



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 21 November 2024 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:30 P.M., 21 November 2024). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

### CONTENTS

<b>ANSWERS</b>	<b>6</b>	■ Ethics and Integrity Commission	11
<b>BUSINESS AND TRADE</b>	<b>6</b>	■ Government Departments: Disclosure of Information	11
■ Alcoholic Drinks and Tobacco: Sales	6	■ Government Departments: Drinking Water	12
■ Department for Business and Trade: Climate Change Convention	6	■ Government Departments: Twitter	12
■ Department for Business and Trade: Correspondence	6	■ Lobbying: Disclosure of Information	12
■ Department for Business and Trade: Remote Working	7	■ Prime Minister: Correspondence	12
■ Department for Business and Trade: Senior Civil Servants	7	<b>CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT</b>	<b>13</b>
■ Electric Bicycles: Imports	7	■ Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme	13
■ Export Controls	8	<b>DEFENCE</b>	<b>13</b>
■ Fireworks: Sales	8	■ Army	13
■ Government Bills: Impact Assessments	8	■ Commonwealth War Graves Commission: Finance	14
■ Locksmiths: Regulation	9	■ Defence: Industry	14
■ Products: Regulation	9	■ NATO	15
<b>CABINET OFFICE</b>	<b>9</b>	■ Shells	15
■ Arms Length Bodies	9	<b>EDUCATION</b>	<b>15</b>
■ Cabinet Office: Civil Servants	10	■ Childcare: Employers' Contributions	15
■ Cabinet Office: Staff	10	■ Department for Education: Ministers' Private Offices	16
■ Chequers: Official Visits	10		
■ Civil Servants: Dismissal	11		
■ Civil Servants: Secondment	11		

■ Free School Meals	16	■ Hamas: Hostage Taking	28
■ School Meals: Animal Products	16	■ Iraq: Age of Consent	28
■ Schools: Mobile Phones	17	■ Israel: Human Rights	29
■ Sixth Form Colleges: Pay	17	■ Occupied Territories: Human Rights	29
■ Special Educational Needs	18	■ Pakistan: Ahmadiyya	29
■ Special Educational Needs: Autism	19	■ Pakistan: Human Rights	30
■ Special Educational Needs: Essex	20	■ Pakistan: Religious Freedom	31
ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO	20	■ Pregnancy: Nutrition	31
■ Carbon Capture and Storage	20	■ Sanctions	31
■ District Heating: Price Caps	20	HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	32
■ District Heating: Regulation	21	■ Accident and Emergency Departments: Heart Diseases and Strokes	32
■ Energy: Meters	21	■ Alan Milburn	33
ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS	22	■ Anaesthetics: Training	33
■ Meat: Australia	22	■ Anaesthetics: Vacancies	34
■ Zoos: Nature Conservation	22	■ Anaesthetists and Doctors: Resignations	34
FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE	23	■ Bladder Cancer: Medical Treatments	35
■ Afghanistan: Asylum	23	■ Cardiovascular Diseases: Emergency Calls	35
■ Afghanistan: Chevening Scholarships Programme	23	■ Charities: Employers' Contributions	37
■ Alaa Abd El-Fattah	23	■ Community Diagnostic Centres	38
■ Commonwealth: Cybersecurity and Joint Exercises	24	■ Dental Services: Dartford	38
■ Commonwealth: Politics and Government	24	■ Doctors: Resignations	39
■ Development Aid	25	■ General Practitioners	39
■ Development Aid: Animal Welfare	26	■ General Practitioners: Translation Services	39
■ Football: Morocco	26	■ GP Practice Lists	39
■ Gaza: Genocide Convention	27	■ Gynaecology: Waiting Lists	40
■ Gaza: Health Services	27	■ Health Services	41

■ Health Services: Translation Services	41	■ Anti-social Behaviour	54
■ Health Services: Women	41	■ Deportation	54
■ Health: Bicycles	42	■ Non-crime Hate Incidents	55
■ Heavy Menstrual Bleeding	42	■ Non-crime Hate Incidents: Children	55
■ Heavy Menstrual Bleeding: Contraceptives	43	■ Police: Social Media	55
■ Hormone Replacement Therapy: Menopause	44	<b>HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT</b>	56
■ Hospices: Employers' Contributions	45	■ Armed Forces: West Suffolk	56
■ Hospital Beds: Foreign Nationals	45	■ Empty Property	56
■ Joint Replacements: Gosport	45	■ Housing Associations: Employers' Contributions	56
■ NHS: Migrant Workers	46	■ Leasehold: Reform	57
■ NHS: Standards	46	■ Leasehold: Unfair Practices	57
■ NHS: Translation Services	47	■ Local Government Finance	58
■ Nurses: Graduates	47	■ Local Government: Devolution	58
■ Nurses: Registration	48	■ Local Government: Employers' Contributions	59
■ Nurses: Resignations	48	■ Planning Permission	59
■ Obesity: Drugs	49	■ Planning Permission: Parish and Town Councils	59
■ Pancreatic Cancer: Medical Treatments	49	■ Social Rented Housing: Disability	60
■ Primary Health Care: Rural Areas	50	<b>JUSTICE</b>	60
■ Protective Clothing: Storage	51	■ Offenders: Electronic Tagging	60
■ Radiology: Greater London	51	■ Reoffenders: Foreign Nationals	61
■ St Mary's Hospital Paddington: Repairs and Maintenance	51	■ Sexual Offences: Convictions	61
■ Sterilisation: Men	52	<b>SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY</b>	62
■ Visual Impairment: Babies	52	■ Animal Experiments: Public Consultation	62
<b>HOME OFFICE</b>	53	■ Artificial Intelligence: Public Sector	62
■ Animal Experiments	53	■ Broadband: Advertising	63
■ Animal Experiments: Dogs	53	■ Broadband: Rural Areas	64
■ Animal Experiments: Licensing	53		

■ Internet: Defamation	64	■ Personal Independence Payment	74
■ Internet: Freedom of Expression	64	■ Personal Independence Payment: Patients	75
■ Internet: Offences against Children	65	■ Poverty: Children	75
■ Internet: Safety	65	■ Social Security Benefits	76
■ Prostitution: Gower	65	■ Universal Credit	77
■ X Corp: Disinformation	66	■ Universal Credit: Parkinson's Disease	77
<b>TRANSPORT</b>	66	■ Work Capability Assessment	78
■ Bus Services: Finance	66	<b>MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS</b>	<b>79</b>
■ Bus Services: Standards	67	<b>BUSINESS AND TRADE</b>	79
■ Bus Services: West Midlands	67	■ Inflation: USA	79
■ Railways: Passengers	67	<b>WRITTEN STATEMENTS</b>	<b>80</b>
■ South Western Railway: Fares	68	<b>ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO</b>	80
<b>TREASURY</b>	68	■ Delivering the Warm Homes Plan	80
■ Agriculture: Inheritance Tax	68	<b>FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE</b>	81
■ Budget October 2024	68	■ World Health Organization Investment Round	81
■ Carbon Emissions: Taxation	69	<b>HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE</b>	82
■ Cycle to Work Scheme: Low Incomes	69	■ Eradicating the use of goods and services tainted by modern slavery in NHS supply chains	82
■ Hospitality Industry and Retail Trade: Business Rates	70	<b>HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT</b>	83
■ Personal Care Services: Money Laundering	70	■ Leasehold and Commonhold Reform	83
■ Personal Care Services: Off-payroll Working	71	<b>JUSTICE</b>	87
■ Private Education: VAT	71	■ Whiplash Injury Regulations 2021: Publication of the Lord Chancellor's Review	87
■ Research: Tax Allowances	71	<b>WORK AND PENSIONS</b>	88
■ Stamp Duty Land Tax: First Time Buyers	72	■ Healthy Start Uptake Data	88
■ Tax Avoidance	72		
■ Trusts: Building Societies	72		
<b>WORK AND PENSIONS</b>	73		
■ Carers: Finance	73		
■ Disability Living Allowance	73		

**Notes:**

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

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

## ANSWERS

## BUSINESS AND TRADE

■ **Alcoholic Drinks and Tobacco: Sales****Richard Tice:**[\[14127\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how many reports have been received by the Citizens Advice consumer hotline on the illegal sale of (a) tobacco products, (b) vape and c) alcohol products in each of the last five years.

**Justin Madders:**

Set out in the table below are the number of cases reported to and collected by the Citizens Advice consumer service over the past 5 years.

CASES	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Tobacco	1376	1471	1184	944	787
E-cig/Vape	459	1883	3757	2398	1400
Alcohol	1719	1749	1746	1014	766

■ **Department for Business and Trade: Climate Change Convention****Andrew Griffith:**[\[14820\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how many officials from his Department travelled to Baku to (a) attend and (b) support COP29 in the last three months.

**Mr Douglas Alexander:**

Within the last three months, nine officials from the Department for Business and Trade travelled to Baku to attend COP29.

■ **Department for Business and Trade: Correspondence****Andrew Griffith:**[\[14821\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how many items of ministerial correspondence received by his Department have not received a reply within 14 days of receipt in the last three months.

**Justin Madders:**

Ministers and the Department place great value on effective and timely handling of ministerial correspondence and keep performance of this under review.

The Cabinet Office publishes routine statistics on Departmental performance which can be found on GOV.UK ( <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/data-on-responses-to-correspondence-from-mps-and-peers> ).

#### ■ Department for Business and Trade: Remote Working

**Andrew Griffith:**

[14823]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how many officials in his Department worked from home for more than one day a week on average over the month to 30 October 2024.

**Justin Madders:**

Since the pandemic, the Department for Business and Trade (DBT) have had a hybrid working policy in place.

DBT's hybrid working approach means staff should spend 40-60% of their contracted hours (averaged over a month) in the office or visiting stakeholders and businesses, and the rest of their time working from home.

This works out to be on average 2-3 days working from home per working week for a full-time member of staff.

#### ■ Department for Business and Trade: Senior Civil Servants

**Andrew Griffith:**

[14818]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 14 November 2024 to Question 13639 on Crawford Falconer, whether he plans to recruit a new Second Permanent Secretary and Chief Trade Negotiation Adviser.

**Justin Madders:**

DBT have no plans at this time to recruit a Second Permanent Secretary or a Chief Trade Negotiations Adviser at Permanent Secretary level, further to the departure of Sir Crawford Falconer on 31 December 2024.

#### ■ Electric Bicycles: Imports

**Chi Onwurah:**

[14943]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment his Department has made of the (a) adequacy of safety standards of imported e-bikes from outside the EU and (b) implications for his policies of risks associated with non-EU lithium-ion batteries.

**Justin Madders:**

UK product safety legislation requires manufacturers or importers placing products on the UK market, including e-bikes to ensure those products are safe. Those importing international products must ensure that they comply with UK product safety rules.

Earlier this year, OPSS banned certain models of Unit Power Pack-branded e-bike batteries manufactured in China, and they and local regulators have powers to prevent any unsafe goods identified from entering the UK at the border.

The Product Regulation and Metrology Bill will preserve the UK's status as a global leader in product regulation, supporting businesses and protecting consumers.

## ■ Export Controls

**Liam Byrne:** [\[14592\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, on how many occasions the Export Controls Joint Unit has initiated a Change in Circumstances Review assessment since January 2020; and what the destination country was in each case.

**Mr Douglas Alexander:**

The Export Control Joint Unit (ECJU) has in place an established process for responding at pace to changing conditions in a country where the UK has previously granted export licences, and where those licences remain extant.

The FCDO advises DBT on the situation in country and the risks this poses with respect to the UK's export control responsibilities. The MOD advises DBT on the risks of diversion of exported goods and national security risks arising from hostile state activity. The Department of Business and Trade, with DBT Secretary of State as the decision-making authority, decides whether to amend, suspend or revoke any relevant licences.

Given its diplomatic sensitivity, the Government is unable to disclose the specific number and destination countries of Change in Circumstances Reviews.

## ■ Fireworks: Sales

**Katie White:** [\[15088\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he plans to strengthen firework regulations to (a) ensure responsible use and (b) limit their impact on (i) pets and (ii) wildlife.

**Justin Madders:**

Most people use fireworks in a responsible, safe, and appropriate manner and there are laws in place to address situations where fireworks are misused. The current regulatory framework is designed to support people to enjoy fireworks whilst lowering the risk of dangers and disruption to people, pets, and property.

To inform any future decisions I intend to engage with stakeholders after the fireworks season to gather evidence on the issues with and impacts of fireworks. The safety of the public and impact on people, animals, wildlife and property will be central in decisions in relation to the regulation of fireworks.

## ■ Government Bills: Impact Assessments

**Mr Richard Holden:** [\[14348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what recent guidance his Department has provided on when Departments should publish a regulatory impact assessment when bringing forward a Bill to Parliament.



**Justin Madders:**

The general requirement for departments to make available the final impact assessment of a government bill introduced to Parliament is set out in the *Guide to Making Legislation*, published by the Cabinet Office, and affirmed in the *Better Regulation Framework Guidance*, published by the Department for Business and Trade.

**Locksmiths: Regulation**

**Neil Duncan-Jordan:** [\[14572\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of making locksmithing a regulated profession to tackle rogue traders.

**Justin Madders:**

The UK's framework for occupational regulation upholds public protection, while ensuring regulatory burdens on industry are proportionate. Although the locksmithing profession is not subject to statutory regulation, several self-regulating trade associations and accreditation schemes exist within the industry. The government keeps the occupational regulatory regime under review to respond to industry and public needs.

**Products: Regulation**

**John McDonnell:** [\[14441\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what his planned timetable is for bringing forward secondary legislation under the Product Regulation and Metrology Bill once enacted.

**Justin Madders:**

The Bill will give us the powers we need to make necessary changes to the product regulation framework. Secondary legislation is subject to the Bill receiving Royal Assent and subsequent parliamentary time in passing any secondary legislation. It is too early to commit to a detailed timetable for secondary legislation, but we will continue to work with stakeholders as this develops.

**CABINET OFFICE****Arms Length Bodies**

**Alex Burghart:** [\[14109\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether framework agreements with Arm's Length Bodies can be unilaterally changed by Departments.

**Georgia Gould:**

As per the guidance set out by HM Treasury Framework Agreements are agreed between the department and the Arm's Length Body jointly and then submitted to the Treasury Officer of Accounts.

### ■ Cabinet Office: Civil Servants

**Sir Ashley Fox:** [\[9831\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many civil servants are assigned to work in each of (a) his Department's and (b) Government Equalities Office offices; and how many desks are available in each office.

**Georgia Gould:**

Owing to security considerations, I am unable to provide information specifically relating to the number of desks in each office for which you have requested information. However, the total full-time equivalent headcount of Civil Servants is provided in the table below:

CABINET OFFICE	6,331
Government Equalities Office	136
Sub Total	6,467
ALB's	1,114
Total	7,581

The Government publishes the monthly average number of staff working in Civil Service Headquarters (HQ) buildings, published on a quarterly basis at:

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

### ■ Cabinet Office: Staff

**Mr Richard Holden:** [\[14901\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 21 October 2024 to Question 8125 on Government Departments: Staff, if he will publish an updated organogram for his Department on data.gov.uk.

**Georgia Gould:**

We are committed to publishing an updated organogram on data.gov.uk. Work has already begun to do this.

### ■ Chequers: Official Visits

**Mike Wood:** [\[14633\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 11 October 2024 to Question 5577 on Chequers: Official Visits, how many external guests have visited Chequers since 5 July 2024.

**Georgia Gould:**

Details of official hospitality at Chequers are published on a quarterly basis and are available via [gov.uk](http://gov.uk)

## ■ Civil Servants: Dismissal

**Rupert Lowe:** [\[14369\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many civil servants were dismissed for poor performance by Department in each of the last five years.

**Georgia Gould:**

Information on how many civil servants were dismissed for poor performance is not available centrally.

## ■ Civil Servants: Secondment

**Mr Richard Holden:** [\[14703\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Answer of 15 June 2023 to Question 188973 on Civil Servants: Secondment, whether he has taken steps to increase the data available.

**Georgia Gould:**

Secondments into the Civil Service from other sectors are a key route to bring essential skills and experience into the right roles and teams, enabling talented individuals from outside the Civil Service to contribute to the work of Government by sharing critical capabilities and innovative thinking for a set period of time.

In August 2023 the Government Chief People Office, Fiona Ryland, commissioned all departments, professions and functions to embed secondments as a key part of their resourcing and skills strategies.

A quarterly secondments data commission was reintroduced in April 2023 to provide insight on inward and outward secondments taking place across government. The Cabinet Office has worked closely with departments to increase the amount, detail and quality of the data available. Responses are now received from all ministerial departments.

## ■ Ethics and Integrity Commission

**Mike Wood:** [\[14634\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the new Ethics and Integrity Commission will be established on a statutory basis.

**Georgia Gould:**

I refer the Hon Member to the answer of 31 July 2024, Official Report, PQ 1251.

## ■ Government Departments: Disclosure of Information

**Mr Richard Holden:** [\[14972\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 6 November 2024 to Question 12416 on Government Departments: Disclosure of Information, whether it is his policy that Government transparency data should be (a) available and (b) searchable on a new transparency platform.

**Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:**

This Government is fully committed to transparency and to looking at how the range of information published can be improved and made as useful as possible.

**Government Departments: Drinking Water**

**Rupert Lowe:** [14361]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much was spent on bottled water by each Department in the last financial year.

**Georgia Gould:**

The information requested is not held centrally by the Cabinet Office.

**Government Departments: Twitter**

**Mr Richard Holden:** [14352]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the Government's policy is on paying for advertising on X.

**Georgia Gould:**

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

**Lobbying: Disclosure of Information**

**Mr Richard Holden:** [14482]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what guidance his Department has issued to other departments on the circumstances in which consultant lobbying firms attending (a) meetings and (b) hospitality must be declared on ministerial transparency returns.

**Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:**

Guidance on ministers' transparency returns is published on GOV.UK at [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6604110bf9ab41001aeea39c/2024\\_04\\_02-Ministers-Transparency-Guidance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6604110bf9ab41001aeea39c/2024_04_02-Ministers-Transparency-Guidance.pdf)

Departments are required to publish details of ministerial meetings with external organisations and individuals, including meetings with lobbyists registered on the Register of Consultant Lobbyists. Departments are also required to publish details of hospitality above de minimis levels received by ministers in their ministerial capacity.

**Prime Minister: Correspondence**

**Mike Wood:** [14632]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 14 October 2024 to Question 6071 on Prime Minister: Correspondence, if he will publish the Prime Minister's response.

**Georgia Gould:**

It is not routine to publish correspondence between the Prime Minister or former Prime Ministers, and any individual or organisation.

**CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT****■ Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme****Neil O'Brien:**[\[14664\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, when her Department plans to make an announcement on the future of the Listed Place of Worship Grant Scheme.

**Chris Bryant:**

Departmental settlements have been set following the Budget announcement on October 30. Individual programmes will now be assessed during the departmental Business Planning process.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[14701\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what plans she has to extend the Listed Places of Worship Grants scheme beyond March 2025.

**Chris Bryant:**

Departmental settlements have been set following the Budget announcement on October 30. Individual programmes will now be assessed during the departmental Business Planning process.

**DEFENCE****■ Army****Ben Obese-Jecty:**[\[14825\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the new operational establishment is for a heavy mechanised infantry battalion.

**Luke Pollard:**

The Army is currently undergoing a combined programme of work to ensure our Land Forces will have the lethality, protection and mobility to fight and win against any adversary. The outcome of the Strategic Defence Review in early 2025 will also guide future capability development priorities.

Planned future operational establishment will see the British Army have four Heavy Mechanised Infantry Battalions across two Armoured Brigades. These Battalions will be equipped and structured around the Boxer platform, with the first Battalion due to reach Initial Operating Capability in 2025.

**■ Commonwealth War Graves Commission: Finance****Ben Obese-Jecty:**[\[14827\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much has been allocated from his Department's budget to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission for (a) 2023/24, (b) 2024/25 and (c) 2025/26.

**Al Carns:**

In Financial Year (FY) 2023-24, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) received a total of £53,670,871 from the Ministry of Defence (MOD).

In FY 2024-25, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) is expected to receive a total of £56,545,358 from the MOD.

The MOD's Defence Business Services pay an additional sum to the CWGC for the upkeep of non-World War One and World War Two Graves. The amounts paid are:

- FY2023-24 - £2.45 million
- FY2024-25 - £2.80 million

Additionally, FY2023-24 saw a one-off payment of £0.5 million to the CWGC for the maintenance of the British Normandy Memorial (covering the period April 2024 to March 2027).

The amounts to be paid to CWGC in FY2025-26 will be confirmed once the future Defence budget is known.

**■ Defence: Industry****Liam Byrne:**[\[14593\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what progress his Department has made on commissioning a new Defence Industrial Strategy.

**Maria Eagle:**

This Government is committed to bringing forward a Defence Industrial Strategy which ensures the imperatives of national security and a high-growth economy are aligned.

The development of the Defence Industrial Strategy will explore how to establish a better, more innovative and more resilient defence sector, enabling the UK to innovate, deter its adversaries and seize opportunities presented by the technologies of the future.

The Defence Industrial Strategy will be developed at pace in parallel with, but separate from, the Strategic Defence Review and will be published in 2025.

**Liam Byrne:**[\[14594\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department plans to take to meet the NATO defence industrial capacity expansion pledge; and how this will be incorporated into developing the new Defence Industrial Strategy.

**Maria Eagle:**

This Government is committed to bringing forward a Defence Industrial Strategy which ensures the imperatives of national security and a high-growth economy are aligned. Our NATO-first approach will be a vital part of our new Defence Industrial Strategy, with NATO's industrial and operational requirements and integration with our allies and partners at the heart of our defence plans. The Department is taking steps to meet the NATO defence industrial capacity expansion pledge, including through our NATO Multinational Procurement Initiatives through which we are encouraging more joint procurement amongst NATO allies.

■ **NATO****Helen Maguire:**[\[14886\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the effectiveness of NATO's readiness, in the context of potential changes in policy from the incoming United States administration.

**Luke Pollard:**

NATO is the world's most successful alliance. It represents 50 per cent of the world's military capability, with 500,000 troops now on high readiness

As NATO allies, the UK-US special relationship is built on a foundation of our deep security partnership and unique historical ties. We look forward to working closely with the new US administration to ensure the Alliance will continue to support the security of the Euro-Atlantic.

■ **Shells****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[14022\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an estimate of the number of weeks the UK could sustain continuous combat for before exhausting its 155mm shells stock.

**Maria Eagle:**

Munition stockpile levels are actively reviewed balancing current holdings against threats, availability, industrial capacity and evolving technology. It is not however possible to comment on specific stockpile levels, as this information is operationally sensitive.

**EDUCATION**■ **Childcare: Employers' Contributions****Laura Trott:**[\[14644\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether increased costs from employer national insurance contributions will be taken into account in the childcare funding formula.

**Stephen Morgan:**

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

**Department for Education: Ministers' Private Offices****Sir Ashley Fox:**[\[12893\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 1 November 2024 to Question 9069 on Department for Education: Ministers' Private Offices, if she will publish the invoice for the new chairs.

**Janet Daby:**

Due to commercial sensitivity, it is against departmental policy to publish invoices.

**Free School Meals****Damian Hinds:**[\[14061\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential implications for her policies of levels of demand in schools for free school meals.

**Damian Hinds:**[\[14062\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans she has for the funding rates for free school meals.

**Stephen Morgan:**

Under existing programmes, the department provides free school meals (FSM) to around 2.1 million disadvantaged pupils in schools, just under 1.3 million infants through Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM), and over 90,000 low-income students in further education (FE). More than £1.5 billion is allocated in support of these programmes.

Schools are funded for benefits-related FSM at £490 per eligible pupil per year as a factor value within the national funding formula. Total funding driven by the FSM factor in 2024/25 is £917 million.

UIFSM and FE free meals are funded through a direct grant to schools and colleges. The current per meal rate is £2.53 in the 2024/25 academic year. Final funding rates for UIFSM in 2024/25 will be confirmed in due course.

As with all government programmes the department will keep its approach to FSM, including levels of demand and funding to deliver this, under continued review.

**School Meals: Animal Products****Neil Duncan-Jordan:**[\[14411\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will amend regulations on school meals so that there is no obligation to serve animal-derived foods.



**Stephen Morgan:**

It is important that children eat nutritious food at school and the department encourages schools to have a whole school approach to healthy eating. The School Food Standards regulate the food and drink provided at lunchtime and at other times of the school day. Compliance with the School Food Standards is mandatory for maintained schools, academies and free schools.

Under the School Food Standards, meat must be served on three or more days each week and a portion of oily fish once every three weeks. Beyond this, the department believes that head teachers, school governors and caterers are best placed to make decisions about their school food policies, considering local circumstances and the needs of their pupils. As such, notwithstanding the requirements around meat and oily fish, schools may provide a meal with any other type of protein every day if they choose to. Although schools are required to make milk available, the School Food Standards also enable schools to provide a variety of other drinks including plain soya, rice or oat drinks enriched with calcium and combination and flavoured variations of these drinks, to suit particular medical, dietary and cultural needs.

**Schools: Mobile Phones****Laura Trott:**[\[14646\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to ensure mobile phones are not a distraction in (a) primary and (b) secondary schools.

**Stephen Morgan:**

The department knows that using mobile phones in schools can lead to online bullying, distraction and classroom disruption, which can, in turn, lead to lost learning time.

Schools are required by law to have a behaviour policy that sets out what is expected of all pupils, including outlining the items that are banned from school premises. Additionally, the government's non-statutory guidance supports schools on how to develop, implement and maintain a policy that prohibits the use of mobile phones throughout the school day. Headteachers are responsible for the implementation of such guidance within their schools.

**Sixth Form Colleges: Pay****Damian Hinds:**[\[14060\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential impact on recruitment and retention of excluding teaching staff at non-academised sixth-form colleges from the recent pay award in financial year 2024-25.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

The recent pay award for the 2024/25 financial year was for school teachers only. The government does not set or recommend pay in further education (FE).

This government recognises the vital role that FE teachers and providers play in equipping learners with the opportunities and skills that they need to succeed in their

education and will consider workforce sufficiency and what this might mean for FE funding in future years.

The Autumn Budget 2024 set out the government's commitment to skills, by providing an additional £300 million revenue funding for FE to ensure young people are developing the skills this country needs. The department will set out in due course how this funding will be distributed.

## ■ Special Educational Needs

**Laura Trott:**

[14645]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many pupils have an (a) education, health and care plan and (b) a named school in each (i) region, (ii) local authority and (iii) constituency.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

The requested information for each region and local authority is attached.

Information on the number of all education, health and care (EHC) plans, and their named school is not readily available at constituency level.

Information on the number of pupils in schools in England with EHC plans is available at constituency level here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england>. The data file titled 'School level underlying data 2024 (csv, 10 Mb)' under the section 'Additional supporting files' includes the figures at school level, including the school type and parliamentary constituency. As these figures are taken from the January 2024 school census, the parliamentary constituencies are based on pre-election boundaries. Where statistics were published prior to the changes in parliamentary constituency boundaries, they will be updated to reflect the new boundaries in the next publication of statistics. This is expected to be in June 2025 for statistics on schools and pupils, including special educational needs.

**Attachments:**

1. 14645\_ehcp\_local\_and\_regional\_table [14645 table\_attachment 191124.xlsx]

**Neil Duncan-Jordan:**

[14847]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the criteria were for award of the contract for Research on the operation and impact of Safety Valve agreements on children, young people and their families.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

In April 2024, all suppliers registered with the Crown Commercial Service's RM6126 Research & Insights Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS), with the relevant skills and experience, were invited to apply to conduct a research project in relation to the Safety Valve programme. This project will look at the operation and impact of Safety Valve agreements on children, young people and their families. Suppliers were identified by using the following filters amongst those registered on the DPS: primary, secondary, special needs/special educational needs, qualitative research, online

fieldwork, case studies, public sector employees, teaching, parents (including foster parents and adopted parents). As a result, 103 organisations were invited to apply, and of these, we received seven bids.

Bids were assessed against the following published criteria: the knowledge, capability and experience of the project team, their proposed methodology and approach, their experience in communicating and delivering high quality reports, how they supported the physical and mental health of their workforce, and value for money. Departmental officials followed the required purchasing processes and protocols in compliance with the DPS framework.

## ■ Special Educational Needs: Autism

**Kate Osamor:**

[\[14309\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing mandatory autism training for (a) teachers and (b) teaching assistants.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

This government's ambition is that all children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) or in alternative provision receive the right support to succeed in their education and as they move into adult life. We are committed to improving inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools, as well as ensuring special schools cater to those with the most complex needs. We will strengthen accountability on mainstream settings to be inclusive including through Ofsted, support the mainstream workforce to increase their SEND expertise and encourage schools to set up Resourced Provision or special education needs units to increase capacity in mainstream schools.

High quality teaching and support is the single most important in-school factor in improving outcomes for pupils, including those with autism or other SEND.

All mainstream schools must have a special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) who must be a qualified teacher, or the head teacher, working at the school. On 1 September 2024, the government introduced a new mandatory leadership level National Professional Qualification (NPQ) for SENCOs. The NPQ will play a key role in improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND by ensuring SENCOs consistently receive high quality, evidence-based training. This is crucial given the central role SENCOs play in supporting pupils with SEND.

Universal SEND Services brings together SEND-specific continuing professional development and support for the school and further education workforce. The programme aims to improve outcomes for children and young people, including those with autism. The contract offers autism awareness training and resources. Over 200,000 professionals have received autism training from an Autism Education Trust training partner since the programme launched in May 2022.

**■ Special Educational Needs: Essex****James McMurdock:**[\[14417\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to ensure equal access to funding for special educational needs and disabilities services in Essex.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

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

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

The department is now in the process of calculating indicative high needs funding allocations for local authorities next year through the national funding formula, which the department expects to publish shortly.

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

**ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO****■ Carbon Capture and Storage****Henry Tufnell:**[\[14517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to support carbon capture and storage technology.

**Sarah Jones:**

I refer the Honourable Member to the answer I gave on Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> October, to Question 901221. On 4<sup>th</sup> October, the government announced up to £21.7bn of available funding over 25 years to launch the UK's Carbon Capture, Usage and Storage industry. We will provide further details on the next steps on CCUS, including Track-2 projects, following Phase 2 of the Spending Review.

**■ District Heating: Price Caps****Dr Scott Arthur:**[\[14139\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will publish a timeline for making heat networks subject to the energy price cap.

**Miatta Fahnbulleh:**

Heat network suppliers commercially contract for the fuel that powers heat networks and so they are not subject to the domestic energy price cap.

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

The heat network regulator, Ofgem, will have powers to investigate and intervene where heat network prices charged to consumers appear to be disproportionate or unfair.

Regulatory oversight will be supplemented by statutory redress through the Energy Ombudsman who will have the same powers to hear complaints and make legally binding decisions as they do in gas and electricity markets.

### ■ District Heating: Regulation

**Uma Kumaran:**

[\[14216\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to regulate communal heating systems.

**Miatta Fahnbulleh:**

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

Ofgem will be appointed heat network regulator, and they will administer the Market Framework which will introduce consumer protections and a licensing regime for operators. Ofgem's powers will include the ability to investigate unfair pricing and ensure that consumers' heat supply is maintained if their supplier goes out of business.

Regulatory oversight will be supplemented by statutory redress through the Energy Ombudsman who will have the same powers to hear complaints and make legally binding decisions as they do in gas and electricity markets. Citizens Advice and Consumer Scotland will also be empowered to provide advice and advocacy on behalf of heat network consumers.

### ■ Energy: Meters

**Alison Hume:**

[\[14235\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of using cellular smart meters to create a fully functioning smart meter network in the north of England.

**Miatta Fahnbulleh:**

Under its licence, the Data Communications Company (DCC) is obligated to provide Wide Area Network (WAN) coverage to at least 99.5% of premises across its 'North' region.

DCC's work on its Future Connectivity strategy includes consideration of a full range of technical solutions including cellular options.

**Harriet Cross:**[\[14432\]](#)

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

**Miatta Fahnbulleh:**

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

**ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ **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 31<sup>st</sup> 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.

■ **Zoos: Nature Conservation****Richard Baker:**[\[14550\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to support zoos in maintaining effective breeding programs with partners in Europe.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

For zoo animal transfers from Great Britain (GB) to the European Union (EU), export requirements vary and must be agreed on a case-by-case basis with the importing country. On receipt of the requirements, Defra collaborates with officials in the importing country to ensure these are practical before producing an official certificate ensuring safe, compliant trade while safeguarding animal and public health. This

minimizes the risk of live animals being delayed or returned at borders due to non-compliance.

Border Control Points capacity at key locations within the EU can affect zoo animal movements, creating challenges for GB zoos participating in international conservation projects. The department engages with stakeholders, including the British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums and French authorities, to advocate for new border control posts and streamline processes where possible.

## FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

### ■ **Afghanistan: Asylum**

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:**

[\[14064\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support people leaving Afghanistan on humanitarian grounds.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

In the first year after the Taliban takeover, the UK provided £17 million to support partners in Afghanistan's neighbouring countries. This support assisted Afghan migrants and asylum seekers moving across borders, and refugee and host communities in those countries. We are also planning £161 million of funding to Afghanistan this financial year (2024-5), which includes both humanitarian aid and support for essential services in Afghanistan. We continue to monitor the situation closely.

### ■ **Afghanistan: Chevening Scholarships Programme**

**Siân Berry:**

[\[13727\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Answer of 19 September 2024 to Question HL704 on Afghanistan: Chevening Scholarships Programme, when a final decision will be taken on the Afghanistan Chevening programme for academic year 2025-26.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The Chevening Scholarship Programme opened for applications from Afghans on Thursday 14 November 2024.

### ■ **Alaa Abd El-Fattah**

**Ms Stella Creasy:**

[\[14622\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what progress his Department has made on securing the release of Alaa Abd El-Fattah.

**Ms Stella Creasy:**

[\[14623\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government plans to take to respond to the Egyptian Government's refusal to (a) release and (b) recognise the British nationality of Alaa Abd El-Fattah.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The UK Government remains committed to securing the release of Alaa Abd El-Fattah. We continue to raise Mr El-Fattah's case at the highest levels with the Egyptian Government. The Egyptian Government does not recognise Mr El-Fattah's British nationality and is refusing consular access. The Foreign Secretary has raised Mr El-Fattah's case on several occasions, most recently with Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty on 14 November. The Prime Minister also raised Mr El-Fattah's case with President Sisi on 8 August. I raised Mr El-Fattah's case with the Egyptian Foreign Minister Abdelatty on 15 October.

## ■ Commonwealth: Cybersecurity and Joint Exercises

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[13404\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the report by Policy Exchange entitled One Family: Harnessing the Strategic Potential of the Commonwealth, published on 17 October 2024, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of establishing a Commonwealth security and defence co-operation forum to (a) conduct joint military and naval exercises and (b) pool resources for cybersecurity.

**Stephen Doughty:**

The UK works bilaterally and multilaterally with many Commonwealth members on defence and security issues, including through other forums - and attaches great importance to this. The Commonwealth as a collective has also been vocal on security issues facing its members, including providing strong support for Guyana regarding Venezuela's actions in respect to the Essequibo region. On cyber security the UK continues to fund the Global Cyber Programme, which works with countries across the Commonwealth to increase their cyber capacity and resilience to threats.

## ■ Commonwealth: Politics and Government

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[13405\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of the conclusions of the report entitled One Family: Harnessing the Strategic Potential of the Commonwealth, published by Policy Exchange on 17 October 2024.

**Stephen Doughty:**

I welcome the contribution of Policy Exchange's 'One Family' report to the debate on the future of the Commonwealth. In particular, I support the report's argument for the Commonwealth to focus on important areas including boosting intra-Commonwealth trade and investment, protecting the environment and advancing education and skills.



At CHOGM (Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting) last month the UK demonstrated its commitment across these three priorities by announcing, amongst another initiatives: the Trade Centre of Expertise, the Commonwealth Investment Plan of Action, continued funding for the Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub and an improved scholarship offer to empower Commonwealth youth with skills for the future.

**Adam Jogee:**

[\[13542\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the outcomes of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Samoa.

**Stephen Doughty:**

The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Samoa focused on building shared resilience in the face of today's global challenges and aligned closely with the UK's Commonwealth priorities: catalysing economic growth, tackling the climate and nature crisis and creating opportunities for future generations. A package of measures to support these priorities was announced at CHOGM, including a new UK Trade Centre of Expertise and Commonwealth Investment Plan of Action, continued UK support to the Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub and an improved scholarship offer to empower Commonwealth youth with skills for the future.

## ■ Development Aid

**Steve Race:**

[\[14220\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that affected local people are included in the delivery of Official Development Assistance.

**Anneliese Dodds:**

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) takes a comprehensive and inclusive approach to the delivery of Overseas Development Aid, with a focus on ensuring that affected local people are actively involved in all stages of the programme cycle. The Programme Operating Framework sets out the FCDO's approach to programme management - including the mandatory rules, principles, roles and responsibilities and governance. This emphasises the importance of beneficiary engagement to improve outcomes - and ensuring interventions are context-specific, good value for money and transparent. It also highlights the importance of ensuring beneficiaries are safe from harm, as well as being empowered to speak out if harm is done through established feedback mechanisms. Additionally, the FCDO collaborates with local partners to understand their capacity and ensure sustainable interventions.

**Priti Patel:** [\[14305\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will publish a breakdown of Overseas Development Assistance funding his Department plans to allocate per country for 2025.

**Priti Patel:** [\[14306\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will publish a breakdown of multilateral funding his Department plans to provide via Overseas Development Assistance per organisation in 2025.

**Anneliese Dodds:**

We are committed to transparency and will separately publish the FCDO's planned Official Development Assistance (ODA) allocations for FY2024/25 and FY2025/26 in due course.

The FCDO reports annually on the UK's calendar year ODA expenditure for the previous calendar year via the Statistics on International Development publication.

Outturn data on the countries and multilateral organisations in receipt of FCDO ODA in 2025 will be published in autumn 2026.

#### ■ **Development Aid: Animal Welfare**

**James McMurdock:** [\[14260\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department uses animal welfare in recipient countries as a criteria for determining aid development policies.

**Anneliese Dodds:**

The Prime Minister is resetting Britain's approach to climate and nature, putting it at the centre of the UK's missions. Action on the climate and nature crisis will be central to the FCDO's priorities. There is no pathway to countries' development aspirations without climate resilience, action on the nature crisis and access to clean energy, and no pathway to a sustainable future without development that leaves no one behind.

This government was elected on a mandate to introduce the most ambitious plans to improve animal welfare in a generation. That is exactly what it will do, and relevant departments will be outlining more detail in due course.

#### ■ **Football: Morocco**

**Dr Danny Chambers:** [\[13642\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to (a) FIFA and (b) the government of the Kingdom of Morocco on the report entitled Cleansing the streets of Morocco for a football tournament, published by the International Animal Coalition.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The organisation of international sports events is a matter for independent international sports bodies. The FCDO has not made representations to the Kingdom of Morocco or FIFA regarding the report referenced. This Government was elected on a mandate to introduce the most ambitious plans to improve animal welfare in a generation. That is what we intend to do, and we will be outlining more detail in due course.

**■ Gaza: Genocide Convention****Ian Byrne:**[\[13256\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps he is taking to help ensure compliance with the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in Gaza.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

It is the UK's long-standing policy that any determination as to whether genocide has occurred is a matter for a competent national or international court, and not for governments or non-judicial bodies. This approach ensures that any determination is above politics, lobbying and individual or national interest.

**■ Gaza: Health Services****Ian Byrne:**[\[13246\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the adequacy of the (a) capacity of (i) hospitals and (ii) primary health care centres and (b) availability of (i) medicine and (ii) basic medical supplies in Gaza.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

We remain gravely concerned about the deteriorating health provision in Gaza, particularly in the north. It is unacceptable that northern Gaza now has no fully functioning hospitals. On 5 November, I reiterated this in a call with Israel's Ambassador to the UK. At a UK-chaired meeting of the UN Security Council on 12 November, Lord Collins expressed our condemnation of Israel's ongoing aid restrictions. The Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary pressed Israel to increase aid flow in calls with their counterparts on 19 and 27 October. This Government is clear that Israel must also do much more to protect civilians, healthcare infrastructure and humanitarian workers, including the medics northern Gaza desperately needs. The UK is supporting the provision of essential healthcare to Palestinians, including through field hospitals operated by UK-Med in Gaza, and through support to the Egyptian health ministry to care for medically evacuated Palestinians.

## ■ Hamas: Hostage Taking

**Alex Easton:** [\[13316\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what (a) diplomatic, (b) humanitarian and (c) other steps he is taking with international counterparts to help secure the release of hostages held in Gaza.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

Since day one of this government, we have prioritised working to end this conflict and secure the safe release of hostages, in co-ordination with international partners. The Prime Minister - along with other G7 Leaders - has fully endorsed efforts by the US and regional partners to reach a comprehensive deal in line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 2735. We need the hostages returned immediately and unconditionally. During his most recent visit to the region on 9 October, the Foreign Secretary reiterated the need for an immediate ceasefire to ensure their safe release. We must also see greater protection of civilians, a rapid increase in humanitarian aid to Gaza, and the enabling of UN and humanitarian agencies to operate safely in Gaza.

**Greg Smith:** [\[13812\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many British citizens were taken hostage during the attack on Israel by Hamas on 7 October 2023.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

Two British nationals were taken hostage during the attack on Israel by Hamas on 7 October 2023. The UK Government was greatly saddened to hear about the death of Nadav Popplewell who had been held in captivity and was declared deceased in June 2024. For some the nightmare continues, with hostages still cruelly held by Hamas, including one British national, Emily Damari, and three with strong British links. All the hostages remain a priority to me and the entire Ministerial team and we will continue to work tirelessly for their release.

## ■ Iraq: Age of Consent

**Rebecca Paul:** [\[14132\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of proposals to be considered by the Iraqi Parliament to amend the Personal Status Law to reduce the age of consent for girls in that country to 9 years old.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The UK is analysing the proposed amendments to Iraq's Personal Status Law and its implications for women and children's rights, which we note have not yet been passed through the House of Representatives. As we continue to privately engage with a range of Iraqi interlocutors to discuss this, we are emphasising the importance of any amendments' compatibility with Iraq's international obligations.

## ■ Israel: Human Rights

**Liam Byrne:**

[\[14591\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when his Department's International Humanitarian Law Compliance Assessment Process Cell made its most recent assessment of Israel's compliance with International Humanitarian Law.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

We continue to keep Israel's compliance with International Humanitarian Law (IHL) in Gaza under review through a regular assessments process. Our judgment on Israel's IHL compliance remains as set out in the Foreign Secretary's statement to Parliament on 2 September.

## ■ Occupied Territories: Human Rights

**Chris Law:**

[\[14456\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of the Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, A/79/363, published on 20 September 2024.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

We did not make an assessment of the Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (A/79/363). However, the Government has been clear since day one that International Humanitarian Law (IHL) must be upheld, and civilians protected. The UK supports Israel's right to self-defence, but it must do so in accordance with IHL. The death and destruction in Gaza is intolerable. Too many civilians have been killed and we need to prevent further bloodshed. What is urgently needed is an immediate ceasefire, the release of all hostages, the upholding of international law, protection of civilians including a rapid increase of aid into Gaza and a pathway to a two-state solution.

## ■ Pakistan: Ahmadiyya

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[14672\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department is taking steps to help secure the release of Ahmadiyya Muslims detained under blasphemy laws in Pakistan.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The UK condemns the persecution of religious minorities and marginalised religious communities in Pakistan. We work to protect and promote human rights in Pakistan through our diplomatic engagement and programme funding. This includes regularly raising concerns about the misuse of blasphemy laws against religious minorities, including the Ahmadiyya Muslim community, both in principle and in relation to

specific cases. I underlined the importance of promoting religious tolerance and harmony when I met with Pakistan's Human Rights Minister Azam Tarar on 19 November. On 20 November, I attended a meeting with Pakistan's Minister of Interior Mosin Naqvi, where the British High Commissioner and I raised concerns about threats of violence directed towards Ahmadiyya Muslims in Pakistan.

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[14673\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will have discussions with international organisations on potential steps to support Ahmadiyya Muslims in Pakistan.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The UK condemns the persecution of religious minorities and marginalised religious communities in Pakistan. We work alongside the wider international community, including foreign governments and civil society organisations to promote human rights, including Freedom of Religion or Belief, in partnership with Pakistan. I outlined the importance of protecting the rights of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community in Pakistan when I met with Pakistan's Human Rights Minister Azam Tarar on 19 November. On 20 November, I attended a meeting with Pakistan's Minister of Interior Mosin Naqvi, where the British High Commissioner and I raised concerns about threats of violence directed towards Ahmadiyya Muslims in Pakistan. Officials regularly meet with the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community both in the UK and Pakistan to listen to their concerns and inform our policy.

## ■ Pakistan: Human Rights

**Ian Byrne:**

[\[13260\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations his Department has made to the Pakistan Government on the rights of minority groups in that country.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

We work to protect and promote human rights in Pakistan through our diplomatic engagement and programme funding. The UK will continue to urge the Government of Pakistan to guarantee the rights of all people as laid down in Pakistan's Constitution and in accordance with international standards. I (Minister Falconer) underlined the importance of promoting religious tolerance and harmony when I met with Pakistan's Human Rights Minister Azam Tarar on 19 November. On 20 November, I attended a meeting with Pakistan's Minister of Interior Mosin Naqvi, where the British High Commissioner and I raised concerns about threats of violence directed towards Ahmadiyya Muslims in Pakistan.

## ■ Pakistan: Religious Freedom

**Christine Jardine:**

[\[14120\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to his Pakistani counterpart about (a) freedom of religion in that country and (b) the case of Ehsan Shan.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The UK condemns the persecution of religious minorities in Pakistan. I underlined the importance of promoting religious tolerance and harmony when I met with Pakistan's Human Rights Minister Azam Tarar on 19 November. On 20 November, I attended a meeting with Pakistan's Minister of Interior Mosin Naqvi, where the British High Commissioner and I raised concerns about threats of violence directed towards Ahmadiyya Muslims in Pakistan. Officials at the British High Commission Islamabad regularly raise our concerns surrounding the mistreatment of minorities with the Pakistani authorities, including law enforcement officials. We regularly raise our opposition to the death penalty and concerns about the misuse of blasphemy laws, both in principle and in relation to specific cases.

## ■ Pregnancy: Nutrition

**Steve Race:**

[\[14218\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he is taking steps to invest in (a) prenatal multiple micronutrient supplementation, (b) breastfeeding (i) promotion and (ii) support, (c) vitamin A supplementation and (d) other early nutrition interventions.

**Anneliese Dodds:**

The FCDO supports the scale up of evidence-based interventions to tackle maternal and child malnutrition. Through the Child Nutrition Fund (CNF), the FCDO supports the procurement and distribution of micronutrient supplements - Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Foods (RUTFs) - for children under 5 and pregnant and lactating women (PLW). This includes a recent contribution to a \$60 million match funding arrangement with the Government of Nigeria, and promotion of exclusive and continued breastfeeding. The FCDO funds the Clinton Health Access Initiative (CHAI) to increase access to maternal micronutrient supplements in selected low- and middle-income countries.

## ■ Sanctions

**Liam Byrne:**

[\[14011\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the Government's sanctions policy priorities are; and whether his Department plans to publish an updated strategy.

**Stephen Doughty:**

The UK uses sanctions to deter and disrupt malign behaviour and demonstrate our defence of fundamental principles, including democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

I recently convened Ministers from across government to deepen our cooperation on sanctions, and review enforcement measures. I also discussed sanctions enforcement with leaders of the Overseas Territories during the Joint Ministerial Council. We regularly coordinate with allies including in the United States, Canada, EU and others to maximise our impact.

This month we announced our largest sanctions package against Russia since May 2023, and working with our allies we will continue to use sanctions to further restrict the revenues and military goods Russia relies on. We have also recently used sanctions to respond to Iran's malign activity, as part of UK efforts to support a more stable West Bank, and targeted members of a Russian cybercrime gang.

**HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ **Accident and Emergency Departments: Heart Diseases and Strokes****Rupert Lowe:**[\[13925\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have presented at A&E for a (a) heart attack and (b) stroke in each of the last ten years.

**Karin Smyth:**

Prior to 2020/21, the mechanism used to collect and record accident and emergency activity was not sufficiently granular to identify the requested conditions. However, NHS England can provide a count of attendances with a relevant primary diagnosis from 2020/21 onwards. The following table shows the number of attendances, broken down by the relevant diagnosis, from 2020/21 to 2023/24:

YEAR	DIAGNOSIS	ATTENDANCES
2020/21	Stroke	110,756
2020/21	Heart Attack	28,209
2020/21	Cardiac Arrest	9,130
2021/22	Stroke	118,699
2021/22	Heart Attack	34,875
2021/22	Cardiac Arrest	10,301
2022/23	Stroke	120,731
2022/23	Heart Attack	35,524



YEAR	DIAGNOSIS	ATTENDANCES
2022/23	Cardiac Arrest	10,887
2023/24	Stroke	122,812
2023/24	Heart Attack	35,829
2023/24	Cardiac Arrest	10,185

Source: the data is from The Emergency Care Data Set, which is available at the following link: <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/data-collections-and-data-sets/data-sets/emergency-care-data-set-ecds>

## ■ Alan Milburn

**Esther McVey:** [\[13483\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 1 November 2024 to Question 9445 on Department of Health and Social Care: Public Appointments, what interests Alan Milburn has declared since being appointed as a Lead Non-Executive Board Member.

### **Karin Smyth:**

The usual process of declarations of interest and agreement of appropriate mitigations for non-executive board member (NEBM) appointments was carried out, overseen by the Permanent Secretary. He is content that the process has been carried out, that appropriate declarations have been made, and that appropriate mitigations for any conflicts arising have been put in place. NEBMs are contracted to work for two to three days a month and therefore it is not unusual for them to hold multiple other positions and interests. Their declarations of interest are published each year in the Register of Interests in the Department's Annual Report and Accounts, and will also be published on GOV.UK website as per the new guidance on NEBM declarations of interest, that will be published soon. These declarations will be published at the earliest opportunity.

## ■ Anaesthetics: Training

**Dr Beccy Cooper:** [\[13936\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to increase the number of medical speciality training places (a) in total and (b) in anaesthesia.

**Dr Beccy Cooper:** [\[13938\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help increase the number of anaesthetists.

### **Karin Smyth:**

NHS staff have been overworked for years, with staff being burnt out and demoralised.

We are committed to training the staff we need, including anaesthetists, to ensure patients are cared for by the right professional, when and where they need it.

We will ensure that the number of medical specialty training places meets the demands of the NHS in the future. NHS England will work with stakeholders to ensure that any growth is sustainable and focused in the service areas where need is greatest.

There is no quick fix, but through the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan we will build a health service fit for the future.

### ■ **Anaesthetics: Vacancies**

**Dr Beccy Cooper:**

[\[13937\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of anaesthetic workforce shortages on the NHS's ability to tackle the elective backlog.

**Karin Smyth:**

Tackling waiting lists is a key part of our Health Mission. We have committed to getting back to the NHS Constitutional standard that at least 92% of patients wait no longer than 18 weeks from Referral to Treatment within our first term. As a first step to achieving this, we will deliver 2 million additional appointments, scans, and operations, or the equivalent to 40,000 per week.

Whilst no formal assessment has been made of the specific potential impact of anaesthetic workforce shortages on the National Health Service's ability to tackle the backlog, the Government will ensure the NHS has the right people, in the right places, with the right skills, to deliver the care patients need.

### ■ **Anaesthetists and Doctors: Resignations**

**Dr Beccy Cooper:**

[\[13939\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the percentage of (a) doctors and (b) anaesthetists preparing to leave the profession; and what steps he is taking to improve retention.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Government is committed to tackling the workforce crisis across the National Health Service. This will be achieved through better workforce planning, which will address the recruitment and retention challenges facing the NHS.

NHS England continues to lead on a range of initiatives to boost retention, with a strong focus on improving organisational culture, supporting staff wellbeing, and promoting flexible working opportunities. It is continually reviewing the effectiveness of these, and their impact on the workforce.

No specific estimate of the future numbers of doctors and anaesthetists preparing to leave the profession has been made. The General Medical Council publishes annual information on the total number of doctors leaving their register of licenced

professionals. This shows that in 2022, 11,319 doctors left the licenced register, the equivalent to 4% of the register. No information is available for anaesthetists specifically.

### ■ **Bladder Cancer: Medical Treatments**

**Ms Julie Minns:**

[\[14793\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of the clinical trial at Mount Sinai Health System, New York, published on 2 October 2024, on treating invasive bladder cancer which avoids removal of the bladder.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Department has not made a formal assessment of the policy implications following this clinical trial. The adoption of new treatments into the National Health Service in England is generally the result of National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidance and commissioner decisions.

The recommended treatment plan for muscle-invasive bladder cancer depends on how far the cancer has spread. All hospitals use multidisciplinary teams to treat bladder cancer. These are teams of specialists that work together to make decisions about the best way to proceed with treatment.

### ■ **Cardiovascular Diseases: Emergency Calls**

**Esther McVey:**

[\[13772\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to section 4.2 of NHS key statistics: England, HC 07281, published on 25 October 2024, (a) what assessment he has made of the causes of the increase in life threatening ambulance calls since Spring 2021 and (b) what percentage of the calls each month were cardiac related.

**Karin Smyth:**

The rise in category 1 incidents reflects an increase in the proportion of patients' ambulance services that have been determined to require an immediate face-to-face response. This may reflect a long-term trend of rising pressures on the health services from an increasing aging population, and complexity that comes with more patients with multiple comorbidities. Information on increases in ambulance service demand is published by NHS England. The total number of cardiac arrests that ambulance services responded to is published by month, however this information does not include other cardiac incidents, for example heart attack or angina, and the information is not disaggregated by incident category. The following table shows the total number of cardiac arrests each month from March 2021 to June 2024:

MONTH	TOTAL CARDIAC ARRESTS
March 2021	7,473

---

MONTH	TOTAL CARDIAC ARRESTS
April 2021	6,982
May 2021	7,085
June 2021	6,944
July 2021	7,592
August 2021	7,135
September 2021	7,442
October 2021	8,307
November 2021	8,483
December 2021	9,227
January 2021	8,936
February 2021	7,466
March 2021	8,216
April 2022	8,043
May 2022	7,781
June 2022	7,407
July 2022	7,959
August 2022	7,408
September 2022	7,349
October 2022	8,118
November 2022	8,440
December 2022	11,988
January 2022	9,832
February 2022	7,682
March 2022	8,599
April 2023	8,049
May 2023	7,298

MONTH	TOTAL CARDIAC ARRESTS
June 2023	6,921
July 2023	6,611
August 2023	6,753
September 2023	6,668
October 2023	7,941
November 2023	8,259
December 2023	9,554
January 2024	9,471
February 2024	8,045
March 2024	8,309
May 2024	7,544
June 2024	7,344

Source: The data is published by NHS England, and is available at the following link:  
<https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/ambulance-quality-indicators/>

## ■ Charities: Employers' Contributions

**Helen Grant:**

**[14451]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with (a) SeeAbility and (b) other charities that deliver public sector contracts on the potential impact of increases in levels of employers' national insurance contributions on those charities.

**Karin Smyth:**

To repair the public finances and help raise the revenue required to increase funding for public services, the Government has taken the difficult decision to increase employer National Insurance. On the impact on charities in particular, our tax regime for charities, including exemption from paying business rates, is among the most generous of anywhere in the world, with tax reliefs for charities and their donors worth just over £6 billion for the tax year to April 2024.

## ■ Community Diagnostic Centres

**Mr Andrew Snowden:**

[\[14525\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to roll out further Clinical Diagnostic Centres.

**Karin Smyth:**

Approximately £1.5 billion of additional capital funding has been allocated in the budget for 2025/26, to support National Health Service performance across secondary and emergency care, and to begin to deliver against the Government's three strategic shifts, which include moving care from the hospital to the community.

This investment will deliver new surgical hubs and diagnostic scanners. This creates new capacity for over 30,000 additional procedures, and over 1.25 million diagnostic tests, as they come online. The investments made at the October Budget also add new beds across the NHS estate.

Collectively, these investments will create more treatment space in emergency departments, reduce waiting times, and help shift more care into the community via the expansion of community based diagnostic capacity. More details will follow at the earliest opportunity.

The NHS is prioritising the roll-out of additional diagnostic capacity, and is currently delivering the final year of the three-year investment plan for establishing Community Diagnostic Centres (CDCs), with capacity prioritised for cancer diagnostics. In August 2024, NHS England published an updated list of 168 CDC sites currently delivering activity. A total of 170 CDCs have been approved and will be delivering activity by March 2025.

## ■ Dental Services: Dartford

**Jim Dickson:**

[\[14863\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve access to NHS dentistry in Dartford constituency.

**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. 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.

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

## ■ Doctors: Resignations

**Rupert Lowe:**

[\[13927\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many UK born doctors have left the NHS for employment outside of the UK in each of the last ten years.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Department does not hold the information requested.

## ■ General Practitioners

**Monica Harding:**

[\[14856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to improve the (a) performance of and (b) patient experience at the GP practices in the bottom 5% of the 2024 GP Patient Survey.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

We know that general practices (GPs) are working hard to deliver for their patients, and are delivering more appointments than ever before, however we know that some patients are struggling to access the care they need, and GPs are struggling to deliver it.

The GP Contract requires NHS England to arrange an annual review of GP contractors' performance against their contractual obligations. Integrated care boards also consider concerns or complaints raised by patients, and can take action where services are not meeting the needs of their local population.

## ■ General Practitioners: Translation Services

**Rupert Lowe:**

[\[14197\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the total cost was for (a) translation and (b) interpretation services incurred by GPs in each of the last 10 years.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Department does not hold this information centrally.

## ■ GP Practice Lists

**Monica Harding:**

[\[14858\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the average GP practice patient list is; what the largest patient list was at a GP practice in 2023-4; and what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of GP list sizes on patient (a) experience and (b) outcomes.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

Data on patients registered at a general practice (GP) is published on a monthly basis, and is as follows for 2023/24: at the beginning of 2023/24, 1 April 2023, the largest practice had 106,308 patients, and the median average practice had 8,383

patients; and at the end of 2023/24, 1 April 2024, the largest practice had 98,469 patients, and the median average practice had 8,620 patients.

NHS England has overall responsibility for ensuring that there are sufficient primary medical services to meet the reasonable requirements of patients throughout the country. To do so, they will contract providers, such as GPs, to provide these services. GPs are required to provide services to meet the reasonable needs of the patients registered at their practice. This includes making their own workforce plans, and so there is no Government recommendation for how many patients a GP should have assigned.

We expect commissioners to act if services are not meeting the reasonable needs of their patients. Under GP Contract regulations, practices can apply to their commissioner to close their patient list to new registrations for a period of time for a number of reasons, including workload and staffing considerations.

This data is taken from the Patients Registered at a GP Practice data set, from NHS England Digital. It should be noted that practices can operate across multiple sites or use a digital first approach, which can account for a particularly large patient list. Further information on the data set is available at the following link:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/patients-registered-at-a-gp-practice>

## ■ Gynaecology: Waiting Lists

**Alex Mayer:**

**[11373]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the data dashboard on UK gynaecology waits published by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists on 24 July 2024, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential reasons for differences in growth of waiting lists for (a) gynaecology and (b) other elective specialties.

**Karin Smyth:**

It is unacceptable that patients are waiting too long to get the care they need, including the nearly 600,000 on gynaecology waiting lists.

We are looking into this issue to understand what is driving demand for gynaecology and what steps we could take to return to the 18-week standard. Women's health hubs play a key role in shifting care from hospitals to the community. There are a range of efforts underway to address challenges identified, including support to trusts where performance is of concern, ongoing efforts to transform outpatient pathways, and the use of surgical hubs which provide high volume low complexity surgery, including for gynaecology.

Tackling waiting lists is a key part of our Health Mission. We will deliver an extra 40,000 operations, scans, and appointments per week, as a first step in our commitment to ensuring that patients can expect to be treated within 18 weeks. The Government will prioritise women's health as we build a 10-Year Health Plan to



reform the National Health Service and make it fit for the future, modernising care so that it takes place efficiently and closer to home, prioritising patient experience, and ensuring that regardless of what treatment you are waiting for, you will be seen, diagnosed, and treated in a timely way.

## ■ Health Services

**Ian Byrne:**

[\[14238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress NHS England has made on developing a mechanism to track, monitor and evaluate independent sector's impact on the long-term NHS capacity landscape in accordance with the Elective Recovery Taskforce implementation plan.

**Karin Smyth:**

NHS England is working closely with the Independent Healthcare Providers Network and the wider sector to ensure we have appropriate mechanisms to track and monitor the independent sector's impact on the long-term National Health Service capacity landscape. From October 2024, NHS England will be reporting independent sector activity data based on the Secondary Uses Service data submissions, to which a large number of independent sector provider sites currently report. This will therefore enable us to more fully capture the sector's activity.

NHS England continues to explore opportunities for the independent sector to support the NHS in the areas of greatest need, including in diagnostics and the most challenged specialties, while ensuring that NHS care remains free at the point of use. NHS England meets regularly with all independent sector providers to encourage this collaborative working.

## ■ Health Services: Translation Services

**Rupert Lowe:**

[\[14376\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department has on the number of (a) GP and (b) outpatient appointments conducted in a language other than English and British Sign Language, broken down by total number of appointments conducted per language.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Department does not hold this information centrally.

## ■ Health Services: Women

**Dame Caroline Dineneage:**

[\[14042\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help improve women's health in Gosport constituency.

**Karin Smyth:**

We are committed to moving towards a neighbourhood health service, with more care delivered in local communities to spot problems earlier. Women's health hubs are an

example of this approach and can play a key role in delivering the Government's commitments on tackling long National Health Service waiting lists, as well as shifting care into the community. The Department has invested £25 million to support the establishment of at least one pilot women's health hub in every integrated care system.

We know that more needs to be done, and we will prioritise women's health as we build an NHS fit for the future.

## ■ Health: Bicycles

**Dr Simon Opher:**

[14752]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential health benefits of improving access to cycles for people on low incomes.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

We know that reducing physical inactivity is beneficial for everyone and evidence suggests that cycling has positive physical and mental health benefits. Public Health England's cycling and walking evidence review, published in 2018, found mixed evidence for whether increasing cycling in deprived socioeconomic status groups is more beneficial than in the general population. 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](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5bf41840e5274a2af47c464e/Cycling_and_walking_for_individual_and_population_health_benefits.pdf)

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

## ■ Heavy Menstrual Bleeding

**Chris Bloore:**

[14504]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of Getting It Right First Time's guidance entitled Heavy Menstrual Bleeding, published in October 2021; and whether he plans to implement their recommendations.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Getting It Right First Time's (GIRFT) 2021 report into maternity and gynaecology identified a key barrier in treating heavy menstrual bleeding as the commissioning arrangements for contraceptive and sexual health services. The report recommended the lifting of restrictions on providing long-acting reversible contraception (LARC) for non-contraceptive purposes, such as treatment for heavy menstrual bleeding.

The commissioning of LARC is a decision for individual integrated care boards, who can decide whether to offer LARC through general practices or sexual health services, or both, based on an assessment of population need.

Additionally, £25 million has been invested by the Department to support the development of at least one pilot women's health hub in every integrated care system, and work is ongoing with NHS England to provide this. Women's health hubs bring together healthcare professionals and existing services to address fragmentation in reproductive health care and remove the barriers women face accessing treatment. Providing care and treatment for heavy menstrual bleeding is a core service of the hubs, and this includes treatment with LARCs.

## ■ Heavy Menstrual Bleeding: Contraceptives

**Chris Bloore:**

[13528]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of increasing access to long-acting reversible contraception for heavy menstrual bleeding in primary care on (a) waiting times and (b) demand for secondary care gynaecology services.

**Karin Smyth:**

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's guideline on heavy menstrual bleeding recommends an intrauterine system or hormonal coil, which is a form of long-acting reversible contraception (LARC), as a first line treatment. In the women's health strategy call for evidence, held in 2021, we heard about the challenges women faced accessing LARCs for the management of menstrual problems.

A cost benefit analysis on women's health hubs conducted by the Department estimated that if 50% of LARC procedures for gynaecology were provided in women's health hubs, it would produce a net saving of £1.8 million, and reduce pressures on secondary care gynaecology services. The cost benefit analysis is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/womens-health-hubs-information-and-guidance/womens-health-hubs-cost-benefit-analysis#cost-benefit-analysis-assumptions>

The Department is continuing to work with NHS England to support the establishment of at least one pilot women's health hub in every integrated care system, following a £25 million investment. Pilot women's health hubs provide intermediate and streamlined care in the community, which reduces pressures on services such as secondary care referrals and general practice appointments. A core service offered by hubs is treatment for heavy menstrual bleeding, and the fitting or removal of a LARC. Cutting waiting lists, including for gynaecology, is a key part of our Health Mission and a top priority for the Government.

**Chris Bloore:**

[13529]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the recommendations of the report by the Getting It Right First Time programme entitled Maternity and Gynaecology, published in September 2021, what steps his Department is taking to provide primary care practitioners with (a) training and (b) other resources to

deliver long-acting reversible contraception as part of treatment options for women with heavy menstrual bleeding.

**Karin Smyth:**

The 2021 Getting It Right First Time national report for maternity and gynaecology recommended that clinical commissioning groups, now integrated care boards (ICBs), commission contraceptive and sexual health services to provide intrauterine devices, which are a form of long-acting reversible contraception (LARC) for heavy menstrual bleeding, in relevant cases. ICBs may commission sexual health services or general practices (GPs) to offer LARC as a locally enhanced service to their local population. It is for ICBs to decide on commissioning arrangements for their area, based on an assessment of local need.

The Department is continuing to work with NHS England to support the establishment of at least one pilot women's health hub in every integrated care system, following a £25 million investment. A core service offered by hubs is treatment for heavy menstrual bleeding and provision of LARC. By providing an enhanced and more specialist service through hubs in the community, they enable women to be more effectively diagnosed and treated promptly in the community. The hubs also provide a centre for the training and support to GPs to help with upskilling, and reduce variation in the care that women can expect to receive.

Other training and guidance are available for primary care practitioners. For example, the Royal College of General Practitioners has developed a Women's Health Library, drawing together educational resources and guidelines on women's health, so primary healthcare professionals have the most up-to-date information for their patients. The Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare also offers a range of contraception qualifications that healthcare professionals can undertake.

■ **Hormone Replacement Therapy: Menopause**

**Nick Timothy:**

[\[12789\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of access to hormone replacement therapies for women experiencing the menopause.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Government is committed to prioritising women's health as we build a National Health Service fit for the future, and women's equality will be at the heart of our missions. Women should not have to suffer in silence and any woman concerned about menopause symptoms should seek advice from their general practitioner or other healthcare professional, who can advise about treatment options, including hormone replacement therapy (HRT).

There are over 70 HRT products, and the vast majority are in good supply. There have been issues with the supply of a limited number of HRT products, primarily due to very sharp increases in demand, but the supply position for the majority has improved considerably over the last year.

More than 500,000 people benefitted from accessing cheaper HRT prescriptions during its first year of operation. The HRT Prescription Prepayment Certificate (PPC) can represent significant savings for patients who are prescribed one of the listed HRT medications. For example, a patient who pays the prescription charge could save nearly £220 per year with an HRT PPC, if they were prescribed two listed HRT items per month.

#### ■ **Hospices: Employers' Contributions**

**Sir John Hayes:**

[\[14444\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the impact of the increase in employers' National Insurance contributions on hospices.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

We have taken necessary decisions to fix the foundations in the public finances at the Autumn Budget, 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 contributions 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.

#### ■ **Hospital Beds: Foreign Nationals**

**Rupert Lowe:**

[\[14365\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of NHS beds were occupied by chargeable overseas visitors in the last financial year.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Department does not hold or collect the information requested.

#### ■ **Joint Replacements: Gosport**

**Dame Caroline Dinéage:**

[\[14041\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce waiting times for joint replacement surgery in Gosport constituency.

**Karin Smyth:**

Tackling waiting lists is a key part of our Health Mission and a top priority for the Government, including waits for joint replacement surgery. We have committed to achieving the NHS Constitutional standard that 92% of patients should wait no longer than 18 weeks from Referral to Treatment by the end of this Parliament. As a first step, we will deliver an additional 2 million operations, scans, and appointments during our first year in Government, which is the equivalent to 40,000 per week.

We are also supporting dedicated and protected surgical hubs to help reduce elective surgery wait times, including for joint replacement, by focusing on high volume low complexity surgeries, as recommended by the Royal College of Surgeons of England, transforming the way the National Health Service provides elective care.

As of November 2024, there are currently 110 operational surgical hubs across England. There are currently two operational surgical hubs within the Hampshire and the Isle of Wight Integrated Care System offering trauma and orthopaedics services, including joint replacement, those being the Lymington Hospital Elective Hub, and the Winchester Country Hospital Elective Hub. Patients in the Gosport constituency can be referred to the two surgical hubs for trauma and orthopaedics services.

The Department and NHS England will set out details on the allocation of further funding at the earliest opportunity, including how many new surgical hubs will be established.

### ■ NHS: Migrant Workers

**Richard Tice:**

[\[14788\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the cost to the public purse was of (a) training and (b) otherwise integrating NHS staff recruited from abroad in the last 12 months.

**Karin Smyth:**

The information requested on the cost to the public purse for the training and integration of National Health Service staff recruited from abroad is not collected centrally.

### ■ NHS: Standards

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[14027\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he his taking to use (a) data and (b) AI to improve NHS efficiency.

**Karin Smyth:**

Data and technology is a key enabling workstream in our 10-Year Health Plan. The NHS is already using and promoting several national tools and datasets to help systems and providers identify and implement efficiency opportunities. The NHS Spend Comparison Service allows NHS procurement teams to identify savings opportunities. Model Hospital is a data-driven improvement tool that provides benchmarked insights across the quality of care, productivity, and organisational culture to identify opportunities for improvement. Model Hospital includes a section on the top ten medicines to support trust progress towards meeting national and trust-level uptake and savings targets by using less costly or biosimilar versions of these drugs.

The Federated Data Platform, being rolled-out to trusts and integrated care systems, will allow them to be much more effective in how they handle data to improve outcomes. It brings together information about staff, waiting times, equipment, and medicines, to allow for better planning of how the NHS uses its resources, including supply main management. This was piloted in trusts across England and showed that better use of data could help discharge patients quicker and make better use of operating theatres.

My Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has also recently announced the intention for there to be a single patient record, including primary care and hospital data, so professionals have the data to make better informed decisions, and deliver more preventative and more efficient health and care.

Through the AI in Health and Care Award, the Department has helped accelerate the testing and evaluation of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies to develop an evidence base to support the commissioning of technologies that are clinically and cost effective. So far, £113 million has been provided to 86 AI technologies, which are live in 99 hospitals across 40% of NHS acute trusts in England, as well as hundreds of Primary Care Networks across the United Kingdom.

AI technologies have huge potential in improving efficiency across the NHS by supporting clinicians with faster and more accurate diagnosis, enhancing clinical decision-making about treatment plans, and reducing the administrative burden faced by healthcare staff. The Department and NHS England are developing guidance for the responsible use of these tools and how they can be rolled out to make the day-to-day operations of the NHS more efficient.

#### ■ **NHS: Translation Services**

**Rupert Lowe:**

**[14378]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will list all the languages excluding English and British Sign Language that are translated in the NHS.

**Karin Smyth:**

The National Health Service is able to send out reminder letters to patients in 24 languages, which are available at the following link:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/services/e-referral-service/language-options-for-e-rs-reminder-letters>

The NHS is also able to provide information about data choices in 11 languages, which are available at the following link:

<https://www.nhs.uk/your-nhs-data-matters/different-languages-and-formats/>

#### ■ **Nurses: Graduates**

**Joe Robertson:**

**[14426]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has had discussions with the Department for Education on (a) the impact of university debt on nursing degree graduates and (b) a student loan forgiveness model for those graduates.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Department of Health and Social Care works closely with the Department for Education on a wide range of matters to ensure the education system is supporting healthcare students, while delivering value for money for taxpayers. Student funding arrangements are reviewed annually ahead of the start of each academic year. The

Government currently has no plans to introduce a student loan forgiveness model for nursing degree graduates.

## ■ Nurses: Registration

**Tom Hayes:** [\[14874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will have discussions with nursing organisations on the nurse registration fee requirement under article 9 of the Nursing and Midwifery Order 2001.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) is the independent regulator of nurses and midwives in the United Kingdom, and nursing associates in England. The Government has no current plans to amend the Nursing and Midwifery Order 2001, to abolish the requirement for NMC registrants to pay a registration fee.

The UK's model of healthcare professional regulation is founded on the principle of regulators operating independently from the Government. All registered health and social care professions in the UK pay an annual registration fee to their regulatory body. Being funded by registrant fees enables the NMC to maintain its independence, allowing it to take action if it identifies risks to patient safety or the public's confidence in the profession.

## ■ Nurses: Resignations

**Mike Amesbury:** [\[13831\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will commission a review of the reasons that registered nurses have left the NHS in the past 10 years.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Department has no specific plans at present to commission further research on reasons why National Health Service registered nurses leave their roles. We have already commissioned research through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) to both evaluate the impact of the programme to have 50,000 more nurses in the NHS in England by 2024, and to understand factors influencing later career NHS nurse retention. Both will encompass elements of the drivers of retention of nurses in the NHS, with the former having already produced published research on push and pull factors in nursing careers, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0020748924002219?via%3Dihub>

Summaries of the scope of the NIHR's work are available at the following two links:

<https://fundingawards.nihr.ac.uk/award/NIHR203842>

<https://fundingawards.nihr.ac.uk/award/NIHR205962>



## ■ Obesity: Drugs

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[14025\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to improve the availability of GLP-1 drugs to help tackle obesity.

**Karin Smyth:**

Obesity medicines can be effective for some patients living with obesity when prescribed alongside diet, physical activity, and behavioural support. Exactly what is most appropriate for an individual is down to health care professionals to advise, in discussion with patients, and considering relevant clinical guidance.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has recommended liraglutide (Saxenda) and semaglutide (Wegovy) as clinically and cost-effective drugs for weight management in adults in the National Health Service in England. NICE guidance includes eligibility criteria and, for some products like Saxenda and Wegovy, a restriction that these treatments should be used within specialist weight management services. NHS organisations are continuing to look at the best way to manage access to these treatments.

We are expecting NICE to issue guidance on tirzepatide (Mounjaro) before the end of the year. This could see it being prescribed by general practitioners rather than restricted to specialist services. To manage this, NHS England has proposed a phased rollout to make tirzepatide available in a way that is effective, affordable, and sustainable. Under NHS England's plan, almost 250,000 people with the greatest clinical need could receive this medicine in the first three years of implementation.

Integrated care boards are responsible for arranging the provision of health services within their area in line with local priorities, considering population need and relevant guidance. This includes the commissioning of NHS specialist weight management services. The licensed treatments for weight loss such as Wegovy (semaglutide) and Mounjaro (tirzepatide) are in good supply.

## ■ Pancreatic Cancer: Medical Treatments

**Adam Jogee:**

[\[14719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of a 21-day diagnosis-to-treatment pathway for people with pancreatic cancer.

**Karin Smyth:**

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave to the Hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale on 24 October 2024 to Question [10063](#).

**■ Primary Health Care: Rural Areas****Edward Morello:** [\[14563\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has plans to provide additional support to ensure primary healthcare remains accessible in isolated regions.

**Edward Morello:** [\[14564\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to tackle primary healthcare staffing shortages in rural areas with limited local resources.

**Edward Morello:** [\[14573\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve access to primary healthcare services in (a) West Dorset constituency and (b) other rural constituencies.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

We acknowledge the urgent challenge of ensuring that rural areas, including West Dorset, have the resources to continue serving their patients. To address this, we will increase capacity in general practices (GPs) and ensure that rural areas have the necessary workforce to provide integrated, patient-centred services.

We are committed to training thousands more GPs across the country, including in rural areas. We have also committed to recruiting over 1,000 newly qualified GPs through an £82 million boost to the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme, which will increase the number of appointments delivered in GPs. This will increase capacity, secure the future pipeline of GPs, and alleviate the pressure on those currently working in the system.

We are tackling the challenges that people in rural areas face when accessing National Health Service dental care. Work is underway to deliver our rescue plan to provide 700,000 more urgent dental appointments, and to recruit new dentists to the areas that need them most. The Golden Hello scheme will see up to 240 dentists receiving payments of £20,000 to work in those areas that need them most, for three years. To rebuild dentistry in the long term, we will reform the dental contract with the sector, with a focus on prevention and the retention of NHS dentists.

Local authorities are required to undertake a pharmaceutical needs assessment every three years to assess whether their population is adequately served, and they must keep these assessments under review. These assessments inform integrated care boards when reviewing applications for NHS pharmacies. The Pharmacy Access Scheme provides additional funding to pharmacies in areas where there are fewer pharmacies. In rural areas where there is no pharmacy, GPs are permitted to dispense medicines. Patients can also choose to access medicines and pharmacy services through any of the nearly 400 NHS online pharmacies that are contractually required to deliver prescription medicines free of charge to patients.

## ■ Protective Clothing: Storage

**Rupert Lowe:**

[\[13915\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the monthly cost is of storing PPE related to Covid.

**Karin Smyth:**

It currently costs approximately £200,000 per week, the equivalent to £850,000 for November 2024, to store personal protective equipment unsuitable for National Health Service use. The figure is dynamic because the stock is reducing.

A programme of work is underway to reduce our excess stock. This work will significantly reduce the cost of our storage network, and is due to be complete by January 2025, through sales, donations, recycling, and energy from waste.

## ■ Radiology: Greater London

**Ruth Cadbury:**

[\[14320\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase the (a) recruitment and (b) retention of radiologists in London.

**Karin Smyth:**

National Health Service organisations in London will have their own plans in place to manage their recruitment and retention needs, based on local workforce planning.

A clear plan for retention is an essential component of an overall supply plan for the NHS. We need to retain the experienced and skilled staff that we already have, and ensure that the NHS is an attractive place to work so that we can bring in the new trainees and recruits that we need. Nationally, the NHS retention programme is working with NHS organisations to improve culture and leadership across the NHS, addressing issues that matter to staff, such as the need for good occupational health and wellbeing support and the promotion of opportunities to work flexibly.

We have launched a 10-Year Health Plan to reform the NHS. A central and core part of the 10-Year Health Plan will be our workforce, and how we ensure we train and provide the staff, technology, and infrastructure the NHS needs to care for patients when and where they need it.

## ■ St Mary's Hospital Paddington: Repairs and Maintenance

**Rachel Blake:**

[\[14144\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the cost to the public purse per (a) week and (b) month of waiting for the release of (i) design and (ii) planning funding for the rebuilding of St Mary's Hospital in Paddington.

**Karin Smyth:**

*[Holding answer 18 November 2024]:* While the review into the New Hospital Programme is taking place, requests for funding are being considered on a case-by-case basis.

We are finalising the implications of the review for all schemes in the programme so we can be honest and upfront with everyone on when we expect the new hospitals to be delivered. My Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, will update Parliament and other stakeholders with the full outcome of the review in the coming months.

**■ Sterilisation: Men****Clive Jones:**[\[14513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what data his Department holds on the number of men who live in areas without (a) universally accessible and (b) fully NHS funded vasectomy services.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Department does not hold data on the number of men who live in areas without universally accessible and fully National Health Service funded vasectomy services.

NHS vasectomy services in England are commissioned locally by integrated care boards. In most parts of the country, vasectomy is available free of charge from the NHS.

**■ Visual Impairment: Babies****Ian Byrne:**[\[14125\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of new born babies losing their sight in one eye as a result of insufficient staffing levels at the hospital where they were born in each of the last five years.

**Karin Smyth:**

There has been no specific estimate made regarding the number of newborn babies losing their sight in one eye due to insufficient staffing levels. As per the National Health Service newborn and infant physical examination (NIPE) screening programme, the vision of newborn babies must be assessed within 72 hours of birth, and at the six-to-eight-week checkup. Further information on the NIPE is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/nhs-newborn-and-infant-physical-examination-nipe-screening-programme>

We recognise the concerns around workforce shortages. Whilst change will not happen overnight, we are committed to training thousands more midwives to better support women and babies throughout pregnancy and beyond.

The responsibility for staffing levels should remain with clinical and other leaders at a local level, responding to local needs, supported by national and professional bodies' guidelines, and regulated by the Care Quality Commission.

## HOME OFFICE

### ■ Animal Experiments

**Alex Easton:**

[14428]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many animals are held by Government (a) Departments and (b) agencies for research; and what type of animals are held.

**Dan Jarvis:**

The Annual Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Living Animals, Great Britain 2023 was published on the 11 September 2024.

The statistics provide full details on the number of licensed procedures carried out, the species of animals and the purposes for which the procedures have been undertaken. Information regarding establishment type is not collected as part of the return of procedures data used as this is not an indicator of the type of procedures carried out, and often establishments could be categorised as more than one type.

### ■ Animal Experiments: Dogs

**Alex Easton:**

[14429]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what happens to dogs held for research purposes by Government (a) Departments and (b) agencies once research has been completed.

**Dan Jarvis:**

The Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 (ASPA) provides protections for animals in the UK that are used in scientific procedures.

For dogs used in science, the Home Office expects that every opportunity will be taken to re-home animals where it is appropriate to do so (advice note available at: [www.gov.uk/guidance/animal-research-technical-advice](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/animal-research-technical-advice) ).

### ■ Animal Experiments: Licensing

**Dame Caroline Dinéage:**

[14037]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 30 October 2024 to Question 10427 on Animal Experiments: Licensing, how many applications received by the regulator were returned to the applicant for reconsideration between 1 January 2023 and 30 September 2024; and how many applicants withdrew an application in response to feedback from the regulator in that period.

**Dan Jarvis:**

The Home Office Regulator for animals in science provides comprehensive guidance to project licence applicants and has a thorough and extensive application process; see Guidance at:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6700017e080bdf716392ee63/Guidance\\_on\\_the\\_operation\\_of\\_ASPA\\_-\\_December\\_2023.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6700017e080bdf716392ee63/Guidance_on_the_operation_of_ASPA_-_December_2023.pdf)

Applicants may not apply for a licence unless they are doing so under an Establishment licence with all the associated requirements of the legislation, have demonstrable funding and can demonstrate appropriate availability of resources as well as having been through a rigorous process of local checks and balances. First time applications to the Regulator are therefore of general high conformity with legal requirements.

The Regulator reports that project licence applications for 2024, to date, had a mean number of 2.4 iterations before granting. The Regulator does not collect data on the number of applications withdrawn, but reports that such occurrences are rare.

**■ Anti-social Behaviour**

**Shaun Davies:** [\[14741\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her planned timetable is for the introduction of Respect Orders.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

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

This is why we are introducing Respect Orders – tough behavioural orders, issued by the civil courts – to tackle the most persistent adult ASB offenders and ensure that our communities are free from harm.

The Respect Order will be introduced in the first session Crime and Policing Bill.

**■ Deportation**

**Ben Obese-Jecty:** [\[14822\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many (a) enforced, (b) voluntary and (c) port returns have taken place each month since July 2024.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

The Home Office published an ad-hoc release "[Returns from the UK between July and October 2024](#)" on 4 November 2024 containing data on enforced and voluntary returns between 5 July and 28 October 2024.

The Home Office also publishes data on returns in the "[Immigration System Statistics](#)" quarterly release. Quarterly data on returns by return type group can be found in Ret\_D01 of the "[Returns detailed datasets](#)". Monthly returns data is not

available. The latest data is for June 2024, with data up to September 2024 to be published on 28 November.

Further information on future scheduled Home Office statistical release dates can be found in the [“Research and statistics calendar”](#).

#### ■ **Non-crime Hate Incidents**

**Rupert Lowe:** [\[14357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many police visits by each police force for non-crime hate incidents there were in each of the last ten years.

**Rupert Lowe:** [\[14367\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many non-crime hate incidents were reported on the grounds of (a) race, (b) religion, (c) sexual orientation, (d) disability and (e) transgender identity in each of the last 10 years by police force.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

The Home Office does not centrally hold information on the number of non-crime hate incidents recorded by individual police forces.

This data is held by police forces.

#### ■ **Non-crime Hate Incidents: Children**

**Rupert Lowe:** [\[14558\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many under-18's were investigated for non-crime hate incidents in each of the last five years.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

The Home Office does not at present centrally hold or collate this information.

#### ■ **Police: Social Media**

**Rupert Lowe:** [\[14363\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much each police force spent on monitoring social media in each of the last ten years.

**Rupert Lowe:** [\[14364\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many personnel were assigned to monitoring social media by the police in of the last ten years.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

Police forces do not routinely monitor social media but will investigate allegations of suspected criminal activity committed on social media platforms that are brought to their attention.

The Home Office does not hold information on how much police forces in England and Wales spend on monitoring social media.

**HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT****■ Armed Forces: West Suffolk**

**Peter Prinsley:** [\[14131\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she has made an assessment of the potential impact of the presence of (a) United States visiting forces and (b) their dependents on local government finances in West Suffolk; and if her Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of direct compensation to affected councils.

**Jim McMahon:**

The different relative strengths of the tax bases of councils in England are taken into account in the Local Government Finance Settlement through the Settlement Funding Assessment (SFA) formula, which is used to calculate the SFA allocation that each authority is given.

When the Settlement Funding Assessment was last calculated in 2013/14, Class P exemptions (meaning that the property will be exempt where members and their dependants of visiting forces would be liable for council tax if property is occupied or unoccupied) were considered within the calculation.

This led to West Suffolk receiving an increased share of grant and retained business rates to account for the loss in council tax income. From our assessment in 2013 to 2024, the number of Class P exempt dwellings in West Suffolk has increased by 171 to 4,872, an increase of 2%. The Government has committed to updating the approach to funding allocations within the Local Government Finance Settlement.

**■ Empty Property**

**Max Wilkinson:** [\[14379\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will take steps to bring forward legislative proposals to allow local authorities to make (a) empty and (b) abandoned houses available to people on housing waiting lists.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

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

**■ Housing Associations: Employers' Contributions**

**David Simmonds:** [\[14187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of increased employer National Insurance contributions, as announced in the Autumn Budget 2024, on (a) the housing association sector and (b) the capacity of housing associations to increase levels of social housing building.



**Matthew Pennycook:**

Restoring stability and fixing the foundations of our economy are the best things we can do to support growth. Tax rises need to play a part to fund public services and to invest in rebuilding Britain – and this includes investment in much needed new social and affordable housing.

At the Budget, the Chancellor set out details of an immediate one-year cash injection of £500 million to top up the existing Affordable Homes Programme which will deliver up to 5,000 new social and affordable homes. This comes ahead of the multi-year Spending Review next spring, where the government will set out details of new investment to succeed the current Affordable Homes Programme.

The government recognises that housing associations and councils need support to build their capacity and make a greater contribution to affordable housing supply. We are consulting on a new 5-year social housing rent settlement to give housing associations and other providers the certainty they need to invest in new social housing. We will be carefully considering all responses to that consultation.

**Leasehold: Reform****Max Wilkinson:**[\[14472\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what her Department's timetable is for the implementation of the Leasehold and Freehold Rights Act 2024; and when she plans to bring forward legislative proposals on leasehold and commonhold reform.

**Dr Simon Opher:**[\[14756\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will set out her timeline for the implementation of the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

I refer the Hon Member to the Written Ministerial Statement made on 21 November ([HCWS244](#)) which sets out further detail on implementation of the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024. It also clarifies government's plans to reform leasehold and commonhold.

**Leasehold: Unfair Practices****Nick Timothy:**[\[14243\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to (a) implement the measures against unfair costs in the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024 and (b) expand protections for homeowners on private estates.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

I refer the Hon Member to the Written Ministerial Statement made on 21 November ([HCWS244](#)) which sets out further detail on the steps the government intends to take

to implement the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024 and to progress the wider set of reforms necessary to end the feudal leasehold system for good.

## ■ Local Government Finance

**David Simmonds:** [\[14192\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 8 November 2024 to Question 11851 on Employers' Contributions: Local Government, which grants are included in the £1.3 billion of new grant funding in 2025-26; and whether funding will be made available for changes to (a) retail, hospitality and leisure business rate relief in the 2025-26 financial year and (b) the increase in employers' National Insurance contributions.

**David Simmonds:** [\[14193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 8 November 2024 to Question 11851 on Employers' Contributions: Local Government, if she will publish a breakdown of the £1.3 billion.

**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. Further details will be included in the upcoming Policy Statement and Local Government Finance Settlement.

In regard to whether funding will be made available for changes to:

(a) the increase in employers' National Insurance contributions, English local authorities will be fully compensated for the loss of income and administration costs resulting from administering 40 per cent Retail, Hospitality and Leisure (RHL) relief and freezing the small business multiplier for 2025-26.

(b) the increase in employers' National Insurance contributions, I refer the Hon Member to the answer to Question UIN [11851](#) on 8 November 2024.

## ■ Local Government: Devolution

**Tom Hayes:** [\[14871\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to page 58 of the Autumn Budget 2024, HC 295, what plans she has to include (a) parish and (b) town councils in (i) consultations and (ii) subsequent work by her Department on moving towards simpler administrative structures for local areas; and if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of her Department's consultation with such councils on those plans as of 18 November 2024.

**Jim McMahon:**

The Government recognises the importance of town and parish councils for the role they play in empowering the communities they represent. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is involved in regular engagement with the sector.

## ■ Local Government: Employers' Contributions

**David Simmonds:**

[\[14190\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the answer of 8 November 2024 to Question 11851 on Employers' Contributions: Local Government, what was the evidential basis for allocating £600 million of social care funding.

**Jim McMahon:**

The Autumn Statement announced at least £600 million of new grant funding for social care. This funding, alongside income from unringfenced sources including council tax, can be used to address the range of pressures facing the social care sector. Further details will be included in the upcoming Local Government Finance Settlement.

## ■ Planning Permission

**Jack Rankin:**

[\[14265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will (a) publish proposals for the use of special development order powers under Section 59 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to grant planning permission for commercial schemes and (b) consult on those proposals before they are implemented.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

Special Development Orders are a long-established part of the planning system. Each case is considered on its individual merits. The government have no plans to change the current arrangements.

## ■ Planning Permission: Parish and Town Councils

**Richard Tice:**

[\[14205\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to ensure that parishes in areas without a parish council are (a) consulted on and (b) have the opportunity to provide (i) local insights and (ii) detailed community knowledge during the Planning Inspectorate's decision-making processes.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

In areas with no Parish Council, Parish Meetings can make representations in relation to planning appeals and wider planning consultations.

Beyond this, residents in these areas can engage directly with the various decision-making processes. Those that have already made representations to the local planning authority about a planning application or a local plan consultation, will have their representations forwarded direct to the Planning Inspectorate if there is an appeal or in advance of a local plan examination. They will also be notified of the appeal or examination, so that they can make further responses or appear at a hearing or inquiry to give evidence. Indeed, residents appear regularly at public

hearings and inquiries, where they are afforded time to speak in front of the Planning Inspector.

Community or action groups may also ask to have so-called "Rule 6" status, which entitles them to appear as a formal party to a public inquiry and to cross-examine witnesses.

In the case of Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects, residents can also register to become "interested parties". This allows them to make representations to the examining panel. They may also ask to speak at the public examination before the examining panel and to attend site visits.

### ■ Social Rented Housing: Disability

**Mike Amesbury:** [\[14318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of social housing with disability access.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

This government is committed to the biggest increase in social and affordable housebuilding in a generation.

Local authorities are responsible for managing the adequacy of social housing with disability access. Local authorities also have a statutory duty to provide adaptations for people who satisfy a needs assessment, eligibility criteria and a means test.

Disabled people of all ages and tenures, including social housing, can apply for a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) to help meet the cost of home adaptations so they can live safely and independently. An additional £86 million for the DFG for 2025-26 was announced in the Budget, bringing the total to £711 million.

## JUSTICE

### ■ Offenders: Electronic Tagging

**Dr Kieran Mullan:** [\[14396\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent assessment she has made of the effectiveness of Acquisitive Crime GPS tagging programme.

**Dr Kieran Mullan:** [\[14397\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment she has made of the potential barriers to successful prosecution using information from the Acquisitive Crime GPS tagging programme.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

The effectiveness of the acquisitive crime project is currently subject to robust evaluation and conclusions will be made available following the publication of the upcoming process and impact evaluations. It is not possible to provide any information prior to the impact evaluation being published.

**Dr Kieran Mullan:**

[\[14399\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of offenders with convictions related to alcohol use have been subject to an alcohol monitoring tag (a) on release from prison and (b) as part of a community sentence in each year since its introduction.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

The number of individuals subject to an alcohol monitoring tag on release from prison and as part of a community sentence can be found here: [Electronic Monitoring Statistics Annual Publication, March 2024 - GOV.UK.](#)

We are unable to produce data on the proportion of offenders with convictions related to alcohol use have been subject to an alcohol monitoring tag.

#### ■ **Reoffenders: Foreign Nationals**

**Neil O'Brien:**

[\[14652\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 11 November 2024 to Question 12200 on Reoffenders: Foreign Nationals, if she will publish a breakdown of the offences committed by reoffending foreign nationals by main offence group.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

I refer the honourable Member to the response I gave on 11 November 2024 to PQ [13567](#).

#### ■ **Sexual Offences: Convictions**

**Tonia Antoniazzi:**

[\[14077\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people have been convicted of an offence under Section 53A of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 in Gower since that Act was introduced.

**Alex Davies-Jones:**

The Ministry of Justice publishes data on the number of defendants convicted under Section 53A of the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

This can be obtained by selecting HO offence code '16702 – Paying or promising to pay a person to provide sexual services, where that person is subject to exploitative conduct to induce or encourage them to provide those services' in the Outcomes by Offences data tool, which can be downloaded from the Criminal Justice Statistics landing page here: [criminal-justice-system-statistics-quarterly-december-2023](#).

Data is not available separately for Gower, however, there have been no convictions for this offence at any courts in Wales (including Gower) since the offence was introduced.

**SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY****■ Animal Experiments: Public Consultation**

**Chris Bloore:** [\[14134\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what discussions he has had with (a) civil society and (b) animal protection organisations on ending animal testing.

**Feryal Clark:**

The Government is committed to supporting the use of alternative methods to the use of animals in science and the Labour Manifesto includes a commitment to “partner with scientists, industry, and civil society as we work towards the phasing out of animal testing”, which is a long-term goal. The government will be consulting civil society and animal protection organisations as this process unfolds.

**■ Artificial Intelligence: Public Sector**

**David Davis:** [\[14587\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to the Answer of 14 May 2024 to Question 24976 on Artificial Intelligence: Government Departments, what recent estimate he has made of when phase one Departments will publish their first Algorithmic Transparency Recording Standard (ATRS) records on the ATRS hub.

**David Davis:** [\[14588\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to the report entitled Securing meaningful transparency of public sector use of AI: Comparative approaches across five jurisdictions, published by the Public Law Project in October 2024, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of putting public sector compliance with the Algorithmic Transparency Recording Standard on a statutory footing.

**David Davis:** [\[14589\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to the report entitled Securing meaningful transparency of public sector use of AI: Comparative approaches across five jurisdictions, published by the Public Law Project in October 2024, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a requirement on public bodies to notify individuals when a decision has been taken about them that was (a) made and (b) supported by (i) AI, (ii) an algorithmic and (iii) automated tool.

**David Davis:** [\[14605\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to the report entitled Securing meaningful transparency of public sector use of AI: Comparative approaches across five jurisdictions, published by the Public Law Project in October 2024, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing a

requirement on public bodies, when a decision has been taken about an individual that was (a) made and (b) supported by (i) AI, (ii) an algorithmic and (iii) automated tool, to proactively provide an explanation of (A) how and (B) why the decision was reached.

**Feryal Clark:**

Central government departments and arm's-length bodies (ALBs) have been working to draft Algorithmic Transparency Recording Standard (ATRS) records since this became mandatory earlier this year. Publication plans were disrupted by the general election, but multiple records are expected to be published soon.

Since the introduction of a mandatory requirement for use of ATRS in cross-government policy, we have seen a significant acceleration in progress towards adopting it, which will be reflected soon in published records. As such, we do not believe that legislation is necessary at this time. We will continue to explore further options for encouraging and enforcing the use of the ATRS, and the need to extend the breadth of the policy beyond central government.

In the UK's data protection framework, Article 22 of the UK GDPR sets out the rules relating to solely automated decisions that have legal or similarly significant effects on individuals. Under these circumstances, individuals have the right to specific safeguards, including being notified of the decisions, being provided information about the solely automated decision making that has been carried out, and the right to contest those decisions and to obtain human intervention.

These specific safeguards for solely automated decision making complement the wider data protection framework's existing data subject rights, including the rights to transparency, objection and access. Organisations must also continue to observe the data protection principles to ensure personal data is processed lawfully, fairly and transparently. These rules apply to all organisations, including public bodies.

■ **Broadband: Advertising**

**Greg Smith:**

[\[14700\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if he will have discussions with the Advertising Standards Authority on the mis-advertising of part-copper broadband.

**Chris Bryant:**

In September, Ofcom issued new guidance to ensure consumers are told in clear terms about the technology that underpins their broadband service. At point of sale, providers will no longer be able to use the term 'fibre' on its own; they must now state whether their network is a new 'full-fibre' network or a 'part-fibre', 'copper', or 'cable' network. The government will continue to engage with the regulator and the Advertising Standards Authority to monitor the impact of these new rules, including considering the implications for advertising terminology.

**■ Broadband: Rural Areas****Sir Geoffrey Cox:** [\[14017\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if he will provide interim funding for hamlets in remote areas to improve broadband coverage before his target date.

**Chris Bryant:**

No, providing a lesser interim service that would be replaced in the near future would involve the government providing a subsidy in some areas twice over, which would not be an efficient use of public funding.

The Torridge and Tavistock constituency is included in BDUK's cross regional framework which has been signed, under which we expect infrastructure will start being deployed in early 2025.

**■ Internet: Defamation****James McMurdock:** [\[14431\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if he will take steps to prevent false accusations being made about people online.

**Feryal Clark:**

Under the Online Safety Act, companies will be forced to take action against illegal content and abuse online including illegal misinformation and disinformation. The false communications offence was also introduced by the Act in January this year. The offence captures communications where the sender knows information to be false but sends it intending to cause harm, without reasonable excuse. This offence carries a maximum penalty of 51 weeks' imprisonment, or a fine (or both).

**■ Internet: Freedom of Expression****Rupert Lowe:** [\[14358\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to strengthen protections for freedom of speech online.

**Feryal Clark:**

Safeguards for freedom of expression have already been built in throughout the framework of the Online Safety Act. All services in scope must have 'particular regard' to the impact on users' rights to freedom of expression and privacy when implementing safety measures and policies.

The regulator Ofcom must act in a way that is compatible with the European Convention of Human Rights, including in relation to freedom of expression. This will be particularly important as Ofcom develops codes of practice and makes enforcement decisions



## ■ Internet: Offences against Children

**Gregor Poynton:**

[\[14202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what discussions he has had with private messaging platforms on (a) ensuring compliance with the Online Safety Act 2023 and (b) tackling (i) grooming of children and (ii) sharing of child sexual abuse material on their platforms.

**Feryal Clark:**

The government is committed to protecting children from these devastating crimes. The Online Safety Act will place strict safety duties on online platforms to protect children from being groomed by online predators, and to tackle child sexual exploitation and abuse content on their services.

Ministers meet regularly with platforms to discuss implementation of the Online Safety Act, and the duties it will place on services to tackle illegal content on their sites. Ofcom is the independent regulator responsible for ensuring compliance with the regime.

## ■ Internet: Safety

**Ruth Cadbury:**

[\[14082\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the Online Safety Act 2023 in tackling instances of (a) online deception and (b) coercive and controlling behaviour by impersonations on (i) social media and (ii) dating apps.

**Feryal Clark:**

The Online Safety Act requires all in-scope services to protect users from online illegal content and criminal behaviour on their services. Coercive and controlling behaviour is a priority offence under the Act. Adult users of services over the designated threshold will also have the ability to verify their own identity, reduce the likelihood of seeing non-verified users' content, and prevent non-verified users from interacting with their content. The government and Ofcom's priority is getting these protections implemented effectively.

## ■ Prostitution: Gower

**Tonia Antoniazzi:**

[\[14076\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he has had recent discussions with the Secretary of State for the Home Department on taking steps to help prevent people being sexually exploited on websites advertising prostitution in Gower.

**Feryal Clark:**

Ministers have regular discussions with Cabinet colleagues on a wide range of issues, including protecting people from illegal activity online.

The Online Safety Act gives online platforms new duties to tackle illegal content and activity on their services. Sexual exploitation offences are 'priority offences' within the Act; service providers need to take proactive steps to search for, remove and limit people's exposure to this harmful kind of illegal content. Firms will need to start risk assessing for illegal content by the end of the year and the illegal content duties will be fully in effect by Spring 2025.

### ■ X Corp: Disinformation

**Dr Simon Opher:** [\[14757\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing further regulations on X to tackle the spread the of (a) disinformation and (b) misinformation.

**Feryal Clark:**

The Online Safety Act will require all in-scope services, including X, to tackle mis- and disinformation where it is illegal or harmful to children.

The Act will also hold Category 1 services to account over the enforcement of their terms of service, including those on mis- and disinformation.

Our immediate focus is getting the Online Safety Act implemented quickly and effectively. Social media companies have a clear responsibility to keep people safe on their platforms, and this is a government priority.

## TRANSPORT

### ■ Bus Services: Finance

**Helen Morgan:** [\[14810\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if her Department will publish the criteria used to decide the bus service improvement plan funding allocations for 2025-26.

**Helen Morgan:** [\[14815\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her Department made an assessment of Shropshire Council's Bus Service Improvement Plan before deciding the authority's 2025-26 funding.

**Helen Morgan:** [\[14816\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her Department took into account the scale of the reduction in bus miles in each authority area over the past five years when allocating Bus Service Improvement Plan funding for 2025-26.

**Mike Kane:**

The government has confirmed £955 million for the 2025 to 2026 financial year to support and improve bus services in England outside London. This includes £243 million for bus operators and £712 million allocated to local authorities across the country. Shropshire Council has been allocated £4.4 million of this funding.

As the Secretary of State noted in her oral statement to the House of Commons on 18 November, funding for local authorities has been allocated based on local needs, including population, the distance that buses travel, and levels of deprivation.

### ■ **Bus Services: Standards**

**Dr Marie Tidball:**

[\[901378\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to help improve local bus services.

**Mike Kane:**

Over the fourteen years the previous Government was in office thousands of vital bus services disappeared across the country, and local bus services were left in a shocking state.

Improving local bus services is a key part of this government's growth mission. We will introduce a transformative Buses Bill to put the power over bus services back in the hands of local leaders, and in the Budget confirmed over £1 billion to support and improve services across England.

### ■ **Bus Services: West Midlands**

**Laurence Turner:**

[\[14896\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many live bus service registrations there were in (a) Birmingham and (b) the West Midlands in (i) 2009-10 and (ii) 2023-24.

**Mike Kane:**

The Office for the Traffic Commissioner (OTC) only publish data on a traffic area wide basis. In the West Midlands, the term traffic area wide would include the West Midlands conurbation, Warwickshire, Staffordshire, Worcestershire, Herefordshire and Shropshire.

In 2009/10 the OTC reported that there were 2,262 local bus services registered in the West Midlands. In 2023/24 there were 633 registered with a traffic commissioner. However, it should be noted that this figure does not include services that operate wholly within the West Midlands Combined Authority as they hold delegated authority under their Enhanced Partnership to register local services.

### ■ **Railways: Passengers**

**Jonathan Hinder:**

[\[901380\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to improve passenger rail performance.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

Improving railway performance and delivering reform is my top priority. The Rail Minister and I continue to hold Train Operating Companies and Network Rail to account through the levers available to us, and will not hesitate to take action where there is a breach. I have also recently announced that performance information will

be displayed at stations, demonstrating transparency and allowing passengers to hold us to account as we deliver change.

### ■ South Western Railway: Fares

**Dr Danny Chambers:** [\[14850\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she plans to change the level of train fares on South Western Railways when it is taken into public ownership.

**Mike Kane:**

Whilst it is our ambition through public ownership to deliver a more affordable railway, any long-term changes or concessions made to rail fares policy require balancing against the potential impacts on passengers, taxpayers and the railway.

Through future legislation, we will set out the role Great British Railways will have in fares, ticketing, and other operational aspects of the railway.

## TREASURY

### ■ Agriculture: Inheritance Tax

**Ben Obese-Jecty:** [\[14824\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what definition of farm her Department used to estimate the number of farms affected by changes to agricultural property relief.

**James Murray:**

From 6 April 2026, the full 100% relief from inheritance tax will be restricted to the first £1 million of combined agricultural and business property. Around 500 estates across the UK are expected to be affected each year from 2026-27. It is not possible to accurately infer a future inheritance tax liability from data on farm asset values. The number of claims, meaning how many people would be impacted by this change, is affected by many things such as: who owns the business; the nature of that ownership; how many owners there are; and how they plan their affairs.

The Government published information about the reforms to agricultural property relief and business property relief at

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/agricultural-property-relief-and-business-property-relief-reforms](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/agricultural-property-relief-and-business-property-relief-reforms), and further explanatory information at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/what-are-the-changes-to-agricultural-property-relief>.

### ■ Budget October 2024

**Mel Stride:** [\[13425\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to page 3 of the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 October, what her definition is of working people.

**Mel Stride:**[\[13426\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to page 3 of the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 October, whether self-employed people are classed as working.

**Darren Jones:**

A working person is someone who goes out to work and works for their income. The government has committed to not increase taxes on working people, which is why it is not increasing the basic, higher or additional rates of Income Tax, National Insurance contributions or VAT

Working people will not see an increase in the taxes they pay on their payslip due to the tax changes announced at Budget.

**Carbon Emissions: Taxation****Henry Tufnell:**[\[14552\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much her Department expects to raise from the introduction of a Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism in (a) 2027, (b) 2028, (c) 2029 and (d) 2030.

**James Murray:**

The government will introduce the UK Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) on 1 January 2027.

The UK CBAM will ensure highly traded, carbon intensive products from overseas face a comparable carbon price to those produced here, making sure that UK decarbonisation efforts lead to a true reduction in global emissions rather than simply displacing carbon emissions overseas.

The UK CBAM is designed to reduce the risk of carbon leakage. The aim of the UK CBAM is not to raise revenue. However, in the Office for Budget Responsibility's most recent Economic and Fiscal Outlook, they forecast the UK CBAM to raise £43m in 2026-27, £184m in 2027-28, £221m in 2028-29, and £223m in 2029-30.

**Cycle to Work Scheme: Low Incomes****Dr Simon Opher:**[\[14753\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the Cycle to Work Scheme in improving cycle ownership among people on low incomes.

**James Murray:**

The Cycle to Work scheme is a benefit-in-kind provided by employers to their employees. A benefit-in-kind is a form of non-cash remuneration provided by employers to their employees. Income tax and National Insurance contribution relief is provided on the scheme to both employers and their employees via salary sacrifice arrangements.

Employees earning at or near the National Minimum Wage (NMW) cannot access salary sacrifice if the arrangement will take their contractual salary below the relevant NMW rate. The Government is not currently considering changing the NMW legislation to apply to an employee's salary after deductions have been made for salary sacrifice.

HMRC has commissioned an evaluation of the effectiveness of the Cycle to Work scheme and will publish its findings in due course.

## ■ Hospitality Industry and Retail Trade: Business Rates

**Andrew Griffith:** [\[14826\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 14 November 2024 to Question 13640 on Hospitality Industry and Retail Trade: Business Rates, when she plans to (a) begin and (b) complete the revaluation that is to produce the referenced revaluation outcomes.

**James Murray:**

In 2023 the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) moved to three-yearly revaluations, an outcome from the 2021 [Business Rates Review](#).

The VOA started preparing for the next business rates revaluation in April 2023, with the new rateable values coming into effect on 1 April 2026, with a valuation date of 1 April 2024.

The VOA are on track to deliver the 2026 Revaluation, with valuation activity now underway.

## ■ Personal Care Services: Money Laundering

**Rupert Lowe:** [\[14203\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will hold discussions with the Financial Conduct Authority on the potential merits of launching a money laundering investigation into high street barber shops.

**Tulip Siddiq:**

Money laundering through cash-based high street businesses is a known issue that government continues to focus on. While businesses such as barber shops are not regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), they interact with regulated businesses, such as banks, who under the Money Laundering Regulations (MLRs) are required to undertake customer due diligence and to submit reports to the National Crime Agency if they suspect money laundering.

The government works closely with law enforcement and the FCA to monitor trends in criminal behaviour – and how these may relate to changes in the make-up of our high streets – to ensure resources are deployed towards the most significant threats.

**■ Personal Care Services: Off-payroll Working****Mike Martin:**[\[14890\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate she has made of the potential impact of disguised employment practices in the hair and beauty sector on (a) VAT and (b) National Insurance revenue.

**James Murray:**

HMRC has not estimated the size of the disguised employment risk in this sector.

The Government is aware of concerns over the rent-a-chair model in the hair and beauty sector. When this model is operated properly, the Government considers it a legitimate working practice.

**■ Private Education: VAT****Sir Desmond Swayne:**[\[14576\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps she is taking to enable private schools to register for VAT.

**James Murray:**

Since the announcement on 29 July, HMRC has extensive taken action to support private schools and has allocated additional resource to process VAT registration applications.

HMRC has published bespoke guidance for schools, as well hosting live webinars to support schools in understanding how to register for, and charge, VAT.

HMRC has also set up an online interactive guidance tool, allowing schools to check when they may be required to register for VAT based on their specific circumstances.

**■ Research: Tax Allowances****Neil Coyle:**[\[14615\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of broadening the definition of research and development activities that qualify for tax relief to include research and development undertaken by creative industries.

**James Murray:**

Qualifying R&D is defined as a project seeking to achieve an advance in science or technology through the resolution of uncertainty, which allows claims from creative sectors.

In the 2021 consultation on R&D tax reliefs, there was a strong consensus amongst respondents that the definition of "R&D" itself does not require amending given it is well understood, embedded and consistent with the OECD Frascati standard, including the core criteria within it. The government currently has no intention to change the definition, since this would add further complexity and uncertainty at a time when the government is prioritising stability and simplification.

## ■ Stamp Duty Land Tax: First Time Buyers

**Sarah Owen:**

[\[14692\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps she is taking to support first time buyers with stamp duty.

**James Murray:**

At Autumn Budget 2024, the higher rates of Stamp Duty Land Tax (SDLT) for additional dwellings were increased by two percentage points from 3% to 5%. This measure will ensure that those looking to move home, or purchase their first property, have a greater advantage over second home buyers, landlords, and companies purchasing residential property. The OBR certified costing estimates that increasing the higher rates of SDLT by two percentage points is expected to result in 130,000 additional transactions over the next five years by first-time buyers and other people buying a primary residence.

## ■ Tax Avoidance

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

[\[14458\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 5 November 2024 to Question 11656 on Tax Avoidance, what her timescales are for (a) commissioning and (b) receiving the review.

**James Murray:**

I refer the honourable Member to the answer I gave to Question UIN [12606](#) on 11 November 2024.

## ■ Trusts: Building Societies

**Pippa Heylings:**

[\[14149\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will hold discussions with the Financial Conduct Authority on the regulation of family trusts sold by building societies.

**Tulip Siddiq:**

Treasury Ministers and officials meet with their counterparts at the Financial Conduct Authority often, as part of their regular engagement on various topics.

The Financial Conduct Authority is an independent body responsible for regulating and supervising the financial services industry across the UK. It monitors firms to make sure they provide products that are fair value, and where necessary, it will take action.

Whether a financial services activity is regulated is decided by the Government and Parliament and set out in legislation. The boundary between what is regulated and what is not is called the regulatory perimeter. The Government keeps the regulatory perimeter under constant review, and it engages with the regulators where there are developments which suggest a new activity should be brought within the regulatory perimeter. In addition to this regular engagement, the Financial Conduct Authority publishes an annual perimeter report, which sets out its views on the perimeter.



## WORK AND PENSIONS

### ■ Carers: Finance

**Helen Grant:**

[\[14468\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps the Government is taking to provide financial support for carers who look after their partners.

**Sir Stephen Timms:**

Unpaid carers play a vital role in supporting elderly or disabled relatives (including partners) or friends. We are determined to give family carers the help and support they need and deserve.

Research published in 2024 estimated that around 1 in 4 carers receiving Carer's Allowance are caring for their partner. Unpaid carers may be able to receive financial support from the department depending on their circumstances. Carer's Allowance provides a measure of financial support and recognition for people who are not able to work full time due to their caring responsibilities. The rate of Carer's Allowance is £81.90 a week in 2024/25, and from April 2025 this will increase by 1.7%.

In addition to Carer's Allowance, carers on low incomes can claim income-related benefits, such as Universal Credit and Pension Credit. These benefits can be paid to carers at a higher rate than those without caring responsibilities through the carer element and the additional amount for carers respectively. Currently, the Universal Credit carer element is £198.31 per monthly assessment period. The additional amount for a carer in Pension Credit is £45.60 a week.

### ■ Disability Living Allowance

**Claire Hazelgrove:**

[\[14878\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of Disability Living Allowance assessments.

**Sir Stephen Timms:**

Disability Living Allowance (DLA) is a non-contributory, non-means-tested, additional cost benefit and can be worth over £9,500 a year, tax free. Individuals can choose how to use the benefit, in the light of their individual needs and preferences. The benefits have been consistently uprated in line with inflation since they were introduced and were, like other benefits, increased by 6.7% from 8 April 2024.

Decisions on claims to DLA for children are made by DWP Case Managers. They receive comprehensive training and are supported by a range of regularly updated guides, such as the Decision Makers Guide and comprehensive medical guidance. They also receive disability-specific training and have the support of medical services and quality assurance managers.

Anyone who believes that the decision on their claim is incorrect, including the length of the award, can ask for Mandatory Reconsideration (MR) within one month of the date stated on the decision letter.

## ■ Personal Independence Payment

**Jim Shannon:**

[14607]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to ensure the accessibility of PIP assessment centres for people with disabilities.

**Sir Stephen Timms:**

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) takes its responsibility to ensure all individuals have access to our services without disadvantage very seriously. We have a range of provisions in place to ensure assessments are accessible to all individuals, in line with the standards under the Equality Act 2010.

At all stages of the claim, individuals are asked to advise of any individual restrictions which could prevent / limit their ability to attend an assessment centre. Assessment suppliers will accommodate these or, if more suitable, make alternative arrangements for the individual to visit a different assessment centre or be assessed via a different assessment channel.

Our agreement with the suppliers regarding accessibility of the assessment centres is detailed in Annex 2 - Design Standards of part 3 of the Functional Assessment Service contracts. This is available on GOV.UK contracts finder - [Functional Assessment Service \(FAS\) 2024 - Contracts Finder](#).

**Richard Burgon:**

[14654]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate her Department has made of the total amount lost to personal independence payment (a) fraud and (b) overpayment in financial year (a) 2023-24 and (b) 2024-25.

**Andrew Western:**

Estimates of the levels of fraud and error in the benefit system for financial year 2023-24 can be found at: [Fraud and error in the benefit system - GOV.UK](#)

Below is an extract:

### PERSONAL INDEPENDENCE PAYMENTS (PIP)

	Overpayments	
	FYE 24	FYE 23
<b>All</b>	0.4% (£90m)	1.1% (£200m)
<b>Fraud</b>	0.0% (£0m)	0.2% (£40m)
<b>Claimant Error</b>	0.3% (£60m)	0.8% (£140m)
<b>Official Error</b>	0.1% (£30m)	0.1% (£20m)

The Department will publish the figures for 2024 – 25 in the upcoming year.

**Richard Foord:** [\[14762\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what criteria her Department uses to determine which Personal Independence Payment recipients need to have a regular work capability assessment.

**Sir Stephen Timms:**

Personal Independence Payment is available to people with a long-term health condition or disability regardless of whether they are in work, training or education or not. As such, the PIP assessment looks at an individual's ability to carry out a series of key everyday activities which are fundamental to living an independent life, such as their ability to prepare, cook and eat food, dress and undress, make budgeting decisions, manage and monitor their health condition, engage with other people, and plan and follow journeys.

The PIP assessment does not look at an individual's capacity to undertake work or work-related activity. This is the purpose of the Work Capability Assessment which determines eligibility for Employment and Support Allowance and the additional health-related amount of Universal Credit.

#### ■ **Personal Independence Payment: Patients**

**Ruth Cadbury:** [\[14464\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 15 November 2024 to Question 13503 on Personal Independence Payment: Patients, how many individuals have had personal independence payments withdrawn after entering (a) hospital, (b) hospice and (c) residential care for more than 28 days in the last four years.

**Sir Stephen Timms:**

As explained in the Answer of 15 November 2024 to Question 13503 on Personal Independence Payment: Patients, found [here](#), the information requested is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

Suspensions of Personal Independence Payment (PIP) after entering (a) hospital, (b) hospice, (c) residential care, and other accommodation types, are combined in the PIP Computer System under a single category.

To distinguish between the specific types of accommodation as requested would require manual investigation of each individual claimant record. We could provide, within cost, the combined figure for all suspensions due to "hospitalisation and other accommodation types".

#### ■ **Poverty: Children**

**Henry Tufnell:** [\[14515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking with Cabinet colleagues to reduce child poverty in rural areas.

**Alison McGovern:**

We are committed to delivering our manifesto commitment to tackle child poverty which is why we have set up a Ministerial Taskforce that is urgently working to publish the Child Poverty Strategy in Spring 2025.

Our publication on 23 October 'Tackling Child Poverty: Developing our Strategy' sets out how we will develop the Strategy, harnessing all available levers to deliver a reduction in child poverty this Parliament.

The Strategy will look at policies across four key themes of increasing incomes, reducing essential costs, increasing financial resilience, and better local support especially in the early years. This will build on the reform plans underway across government and work underway in Devolved Governments.

The Taskforce will hear directly from experts across the UK on each of the Strategy's themes including children and families living in poverty and work with leading organisations, charities, and campaigners.

Alongside the work of the Taskforce, we are continuing to provide substantial funding to Local Authorities to support those most in need. At the Autumn Budget 2024, the Government announced that £1 billion, including Barnett impact, will be invested to extend the Household Support Fund (HSF) in England by a full year until 31 March 2026, and to maintain Discretionary Housing Payments in England and Wales. This enables Local Authorities to provide discretionary support to those most in need towards the cost of essentials, such as food, energy and water.

The government knows how important bus services are to local communities and knows that buses can be a lifeline in particular for those in rural areas. We have set out a plan to deliver better buses throughout England by giving local leaders the tools they need and empowering them to ensure bus services reflect the needs of the communities they serve, including through the introduction of the Buses Bill later in this parliamentary session. The government also recognises the importance of providing funding to support and drive improvements to bus services over the longer-term. In the Budget we confirmed over £1 billion of funding to support and improve bus services, and keep fares affordable in England outside London.

**■ Social Security Benefits****Richard Burgon:**[\[14653\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Written Statement of 8 October 2024 on DWP Fraud, Error and Debt Bill, HCWS114, what estimate her Department has made of the proportion of the £1.6 billion saved over the next five year period will be due to tackling (a) fraud, (b) error and (c) debt in each of the next five years.

**Andrew Western:**

The savings from the Eligibility Verification Measure (EVM) come from both fraud and error, and it is not possible to separate the components.

The measures referred to have now been scrutinised by the Office for Budget Responsibility and included in the Budget (table 2.1 [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/672b98bb40f7da695c921c61/Autumn Budget 2024 Print.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/672b98bb40f7da695c921c61/Autumn_Budget_2024_Print.pdf) ) that sets out the year by year savings and estimates £1.5bn over five years from 25/26.

The proportions coming from a) fraud and error which comes from EVM and b) debt which comes from the new debt recovery powers in each year is as follows:

	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30
F&E	N/A	33%	55%	64%	65%
Debt	N/A	67%	45%	36%	35%

**Neil Duncan-Jordan:**

[\[14841\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of assessing entitlement to benefits on individual income.

**Sir Stephen Timms:**

The Department provides support for different needs across a range of benefits. Each of these benefits has its own assessment criteria and entitlements dependent on the claimant's circumstances.

The Secretary of State continues to monitor all support provided by the Department.

#### ■ Universal Credit

**Rupert Lowe:**

[\[14388\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will publish a breakdown of the preferred (a) written and (b) spoken language of people claiming Universal Credit.

**Sir Stephen Timms:**

We do not have a breakdown of the preferred language of people claiming Universal Credit because we do not ask customers this information at any stage of the application or process.

#### ■ Universal Credit: Parkinson's Disease

**Sammy Wilson:**

[\[14050\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to ensure that people with Parkinson's who receive the health element of Universal Credit do not have to prove that they continue to live with a degenerative condition after six months in order to keep the health element of Universal Credit.

**Sir Stephen Timms:**

The Work Capability Assessment (WCA) determines entitlement to the extra health-related amount of Universal Credit. It is not based on a person's condition, but on how it affects their ability to function. It recognises that conditions can vary in their

severity and therefore people with the same condition can have different WCA outcomes.

WCA reassessments are prioritised for customers on the health element of UC who report a change in their health condition. Routine department-led reassessments are scheduled according to expected prognosis length for recovery and subject to available assessment capacity.

The healthcare professional who performs the WCA, will advise a DWP decision maker on when an individual should be re-assessed. This advice is based on when the individual's condition is expected to have improved to the point where looking for work or preparing for work may become a realistic option. For those with Limited Capability for Work, re-referral dates can be 6, 12, 18 or 24 months. For individuals with more serious or complex conditions, who have Limited Capability for Work and Work-related activity (LCWRA), a 3-year re-referral date can be chosen.

Individuals, who have LCWRA, with the most severe and lifelong health conditions or disabilities, whose level of function means that they will always have LCWRA and are unlikely ever to be able to move into work, are not routinely reassessed.

## ■ Work Capability Assessment

**Dame Caroline Dinenge:**

[\[14039\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department plans to publish a timeline for its proposed changes to the Work Capability Assessment.

**Sir Stephen Timms:**

The Work Capability Assessment is not working and needs to be reformed or replaced. This needs to come alongside a proper plan to support disabled people into work.

We are taking the time to review this in the round before setting out next steps on our approach, and the timescale, in the coming months.

**Sammy Wilson:**

[\[14049\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she plans to make changes to the Work Capability Assessment.

**Sir Stephen Timms:**

The Work Capability Assessment is not working and needs to be reformed or replaced. This needs to come alongside a proper plan to support disabled people to work, which will, in turn, bring down the benefits bill.

We are taking the time to review this in the round before setting out next steps on our approach in the coming months.

## MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

### BUSINESS AND TRADE

#### ■ Inflation: USA

**Liam Byrne:**

[\[13177\]](#)

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

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 18 November 2024. The correct answer should have been:**

**Mr Douglas Alexander:**

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

**We have engaged with UK businesses across a range of sectors to understand their concerns about the potential impact of the US Inflation Reduction Act on UK industry. We have also engaged with the US on UK industry views across multiple channels on this issue, including in 2022 in response to the US Treasury consultation on the implementation of the Inflation Reduction Act, and remain committed to defending the interests of UK businesses.**

## WRITTEN STATEMENTS

### ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

#### ■ Delivering the Warm Homes Plan

**Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Minister for Energy Consumers) (Miatta Fahnbulleh):** [\[HCWS240\]](#)

The Government was elected on a promise to deliver warmer homes with lower energy bills for families across the country. Decent homes are the foundation of decent lives, and our Warm Homes Plan is driven by a simple principle: every household deserves the security of a home they can afford to heat.

Today, I am pleased to confirm funding for the Warm Homes Plan that means that next year more homes will benefit from upgrades to make them more energy efficient and cheaper to run, more than double the number of upgrades delivered last year. Next year will see a total investment of £3.2bn from government, social housing providers and obligations on suppliers.

As part of the changes we are announcing today, more households will now be able to install an air source heat pump without the need to submit a planning application. The Government is removing the rule requiring heat pumps to be installed at least one metre away from a property's boundary, which was an outdated regulation that prevented thousands of installations.

In addition, the Government is increasing direct grant support for heat pumps through the Boiler Upgrade Scheme, adding £30 million for the rest of this financial year and doubling the budget for the next financial year to £295 million. We are also setting out plans to consult on further increases to energy efficiency standards for both new heat pumps and new boilers, helping households save money off their bills.

We recognise that to deliver the Warm Homes Plan, support for the supply chain will be critical. That is why we will be providing investment in homegrown heat pump production through the Heat Pump Investment Accelerator Competition, and stimulating further investment in the supply chain through the introduction of a reformed Clean Heat Market Mechanism, for which we are laying a statutory instrument today. Ministers have been engaging closely with industry on a shared vision for the transition to cleaner, cheaper heating and look forward to continuing that constructive dialogue and partnership during the further development and delivery of the Warm Homes Plan.

Over the coming months, I look forward to building on the announcements made today and publishing our Warm Homes Plan in full. This will detail our new approach to delivering warmer homes with lower energy bills, tackling the fuel poverty currently experienced by too many people, and creating new opportunities for jobs, skills, and investment right across the country.



**FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE****■ World Health Organization Investment Round****Minister of State for Development (Anneliese Dodds):**[\[HCWS243\]](#)

I wish to inform the House that the Government has today pledged new support to the World Health Organization (WHO) alongside international partners as part of the WHO's first Investment Round.

Nowhere is multilateralism more critical than for global health security. The WHO is the cornerstone of the global health multilateral architecture, and a vital partner to delivering both our domestic health mission and our global ambitions for a safer and more prosperous world, reconnecting Britain and resetting our relations with the Global South.

With a future pandemic a certainty, climate change a fundamental threat to public health, and the rise of antimicrobial resistance (AMR)-related deaths, the link between national health security and global health security has never been clearer. From surveillance and tackling pandemics, to strengthening country health systems ready to address the challenges of tomorrow - WHO plays a vital global leadership role.

The United Kingdom has long been a champion of global health through our support to WHO and other global health institutions, recognising that health security transcends national borders. In an interconnected world, health threats do not respect boundaries, as shown by COVID-19 and the recent Mpox outbreak.

The UK will invest up to £310m in core voluntary contribution (CVC) funds in support of the critical delivery of the WHO's 14th General Programme of Work (GPW 14) and in support of WHO's transformation agenda. Our CVC investment recognises the need for flexible, predictable, multi-year support, to enable WHO to be the strongest, most agile and effective organisation it can be in tackling challenges today and of future health crises.

This investment, alongside other international partners' support, will enable the WHO to prioritise activities that directly contribute to better health outcomes worldwide. Outcomes supported include: an enhanced global health emergency response - better protecting 7 billion people from health emergencies by 2028; ensuring Universal Health Coverage (UHC) - supporting 5 billion people to access quality health services without suffering financial hardship; combating Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) - accelerating actions to counter the growing threat of AMR; and, strengthening climate resilience- supporting adaptation plans to better prepare nations for the impacts of climate change.

Through our investment over 2024-2028 we reiterate our commitment both to WHO and international partners of working together towards the collective goal of a healthier, safer, and more resilient world.

**HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE****■ Eradicating the use of goods and services tainted by modern slavery in NHS supply chains**

**Minister of State for Health (Secondary Care) (Karin Smyth):** [\[HCWS245\]](#)

An estimated 50 million people live in modern slavery across the world. Modern slavery exists in every country, including the UK, with instances of forced and child labour documented within the supply chain of the health and social care sector.

The UK government is committed to eradicating modern slavery both domestically and abroad and is clear that the NHS should not be purchasing goods or services which have been tainted by slavery or human trafficking.

DHSC, supported by NHS England, delivered a review in December 2023 into the risk of modern slavery within NHS supply chains. The review showed a significant amount of commitment from our suppliers to tackling modern slavery in their supply chains, and confirmed the important role that regulation would play in this area.

As such, I am pleased to announce that we will be introducing robust regulations to ensure the eradication of modern slavery in NHS supply chains in England.

As required by the NHS Act 2006, we are creating regulations which will place legal duties on public bodies to assess modern slavery risk in procurement and contract activities and take reasonable steps to address, and where possible, eliminate that risk.

These regulations will impose legal obligations on public bodies to assess and address modern slavery risks in their supply chains when procuring goods and services for the purpose of the NHS. Public bodies will be required to first evaluate the level of modern slavery risk associated with a procurement, then take appropriate and proportionate actions to mitigate and, where possible, eliminate that risk. Reasonable actions include ensuring robust selection and award criteria is built into their tenders to respond to identified risks; and introducing specific contract terms to monitor and require mitigation where instances of modern slavery are discovered.

The department is pleased to announce that public consultation on our draft regulations has now been launched. This marks an important step in our commitment to eradicate modern slavery from our healthcare system. A collaborative approach is necessary, and as such we are inviting the views and contributions from a wide range of stakeholders including public bodies, suppliers, trade associates, interest groups and the public. Subject to the outcome of the consultation we intend to lay draft regulations before parliament in due course.

Efforts to reform procurement rules in the UK are ongoing. The Procurement Act 2023, scheduled to take effect on 24 February 2025, will establish the new legal framework that the public sector must adhere to for applicable procurements. In January 2024, the Health Care Services (Provider Selection Regime) Regulations 2023 were introduced, outlining procurement regulations for clinical services.

Modern slavery is an abhorrent crime which requires a collective international response. DHSC has a duty to eradicate the use of goods and services tainted by modern slavery in NHS supply chains. This is not something that impacts only the health sector; modern slavery impacts everyone, everywhere. This government will work to ensure a collaborative government and cross sector approach to tackling modern slavery within our regulatory framework.

## HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### ■ Leasehold and Commonhold Reform

**Minister of State for Housing and Planning (Matthew Pennycook):** [\[HCWS244\]](#)

Millions of homeowners across the country will remember with fondness the sense of satisfaction, pride and security they felt when completing the purchase of their first home. Given a free choice, an overwhelming majority of families would prefer to own their own home, and home ownership remains indelibly associated in the minds of many with security, control, freedom and hope.

Yet, for far too many leaseholders, the reality of home ownership has fallen woefully short of the dream – their lives marked by an intermittent, if not constant, struggle with punitive and escalating ground rents; unjustified permissions and administration fees; unreasonable or extortionate charges; and onerous conditions imposed with little or no consultation. This is not what home ownership should entail.

Over the course of this parliament, the government is determined to honour the commitments made in our manifesto and do what is necessary to finally bring the feudal leasehold system to an end. Given that millions of leaseholders and residential freeholders are currently suffering as a result of unfair and unreasonable practices, we appreciate fully the need to act urgently to provide them with relief. However, we are also cognisant of the significant complexity of the task and the importance of taking the necessary time to ensure that reforms are watertight.

With both of these imperatives in mind, I am today updating the House on the steps the government intends to take to implement those reforms to the leasehold system already in statute and to progress the wider set of reforms necessary to end the feudal leasehold system for good.

### **The Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024**

The previous government's Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024 was passed in the wash-up period prior to the dissolution of the last parliament. In enacting only a select number of Law Commission recommendations relating to enfranchisement and the right to manage, the Act has rendered the process of holistic and coherent leasehold and commonhold reform more challenging.

However, while limited in nature, the Act did introduce a necessary set of reforms that will provide immediate relief to those leaseholders and residential freeholders subject to unfair and unreasonable practices. As set out in the King's Speech, it is therefore the

government's intention to act as quickly as possible to provide homeowners with greater rights, powers and protections over their homes by implementing its various provisions.

However, we must balance speed with care if we are to ensure that the measures brought into force are to the lasting benefit of leaseholders and residential freeholders. The risk of acting with undue haste is not merely a hypothetical one. On assuming office in July, the Deputy Prime Minister and I were informed that the 2024 Act contains a small number of specific but serious flaws which would prevent certain provisions from operating as intended and that need to be rectified via primary legislation.

These serious flaws include a loophole which mean the Act goes far beyond the intended reforms to valuation and that undermines the integrity of the amended scheme. In addition we must correct an omission that would deny tens of thousands of shared ownership leaseholders the right to extend their lease with their direct landlord given that the providers in question do not have sufficiently long leases to grant 990-year extensions.

This government will not make the same mistakes as the last when it comes to reforming what is, without question, an incredibly complicated area of property law. While we intend to continue to work at pace, we will take the time necessary to ensure the reforms we pass are fit for purpose.

That is not to say that progress has not already been made. A number of the Act's provisions came into force on 24 July relating variously to legal costs associated with the remediation of unsafe buildings, the work of professional insolvency practitioners, and removing the remedy where homeowners risk losing their home entirely because of failure to pay an income-supporting rentcharge after 40 days.

On 31 October, the government activated further building safety measures. These help clarify that remediation contribution orders and remediation orders (which require developers and other relevant persons to pay for or fix defects) can be made in respect of interim measures, known as 'relevant steps', such as waking watches and simultaneous evacuation alarms. They also clarify that costs of alternative accommodation, when leaseholders have been displaced from their homes on building safety grounds, and expert reports, can be recovered through remediation contribution orders.

Commencing the remaining provisions in the Act will require an extensive programme of detailed secondary legislation. While we appreciate fully the scepticism that leaseholders feel about yet more consultations, in some cases they will be necessary to determine precisely how certain measures are to be implemented effectively. To our frustration, we will not be able to bring other important measures into force, including the new valuation process, until we have fixed the small number of specific but serious flaws in the 2024 Act through primary legislation. Switching on the Act in full will therefore take time, but it is important that we get it right if we are to avoid the mistakes made by the previous government.

A good example of why appropriate secondary legislation must be prepared and scrutinised before even seemingly simple measures in the Act are commenced is section 49. This section provides for an increase in the non-residential floorspace limit for right to

manage claims from 25% to 50%. This will broaden access to this right for a significant number of leaseholders by allowing those in mixed-use buildings where up to 50% of the floorspace is non-residential to make right to manage claims.

However, the way existing right to manage company voting rights operate mean that in some buildings with higher percentages of non-residential floorspace, freeholders not leaseholders will be able to control the right to manage company with more votes. For this reason we must amend right to manage company voting rights via secondary legislation in parallel with commencing section 49. If we do not do so, and simply activate section 49, new claims for the right to manage could result in these companies being set up only for the building's existing freeholders to have total control over them. This would be contrary to the intention behind the Act. Whilst we appreciate that leaseholders will be frustrated at having to wait for secondary legislation, this government will not commence the Act in a half-baked or incoherent way that could risk detriment to leaseholders.

With a view to effectively implementing the Act as quickly as possible, the government's intended sequencing for bringing the provisions of the 2024 Act into force is as follows:

We intend to commence the Act's provision to remove the '2-year rule' in January next year. This will mean that leaseholders will no longer have to wait two years after purchasing their property before exercising rights to extend their lease or buy their freehold, giving more leaseholders control over their properties from the outset.

We will bring the Act's right to manage provisions (expanding access, reforming its costs and voting rights) into force as a coherent package at the same time, in spring 2025, meaning more leaseholders in mixed-use buildings can take over management from their freeholders, and leaseholders making claims will, in most cases, no longer have to pay their freeholder's costs.

We understand that for many leaseholders the cost of living will be their primary immediate worry. For too long, leaseholders have borne the brunt of opaque and excessive costs being passed on to them. We will go out to consultation very shortly on the detail of the Act's ban on buildings insurance remuneration such as commissions for landlords, property managing agents and freeholders being charged through the service charge and their replacement with transparent and fair fees.

Next year, we will look to consult on the Act's provisions on service charges and on legal costs, bringing these measures into force as quickly as possible thereafter. Once implemented, leaseholders will be able to more easily challenge service charges they consider unreasonable and landlords will be required to apply to the relevant court or tribunal for approval before they can pass legal costs from such challenges back to leaseholders.

The Act includes measures that will make it cheaper for leaseholders to enfranchise – buy their freehold or extend their lease, giving them security over their property in the long term. Next summer we will consult on the valuation rates used to calculate the cost of enfranchisement premiums. Parliament will then need to approve the secondary legislation that sets out the detail, as well as fixing the Act's serious flaws in further primary legislation, before implementing the package.

The government remain committed to protecting residential freeholders on private and mixed-tenure housing estates from unfair charges. Next year we will consult on implementing the Act's new consumer protection provisions for the up to 1.75m homes that are subject to these charges, and bring these measures into force as quickly as possible thereafter. These include ensuring that homeowners who pay an estate management charge have better access to information they need to understand what they are paying for, the right to challenge the reasonableness at the First-tier Tribunal (in England), and to go to the tribunal to appoint a substitute manager.

It is important that landlords, agents and other key actors in the sector are aware of their responsibilities. As such, we will continue to work closely with delivery partners and stakeholders as we implement the Act, and look to future reform. We also look forward to working closely with the Welsh Government to bring about these much-needed reforms across England and Wales.

It is also vital that as many residential leaseholders and freeholders understand and take advantage of the reforms as they are implemented. The Leasehold Advisory Service will have a crucial role to play in that regard and we will set out further detail in due course about how we believe it can most effectively do so.

#### **Further reform of the leasehold system**

While we must fix the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act and implement its provisions as soon as possible, we have always been clear that the Act does not go far enough. It overlooked a number of Law Commission recommendations relating to leasehold enfranchisement, enacted only eight relating to the right to manage and contained none relating to commonhold.

Moreover, it left untouched serious problems such as unregulated and unaffordable ground rents; the poor quality of service provided by some managing agents; the threat of forfeiture as a means of ensuring compliance with a lease agreement; and the prevalence of 'fleecehold' private and mixed-tenure housing estates.

As part of our commitment to finally bring the feudal leasehold system to an end in this parliament, the government are determined to take action to address Law Commission recommendations omitted from the 2024 Act, to resolve a range of problems that legislation failed to grapple with, and to enact key pledges in our manifesto that it did not even engage with, such as making commonhold the default tenure.

In the King's Speech, the government made clear it would publish an ambitious new Draft Leasehold and Commonhold Reform Bill in this parliamentary session that would be subject to broad consultation and additional parliamentary scrutiny. Our intention is that it will be published in the second half of next year.

A central focus of the Bill will be reinvigorating commonhold through the introduction of a comprehensive new legal framework. To set out our thinking in advance of the Bill and invite consultation and discussion about how we finally transition away from leasehold, we will publish a White Paper on reforms to commonhold early next year.

Alongside setting out our plans for a comprehensive new legal framework for commonhold, we will take decisive first steps to making commonhold the default tenure by the end of the parliament. To that end, we will consult next year on the best approach to banning new leasehold flats so this can work effectively alongside a robust ban on leasehold houses. We will seek input from industry and consumers on other fundamental points such as potential exemptions for legitimate use and how to minimise disruption to housing supply. We will also engage on the conversion of existing flats to commonhold.

The Draft Bill will also consider a number of vital reforms to the existing leasehold system. The government remains firmly committed to its manifesto commitment to tackle unregulated and unaffordable ground rents, and we will deliver this in legislation. We will remove the disproportionate and draconian threat of forfeiture as a means of ensuring compliance with a lease agreement. And we will consult on new reforms to the section 20 'major works' procedure that leaseholders must go through when they face large bills for such works.

We also intend to act to protect leaseholders from abuse and poor service at the hands of unscrupulous managing agents. The previous government committed to regulate the property agent sector in 2018, even asking a working group chaired by the esteemed Lord Best to advise them how to do it. Yet, over multiple years it failed to take any action.

Managing agents play a key role in the maintenance of multi-occupancy buildings and freehold estates, and their importance will only increase as we transition toward a commonhold future, and so we are looking again at Lord Best's 2019 report on regulating the property agent sector, particularly in light of the recommendations in the final Grenfell Inquiry report. As part of our response to that report I can confirm that we will strengthen regulation of managing agents to drive up the standard of their service. As a minimum, this should include mandatory professional qualifications which set a new basic standard that managing agents will be required to meet. We will consult on this matter next year.

Finally, we are determined to end the injustice of 'fleecehold' entirely and we will consult next year on legislative and policy options to reduce the prevalence of private estate management arrangements, which are the root cause of the problems experienced by many residential freeholders.

## JUSTICE

### ■ Whiplash Injury Regulations 2021: Publication of the Lord Chancellor's Review

**Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice (Shabana Mahmood):**

[\[HCWS241\]](#)

I would like to announce that I have completed my report of the first statutory review of the Whiplash Injury Regulations 2021 (the Regulations).

Part 1, Section 3 of the Civil Liability Act provides for the Lord Chancellor to set a tariff of damages for whiplash injuries of up to two years in duration and to make regulations to do so. Section 4 of the Act requires the Lord Chancellor to review regulations made under Section 3 within three years of implementation.

In summary I have decided to:

- maintain the existing split structure of the tariff (whiplash only and whiplash plus minor psychological injury) and to provide additional guidance on defining minor psychological injury;
- uprate the tariff by around 15% to account for actual Consumer Price Index inflation to May 2024 and for forecasted inflation to May 2027 - the likely date of the next review;
- keep the allowable judicial uplift for exceptional injuries or circumstances at its current level of up to 20% of the tariff award; and
- make no changes to the definitions on what constitutes appropriate medical evidence and who may provide it for the purposes of the ban on seeking/making an offer to settle a whiplash claim without evidence.

As per the requirements of the Act, I will today lay a report with more information on the review, its conclusions and the next steps in the House libraries. I will also shortly commence a consultation on these decisions with the Lady Chief Justice and will provide further information on the implementation timetable in due course.

## WORK AND PENSIONS

### ■ Healthy Start Uptake Data

**Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Transformation) (Andrew Western):**

[\[HCWS242\]](#)

#### **Background**

Healthy Start is a passported scheme with eligibility being derived from certain qualifying benefits, such as Universal Credit. The uptake percentage for the Healthy Start scheme is calculated by comparing the number of potential eligible people to the number of beneficiaries (individuals who accessed the Healthy Start scheme). NHS Business Services Authority publish the data on their website where it is publicly available.

Eligibility and take-up numbers have been used in numerous Parliamentary Questions and parliamentary debates. A previous source data issue that affected eligibility statistics resulted in a Written Ministerial Statement being laid in parliament on the 26 March 2024.

I regret to inform the House that a further issue has been identified with the statistics on the number of those potentially eligible. This dates back to January 2023. This means that uptake and eligibility data used in 15 PQs and 8 debates during the former government, was inaccurate.

It is important to state that this issue has not impacted any Healthy Start applications, existing beneficiaries, or live claim processes. This issue has only affected reported uptake statistics.

#### **Issue**



Healthy Start uptake percentage statistics are calculated using information provided by Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). DWP generate potential eligibility figures using the Universal Credit assessed income period, unfortunately, this period was calculated incorrectly meaning the monthly figures reported were based on a longer period.

This means that the potential eligibility figures provided by DWP from January 2023 to June 2024 were inaccurate.

### **Impact**

The error means that the number of those potentially eligible has been over-estimated; this in turn has led to an underestimated uptake percentage since January 2023.

It should be noted that while these statistics are a key element for reporting uptake of the Healthy Start scheme, this has not impacted any Healthy Start applications, existing beneficiaries, or live claim processes. The scheme continues to be promoted by NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA), who administer the scheme on behalf of Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), through a variety of publications, social media, exhibits etc.

### **Corrective Action**

DWP has corrected the calculation of the assessed income period from July 2024. Cross departmental testing is being conducted to provide assurance before any further data is shared with NHSBSA.

The incorrect statistical data has been removed from the NHS Healthy Start website.

Unfortunately, we are unable to publish corrected historical figures as the number of recipients of Universal Credit changes daily meaning the data is only fully accurate at the time it is produced. We will seek to restore fully accurate uptake data as soon as we are able.