken by the Prisoner Escort and Custody Service, 484 instances of supplier failure resulted in service credits being paid by suppliers.

In 2024, up to 31 October, out of 274,606 journeys to court, there were 228 instances of supplier failure that resulted in service credits being paid by suppliers. 99.92% of all journeys arrive on time.

As delays are recorded in periods of 15 minutes, it is not possible to calculate a precise average length of delay.

The breakdown requested between the Crown Court and magistrates' courts is not available, and the work needed to provide it could not be undertaken without incurring disproportionate cost.

■ Young Offender Institutions: Labour Turnover

Ben Goldsborough:

[\[13890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the employee turnover rate in (a) young offenders institutions and (b) Category (i) A, (ii) B, (iii) C and (iv) D estates was in each of the last 10 financial years.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Data relating to the leaving rates in prisons, broken down by the financial years and prison categories requested, has been provided in table 1 (below).

Table 1: Underlying leaving rate of permanent staff, by prison category - financial years 2014/15 to 2023/24

FINANCIAL YEAR	CATEGORY A	CATEGORY B	CATEGORY C	CATEGORY D	YCS
2014/15	6.0%	8.8%	8.4%	7.8%	11.1%
2015/16	4.9%	9.6%	8.5%	7.8%	10.6%

FINANCIAL YEAR	CATEGORY A	CATEGORY B	CATEGORY C	CATEGORY D	YCS
2016/17	6.1%	10.5%	9.6%	7.0%	11.0%
2017/18	6.3%	11.1%	9.7%	7.6%	10.5%
2018/19	7.5%	12.0%	11.5%	6.7%	9.4%
2019/20	7.9%	13.2%	12.1%	7.7%	11.4%
2020/21	7.7%	9.9%	9.7%	7.6%	7.8%
2021/22	10.4%	15.7%	15.0%	10.2%	12.2%
2022/23	11.9%	15.5%	14.2%	10.5%	17.0%
2023/24	9.6%	13.4%	12.7%	10.3%	17.3%

Notes

1. Movements due to machinery of Government changes or due to staff transferring to or from the private sector as a result of changes in the management of establishments are not included in these tables.
2. Permanent staff are those with a permanent contract of employment with HMPPS.
3. The leavers figures relate to those who have left HMPPS but do not include voluntary early departure or redundancy.
4. Prisons assigned to the category they were on 31 March 2024 or the category they were when they closed. Does not include prisons in the Women's Estate.
5. Coverage is public sector prisons in England and Wales.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Business Rates: Northern Ireland

Alex Easton:

[\[14438\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that businesses in Northern Ireland receive the same rate relief support as their counterparts in other regions of the United Kingdom, including the recent 40% rate relief scheme announced for high street businesses in England.

Hilary Benn:

Business relief support is devolved to the Northern Ireland Executive. The Northern Ireland Executive's Spending Review settlement for 2025-26 is the largest in real terms of any settlement since devolution.

The Northern Ireland Executive is receiving £18.2 billion in 2025-26, including an additional £1.5 billion through the operation of the Barnett formula and £760 million targeted funding, with £670 million resource and £90 million capital, including for the 2024 restoration financial package, historic funding packages, and additional security funding.

It is for the Executive to allocate this record funding in a way that delivers effective public services and provides better outcomes for people.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[\[901341\]](#)

What discussions he has had with the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency on how to accelerate the acceptance of data generated in non-animal methods for drug safety decision making.

Feryal Clark:

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) attended a ministerial roundtable on accelerating the adoption of alternatives to using animals for drug development earlier this year.

Becky Gittins:

[\[901342\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he is taking to tackle intimate image abuse online.

Feryal Clark:

Tackling intimate image abuse, and violence against women and girls, is a priority for this government.

We made changes to the Online Safety Act to strengthen online platforms' duties for intimate image abuse.

These broadened the scope of intimate image abuse that providers need to address under the Act.

The Government's manifesto included a commitment to ban the creation of sexually explicit deepfakes. We are working to identify the most appropriate legislative vehicle for this change.

Steve Race:

[\[901343\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what progress he has made on the roll-out of gigabit-capable broadband in urban areas.

Chris Bryant:

Rollout of gigabit-capable broadband in urban areas is strong but there is still more to do, with coverage at 84%

This is based on data collected up to January 2024 and is the most recent data we have breaking down coverage by urban and rural.

Government and Ofcom have deployed a range of measures to support urban roll-out. For instance, by establishing regulation to allow infrastructure sharing between providers, and working with local authorities to overcome planning barriers.

Alan Gemmell:

[901344]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he is taking with Cabinet colleagues to support the growth of the life sciences manufacturing sector.

Feryal Clark:

At the Budget, the Chancellor unveiled the Life Sciences Innovative Manufacturing Fund, which will provide up to £520 million to secure major life sciences manufacturing investments across the UK. The scheme is now open to applications.

My Department is working across government on the upcoming Life Sciences sector plan under the Industrial Strategy, the 10-year health plan, and the Innovation and Adoption Strategy, which will detail the government's approach to this critical sector.

Steve Darling:

[901345]

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

Chris Bryant:

Digital inclusion is a priority for this Government and we have already set up a Digital Inclusion and Skills Unit to ensure that everyone has the access, skills, support and confidence to engage in our modern digital society, whatever their circumstances.

This country has been without a digital inclusion strategy for 10 years, and during that time other countries have leapt ahead of us. This Government is determined that that will no longer be the case. I hope to say more on this soon.

Louise Jones:

[901346]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what progress he has made on the roll-out of gigabit-capable broadband in rural areas.

Chris Bryant:

Latest independent data shows that over 85% of UK premises can access a gigabit-capable connection and we are committed to extending this to nationwide coverage by 2030 through Project Gigabit.

We will be taking steps to remove barriers to roll-out including trialling more flexible street-works permits next year; and I have been working with industry to secure commitments to greater sharing of ducts and poles.

Mr Alex Barros-Curtis:

[901347]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps his Department is taking to help increase levels of innovation in Cardiff West constituency.

Feryal Clark:

The Spending Review supports the UK's R&D ambitions, with total Government investment in R&D rising to a record £20.4 billion in 2025/26

This will build on the investments we have already made in the Cardiff region such as £25 million through the Strength in Places Fund to build on regional strengths in advanced semiconductor materials and manufacturing, and £22 million to accelerate growth in the Cardiff Capital Region's media sector.

■ 4G and 5G: Bedfordshire**Alex Mayer:**[\[13894\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps his Department is taking to help improve (a) 4G and (b) 5G coverage in Bedfordshire.

Chris Bryant:

This Government wants all areas of the UK to benefit from good quality mobile coverage. Our ambition is for all populated areas, including Bedfordshire, 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 in place to support investment and competition. As part of this work, the Government intends to reform the planning system to make it easier to build and deploy digital infrastructure.

■ 4G and 5G: Urban Areas**Dr Danny Chambers:**[\[14408\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps his Department is taking to help accelerate the rollout of (a) 4G and (b) 5G in (i) central Winchester and (ii) other urban areas with limited mobile data availability.

Chris Bryant:

This government wants all areas of the UK, including urban areas such as Winchester, to benefit from good quality mobile coverage. Our ambition is for all populated areas to have higher-quality standalone 5G by 2030, and to increase 4G coverage to 95% of the UK landmass by the end of 2025 through the Shared Rural Network programme.

This government is committed to ensuring we have the right policy and regulatory framework to support investment and competition. As part of this work, the Government intends to reform the planning system to make it easier to build and deploy digital infrastructure.

■ Broadband: Costs**Dr Danny Chambers:** [14409]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether his Department is taking steps to support people with the cost of full fibre to premises connections in commercially viable areas where providers (a) do not connect premises and (b) require substantial fees.

Chris Bryant:

The government does not support individuals with the cost of obtaining a full fibre connection in commercially viable areas. However, we have deployed a range of measures to support roll-out in commercially viable areas to make it as easy and as cost-effective as possible for operators to rollout their networks. For instance, we have worked with Ofcom to create regulation that facilitates infrastructure sharing between operators. We are also working with local authorities to overcome planning barriers

■ Digital Technology**Alex Mayer:** [13895]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a digital champion in each local authority area.

Chris Bryant:

The Government believes Digital Champions play a key role in advancing the digital connectivity agenda - and help local communities to realise the benefits advanced connectivity can bring. We strongly encourage local and combined authorities to appoint them as dedicated officers where possible.

We have set out more details on the role that Digital Champions can play within the Digital Connectivity Portal. The Portal is an extensive online resource providing best practice guidance helping local authorities to facilitate digital infrastructure deployment. It can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/digital-strategy-and-leadership#digital-champion>

■ Government Digital Service: Fujitsu**Mr Richard Holden:** [13823]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether his Department has made a recent assessment of (a) whether project objectives have been met and (b) the value for money of its contract with Fujitsu Services Ltd for the GDS Digital Service Platforms One Login project.

Feryal Clark:

The GOV.UK One Login programme is subject to regular scrutiny and reporting to assess and ensure project objectives have been met, including through the Government Major Projects Portfolio. The Infrastructure and Projects Authority has

provided positive reviews of GOV.UK One Login for the last three years. The programme is also working with the Evaluation Task Force to publish a comprehensive evaluation plan which will assess the programme's key objectives.

The [GOV.UK](#) One Login programme has not had a contract with Fujitsu Services Ltd.

The development of Emergency Alerts included a contract awarded to Fujitsu.

Emergency alerts is a mobile network based system for warning the public if there is a danger to life nearby and action to take to stay safe. The system is owned by COBR, Civil Contingencies Unit, with GDS maintaining authority for the product's development and managing the risks.

Fujitsu was awarded the contract WP2083, which was a compliant procurement run through the Crown Commercial Services framework (RM6100). In accordance with procurement regulations, a fair, open and transparent procurement process was conducted. A fair evaluation was completed and the award made to the supplier offering the best MEAT (Most Economically Advantageous Tender).

The contract with Fujitsu is currently in its Initial Term, which spans 36 months and is set to conclude on 09 October 2025. There is provision for an Extension Period of up to 12 months, subject to Cabinet Office Approval. The contract was agreed and signed by the Cabinet Office on 7th October 2022.

It is confirmed that Year 3 of the contract will proceed with Fujitsu as planned. The potential utilisation of the Extension Period remains under consideration, pending future decisions on ownership, funding, and operational structure.

A review of the contract's future beyond the Initial Term will be undertaken, accounting for evolving organisational needs and HMG best practice guidelines.

■ **Voice over Internet Protocol: Tiverton and Minehead**

Rachel Gilmour:

[\[13914\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of transitioning from analogue landline systems to a digitised service on (a) Tiverton and Minehead constituency and (b) other rural areas.

Chris Bryant:

The industry-led migration from analogue to digital landlines ("the PSTN migration") poses some specific risks for rural constituencies, for instance where areas may be more prone to power outages or lack mobile coverage. The Department is working with communications providers to ensure that they are mitigating these risks wherever possible, for example by encouraging the industry to provide improved power resilience to vulnerable customers.

Since the general election, the government has brought together communications providers, government departments, local government, telecare providers and water companies to ensure that the transition proceeds smoothly and stably. This has led to

a new Charters of Commitments signed by industry to ensure additional protections for vulnerable customers and for Critical National Infrastructure.

SCOTLAND

■ Manufacturing Industries: Scotland

Alison Taylor: [\[14226\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what estimate his Department has made of the potential impact of the Advanced Manufacturing Innovation District Scotland on regional economic growth in the next three financial years.

Ian Murray:

The Advanced Manufacturing and Innovation District for Scotland (AMIDS) is Scotland's home of manufacturing innovation, and forms an integral part of the £1bn UK and Scottish Government funded Glasgow City Region Deal. AMIDS is home to two world-class innovation centres - the National Manufacturing Institute Scotland and the Medicines Manufacturing Innovation Centre.

Since its establishment, AMIDS has already become home to world renowned names, including Boeing and Thermo Fisher, and with the landmark opening of the Renfrew Bridge, my department expects AMIDS to achieve even greater successes in delivering up to 10,000 new jobs across the River Clyde.

TRANSPORT

■ A39: Bypasses

Ben Maguire: [\[14267\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what her Department's planned timetable is for making a decision on the proposed A39 Camelford Bypass plans.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Government's Budget in October delivers increased investment in local transport, supporting everyday journeys and addressing poor connectivity within our towns and cities across the country. The Department's Major Road Network/ Large Local Majors programme, which includes the proposed A39 Camelford Bypass scheme, is now being reviewed in light of the Budget. Further details will be released in due course.

■ Department for Transport: Buildings

Sir Ashley Fox: [\[13966\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 23 October 2024 to Question 9280 on Department for Transport: Buildings, how many desks were occupied in her Department's headquarter office in the most recent four weeks for which

figures are available; and how many staff assigned to that workplace attended the office in person on average in the same period.

Mike Kane:

For the 4-week period from 7 October 2024 to 1 November 2024 a total of 21,710 desks were occupied in our London office against a maximum available desk capacity of 25,220.

In that same 4-week period 3,201 different Department for Transport staff attended our London office. It is not possible to determine how many staff assigned to our London building attended.

■ **Dual Carriageways: Norwich**

Terry Jermy:

[\[13982\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what her policy is on the potential provision of funding for dualling the Norwich Western Link.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Secretary of State for Transport has commissioned a review of the Department's capital portfolio which will inform the next phase of the cross-Government Spending Review. It is too early to say how this will affect the proposed Norwich Western Link, but the Department will be in touch with the promoter, when there is further information.

■ **Electric Vehicles: Charging Points**

Dr Simon Opher:

[\[14374\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if her Department will take steps to ensure that households that do not have driveways can access (a) on-street and (b) domestic EV charging infrastructure.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Government is dedicated to ensuring EV drivers can charge across the country, wherever they live. Through the Local EV Infrastructure Fund, local authorities in England are being supported to install tens of thousands of chargepoints.

For those without off-street parking, the Government also offers the Electric Vehicle Chargepoint Grant for Households with On-Street Parking. Eligible applicants can get up to £350 off the cost of installing a domestic chargepoint, when paired with a cross-pavement solution.

Going forward, the Government confirmed in the October 2024 Budget that it will be investing over £200 million in 2025-26 to accelerate EV chargepoint rollout, including funding to support local authorities to install on-street chargepoints across England.

■ London North Eastern Railway: WiFi**Chi Onwurah:** [\[14457\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 14 November 2024 to Question 13473 on London North Eastern Railway: WiFi, what period the most recent report covers; and whether that report is publicly available.

Mike Kane:

The Office of Rail and Road publishes complaints data on a quarterly basis for all rail operators. London North Eastern Railway also undertakes its own research to understand and respond to passenger needs. The latest Office of Rail and Road passenger complaints data is available on its website at the following link:

<https://dataportal.orr.gov.uk/statistics/passenger-experience/passenger-rail-service-complaints>

■ Railways: Electrification**Alex Mayer:** [\[13904\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment her Department has made of the potential use of discontinuous electrification as a means to decarbonise the rail network.

Mike Kane:

The Government expects electrification to play an important role in our programme to achieve our Net Zero 2050 target and improve the passenger experience.

Overhead Line Electrification will remain the best value for money option for some lines, for example where there is high speed, high volume of passenger trains, or high freight use; but other lines may represent better value for money by electrifying less and utilising hybrid electric and battery power trains. East West Rail has recently launched a non-statutory consultation which sets out a preference for discontinuous electrification and a final decision will be informed by the consultation responses.

Alex Mayer: [\[13906\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will publish her Department's criteria for prioritising rail routes for electrification.

Lilian Greenwood:

Electrification will play an important role in our programme to achieve our Net Zero 2050 target. Discontinuous electrification, as well as alternative technologies such as hydrogen, battery and bi-modes will also play a part. Which rail lines will be electrified will broadly depend on the most suitable technological choice and value for money. More widely, the Transport Secretary has stated that we want to move to a vision-led approach to planning infrastructure so that transport is an engine for social mobility and economic growth.

■ Railways: Suicide

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[13753\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to help prevent suicide on railway infrastructure.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Department is committed to working with the rail industry to reduce the number of deaths by suicide. Each rail operator is responsible for delivering a suicide prevention plan and maintaining accreditation to the independently assessed Safeguarding on Rail Scheme.

Their plan must include training of public-facing staff in suicide prevention, putting in place mitigation measures at stations and promoting avenues of help for vulnerable people at risk of suicide or self-harm.

The British Transport Police works in collaboration with its partners to ensure incidents are managed swiftly and people are treated with dignity. Network Rail has a long-standing relationship with The Samaritans, and funds the 'Small Talk Saves Lives' campaign. Since launching in 2017, the campaign has successfully raised awareness within railway stations and other public settings about the need to trust your instincts and start a simple conversation if you think someone might need help.

■ Travel: Northern Ireland

Claire Hanna:

[\[13830\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if her Department will take steps to increase (a) sustainable travel options and (b) (i) rail and (ii) sail provision between Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Mike Kane:

The UK ferry market predominantly operates on a private sector, commercial basis without government support or intervention. As such decisions on increased services is a matter for the relevant operators, and we note that there are multiple routing options for ferry access between Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The Government is considering options to decarbonise the domestic maritime sector which - alongside the expansion of the UK ETS to domestic maritime from 2026, will deliver more sustainable travel options between GB and NI.

The Northern Ireland rail network is fully devolved, operated by Translink and provided grant capital from Department for infrastructure.

TREASURY**■ Bank Services: Closures****Andrew Cooper:**[\[14514\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate her Department has made of the number of closures of (a) bank branches and (b) free-to-use ATMs in (i) Mid Cheshire constituency, (ii) Cheshire, (iii) and England in each of the last five years.

Tulip Siddiq:

The Government does not hold bank branch closure data for each of the last 5 years. However, according to consumer website Which?, Mid Cheshire constituency lost 35.7% of its branch network between January 2015 and September 2024, and has nine branches remaining. The operator of the UK's largest ATM network, LINK, publishes data on the number of ATMs across each parliamentary constituency, both free and pay to use. In the constituency of Mid Cheshire, LINK data identifies 50 free-to-use ATMs out of 57 in total across the constituency.

The Government understands the impact of bank branch closures on communities and the importance of face-to-face banking. It is committed to championing sufficient access for all as a priority, including those who are reliant on cash.

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. These hubs will provide small businesses and individuals who need face-to-face support with critical cash and in-person banking services. Over 80 banking hubs are already open and Cash Access UK, who oversee banking hub rollout, expect 100 hubs to be open by Christmas.

Furthermore, FCA guidance expects firms to carefully consider the impact of planned branch closures on their customers' everyday banking and cash access needs and put in place alternatives where reasonable. As well as banking hubs, alternative options to access everyday banking services can be via telephone banking, through digital means such as mobile or online banking and via the Post Office.

With regards to access to cash, the Financial Conduct Authority has recently assumed regulatory responsibility for protecting access to cash. On 18 September, it introduced new rules which protect free access to cash for personal customers. These 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.

■ Buildings: VAT**Tom Hayes:**[\[13909\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make it her policy to review the VAT framework to reduce incentives towards (a) demolition and (b) rebuilding of housing.

Tom Hayes:

[\[13913\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make it her policy to remove VAT for building refurbishment works when energy performance targets are met to incentivise retrofit.

Llinos Medi:

[\[13919\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of zero rating for VAT buildings retrofitted to (a) Passivhaus and (b) AECB standards.

James Murray:

This Government is committed to improving the quality and sustainability of our housing stock, through improvements such as low carbon heating, insulation, solar panels, and batteries. This will be vital to making the UK more energy resilient and meeting our 2050 Net Zero commitment.

Installations of qualifying energy-saving materials in residential accommodation and buildings used solely for a charitable purpose benefit from a temporary VAT zero rate until March 2027, after which they will revert to the reduced rate of VAT at five per cent.

VAT is a broad-based tax on consumption and the 20 per cent standard rate applies to most goods and services. VAT is the UK's second largest tax forecast to raise £171 billion in 2024/25. Taxation is a vital source of revenue that helps to fund vital public services.

One of the key considerations when assessing a new VAT relief is whether the cost saving is likely to be passed on to consumers. Evidence suggests that businesses only partially pass on any savings from lower VAT rates. In some cases, reliefs do not represent good value for money, as savings will not always be passed on to consumers.

The Government has no current plans to formally review the VAT treatment of building works. However, all taxes are kept under review as part of the tax policymaking process. The Chancellor makes decisions on tax policy at fiscal events in the context of the overall public finances.

■ **Employers' Contributions: Government Departments**

Mr Andrew Snowden:

[\[13996\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of proposed increases in employer's national insurance contributions on future trends in the cost to the public purse of Government contracts with private sector companies.

James Murray:

At the Autumn Budget, the Chancellor announced that the rate of Employer National Insurance contributions will increase from 13.8% to 15% from 6 April 2025. In order to raise the revenue required to fund public services and restore economic stability,

difficult decisions need to be taken on tax, which is why the Government is asking employers to contribute more.

The Chancellor also set out, at the Autumn Budget, the departmental spending allocations for 2024-25 and 2025-26. Departmental allocations for future years will be set out at the next phase of the Spending Review. The responsibility for prioritising these budgets effectively and making assessments on the costs of procurement rests with contracting authorities.

■ Employers' Contributions: Public Sector

Nick Timothy:

[14523]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the memo to item 26 on page 118 of the Autumn Budget 2024, HC 295, what methodology she used to calculate the public sector compensation amount for the increase to employer National Insurance contributions.

James Murray:

The amount of public sector support was based on an estimate of the proportion of employer NICs receipts paid by public sector organisations, using the Office for National Statistics (ONS) classification of the public sector boundary. The Treasury routinely uses the Office for National Statistics (ONS) classification of the public sector boundary, for example in relation to public sector spending, public sector borrowing and public sector debt.

■ Film: Tax Allowances

Mr Andrew Snowden:

[13834]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if her Department will issue guidance on whether film and television productions that use generative artificial intelligence qualify for (a) the Independent Film Tax Credit and (b) rate relief for VFX spend.

James Murray:

From 1 April 2025, films with a UK lead writer or director and budgets of under £15 million will be able to claim an enhanced 53% rate of Audio-Visual Expenditure Credit (AVEC), known as the Independent Film Tax Credit (IFTTC). Generative artificial intelligence costs are not excluded from the IFTTC. Costs that qualify for the IFTTC will be the same costs that currently qualify for the normal rate of AVEC. Guidance can be accessed here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-audio-visual-expenditure-credits-for-corporation-tax>.

From 1 April 2025, film and high-end TV companies may claim an enhanced AVEC rate of 39% on their UK visual effects costs. UK visual effects costs will be exempt from the AVEC's 80% cap on qualifying expenditure. Generative artificial intelligence costs are not excluded from the additional tax relief for visual effects. Further information on the costs that will qualify for the additional tax relief can be found in the Government's response to its consultation on the design of the policy, and can be

accessed here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-additional-tax-relief-for-visual-effects-costs>.

HMRC will publish specific guidance on the additional tax relief for visual effects in due course.

■ National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[13822\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, which Minister will be responsible for the National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority; and what progress has been made on setting up that Authority.

Darren Jones:

The National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority (NISTA) will combine the functions of the National Infrastructure Commission and Infrastructure and Projects Authority. NISTA will bring oversight of strategy and delivery into one organisation, driving more effective delivery of infrastructure across the country.

As announced by the government in October, NISTA will be operational by Spring 2025. NISTA's governance will be confirmed in due course.

■ National Insurance Contributions

Graeme Downie:

[\[13868\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps she has taken to encourage people to check their national insurance contributions.

James Murray:

To support customers, an enhanced online State Pension forecast service was launched on 29 April 2024. This included new functionality that enables the majority of working age customers to view any gaps in their national insurance contributions and make payments online where this would be beneficial. The service has successfully allowed a large number of people to self-serve, with a satisfaction rate of over 80%.

HMRC and DWP have launched a significant communications campaign to encourage people to check their National Insurance contributions, with paid-for marketing supporting our wider low-cost communications.

Some examples include a recent press release published on 7 October 2024 on GOV.UK reminding people of the deadline that has also been publicised by a range of media outlets, including Money Saving Expert. We also undertook a range of activity as part of Pensions Awareness Week in September and Talk Money Week in November. Communications included emails to 2.3 million employers and 110,000 agents, social media posts and stakeholder partnership work with organisations including British Innkeepers, DHL, Unilever and MoneyHelper, who have all helped to promote the campaign.

Continued promotion activity ahead of the deadline in April will include a robust social media strategy and continued interaction with media outlets and external partners. We are also due to publish a new explainer video, covering VNICs and how people can use the online service.

■ Public Sector

Nick Timothy: [\[14522\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to item 26 on page 118 of the Autumn Budget 2024, HC 295, how she defines public sector organisations.

Darren Jones:

For the purposes of defining support for Employer NICs costs, the Government has used the Office for National Statistics (ONS) classification of the public sector boundary. This is the usual approach for classification of the public sector boundary, for example in relation to public sector spending, public sector borrowing and public sector debt.

■ Veterans: LGBT+ People

Dan Carden: [\[13828\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the Chief Secretary to the Treasury has had discussions with the Secretary of State for Defence on increasing the fund for reparations payments to LGBT+ veterans.

Darren Jones:

Treasury Ministers regularly meets with Ministerial colleagues to discuss a range of issues. The LGBT Veterans Independent Report recommended a level of funding to be made available for those dismissed or discharged from service as a result of policy prohibiting homosexuality in the Armed Forces ('the ban'). The details of the financial recognition scheme recommended by the report are still in development and approval, including the total fund to be made available by MoD in recognition of those dismissed, discharged, or otherwise impacted by the ban. The Scheme details will be announced in Parliament when the Government is ready to publish its response.

■ Voluntary Contributions

Graeme Downie: [\[13867\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the April 2025 deadline to check for and buy voluntary national insurance contributions.

James Murray:

People normally have six years to pay voluntary National Insurance contributions (vNICs). An extended deadline was put in place to provide transitional arrangements as part of the introduction of the new State Pension (SP), originally ending in April 2023. Since the deadline extension to support customers, the online Check your State Pension forecast was enhanced and launched on 29 April 2024. New

functionality enables the majority of working age customers to view their payable gaps and make payments online. This service has successfully allowed a large number of people to self-serve, with a satisfaction rate of over 80%.

The National Insurance helpline remains in place for customers who are unable to use the online service or who need additional assistance. Previous deadlines have resulted in significant telephony demand, and HMRC is putting in place measures to manage the expected demand in the run-up to the 5 April 2025 deadline, including managing the deployment of resources, the use of interactive voice response messaging and directing customers to the digital service.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ Equality: Public Sector

Mike Wood:

[\[14455\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what the Government's policy is on the scope of the public sector equality duty in relation to private sector organisations that provide goods and services to the public sector.

Anneliese Dodds:

The scope of the Public Sector Equality Duty (the PSED) is set out in the Equality Act 2010 (the Act). It extends to all public authorities listed in Schedule 19 of the Act and all parties carrying out public functions. This came into force in April 2011 and includes private sector and voluntary organisations.

The PSED requires organisations in scope to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between different people.

The government remains committed to upholding the PSED and ensuring that all parties exercising public functions comply with its provisions.

■ Gender: Equality

Claire Coutinho:

[\[14502\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what guidance the Office for Equality and Opportunities has produced on whether positive discrimination on the basis of gender identity is permitted under the Equality Act 2010.

Anneliese Dodds:

Positive discrimination is treatment which favours someone solely because he or she has a particular protected characteristic such as their sex or race. Positive discrimination is generally unlawful under the Equality Act 2010 and therefore guidance has not been issued.

■ Gender: Public Consultation**Claire Coutinho:** [\[14501\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what her planned timetable is for the publication of the response to the call for evidence on single-sex spaces; and how many responses to the call for evidence have been received.

Anneliese Dodds:

We will publish a response to the call for input on single-sex spaces guidance, including the number of valid responses, in due course.

■ Office for Equality and Opportunity: Marriage**Mr Richard Holden:** [\[14346\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what role the Office for Equality and Opportunity has in informing Government policy on marriage.

Anneliese Dodds:

The Office for Equality and Opportunity's role in informing Government policy on marriage relates to equality and discrimination, as it is responsible for the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, which include marriage and civil partnership.

While the Office for Equality and Opportunity work with the Ministry of Justice on issues relating to equality, the Ministry of Justice is responsible for marriage law.

WORK AND PENSIONS**■ Access to Work Programme****Sir Christopher Chope:** [\[14442\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many applications for Access to Work assessments have been outstanding for more than two months; what steps she is taking to reduce waiting times for such applications; and if she will make it her policy to prioritise applications from people who are about to start a job.

Alison McGovern:

We are unable to provide information with regards to the number of applications for Access to Work which have been outstanding for more than two months because this information is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate costs.

With regards to what steps we have taken to reduce waiting times, we have streamlined delivery practices and have increased the number of staff processing claims. We also prioritise customers starting a job within four weeks. We have taken steps to modernise Access to Work to improve the customer experience. From April 2024, all core parts of the Scheme have been fully digital, with customers able to apply and make payment requests online.

■ Child Maintenance Service

Ian Sollom:

[\[13953\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of making the Child Maintenance Service more accessible to parents.

Andrew Western:

The aim of the Child Maintenance Service is to create a modern accessible service through our digital transformation and Service Modernisation programmes, to allow our customers to have greater choice of how and when they contact us.

Through our digital transformation programme, almost all applications are now made online, and we have more than doubled My Child Maintenance Case (MCMC) registrations. 1.46 million customers now have access to our service 24/7 through their online accounts, with over 1.12 million logins in September 2024.

Every change and improvement made to our processes, systems, and service are all part of modernising our service. This will be an ongoing process of continuous improvement to make Child Maintenance Service more accessible to all parents.

As part of the Government's reforms to the Child Support Collection (Domestic Abuse) Act receiving Royal Assent on 29 June 2023, the Child Maintenance Service removed the £20 application to ensure families on the lowest incomes do not face a barrier to accessing the service. The Government consultation on remaining reforms has concluded. We are in the process of finalising the details of the consultation and aim to publish it as soon as possible on gov.uk.

■ Education and Employment: Disability

Samantha Niblett:

[\[14252\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans she has to widen access to (a) educational and (b) career opportunities for people with disabilities in Derbyshire.

Alison McGovern:

Too many people across our country do not get the chance to succeed. We want to ensure people of all ages and backgrounds can undertake activities which provide them with the skills and learning which will support them into work and offer excellent career development and progression opportunities.

Our Disability Employment Adviser's (DEA) across Derbyshire provide a range of specialist support for individuals to help them move closer to, secure and stay in work, ensuring customers are confident with their Health Adjustment Passports, are accessing Access to Work support, as well as ensuring those working with Work and Health Programme are fully engaged and gaining the most from the programme.

The Jobcentre network works closely with a range of external providers offering a wealth of individual outreach support which includes monthly meetings at P3 individual living (local housing charity), Collective Community Hub and Sharps

pottery. The DEA's are also able to attend to provide more personalised support by offering group or one to one sessions in a safe space for our customers.

Our teams also collaborate with the local NHS teams to refer to and deliver NHS Talking Therapies and link with Individual Placement and Support Organisations in Primary and Secondary Care as well as the Social Prescribers Network.

The DEAs have a close working relationship with our Employer Advisers which continues to build a strong Disability Confident employer network to offer advice, resource and guidance onto employers to enhance their support for disabled customers in their workplace.

Jobcentres across Derbyshire hold monthly group sessions on site. These are site specific sessions depending on the needs of the customer base at the time. Sessions include Mental Health awareness, access to work support and volunteering opportunities.

All education and training providers, and other related service providers, have a duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people, so they are not placed at a substantial disadvantage compared to non-disabled students. This includes people with a learning difficulty. This duty is set out under section 20 of the Equality Act 2010. We also want providers to play a stronger role in expanding access and improving outcomes for disadvantaged students, making sure they are delivering strong and ambitious Access and Participation Plans.

It is critical that all students should be supported with good advice, quality options and fair and transparent processes which ensure there are no barriers to them accessing high-quality courses suited to their ability, interests and aspirations.

Through grant arrangements with Disability Rights UK, the Department for Education (DfE) provides advice and guidance activities which increase awareness, access to and participation in DfE programmes and services for disabled young people. These activities help DfE identify and overcome barriers faced by disabled people in accessing and progressing through their post-16 pathway on their route towards employment

■ Habitual Residence Test

Rupert Lowe:

[\[13944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 12 November 2024 to Question 12868 on Habitual Residence Test, how many habitual residency tests for Universal Credit there were, excluding factual habitual residency tests, in each of the last five years.

Andrew Western:

Habitual Residence Tests (HRT) always assess whether individuals are factually habitually resident. For an individual to be factually habitually resident they must have been living here for a significant period of time and have a settled intention to remain.

There were therefore no HRTs over the past 5 years which excluded an assessment of factual habitual residence.

■ **State Retirement Pensions**

Steve Darling:

[\[14519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the State Pension.

Emma Reynolds:

Our system of state, private, and workplace pensions provides the basis for security in retirement. Our commitment to increase the State Pension by the Triple Lock is helping both today's pensioners and the pensioners of tomorrow. Over the course of this Parliament, the full yearly rate of the new State Pension is forecast to increase by around £1,900.

Together, the new State Pension and Automatic Enrolment provide a robust system for retirement. Those on low incomes are supported by Pension Credit which continues to provide a safety net.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Deep Sea Mining

Jim Shannon:

[79]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to prevent deep sea mining.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 26 July 2024. The correct answer should have been:

Anneliese Dodds:

This Government supports a moratorium on the granting of ~~exploration~~ **exploitation** licences for deep sea mining projects by the International Seabed Authority (ISA). The UK recognises the impacts of deep sea mining are not fully understood and supports a moratorium on the granting of mining licences by the ISA until sufficient scientific evidence is available to assess the potential impact of deep-sea mining activities on marine ecosystems, and strong, enforceable environmental regulations, standards and guidelines are adopted by the ISA.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

DEFENCE

■ Defence Programmes Developments

Secretary of State for Defence (John Healey):

[\[HCWS239\]](#)

I have today made an Oral Statement setting out how our new Government is addressing the challenges facing UK Defence. This Written Ministerial Statement provides fuller detail about the decisions I have taken on certain defence programmes.

We face increasing global threats. War in Europe, growing Russian aggression, conflict in the Middle East and technology changing the nature of warfare. As a result, Defence needs increased resilience and readiness for the future.

We also face serious financial pressures in the Defence budget. Our Government has taken immediate action, confirming an additional £2.9bn for the Defence budget in 2025-26 to help start to fix the foundations of UK defence. And we will set a clear path to spending 2.5% of GDP on defence.

To ensure that Britain is kept secure at home and strong abroad in a changing world, Defence needs to make changes too. Difficult decisions are required.

As I set out in today's Oral Statement, this includes the retirement of ageing equipment as we transition to new capabilities and make our Armed Forces fit for the future. These decisions will deliver better value for money and ensure we are in a better position to modernise and strengthen UK defence.

I have halted the current refit of HMS Northumberland, a Type 23 frigate, which will now be retired from the Fleet in March 2025. As a result of service well beyond the original Type 23 out-of-service date, the structural damage discovered during refit makes her uneconomical to repair. There will be no impact on current operations, and the Ship's Company has already been assigned elsewhere for the refit period. The Type 23 frigates will be replaced by the most advanced Anti-Submarine Warfare frigates in the world: the Type 26, the first of which, HMS Glasgow, will be delivered by 2027.

HMS Albion and HMS Bulwark, the Royal Navy's two amphibious assault ships, will be retired from service by the end of March 2025. Both are currently held at lower readiness having not been to sea since 2023 and 2017 respectively. On current planning, neither was due to go to sea again before their planned out of service dates of 2033 and 2034. They had, in effect, been mothballed, but were still costing the taxpayer around £9m per year to maintain. Almost all crew have been reassigned already – and the rest will be reassigned once retired. They will be replaced by planned Multi-Role Support Ships. In the meantime, the Commando Force will continue to be supported by the three Bay Class auxiliary landing ship docks and RFA Argus.

The Wave Class auxiliary oilers, RFA Wave Knight and RFA Wave Ruler, will be retired from service by the end of March 2025. They have not been to sea since 2017 and 2022

respectively. They are currently in extended readiness and are not due to return to sea before their planned out of service date in 2028. All crew have been reassigned already. The Fleet's operations and training will be unaffected, with the more modern Tide Class auxiliary oilers fulfilling all requirements.

The Army's Watchkeeper Mk 1 Uncrewed Aerial System will be retired from service from March 2025. Watchkeeper Mk 1 was introduced in 2010. Since then, drone technology has advanced at a rapid rate, accelerated by prolific use throughout the war in Ukraine. A modern army must self-evidently have a modern drone capability able to operate in the most challenging environments. Following the retirement of Watchkeeper Mk 1, the Army will rapidly switch to a new advanced capability, drawing on the most recent operational lessons and technological developments.

The Chinook helicopter has been a workhorse for the Armed Forces since it first entered service in the Royal Air Force in 1980. Over the years it has been upgraded many times. Fourteen of the most modern variant, the highly capable H-47(ER), will enter service with the Royal Air Force from 2027. Ahead of this arrival, decommissioning of the oldest fourteen aircraft will be accelerated as they reach their next deep maintenance period over the next four years. Current personnel will be unaffected and will continue to train, ready for the introduction of the H-47(ER).

The Puma helicopter has similarly served the Royal Air Force for a long time, having been first introduced in 1971 and extended several times. Puma will be retired in March 2025 when its current support contract expires. Pumas currently operate solely in Cyprus and Brunei, where they will be replaced by the new Airbus H-145 from 2026. During this short gap in capability, a commercial or military solution will be used for firefighting with our sovereign base in Cyprus and alternatives to Brunei will be used for some elements of jungle training.

These ships and aircraft have provided a valuable capability over many years. But we must look to the future. I recognise they will mean a lot to many who currently serve, and have served, with and in them during their deployments around the world. All personnel will be redeployed or retrained.

These are not the only difficult decisions we will need to make as a new Government to deal with the fiscal inheritance. But decisions which secure better value for money for taxpayers and better outcomes for our military. They are set to save MOD up to £150m in the next two years, and up to £500m over five years – savings that will be retained in full in Defence. My decisions are all backed by our Military Chiefs and taken in consultation with those leading Strategic Defence Review. Allies have been informed and we have constant dialogue with NATO. I am announcing them now in order to maximise the associated savings which will be invested back into Defence.

EDUCATION

■ World Children's Day 2024

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, The Minister for Children and Families (Janet Daby): [\[HCWS237\]](#)

Today is World Children's Day, marking the 35th anniversary of the date that the UN adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), setting out the fundamental rights held by each and every child across the world.

This new government will be a Mission-led one, and one of our five Missions is to break down the barriers to opportunity. The government is determined to break the unfair link between background and success once and for all.

Our ambition is to create a society in Britain where the life chances of every child are front and centre and where every child and young person believes that success belongs to them.

We are taking swift action to improve the lives of every child. Our new policy statement Keeping Children Safe, Helping Families Thrive, sets out ambitious proposals to fix Children's Social Care so that it provides help and protection to our most vulnerable children; and we will seek to legislate to enact these proposals when Parliamentary time allows. Action on child poverty is being driven by our new Child Poverty Taskforce, which was established within weeks of the new government taking power and is co-chaired by the Secretaries of State for Education and Work and Pensions.

With the support of our stakeholders and by actively listening to children and young people, we are determined to deliver profound, lasting change for all children and young people, and particularly those from disadvantaged and deprived backgrounds. We will continue to place children at the heart of our ambitions.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Independent Review of the Physician and Anaesthesia Associate Professions

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Wes Streeting): [\[HCWS236\]](#)

The Government has commissioned Professor Gillian Leng CBE to lead an independent review into the Physician and Anaesthesia Associate professions. This will consider how they are currently used and how they can be integrated safely into health teams to deliver the best possible care.

The review will consider the safety, cost-effectiveness and efficiency of roles, alongside the lessons that can be learned from how they have been deployed in the NHS. The conclusions of the review will inform future reforms, which will be vital to the delivery of the 10-Year Health Plan. This review marks an important step: to reset the discussion by stepping back and taking stock of the evidence.

The review will report in Spring 2025 and will gather the available evidence and data on the Physician Associate (PA) and Anaesthesia Associate (AA) professions from the UK

and globally, engaging with these professionals, patients, the public, doctors and other professions, employers, and researchers. It will review the safety of the roles; patient experience; the contribution the roles can make to more productive use of professional time in multi-disciplinary teams; and whether these roles deliver good quality, efficient and safe patient care in a range of settings.

PAs and AAs support doctors to manage patients, increasing the capacity of health care services and freeing up doctors to focus on specialist cases. The roles should always work under the supervision of a doctor, but concerns have been raised by the medical professional about blurred lines of responsibility and whether, in some cases, PAs and AAs are being used to replace doctors. The public has every right to be confident they are seeing the most appropriate healthcare professional.

Regulation of PAs and AAs by the General Medical Council will begin in December 2024 and will help to ensure all PAs and AAs meet the high standards we expect of every healthcare professional. However, we do not have a comprehensive view of how these roles are being deployed, or how effectively, and the review will address this gap. The conclusion will provide clarity to patients and healthcare professionals and inform our 10-Year Health plan.

Terms of Reference for the review will be published on GOV.UK in due course. Following completion of the review, we will publish our findings and update the House on next steps.

HOME OFFICE

■ Terrorism Prevention and Investigation Measures (1 June 2024 to 31 August 2024)

The Minister of State for Security (Dan Jarvis):

[\[HCWS234\]](#)

Section 19(1) of the Terrorism Prevention and Investigation Measures (TPIM) Act 2011 (the Act) requires the Secretary of State to report to Parliament as soon as reasonably practicable after the end of every relevant three-month period on the exercise of their TPIM powers under the Act during that period.

The level of information provided will always be subject to slight variations based on operational advice.

TPIM NOTICES IN FORCE (AS OF 31 AUGUST 2024)	2
Number of new TPIM notices served (during this period)	1
TPIM notices in respect of British citizens (as of 31 August 2024)	2
TPIM notices extended (during the reporting period)	0

TPIM NOTICES IN FORCE (AS OF 31 AUGUST 2024)	2
TPIM notices revoked (during the reporting period)	0
TPIM notices expired (during reporting period)	0
TPIM notices revived (during the reporting period)	0
Variations made to measures specified in TPIM notices (during the reporting period)	0
Applications to vary measures specified in TPIM notices refused (during the reporting period)	1
The number of subjects relocated under TPIM legislation (during the reporting period)	2

The TPIM Review Group (TRG) keeps every TPIM notice under regular and formal review. TRG meetings were convened on 15 August 2024.

■ **Terrorism Prevention and Investigation Measures (1 March 2024 to 31 May 2024)**

The Minister of State for Security (Dan Jarvis):

[\[HCWS233\]](#)

Section 19(1) of the Terrorism Prevention and Investigation Measures (TPIM) Act 2011 (the Act) requires the Secretary of State to report to Parliament as soon as reasonably practicable after the end of every relevant three-month period on the exercise of their TPIM powers under the Act during that period.

The level of information provided will always be subject to slight variations based on operational advice.

TPIM NOTICES IN FORCE (AS OF 31 MAY 2024)	1
Number of new TPIM notices served (during this period)	0
TPIM notices in respect of British citizens (as of 31 May 2024)	1
TPIM notices extended (during the reporting period)	0
TPIM notices revoked (during the reporting period)	1

TPIM NOTICES IN FORCE (AS OF 31 MAY 2024)	1
TPIM notices expired (during reporting period)	0
TPIM notices revived (during the reporting period)	0
Variations made to measures specified in TPIM notices (during the reporting period)	0
Applications to vary measures specified in TPIM notices refused (during the reporting period)	0
The number of subjects relocated under TPIM legislation (during the reporting period)	2

The TPIM Review Group (TRG) keeps every TPIM notice under regular and formal review. TRG meetings were convened on 13 and 22 May 2024.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Local Government Best Value

Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution (Jim McMahon): [\[HCWS235\]](#)

All Honourable Members will recognise the importance of having well-functioning local councils which provide essential statutory services local residents rely upon. Government will continue to work directly with a small number of councils in difficulty, and this should be done in a way that is not punitive and is based on genuine partnership to secure improvements. Today, I would like to update the House on the statutory interventions in Slough and Woking.

Slough Borough Council

On 22 October 2024, I announced to the House that the Secretary of State was minded to issue new Directions to Slough Borough Council, and that I was seeking representations on a proposal. I also announced if I implemented this proposal, I would reappoint the current three Commissioners and also appoint the interim Chief Executive, Will Tuckley, as Managing Director Commissioner.

The proposal was to require the Council to take actions that are consistent with the priorities the Commissioners have set for the Council, provide for Commissioners to continue to be able to exercise council functions relating to governance, finance and appointments and to extend the timeframe of the statutory intervention until 30 November 2026. This followed the publication of the fifth report from Commissioners, which, as I outlined on 22 October, provided evidence that there are still a substantial number of

areas which require further improvement at the Council, and there remains volatility in the Council's overall financial position. In my view the report provides considerable evidence that the Authority is not complying with its Best Value Duty, as outlined in the Local Government Act 1999 and Best Value Guidance published in May 2024.

Following consideration of the two representations that were received, noting the support from the Council for the proposal and the concerns raised about the pace and impact of the intervention to date in the other, the Secretary of State and I have decided to implement the proposals announced on 22 October and issue new Directions to the Council, which come into effect immediately and will remain in force up to and including 30 November 2026. The Directions issued on 1 December 2021 (updated on 1 September 2022 and 22 May 2023) are revoked with immediate effect.

I am therefore today confirming the reappointment of the current three Commissioners, Gavin Jones, Denise Murray and Ged Curran. They will continue to work in partnership with the Council to support its recovery. Alongside this I have appointed Will Tuckley, the Interim Chief Executive, as Managing Director Commissioner. This will strengthen the relationship between the Commissioner team and Council and support the Council to lead its recovery.

The three reappointed Commissioners have been nominated for the duration of the intervention and the Managing Director Commissioner has been nominated for eighteen months.

As with other interventions led by my Ministry, the Council will be required to cover the costs associated with the Commissioners. The fees for each individual are detailed in their appointment letters, published on gov.uk. I am assured this provides value for money given the expertise that is being brought, and the scale of the challenge in councils requiring statutory intervention.

Woking Borough Council

As the House will be aware, in May 2023, the former Secretary of State (the Rt Hon Michael Gove) announced a statutory intervention in Woking Borough Council, following evidence of extensive best value failure compiled in an external assurance review. The Review detailed the exceptional level of financial and commercial risk to which the Council had exposed itself, and concerns regarding the quality of its strategic financial decision-making and its commercial dealings.

Historic commercial mismanagement and major governance failures led to Woking Borough Council accumulating an extraordinary level of debt, far exceeding usual levels of borrowing for a council of its size. This is an extreme position for a council to be in, and will require unprecedented support from government to resolve. Woking clearly requires a significant programme of change to ensure it is operating to the required standard. I am grateful to the Commissioners for working with the Council to improve its strategic financial management and governance, and in charting a path to reduce Woking's debt as far as possible.

On 29 May 2024, the Commissioners at Woking submitted their third report. I will be publishing this report, and my response, later today. It is clear from their report that Woking still faces significant challenges in its recovery, particularly its financial position, but I am pleased that the Council remains committed to working with Commissioners to deliver fundamental change through its Improvement and Recovery Plan. There are lots of obstacles ahead, but I am confident that the Commissioners and Council have a good understanding of the challenge and are beginning to deliver a robust plan of improvement.

I also join the Council in thanking their auditor Grant Thornton for their recent Public Interest Report on Woking's historic investment practices, which the Council will consider later today before issuing their formal response. The Council has the full support of the Commissioners in addressing the recommendations. I will also be reflecting on the Public Interest Report and what lessons it can provide on the drivers of council failure.

I urge all councils to consider whether they could be doing more to ensure they are delivering the sound decision-making that residents deserve, including considering the characteristics of a well-functioning authority as set out in Best Value guidance.

Conclusion

The Government is committed to work in genuine partnership with councils under intervention to support their reset, reform and recovery, making sure residents have what they need from their local council, including confidence in its governance, financial management and service delivery. I will continue to monitor progress over the coming months and ensure these councils get the support they need to secure sustainable continuous improvement.

I will deposit in the House library copies of the documents I have referred to, which are also being published on gov.uk today.

■ **Social and Affordable Housing**

Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (Angela Rayner): [\[HCWS238\]](#)

I am publishing today a consultation on reforms to the Right to Buy in England.

This Government is committed to the biggest increase in social and affordable housebuilding in a generation and to supporting councils to increase their capacity to build.

After more than a decade of marginalisation, we must once again assert the necessity and the value of social housing. It is a crucial national asset to be proud of, to invest in, to protect and to maintain.

We cannot achieve this whilst councils are losing homes quicker than they can replace them through the Right to Buy scheme. Nor can we achieve this whilst councils risk losing their investment in a newly built social home as soon as three years after completion. Between April 2012 and March 2024 there have been over 124,000 council Right to Buy sales, and in the same period fewer than 48,000 homes have been replaced.

Reduced access to affordable social rented homes has seen millions of low-income families forced into insecure, poor quality and unaffordable accommodation. Over 150,000 children are now in Temporary Accommodation and nearly 1.3 million people on social housing waiting lists. The cost of this has been borne not only by those low-income families unable to secure a social home, but by the taxpayer in the form of a rapidly rising housing benefit bill. This is unsustainable and represents a poor use of public money.

This Government remains committed to Right to Buy, which is why we are not proposing its abolition. It is an integral way for social tenants to get on the property ladder; many of whom may not otherwise be able to access home ownership. But crucially we also need to protect social housing stock to meet future housing need, to support councils to replace homes that are sold and to improve their confidence to scale-up delivery.

The scheme must be reformed so that it better protects the existing stock of social rented homes, provides better value for money for the taxpayer and ensures fairness within the system.

We have already taken significant steps to deliver this reform. In July, we increased the flexibilities on how councils can use the capital receipts generated by a Right to Buy sale to accelerate the delivery of replacement homes.

The Government, at Autumn Budget, confirmed that councils will no longer be required to return a proportion of the capital receipt generated by the sale of the home to HM Treasury, which has totalled c.£183 million a year. This will ensure that councils are better able to build and acquire new council homes to meet local housing need.

The Government also confirmed at the Autumn Budget the reduction of maximum Right to Buy cash discounts to their pre-2012 regional levels (ranging from £16,000 to £38,000) following a review conducted by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. Secondary legislation was laid on 30 October and new discounts will come into force tomorrow (21 November). This is a crucial step in delivering a fairer, better value and more sustainable scheme. Reducing discounts will protect existing social housing stock, whilst ensuring long-term tenants can still benefit.

Through the same secondary legislation, we are increasing protections for newly built social homes from being sold under the Right to Buy, by increasing the “cost floor” period during which discounts can be reduced to account for money spent building or maintaining the property from 15 years to 30 years. This will give councils greater confidence to scale-up delivery of social homes for those who need them most.

But these measures are only part of the reform needed to achieve a fairer and more sustainable Right to Buy scheme. The eight-week consultation, which I am launching today, proposes the broader reforms necessary to ensure that the Right to Buy is sustainable, meets the needs of tenants who aspire to own their own homes, whilst will also ensuring that the homes sold can be replaced. We are seeking views on:

- Eligibility – we propose to increase the eligibility requirement (currently three years as a secure tenant) to support councils to rebuild the stock of council homes and to

better ensure that long-term tenants who have lived in, and paid rent on, their social homes are able to own their home through the scheme.

- Discounts as a percentage of the property value – we propose to amend the current percentage discounts to better align with the new cash discounts and propose that the same rules should apply to houses and flats.
- Exemptions – we are seeking views on whether the current exemptions to the scheme are fit for purpose and whether new build homes should be exempt from the Right to Buy, for a given period, to better incentivise councils to invest in new stock. We also welcome views on how to protect council investment in retrofitting and improving homes to a high standard.
- Restrictions on properties after sale – once someone has purchased a home under the Right to Buy, it is theirs to live in and enjoy, the same as any home purchased on the open market. We do not therefore propose to introduce covenants to prevent homes being let out, which we think would be restrictive and too difficult for councils to administer. We are seeking views, however, on whether the time period in which the council has the right to ask for repayment of all or part of the discount received should be increased from five to ten years.
- Requirements around the replacement of homes sold under the Right to Buy – we are seeking views on the benefits of replacement homes being for Social Rent to support the Government's ambition to increase the number of Social Rent homes and whether replacements should be, as far as possible, of the same size and in the same area.
- Simplification of the receipts regime – we are seeking views on how the current system can be simplified and strengthened to support the replacement of homes.

Through this consultation, we will better understand what barriers there may be to the introduction of these proposals and to inform their design. Subject to views in response to this consultation, we intend to bring forward legislation to implement any changes when parliamentary time allows.

I can also confirm today that the Government will not be extending the Right to Buy scheme to housing associations given the substantial costs to the taxpayer and the reduction in social housing stock that is likely to result. Eligible tenants will, however, continue to be able to buy their rented home at a discount, ranging from £9,000 to £16,000 depending on where their rented home is located, through the Right to Acquire scheme.

Further, I can confirm that the Government will not be taking forward the policy on the sale of higher value assets proposed under the Housing and Planning Act 2016, which would have required councils to make a payment in respect of their vacant higher value council homes and return some of the funds to the Government. The Government will repeal the provisions in the 2016 Housing and Planning Act when Parliamentary time allows.

I look forward to continuing to work with all those with an interest in improving the system to make sure that these plans for reform are robust and deliverable.