



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 22 November 2024 and the information is correct at the time of publication (03:29 P.M., 22 November 2024). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

BUSINESS AND TRADE

■ Artificial Intelligence: Trade Competitiveness

Andrew Rosindell:

[14024]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps he is taking to keep the UK as a competitive place to invest in AI start-ups.

Sarah Jones:

The UK has a competitive advantage in AI, with some of the world's most innovative AI companies based here.

The government commissioned an Action Plan in July, led by Matt Clifford to identify how AI can drive economic growth and explore untapped AI opportunities. HMG will form a new "AI Opportunities Unit" to seize the benefits of AI. The Action Plan, to be published shortly, will consider key enablers such as the UK's compute and broader infrastructure requirements by 2030, how this infrastructure is made available for start-ups and scale-ups and how to develop and attract top AI talent.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ai-expert-to-lead-action-plan-to-ensure-uk-reaps-the-benefits-of-artificial-intelligence>

■ Employment: Artificial Intelligence

Andrew Rosindell:

[14028]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will take steps to help protect jobs that could otherwise be replaced by increased use of artificial intelligence.

Justin Madders

New technologies, including AI, have the potential to boost wages, drive up productivity and empower workers.

The government's approach to new technologies is to protect good jobs, enable good future jobs and ensure rights and protections keep pace with technological change; safeguarding against discrimination; and putting the worker voice at the heart of Britain's digital transition.

AI is expected to augment roles, rather than replace them. A report by the International Labour Organisation corroborates this, indicating that some roles are more exposed to AI, but that AI is not able to fully replace human employees.

■ Iron and Steel: Manufacturing Industries

Richard Tice:

[14207]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact on national security of the level of steelmaking capacity in the UK

between the (a) closure of blast furnaces and (b) establishment of electric arc furnaces; and what steps he is taking to ensure (i) the security of steel supply for critical infrastructure and (ii) value for money in the purchase of steel for such projects in that transitional period.

Sarah Jones:

The Government recognises the important position our steel companies play in the supply chains for a number of key industries. This is why we are developing a steel strategy. With regards to the transition of Port Talbot, Tata will be importing steel slab and coil for a temporary period whilst the new electric arc furnace (EAF) is being built. We continue to prioritise engagement with British Steel.

Neither Tata Steel nor British Steel are currently critical suppliers into UK defence programmes. High quality steel, including for the Royal Navy's new Dreadnaught class submarines, is already being made by EAF steel producers.

■ **Post Offices: Closures**

Alex Easton:

[\[14201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps he is taking to (a) help prevent Post Office closures in (i) the United Kingdom and (ii) Bangor, North Down and (b) ensure continued access to (A) postal and (B) banking services in impacted areas.

Justin Madders:

Government provides an annual £50m Network Subsidy funding to support the delivery of a minimum number of branches and a geographical spread of branches in line with published access criteria. The access criteria ensure that however the network changes, Post Office delivers essential services, including banking and cash services, across all four nations of the UK via its network of 11,500 branches.

The Government further understands the importance of face-to-face banking to communities and high streets, and is committed to championing sufficient access for all. We have committed to work closely with banks to roll out at least 350 banking hubs, which will provide individuals and businesses up and down the country with critical cash and banking services.

■ **Street Trading: Greater London**

Neil O'Brien:

[\[9942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will increase the fines available through section 38 of the London Local Authorities Act 1990.

Justin Madders:

Local Authorities are responsible for enforcement and central Government has no current plans for legislation that can be used to amend these fees.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Cultural Heritage: Urban Areas****Dame Caroline Dinéage:**[\[14058\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of Historic England's High Street Heritage Action Zone programme on (a) local economic regeneration and (b) the maintenance of cultural assets.

Chris Bryant:

We have not made such an assessment, but Historic England has commissioned an external evaluation of the High Streets Heritage Action Zone programme, which was designed to drive economic growth in places that need it the most. We await the report for this which will be published in March 2025.

■ Music Venues: Finance**Rebecca Paul:**[\[14129\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will take steps to provide financial support for grassroots music venues, in the context of the removal of business rate relief for retail, leisure and hospitality venues.

Chris Bryant:

The government response to the Culture, Media and Sport select committee report on grassroots music venues, sets out the steps the government is taking, working closely with industry, to support a sustainable grassroots music sector. In particular, we are calling on the music industry to introduce a voluntary levy on arena and stadium tickets to support grassroots music venues, artists and promoters.

The government intends to introduce permanently lower tax rates for retail, hospitality, and leisure (RHL) properties from 2026-27, such as grassroots music venues. This reform, on which a Discussion Paper was published at Autumn Budget 2024, will provide certainty for businesses regarding their bills. It is incorrect to state that business rate relief has been removed. In fact, to provide further support, the government has extended RHL relief at 40% for 2025-26.

In addition, at the 2024 Autumn Budget, this government has extended support for the Arts Council England's Supporting Grassroots Music investment programme for 2025-26, ensuring sustained support for musicians, venues, and industry professionals.

■ Press: Regulation**Siân Berry:**[\[14270\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will bring forward legislative proposals to protect people affected by (a) discrimination, (b) inaccuracy and (c) intrusion in the press.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Government currently has no plans to bring forward legislative proposals to regulate the press.

It is vital that the public have access to accurate and trustworthy information from a range of different media, and we are working across Government to consider these issues in the round.

■ Tourist Attractions: Planning Permission**Jack Rankin:**[\[14266\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what her Department's criteria are for sponsoring visitor attractions through the special development order process.

Chris Bryant:

DCMS works to support the growth of the visitor economy as part of the Government's Growth Mission. Special Development Orders are a long-established part of the planning system. Each case is considered on its individual merits.

DEFENCE**■ Navy****James McMurdock:**[\[14258\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Royal Navy's escort fleet capabilities.

Luke Pollard:

The Royal Navy's escort fleet, comprising Type 23 Frigates and Type 45 Destroyers, is a credible force calibrated to meet individual and multinational Defence outputs effectively. These vessels remain poised to defend the Fleet against complex threats and are central to the UK's Carrier Strike Capability, as witnessed in Carrier Strike Group 21. The importance of the escort fleet will be further illustrated in Carrier Strike Group 25 next year, which will involve deployment to the Indo-Pacific.

The introduction of Type 26 and 31 Frigates in the coming years demonstrates the Royal Navy's commitment to the modernisation of our escort fleet.

EDUCATION**■ Armed Forces: Cadets****Mr Calvin Bailey:**[\[14224\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing 16-18 scholarships for young people participating in cadet programmes.

Mr Calvin Bailey:

[14225]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to help improve the (a) employment, (b) training and (c) educational opportunities available for young people participating in cadet programmes.

Catherine McKinnell:

The government, through the Ministry of Defence, provides in the region of £180 million to support cadets schemes. The Cadet Expansion Programme will receive £3.6 million in government funding for this academic year and through to the 2033/2034 financial year. This goes to the single Service (i.e. Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force) cadet organisations, to provide funding for cadet expansion in schools.

The department provides £3.5 million to enable cadets to achieve an 'out of school hours' level 2 or 3 vocational qualification. The qualifications recognise the wide variety of skills, including teamwork, communication and leadership skills that cadets gain while attending their unit, which are transferable to further and higher education, as well as the workplace.

These qualifications are directly linked to community, social action and volunteering, and are carefully mapped to the training programmes of the cadet forces. For the cadet forces, the current offer is:

- BTEC Level 1 in Teamwork and Personal Skills for Uniformed Youth Organisations. 1 year course, age range: 13 to 15.
- BTEC Level 2 in Teamwork and Personal Development in the Community. 2 year course, age range: 16 to 18.
- ILM Level 3 Award in Leadership and Management. 1 year course, age range: 16 +.

Further details are available here: https://cvcollege.org/our_qualifications/.

There are no current plans to make an assessment of the merits of introducing 16 to 18 scholarships for young people participating in cadets programmes. However, there are initiatives at a local level to support cadets with financial barriers to participate.

■ **Budehaven Community School: Special Educational Needs**

Ben Maguire:

[14264]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if her Department will take steps to support Budehaven Community School's SEND unit.

Catherine McKinnell:

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

Support for Budehaven Community School is the responsibility of Cornwall County Council as the maintaining local authority.

The department wants to drive a consistent and inclusive approach to supporting children and young people with SEND through early identification, effective support, high quality teaching and effective allocation of resources. We will work with the sector as essential and valued partners to deliver our shared mission.

■ Carers

Jo Platt: [\[14106\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to help local authorities support kinship carers.

Janet Daby:

The department recognises the important role that kinship carers play in caring for some of the most vulnerable children and the role of local authorities to support them.

The government has recently announced a £40 million package to trial a new kinship allowance in up to ten local authorities to test whether paying an allowance to cover certain costs, such as covering day to day costs, supporting them to settle into a new home with relatives, or affording activities to support their wellbeing, can help increase the number of children taken in by family members and friends. This trial will help us make decisions about future national rollout.

The government recently published the updated guidance for local authorities, the kinship care statutory guidance. This guidance outlines the framework for the provision of support for kinship children and kinship families.

The government also appointed the first National Kinship Ambassador who will work alongside local authorities to help improve their kinship practice and local policies, and ensure they are following national guidance. As well as providing bespoke support to some local authority teams, they will share learning nationally so that more local authorities can benefit from evidence of best practice. In turn, this will help to improve outcomes for children and families.

■ Carers and Foster Care: Finance

James McMurdock: [\[14259\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department has made a comparative assessment of financial support available to (a) kinship and (b) foster carers.

Janet Daby:

Statutory guidance issued to local authorities makes it clear that children and young people should receive the support that they and their carers need to safeguard and promote their welfare.

As local authorities know their carers best, they have the power to decide what financial support should be provided to carers and their children and any payments should be made in accordance with their model for assessing support needs. The government does not set a maximum or minimum allowance for local authorities to administer. However, the kinship care statutory guidance, published in October 2024.

states that in its calculation of any ongoing special guardianship financial support, the local authority should have regard to the fostering allowance that would have been paid if the child was fostered.

Broadly speaking, no foster carer should be financially disadvantaged because of their fostering role. The government expects that all foster parents receive at least the weekly National Minimum Allowance (NMA), in addition to any agreed expenses to cover the full cost of caring for each child placed with them. More information is set out in the National Minimum Standards (NMS) Standard 28, which can be found here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7abe16e5274a319e77a6a1/NMS_Fostering_Services.pdf.

The department has raised the NMA for foster carers above inflation for two consecutive years. In 2024/25, we increased the NMA by 6.88%, following an increase of 12.43% in 2023/24. The new allowance amounts for 2024/25 can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/support-for-foster-parents/help-with-the-cost-of-fostering>.

Fostering service providers can choose to pay above the minimum allowance or pay additional fees. However, there is no requirement to pay fees beyond the minimum allowance.

The government is committed to supporting children in care through kinship and foster care.

At the Autumn Budget 2024, the government announced £40 million to trial a new kinship allowance in up to 10 local authorities. We will test whether paying an allowance to cover certain costs, like supporting a child to settle into a new home with relatives, can help increase the number of children taken in by family members and friends.

The department is also investing £15 million to boost the number of foster carers next year, to generate hundreds of new foster placements and offer children a stable environment to grow up in. This will help recruit more foster parents by ensuring that every local authority has access to a regional recruitment hub. These hubs help raise awareness about fostering and offer prospective carers a centralised platform to find information, ask questions and get support from the start of their fostering journey.

■ Carers: Finance

Freddie van Mierlo:

[14130]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment with Cabinet colleagues of the potential merits of increasing the provision of financial support available to kinship carers.

Janet Daby:

The department recognises the important role that kinship carers play in caring for some of the most vulnerable children and this government is determined to give every child the opportunities they deserve. Kinship carers play a crucial role in delivering this.

At Budget, the department recently announced a £40 million package to trial a new kinship allowance in up to ten local authorities to test whether paying an allowance to cover certain costs, such as covering day to day costs, supporting them to settle into a new home with relatives, or affording activities to support their wellbeing, can help increase the number of children taken in by family members and friends. This trial will help the department make decisions about future national rollout.

This is the single biggest investment made by government in kinship care to date. This investment could transform the lives of vulnerable children who can no longer live at home.

Departmental officials and I will continue to work across government to implement the new kinship allowances trial and to learn from this to inform any future policy.

■ Children: English Language

James McMurdock:

[14415]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of children in South Basildon and East Thurrock constituency do not have English as their first language.

Catherine McKinnell:

A pupil is recorded to have English as an additional language if they are exposed to a language at home that is known or believed to be other than English. This measure is not a measure of English language proficiency nor a good proxy for recent immigration.

The number and proportion of children in school that do not have English as a first language, as well as other characteristics, is available in the following publication: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics>.

The number and proportion of pupils that do not have English as a first language can be calculated by clicking the link above and downloading the file 'School level underlying data - 2023/24 (csv, 22 Mb)' under 'additional supporting files'.

Parliamentary constituency can be filtered, as can the number and proportion of pupils whose first language is known or believed to be other than English.

Additionally, other school level characteristics can be found in the underlining data file.

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

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

■ Children: Social Services

Sally Jameson: [\[14414\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much was spent from the public purse on private sector provision of children's social care in each year since 2010.

Janet Daby:

The department publishes data on local authority spend on looked after children. The latest data is available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/la-and-school-expenditure#explore-data-and-files>.

The attached table sets out the amount spent by local authorities on private sector provision for looked after children between 2012 and 2023. Prior to 2012, the methodology for this data set was different and comparisons should not be made. As such, data from previous years has not been provided as part of the answer.

Attachments:

1. LA spend on looked after children [14414 local_authority_spend_looked_after_children.xlsx]

■ Cultural Heritage: Education

Dame Caroline Dinenge: [\[14059\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she will commit to the continued funding of the Heritage Schools programme.

Catherine McKinnell:

Programme funding for the 2025/26 financial year is subject to the outcomes of the department's business planning. This includes the Heritage Schools programme, led by Historic England. Details will be set out in due course.

■ 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.

■ Further Education: Finance

Dr Danny Chambers:

[\[14831\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to paragraph 3.46 of the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 October, how she plans to distribute the £300 million for further education in England.

Janet Daby:

This government is committed to driving economic growth and supporting opportunity for all, and further education (FE) is central to this. The government is providing an additional £300 million for FE to ensure young people are developing the skills they need to succeed, and an additional £300 million to support colleges to maintain, improve and ensure suitability of their estate. This funding will benefit all FE colleges. We will set out how the additional funding will be distributed in due course.

■ Further Education: Pay

Alex Sobel:

[\[14121\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will meet with representatives from the National Education Union to discuss the 2024-2025 further education pay award for teachers.

Janet Daby:

As part of this government's commitment to working closely with stakeholders, my Ministerial colleagues and departmental officials meet regularly with representatives of all the education unions, including the National Education Union, to discuss a range of issues.

Further education (FE) providers are responsible for setting the pay of their teachers and government plays no role in this process.

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.

■ Higher Education: Apprentices

Rebecca Long Bailey:

[\[14096\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of higher education degree apprenticeships on (a) local educational opportunities, (b) the development of a skilled workforce and (c) career outcomes.

Rebecca Long Bailey:

[\[14097\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to (a) support providers and (b) encourage the uptake of higher education degree apprenticeships.

Janet Daby:

This government knows that earnings for those undertaking higher apprenticeships compare well to the earnings of first-degree graduates five years on. The latest data shows the median first-degree graduate earnings five years after graduation were £29,900 compared to £33,800 for level 4 apprentices and £31,380 for level 5+ apprentices.

In addition, latest data shows that 95% of those who achieved a level 6 apprenticeship in 2020/21 moved into sustained employment or sustained employment and learning in the following academic year.

The department will work with Skills England to ensure that degree apprenticeships continue to offer good value for money and drive economic growth.

■ Higher Education: Finance

Steff Aquarone:

[\[14242\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the financial stability of the higher education sector in (a) Norfolk and (b) nationally.

Janet Daby:

The financial position of individual higher education (HE) providers is highly commercially sensitive. As such, it would be inappropriate to comment on the financial stability of HE providers in any individual local authority area.

The department recognises that the financial environment of the HE sector is challenging. The Office for Students' (OfS) update on the financial sustainability of the HE sector, published 15 November, states that up to 72% of HE providers could face a deficit in 2025/26 if they do not take mitigating action. The OfS has rightly affirmed that HE providers must take bold action to secure their long term sustainability. As autonomous bodies independent of government, it is for providers to decide on effective business models and to how to manage their finances.

However, in recognition of this challenging financial environment, this government has taken action to support the sector. The government has acted decisively to

accept in full the recommendations of the independent review of the OfS undertaken by Sir David Behan. Sir David has been appointed as interim OfS Chair to oversee the important work of refocusing their role to concentrate on key priorities, including the HE sector's financial stability. The department continues to work closely with the OfS to monitor any risks and to ensure there are robust plans in place to mitigate them.

Moreover, the government has made the difficult decision to increase tuition fee limits in line with forecast inflation. As a result, the maximum fee for a standard full-time undergraduate course in the 2025/26 academic year will increase by 3.1%, from £9,250 to £9,535. The government also recognises the impact that the cost-of-living crisis has had on students. Maximum loans for living costs for the 2025/26 academic year will increase by 3.1%, from £10,227 to £10,544 for an undergraduate student living away from home and studying outside London. Longer term funding plans for the HE sector will be set out in due course.

As my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education set out in her oral statement on 4 November, this government will secure the future of HE so that students can benefit from a world class education for generations to come.

■ **Processed Food: Health Education**

Jim Shannon:

[14079]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that children are taught about the potential impact of ultra-processed foods on health.

Catherine McKinnell:

Education is a devolved matter, and response outlines information for England only.

The government acknowledges there is no universally agreed definition of ultra-processed foods (UPF).

The topic of UPFs could be covered under a number of subjects within the National Curriculum, including design and technology (D&T), science, and relationships, sex and health education (RSHE). The department does not specifically prescribe the teaching of UPFs. This is because we want schools to have flexibility over how they deliver these subjects, so they can develop an integrated approach that is sensitive to the needs and background of their pupils.

The cooking and nutrition strand of D&T, which is compulsory for key stages 1 to 3 in maintained schools, teaches pupils how to cook and apply the principles of healthy eating and nutrition.

Similarly, in science, healthy eating is covered through topics relating to nutrition and digestion, which cover the content of a healthy diet and the impact of diet on how the body functions. Science teachers could decide to highlight UPFs and their impact where appropriate in the course.

Furthermore, within the health education portion of RSHE it is expected that by the end of primary, pupils should know what constitutes a healthy diet, including understanding calories and other nutritional content, the characteristics of a poor diet, and the risks associated with unhealthy eating. Then by the end of secondary, pupils should know how to maintain healthy eating and the links between a poor diet and health risks, including tooth decay and cancer.

At GCSE, pupils can choose to study the food preparation and nutrition course. The subject content requires pupils to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of how foods are grown, reared or caught, and the primary and secondary stages of processing and production, along with how this processing affects the sensory and nutritional properties of ingredients.

To support teachers, Oak National Academy currently have free online resources on their website that will help in delivering education on food processing in D&T, and also within geography as well where they highlight the negative impacts of UPFs. Included in this are lessons specifically on the different ways that food is processed and how new technologies are used in manufacturing.

The government has established an independent Curriculum and Assessment Review, covering ages 5 to 18, chaired by Professor Becky Francis CBE. The review will seek to refresh the curriculum to ensure it is cutting edge, fit for purpose and meeting the needs of children and young people to support their future life and work.

■ Pupils: Allergies

Max Wilkinson:

[\[14385\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to help protect school pupils who are known to have allergies.

Catherine McKinnell:

Section 100 of the Children and Families Act 2014 places a duty on maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units to make arrangements for supporting pupils with medical conditions, including allergies.

The statutory guidance 'Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions' makes clear to schools what is expected of them in taking reasonable steps to fulfil their legal obligations and meet the individual needs of pupils with medical conditions. Schools should ensure they are aware of any pupils with medical conditions and have policies and processes in place to ensure these can be well managed.

The department included a reminder to schools of these duties in its regular schools' email bulletin in both March and September 2024. In the same communication, the department also alerted schools to the newly created Schools Allergy Code. The Code was developed by the Allergy Team, the Independent Schools' Bursars Association and the Benedict Blythe Foundation, who are all trusted voices on the matter of allergies. The department has now also added a link to the Code to its online allergy guidance on GOV.UK.

The department will keep the statutory guidance under review as it takes forward its commitment to delivering an inclusive mainstream system.

■ Pupils: Neurodiversity

Manuela Perteghella:

[\[14141\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential implications for her policies of trends in the number of schools that have applied full-time attendance targets for (a) autistic and (b) neurodivergent children without reasonable adjustments in place.

Stephen Morgan:

The department's guidance to schools, trusts and local authorities on supporting school attendance sets clear expectations to provide a 'support-first' approach to attendance, while maintaining high ambitions for all pupils.

The department knows that some pupils face more complex barriers, including pupils who have long-term physical or mental health conditions, or who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Their right to an education is the same as any other pupil and therefore the attendance ambition for these pupils should be the same as it is for any other pupil. However, additional support may need to be provided to deliver those ambitions.

For pupils with SEND, schools are expected to:

- Work in partnership with parents to develop specific support approaches including, where applicable, ensuring the provision outlined in the pupil's education, health and care plan is accessed.
- Work in partnership with families to address barriers where school transport is regularly being missed and work with other partners to encourage the scheduling of medical appointments and other interventions outside of the main school day.
- Establish strategies for removing any in-school barriers, including considering reasonable adjustments for uniform, transport, routines, access to support in school and lunchtime arrangements.
- Consider adjustments to practice and policies to help meet the needs of pupils who are struggling to attend school, as well as making formal reasonable adjustments under section 20 of the Equality Act 2010 where a pupil has a disability. Any adjustments should be agreed by and regularly reviewed with the pupil and their parents.
- Ensure joined-up pastoral care is in place where needed and consider whether a time-limited phased return to school would be appropriate.

The department's 'Working together to improve school attendance' guidance can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66bf300da44f1c4c23e5bd1b/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance_-_August_2024.pdf, and additional

information about SEND support can be accessed at: <https://www.gov.uk/children-with-special-educational-needs/special-educational-needs-support>.

■ Pupils: Per Capita Costs

Luke Murphy:

[14159]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the average funding per pupil in mainstream schools was in (a) Basingstoke constituency, (b) Hampshire, and (c) England in each year since 2010.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department cannot provide comparable funding back to 2010 due to the changes in the funding system since that time. The scope of the per pupil funding before and after the 2018/19 financial year are not directly comparable. In particular, funding for the central services provided by local authorities was split out from the schools block funding in the 2018/19 financial year, and instead funded separately through the central school services block from that year onwards.

We have therefore provided the links to the published dedicated schools grant (DSG) tables from the 2018/19 to 2024/25 financial years. In these tables we provide average per-pupil funding amounts, split by primary and secondary phase, for each local authority and at national level.

As the DSG is allocated at local authority level, DSG allocations are not available broken down to the level of individual constituencies. The individual allocations that schools within Basingstoke constituency receive are determined, each year, by the local funding formula set by Hampshire local authority.

Links to the published DSG tables from the 2018/19 financial year onward are below:

2018/19: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dedicated-schools-grant-dsg-2018-to-2019>.

2019/20: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dedicated-schools-grant-dsg-2019-to-2020>.

2020/21: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dedicated-schools-grant-dsg-2020-to-2021>.

2021/22: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dedicated-schools-grant-dsg-2021-to-2022>.

2022/23: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dedicated-schools-grant-dsg-2022-to-2023>.

2023/24: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dedicated-schools-grant-dsg-2023-to-2024>.

2024/25: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dedicated-schools-grant-dsg-2024-to-2025>.

■ 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: Admissions

Michelle Welsh:

[14430]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent guidance her Department has issued on whether parents may make enquiries in respect of the availability of state school places for their children to more than one (a) local authority and (b) academy trust.

Catherine McKinnell:

The rights of parents to make enquiries about the availability of school places, including across multiple local authorities or academy trusts, is set out in the School Admissions Code. This is mandatory and imposes requirements and guidelines relating to the functions of the local authority and all state schools' admission authorities, including academy trusts. The School Admissions Code was last updated in 2021 and can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1001050/School_admissions_code_2021.pdf.

Paragraph 2.23 of the Schools Admissions Code states that a parent can apply for a place for their child at any school and at any time to the relevant admission authority.

Paragraph 2.27 of the School Admissions Code states that local authorities must provide information on available places in their area to prospective parents. To enable local authorities to do this, the admission authorities for all schools in the area

must provide the local authority with details of the number of places available at their schools whenever this information is requested.

■ Schools: Swimming

Rebecca Long Bailey:

[14072]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of schools provide swimming lessons for Key stage (a) 1 and (b) 2 pupils.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department does not collect data on primary schools' provision of swimming and water safety lessons. Sport England collects some data on swimming and water safety in from their annual Children and Young People's Survey. This includes whether and how many swimming and water safety lessons are provided by primary schools who participate in the survey. This information can be found here:

<https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fsportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com%2Fs3fs-public%2F2023-12%2FActive%2520Lives%2520CYP%252022-23%2520Tables%252041-43%2520School%2520data.xlsx%3FVersionId%3DxCNGsG7bgs5I3oTWIn4Z9fmFsmfQvEdO&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK>.

■ Schools: Transport

Chris Hinchliff:

[14195]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of expanding free school transport access to include students between 16 and 19 years old.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department recognises that the cost and availability of public transport can be an issue for some 16 to 19 year olds when travelling to their college or sixth form, particularly for those with special educational needs (SEN) or those living in rural areas.

It is the responsibility of local authorities to put in place transport arrangements to help young people aged 16 to 19 to access education or training, as well as those aged 19 to 24 with SEN, using funds they have available locally. All local authorities have to prioritise their spending carefully.

Many local authorities do offer some form of subsidised transport. For example, in North East Hertfordshire, Hertfordshire County Council offer discounted fares to all young people, and free transport for eligible young people from low-income backgrounds, or those with education, health and care plans, to access relevant learning.

The 16 to 19 Bursary Fund can also be used for transport costs to support young people to access education and training. Schools and colleges are responsible for deciding how to distribute their bursary allocations to students and for establishing what criteria to use.

■ Secondary Education: Teachers

Luke Murphy:

[14158]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the average staff-to-student ratio was in secondary schools (a) nationally and (b) in Basingstoke constituency in each year since 2010.

Catherine McKinnell:

Information on the school workforce, including the pupil-to-adult and pupil-to-teacher ratios at national, regional, local authority and individual school level, is published in the 'School workforce in England' statistical publication, which is available here:

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england>.

As of November 2023, which is the latest data available, there were 468,693 full-time equivalent teachers in state-funded schools in England.

The table below provides the pupil-to-adult ratio and the pupil-to-teacher ratio for state-funded secondary schools in Basingstoke constituency and England for the 2010/11 to 2023/24 academic years.

Pupil to adult and pupil to teacher ratios for state-funded secondary schools in Basingstoke constituency and England, by year

2010/11 to 2023/24 ¹

	BASINGSTOKE CONSTITUENCY ²		ENGLAND	
	Pupil to adult ratio ^{3,5}	Pupil to teacher ratio ^{4,5}	Pupil to adult ratio ^{3,5}	Pupil to teacher ratio ^{4,5}
2010/11	13.8	15.2	12.1	14.8
2011/12	12.8	17.3	10.5	15
2012/13	11.0	15.1	10.4	14.9
2013/14	10.6	14.7	10.3	14.8
2014/15	10.9	15.7	10.4	14.9
2015/16	10.8	15.2	10.6	15.1
2016/17	12.6	17.3	11.0	15.5
2017/18	11.6	16.1	11.3	15.9
2018/19	12.1	16.7	11.6	16.3
2019/20	12.2	17.0	11.9	16.6
2020/21	12.3	17.0	11.9	16.6

	BASINGSTOKE CONSTITUENCY ²		ENGLAND	
2021/22	12.2	16.8	11.9	16.7
2022/23	12.2	16.7	12.0	16.8
2023/24	12.0	16.8	12.0	16.8

Source: School Workforce Census.

1. Workforce data as at November and pupil data as at the following January. For instance, 2023/24 relates to November 2023 workforce and January 2024 pupils.

2. There were eight secondary schools in Basingstoke constituency in 2010/11 to 2016/17 and seven in 2017/18 to 2023/24.

3. Pupil to adult ratio includes teachers and support staff (excluding administrative and auxiliary staff).

4. Pupil to teacher ratio includes all teachers.

5. The ratios are calculated using pupil numbers taken from the 'Schools, pupils and their characteristics' publication, which is available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics>.

■ Special Educational Needs: Teachers

Sir Desmond Swayne:

[13160]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions she has had with the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education on a Level 7 apprenticeship qualification for teachers of sensory impairment; and when the apprenticeship is expected to start.

Janet Daby:

The department recognises the significant impact this profession has on the lives of children and families, and is committed to improving support for all children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities, including children with a sensory impairment.

The department is reforming the apprenticeship levy into a new growth and skills levy, which will deliver greater flexibility for learners and employers.

At the same time, the department is prepared to make the tough choices needed on how funding should be prioritised in future. That is why, taking advice from Skills England, we will be asking more employers to step forward and fund level 7 apprenticeships outside of the apprenticeship budget in future.

The department will be setting out our final decisions on funding level 7 apprenticeships, such as the qualification for teachers of sensory impairment, in the new year.

■ Teachers: Standards

Mark Ferguson:

[\[14356\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment she has made of the potential impact of qualified teacher status on the quality of teaching.

Catherine McKinnell:

Evidence shows that high quality teaching is the most important in-school factor for improving the outcomes of children, which is why qualified teacher status (QTS) is so important. The government is committed to breaking down barriers to opportunity and ensuring the best life chances for every child. As part of this, we are ensuring that new teachers entering the classroom have, or are working towards, QTS.

Teachers who have undertaken initial teacher training (ITT) leading to QTS have demonstrated that they meet all the teachers' standards at the appropriate level and have had access to high quality, regulated training, followed by a statutory induction. The children in their classes will benefit from having professionally qualified, well-trained teachers.

All primary and secondary ITT courses leading to QTS must incorporate the ITT Core Content Framework (CCF) in full. The CCF is based on the best available evidence of what makes high quality teaching. A review of the CCF alongside the Early Career Framework (ECF) was undertaken during 2023. Building on the evidence underpinning the frameworks, in addition to what the department learnt from the first few years of CCF implementation and ECF delivery, the content of the ITT, CCF and the ECF were reviewed and updated into the combined Initial Teacher Training and Early Career Framework (ITTECF). This covers the first three years or more of a teacher's career and articulates what trainee and new teachers need to know and be able to do. From September 2025, the ITTECF will replace the CCF and become mandatory for accredited ITT providers to incorporate into their primary and secondary ITT courses leading to QTS.

■ Teachers: Workplace Pensions

Alberto Costa:

[\[14330\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department has made an assessment of the impact of removing the abatement law on teacher's pensions on (a) retaining teachers and (b) allowing retired teachers to return to the profession.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department reviewed the abatement provisions as part of scheme reforms introduced in 2015 and removed abatement applying to any service accrued under the career average scheme that was introduced.

The abatement provision applies to pension accrued in the final salary section of the scheme only. The final salary section is closed to any further accrual, and all active members have now transitioned to the career average scheme.

Retired teachers are able to return to the profession and accrue further pension.

There are no plans to review the abatement provisions again.

■ Vocational Education: Nuneaton

Jodie Gosling:

[14167]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to increase funding for skills-based education in Nuneaton constituency.

Janet Daby:

The government is committed to offering skills training to learners to help them acquire the necessary skills for employment or further training. The Adult Skills Fund (ASF), previously the Adult Education Budget (AEB), is worth £1.34 billion this academic year and fully funds or co-funds education and skills training for eligible adults aged 19 and over.

In 2024/25, as part of the AEB transition to the ASF, the department introduced five new funding rates, which has seen 78% of qualifications funded through the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

The department is investing in level 3 learning via the 'free courses for jobs' offer, which allows eligible learners to access a high value level 3 qualification for free. An additional funding uplift is paid by the department, at two different rates, for providers that offer a wide range of sector subjects.

The total ASF allocation for a provider in the Nuneaton constituency for the 2024/25 academic year is approximately £4.6 million. More information can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/funding-allocations-to-training-providers-2024-to-2025>.

Over £7.5 billion in 16 to 19 programme funding will be invested during the 2024/25 academic year as part of the department's drive for all young people to access high quality education and training that meets their needs and helps them to thrive. My right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced at Budget a further boost of £300 million in the 2025/26 financial year for further education (FE) to ensure young people are developing the skills they need to succeed and a further £300 million to support colleges to maintain, improve and ensure suitability of their estate.

Information on 16 to 19 funding allocations received by institutions in Nuneaton is available in the published allocations, which can be accessed here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/funding-education-for-16-to-19-year-olds#published-allocations>.

For the 2023/24 academic year, 16 to 19 funded institutions in the Nuneaton constituency were allocated £31.23 million in 16 to 19 funding. This includes high needs student funding, student support funding and funding for the FE teachers pension scheme employer contribution grant. For the 2024/25 academic year, they received £33.96 million. This is an increase of £2.73 million, or 8.7%.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO**■ Biofuels: Carbon Capture and Storage**

Wera Hobhouse: [\[14101\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what his Department's timetable is for making a decision on how much funding the Government will make available for bioenergy carbon capture and storage technology.

Sarah Jones:

Following the announcement in October 2024 of funding for the initial Track 1 cluster configurations, further funding decisions for continued CCUS deployment will be taken as part of the Spending Review concluding in late Spring 2025.

Wera Hobhouse: [\[14102\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an assessment of the (a) potential implications for his policies and (b) the Government's net zero strategy of discussions by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change on determining its methodology for calculating bioenergy with carbon capture and storage emissions including imported biomass.

Sarah Jones:

An assessment is made on the potential implications of any policy by the civil service and is provided to ministers to allow an informed decision to be made. The 2006 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories provide a methodology for the reporting of emissions from bioenergy with carbon capture and storage that the UK is intending to follow once the technology is operating at sufficient scale.

■ Energy Performance Certificates

David Simmonds: [\[14194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the new RdSAP10 Energy Performance Certificate methodology on EPC ratings.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government recognises EPCs as crucial for informing consumers about energy costs, emissions, and supporting Net Zero goals. An updated assessment methodology, RdSAP 10, will be introduced in early 2025. Developed with the EPC industry, this update aims to enhance the accuracy of energy performance evaluations by including detailed measurements like window sizes and battery storage. These changes ensure EPCs better reflect actual energy performance, aiding consumers in making informed decisions. The revised methodology will offer more reliable energy ratings and a clearer understanding of home efficiency.

■ Fossil Fuels: Advertising

Ian Byrne:

[\[14118\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his Department's policies of UN Secretary-General António Guterres's call for every country to ban advertising from fossil fuel companies, dated 5 June 2024.

Michael Shanks:

The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) is responsible for regulating advertising in the UK across traditional forms of media and takes environmental issues into account. The ASA operates independently of Government, and I would encourage the Hon. Member to reach out to the ASA to discuss this issue further.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Agriculture: Land Use

Sir Alec Shelbrooke:

[\[12061\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of solar farms on soil (a) carbon storage, (b) structure and (c) biodiversity.

Mary Creagh:

No assessment has been made of the potential impact of solar farms on soil.

When considering development proposals that affect agricultural land and soils, the Government encourages developers and local planning authorities to refer to relevant Government policies and legislation that aim to protect all soils by managing them in a sustainable way.

The previous Government did not commission research into this space, so it is currently unclear what impact solar panels may have on soil properties such as carbon storage, structure and biodiversity across England. However, a solar farm development near Kenilworth (Honiley Road solar farm) reports that it delivered 135% Biodiversity Net Increase.

■ Equipment: Waste Disposal

Tom Hayes:

[\[11729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to (a) help reduce the number of (i) appliances and (ii) electronics which are thrown away and (b) support local repair cafes.

Mary Creagh:

The Government is committed to reducing waste by moving to a circular economy and is developing a circular economy strategy. The approach reduces all forms of waste; moving materials and products up the waste hierarchy to reduce new inputs,

prolong lifetime functionality and support sustainable economic activity, social safeguarding, and environmental preservation. We have already taken steps to reduce the 5 million single use vapes discarded weekly by introducing our single use vapes ban, which will come into force in June 2025.

■ Fisheries

Steve Darling: [\[14402\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will ensure that all policies which potentially impact on fisheries are assessed by his Department in a holistic manner, considering their potential interactions with related policies, before implementation.

Daniel Zeichner:

Development of all policies within Defra, including on fisheries, is undertaken holistically. We work across the public sector, private sector and society to make policy that works for citizens, and to help the Government achieve its missions and priorities. This includes collaborating closely across policy areas in Defra (such as fisheries management plans, offshore wind and the Marine Protected Areas programme), as well as with different Government departments and levels of Government, to fully explore linkages with other areas of policy delivery by Defra and beyond.

■ Lead: Contamination

Sir Julian Smith: [\[13211\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate his department has made of the potential changes to the level of risk of lead contamination from flooding events due to climate change in areas downstream of historical lead mines.

Emma Hardy:

Environment Agency (EA) monitoring indicates that climate change could potentially increase the mass (kg/day) of metals washed into rivers from historic metal mines. Erosion of spoil heaps during storm events can increase the mobilisation of metals into rivers and re-suspend metal-rich sediments previously deposited in river channels.

For example, on average 127 tonnes of zinc and 40 tonnes of lead enters the Tyne estuary annually (all from abandoned metal mines); however, 50% of this zinc and 80% of this lead flows into the estuary during the highest 5% of river flows. However, while the mass of metals washed into rivers increases in storm events, the severity of water pollution (metal concentrations in mg/l) may decrease due to dilution.

In flood events these metals can be washed onto floodplains, causing land contamination. Climate change is expected to increase the risk of floodplains downstream from historic mining sites being contaminated by flooding.

Through the Water and Abandoned Metal Mines Programme - a partnership between Defra, the EA and the Coal Authority – the Government is taking action to develop

mine water treatment schemes and diffuse interventions to prevent metals from abandoned metal mines, including lead, from entering local river systems.

■ Recycling

Mr Peter Bedford:

[\[14892\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to publish guidance on the simpler recycling scheme for local authorities.

Mary Creagh:

The Government recently confirmed its commitment to delivering the Collection and Packaging Reforms to the announced timelines, including Simpler Recycling, subject to spending review outcomes. Ministers are reviewing the final detail of the Simpler Recycling policy; we hope to provide further certainty and clarity to stakeholders as soon as possible.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ British Indian Ocean Territory: Sovereignty

Priti Patel:

[\[14307\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what his planned timetable is for signing the agreement with Mauritius on sovereignty of the British Indian Ocean Territory.

Stephen Doughty:

The timetable for treaty signature has not yet been determined. Following Mauritian elections, UK officials are engaging with the new Mauritian administration on the details of the British Indian Ocean Territory / Chagos Archipelago agreement.

Priti Patel:

[\[14331\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what his planned timetable is to publish the details of the treaty with Mauritius on the future sovereignty of the British Indian Ocean Territory.

Stephen Doughty:

The timetable for treaty publication has not yet been determined. However following signature, the treaty will be laid before Parliament in the usual way, consistent with the Constitutional Reform and Governance (CraG) Act 2010.

■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Employers' Contributions

Priti Patel:

[\[14337\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer (a) prior to and (b) since 30 October 2024 on the resourcing impact for (i) his Department and (ii) non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department of changes to employer National Insurance contributions.

Catherine West:

The Foreign Secretary has not had any discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer prior to or since 30 October 2024 on the resourcing impact on the FCDO of changes to employer National Insurance contributions.

Priti Patel:[\[14338\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the RDEL allocation provided to his Department in the Autumn Budget 2024 includes resourcing provisions for the additional costs due to changes to employers National Insurance contributions.

Catherine West:

The RDEL allocation provided in the Autumn Budget 2024 does not include provision for the additional costs due to changes to employer National Insurance contributions. HM Treasury has subsequently informed the Department that the Government will provide support for additional employer NI costs to all departments and public sector employers and will set out allocations by department in due course.

■ **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Recruitment****Priti Patel:**[\[14339\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many staff were appointed to roles within his Department between 5 July and 5 November 2024, broken down by pay grade.

Catherine West:

Between 5 July 2024 and 31 October 2024, the following number of UK based members of staff joined the FCDO:

GRADE	NUMBER OF STAFF
AO	50-59
EO	70-79
HEO	120-139
SEO	30-39
G7	20-29
G6	10-19
SCS1	Fewer than 10
Grand Total	320-339

■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Staff

Priti Patel:

[\[14334\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many full-time equivalent employees are currently employed by (a) his Department and (b) non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department; and how many he expects to be employed next year.

Catherine West:

As of 30 September 2024 there were a) 8266 Headcount / 8131.58 full-time equivalent staff employed by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and b) 1217 Headcount / 1170.98 full-time equivalent staff employed by the non-departmental public bodies of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. I would expect the number of staff employed by both the FCDO and associated non-departmental public bodies to reduce next year in line with workforce savings targets.

Priti Patel:

[\[14335\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what estimate he has made of the total staffing costs for (a) his Department; and (b) non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department for (a) the current financial year and (b) the 2025-26 financial year.

Priti Patel:

[\[14336\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what estimate he has made of the employer National Insurance contribution costs for (a) his Department and (b) non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department (i) in direct staffing costs and (ii) on third party and contract spend for the (A) current and (B) 2025-26 financial year; and whether he has made provision for the impact of the additional costs announced in paragraph 2.40 of the Autumn Budget 2024.

Catherine West:

In 2024-25, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office estimates total staffing costs to be £975 million and employer national insurance (NI) costs to be £44 million. Budget allocation and workforce planning processes for 2025-26 are in progress but have not been finalised. The workforce budgets of non-departmental public bodies are not set by the Department and it does not hold that information. The Department has not estimated the NI costs of its suppliers. The impact of tax changes would be taken into account along with all other changes to their cost base in the usual way through contract negotiations.

■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Termination of Employment

Priti Patel:

[\[14340\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many staff have left his Department between 5 July and 5 November 2024, broken down by pay grade.

Catherine West:

Between 5 July 2024 and 31 October 2024, the following number of UK based members of staff left the FCDO:

GRADE	NUMBER OF STAFF
AO	30-39
EO	10-19
HEO	40-49
SEO	20-29
G7	40-49
G6	10-19
SCS1	10-19
SCS2	Fewer than 10
Grand Total	180-199

■ Hong Kong: Human Rights

Luke Taylor:

[\[14362\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with the Convenor of the Executive Council of Hong Kong on human rights violations in that region.

Catherine West:

I met Regina Ip on 31 October in London. Human rights were raised as part of the discussion. The UK will continue to speak often and candidly with Hong Kong authorities across both areas of contention as well as areas for cooperation. Engagement with representatives of Hong Kong and China is pragmatic and necessary to support UK interests.

■ Hong Kong: Travel

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[13836\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 30 October 2024 to Question 10496 on Hong Kong: Travel, what steps his Department is taking to (a) clarify and (b) mitigate risks of British-born children of naturalised British citizens of Chinese descent being subject to (i) PRC nationality laws and (ii) potential limitations on consular access.

Catherine West:

The FCDO provides consular assistance to British nationals abroad. In some cases, British Nationals of Hong Kong or Chinese descent may be considered Chinese by the Chinese authorities meaning the consular assistance we can provide may be limited. As per our nationality guidance, we advise seeking legal advice where appropriate for individual cases.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: Diagnosis****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[14699\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps he has taken to reduce the waiting time for ADHD assessments.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 21 November 2024]: It is the responsibility of integrated care boards to make appropriate provision to meet the health and care needs of their local population, including attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) assessments, in line with relevant National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines.

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

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

■ General Practitioners**Monica Harding:**[\[14857\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the average per-patient funding for GP practices was in (a) England and (b) NHS Surrey Heartlands in 2023-4.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 21 November 2024]: This data is published annually by NHS England in the NHS Payments to General Practice Report and will be available in due course.

■ General Practitioners: Closures and Mergers

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[14471\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has statutory powers to prevent the (a) merger and (b) closure of GP services.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 20 November 2024]: The Health and Care Act 2022 included new powers in the National Health Service Act 2006, giving my Rt. Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, increased oversight of, and the option for earlier involvement in reconfiguration of services within the NHS.

Where there are concerns about a proposal by an NHS commissioner for a reconfiguration of NHS services, either relating to the process that has been followed or where the decision is not in the best interests of the health service in the area, then the Secretary of State may intervene under new powers introduced on 31 January 2024. This may include where there are concerns about a commissioner's decision to merge or close a general practice (GP).

The closure of a GP surgery is an issue that is considered and decided upon by local commissioners following an application from a GP provider.

Practices close for a variety of reasons, including mergers or retirement, and so do not necessarily indicate a reduction in the quality of care. When a practice does close, patients are informed of the closure and advised to register at another local practice of their choice within their area.

Commissioners are accountable for ensuring that patients have access to a GP practice. In the event of a closure, commissioners will assess the need for a replacement provider before transferring patients to alternative practices when a GP surgery closes.

HOME OFFICE

■ Agriculture: Seasonal Workers

James MacCleary:

[\[14553\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has made an assessment of the potential impact of the UK leaving the EU on the number of seasonal agricultural workers in each of the countries of the UK.

Seema Malhotra:

The Government keeps the Seasonal Worker route under close ongoing review and is carefully considering the Migration Advisory Committee's review of the Seasonal Worker route and will announce a detailed response in due course.

The Home Office and the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) monitor the scheme closely to ensure they are operating in the best interests of the UK when it comes to future recruitment. This Government recognises

and values the important contribution workers from overseas make to our economy and public services throughout the UK. Legal migration must be controlled and managed through a fair system.

■ Asylum: Deportation

Max Wilkinson:

[\[14382\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will take steps to ensure that asylum seekers are not deported prior to a final judgement on their case.

Dame Angela Eagle:

Every asylum claim admitted to the UK asylum system is carefully considered on its individual merits by assessing all the evidence provided by the claimant against a background of published country information.

No one who is at risk of persecution or serious harm in their home country is expected to return there.

Refugee status is normally granted when someone has a well-founded fear of persecution under the Refugee Convention.

Those found not to need protection are refused. However, it is only when any appeal rights are exhausted that failed asylum seekers are expected to leave the UK.

A refusal of a protection or a human rights claim can, in some circumstances, be certified under Section 94 and Section 96 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002. This process removes the right of appeal against the decision.

Failed asylum seekers may be eligible for help to go home under the Voluntary Returns Service (VRS). Where a failed asylum seeker fails to leave voluntarily, we will seek to enforce their removal.

■ Asylum: Hotels

Esther McVey:

[\[14084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has undertaken background checks on the asylum seekers accommodated at the Cresta Court Hotel in Altrincham.

Esther McVey:

[\[14085\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the nationalities are of immigrants accommodated in the Cresta Court Hotel in Altrincham.

Dame Angela Eagle:

For the safety, security and wellbeing of staff and those being accommodated, the Home Office does not comment publicly on individual accommodation sites.

When a person claims asylum, the Home Office conducts mandatory identity and security checks. Biographic and biometric data are checked against relevant Home Office systems and police criminality databases including domestic and international data.

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

■ Immigration: Enforcement

Rupert Lowe:

[14400]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many enforcement visits have taken place in each local authority in each of the last ten years; and what the total cost to the public purse was of these visits.

Seema Malhotra:

Information about the number of Enforcement Visits conducted by Immigration Enforcement in each local authority in each of the past ten years is not available in our published data. Our published national data on enforcement visits from 2019 – April 2024 is available at the following link: [Statistics relating to Illegal Migration - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statistics-relating-to-illegal-migration).

We do not routinely publish the information you have requested regarding the total cost of enforcement visits over the past ten years, and could only obtain this information at a disproportionate cost.

■ Mistreatment of Detainees at Brook House Immigration Removal Centre Inquiry

Siân Berry:

[14272]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 22 October 2024 to Question 8868 on Mistreatment of Detainees at Brook House Immigration Removal Centre Inquiry, whether she plans to publish a response to each of the recommendations of the Brook House Inquiry report; and whether she has taken steps relating to the use of force against people in immigration detention pending her response to recommendations 14, 15, 16 and 17 of that report.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The abuse that took place at Brook House Immigration Removal Centre (IRC) in 2017 was unacceptable.

Whilst there are no plans to publish a response to each recommendation raised by the inquiry, positive progress continues to be made against the 30 accepted recommendations. The Government will continue to reflect and act on Inquiry recommendations.

Specifically on recommendations 14-17, on the use of force in IRCs, the Home Office communicated to all IRC and contracted service provider staff in December 2023 and May 2024, that techniques involving handcuffing behind backs whilst seated is not permitted. A new Detention Services Order in relation to use of force is being developed specifically for the immigration detention estate and will be published in Spring 2025.

■ Offenders: Deportation

Richard Tice:

[14210]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people that entered the UK illegally and were subsequently convicted of a criminal offense have been deported in each of the last three years; and what steps she is taking to expedite the deportation of foreign nationals with criminal records.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The information requested is not available from published statistics.

Any foreign national who is convicted of a crime in the UK and given a prison sentence is considered for deportation at the earliest opportunity. Where a person's criminality does not meet the threshold for deportation, consideration is given to administrative removal.

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

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

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

We have already begun delivering a major surge in immigration enforcement and returns activity to remove people with no right to be in the UK and ensure the rules are respected and enforced.

■ Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner: Fees and Charges

Olivia Blake:

[R] [14164]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department plans to (a) respond to and (b) implement the proposals set out in the consultation entitled Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner's fee structure, published on 14 March 2024.

Seema Malhotra:

The Home Office together with the Office of the Immigration Service Commissioner (OISC) ran the fees consultation for a period of 12 weeks, which closed on 5 June 2024. The consultation was designed to help best understand the impact of proposals to amend the structure of the fees charged by the OISC to its registered advisers, and to minimise the risks of any adverse impact.

The Government is committed to ensuring advice seekers receive the advice that they need, through an efficient and regulated immigration advice sector. We will consider next steps in this area in due course in line with that commitment.

■ Passports

Rupert Lowe: [\[14200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will list the number of passports issued in each of the last 10 years, broken down by (a) place of and (b) nationality at birth.

Seema Malhotra:

His Majesty's Passport Office does not hold data in a reportable format relating to an individual's place or country of birth, and this information could therefore only be provided at disproportionate cost.

■ Prostitution: Gower

Tonia Antoniazzi: [\[14075\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an estimate of the number of women who are being advertised for sexual exploitation on websites advertising prostitution in Gower.

Jess Phillips:

The trafficking of women and girls for sexual exploitation is a truly horrific crime. This Government has set out a mission to halve violence against women and girls in a decade, and we will use all the levers available to us to deliver this ambition.

We have not estimated the number of women being advertised on websites advertising prostitution in Gower, but the Government recognises that adult service websites are the most significant enabler of trafficking for sexual exploitation. Online platforms need to be responsible and accountable for content on their sites and take proactive steps to prevent their sites being used by criminals. The Online Safety Act 2023 sets out priority offences, including sexual exploitation and human trafficking offences, and sites, including adult service websites, will need to adopt measures and put in place systems and processes to identify, assess and address these offences based on a risk assessment.

In addition, the Government is working closely with law enforcement to tackle the drivers of trafficking for sexual exploitation, including through operational intensifications to target perpetrators.

The Government will continue to keep policies to tackle sexual exploitation under review.

■ Radicalism

Andrew Rosindell: [\[14019\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment her Department has made of the effectiveness of the Prevent programme.

Dan Jarvis:

The Independent Review of Prevent, published on 8 February 2023, was conducted by Sir William Shawcross. 33 of the 34 recommendations have now been implemented. This has included strengthening guidance and training, regionalising Prevent delivery, and improving case management. This includes introducing a new risk assessment tool for all referrals that will be evaluated in 2025.

The Home Office has commissioned an independent evaluation of Channel that will assess whether Channel is effective at reducing individuals' susceptibility to radicalisation. It will also explore how well Channel interventions are being delivered and how the programme could be improved. The evaluation is expected to report findings in 2025.

In addition, the Desistance and Disengagement Programme, which helps to manage the risk of individuals who have already been involved in terrorism or terrorism related activity, has been independently evaluated. Most recommendations from that evaluation have been implemented.

The Prevent Standards and Compliance Unit, which sits within the Commission for Countering Extremism, fulfils a crucial oversight function of Prevent, providing a route for the public and Prevent duty partners to register complaints or concerns, and ensuring Prevent is being delivered properly within the direction set by ministers.

Andrew Rosindell:[\[14020\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of people referred to the Prevent programme went on to commit acts of (a) terrorism and (b) violent crime in each of the last five years for which data is available.

Dan Jarvis:

The first priority of Government is to keep its citizens safe. Prevent is a vital part of that. We must try and divert people away from radicalisation and violent ideologies.

Between 2019 and 2024, there have sadly, been 4 instances where somebody who had previously been referred to Prevent for early intervention support went on to commit a terrorist attack. This is a very small, but tragic number compared to the 2,800 individuals that have been supported through the Channel multi-agency programme since 1 April 2019. We have looked very closely at each of these 4 cases to identify lessons and then to deliver improvements to ensure that the Prevent programme does all it can to identify and support those susceptible to radicalisation.

The Home Office does not hold a comprehensive dataset on those individuals that have been referred into Prevent and have subsequently committed a violent crime. We are working with regional police forces and CT Police to strengthen this dataset and learn from any such incidents.

■ Undocumented Migrants

Richard Tice: [\[14213\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her current budget is for (a) processing illegal immigration cases, (b) managing legal appeals to such cases and (c) deportation operations; and what steps she is taking to increase efficiency in the (i) allocation and (ii) use of this funding.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Home Office publishes relevant information regarding departmental expenditure on the asylum and immigration systems on a regular basis in its annual reports, the most recent editions of which can be found at the following link: [Home Office Annual Report and Accounts 2023 to 2024 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk).

Richard Tice: [\[14214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of illegal immigration on (a) local law enforcement and (b) levels of police (i) funding and (ii) manpower required to tackle illegal entry-related cases.

Dame Diana Johnson:

This Government recognises that irregular migration is too high and that is why we are committed to restoring order to the system so that it is faster, fairer, and the rules are properly enforced.

Other Border Security partners, including Border Force, Immigration Enforcement and the National Crime Agency, lead on tackling illegal migration. As such, no specific assessment is made regarding the impact illegal migration has on law enforcement.

■ Undocumented Migrants: English Channel

Rupert Lowe: [\[14137\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 12 November 2024 to Question 12574 on Undocumented Migrants: English Channel, how many irregular migrants aged (a) 14, (b) 15, (c) 16, (d) 17, (e) 18 and (f) 19 crossed the Channel in each year since 2018.

Rupert Lowe: [\[14138\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 12 November 2024 to Question 12491 on Crime: Undocumented Migrants, if she will publish the statistics that her Department holds on that matter.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Home Office does not publish data on individual ages of small boat arrivals to the UK.

Official statistics published by the Home Office are kept under review in line with the code of practice for statistics, taking into account a number of factors including user needs, the resources required to compile the statistics, as well as quality and

availability of data. These reviews allow us to balance the production of our regular statistics whilst developing new statistics for future release.

■ Undocumented Migrants: Young People

Rupert Lowe: [\[14372\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many (a) 17 and (b) 18 year old irregular migrants there are in each local authority area.

Rupert Lowe: [\[14373\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many 17 year old irregular migrants there are in schools, broken down by local authority.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Home Office publishes data on irregular arrivals in the ['Irregular migration to the UK release'](#). Data on irregular arrivals broken down by age group are published in table Irr_D01 of the ['Irregular migration detailed datasets'](#).

The Home Office does not publish data on individual ages of irregular arrivals to the UK, or a breakdown of irregular migrants by local authority, or whether they attend a school.

Data on asylum seekers in receipt of support by local authority is published in table Asy_D11 of the ['Asylum seekers in receipt of support by local authority detailed datasets'](#) as part of the ['Immigration system statistics quarterly release'](#). Please note that not all asylum seekers arrived via irregular means and that not all irregular migrants are asylum seekers in receipt of support.

Information on how to use the dataset can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbooks. The latest data refers to arrivals up to and people supported as on 30 June 2024.

■ Visas

Richard Tice: [\[14212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent estimate she has made of the number of people in the UK that have overstayed their visas; if she will make an estimate of the percentage of people in the UK that have overstayed their visas that have been (a) located and (b) deported in the last year; and what further steps she plans to take to (i) track and (ii) enforce compliance among visa holders.

Dame Angela Eagle:

As set out in legislation, an individual is liable to removal from the UK if "the person requires leave to enter or remain in the United Kingdom but does not have it". The Home Office does not routinely categorise immigration offenders by the manner in which they became irregular, and to do so could only be achieved at disproportionate cost.

We have already begun delivering a major surge in immigration enforcement and returns activity to remove people with no right to be in the UK and ensure the rules are respected and enforced, with 9,400 people returned from 5 July to 28 October 2024.

Further data on returns activity is published quarterly and can be found on gov.uk at [Immigration system statistics quarterly release - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-quarterly-release).

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Community Relations

Neil Duncan-Jordan: [\[14410\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking with Cabinet colleagues to help strengthen communities after the riots in August 2024.

Alex Norris:

The Government has made £15 million available to the places most severely affected by disorder through the Community Recovery Fund to support the immediate recovery. Officials from my department have also carried out an extensive engagement process with these places to understand and address the underlying causes of the unrest.

The disorder that affected communities across the UK following the Southport tragedy this summer has made clear that a new approach to community cohesion is urgently needed. This is a priority for the Government and I have stood up a cross-government Communities & Recovery Steering Group to oversee this work.

We are listening to communities across the country to understand the challenges they face and this will inform how this government works to empower communities and build greater cohesion.

■ Council Tax: Greater London

David Simmonds: [\[14183\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the Greater London Authority precept on Band D council tax, (a) including and (b) excluding the Transport for London element, was in each year since 2016-17; and how much was allocated in monetary terms to Transport for London funding in each year.

Jim McMahon:

The average Band D council tax set by the Greater London Authority over time can be found at the following link:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/662a4c28690acb1c0ba7e617/Live_Table - Band D 2024-25 revised ods](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/662a4c28690acb1c0ba7e617/Live_Table_-_Band_D_2024-25_revised ods).

There is no separate council tax precept for Transport for London. The Government does not collect information on how much council tax was allocated by Greater London Authority to Transport for London.

David Simmonds:

[\[14185\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 8 November 2024 to Question 11925 on Council tax: Greater London, what are the assumed council tax requirement excluding parish precepts figures for the local government core spending power figures of (a) £64,786 million in 2024-25 and (b) £68,459 million in 2025-26.

David Simmonds:

[\[14191\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what methodology was used to calculate the council tax requirement, excluding parish precepts, in (a) Core spending power table: final local government finance settlement 2024 to 2025, published on 5 February 2024, and (b) Council Tax levels set by local authorities in England 2024 to 2025, published on 8 May 2024.

Jim McMahon:

The Government has confirmed that it will not increase council tax referendum principles above the current 3% core council tax principle and the 2% principle for the adult social care precept, in line with the OBR forecasting. This is a continuation of the previous government's policy, and informs the Core Spending Power figures for both 2024-25 and 2025-26. Further details will be set out at the Local Government Finance settlement.

The Government has published an explanatory note on the methodology used to calculate Core Spending Power for the 2024-25 Local Government Finance Settlement. The note is available on the Gov.UK website [here](#).

■ Domestic Abuse

David Smith:

[\[14423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she is taking steps to ensure her Department's policies are trauma-informed; and what guidance her Department issues women fleeing domestic abuse.

Rushanara Ali:

This Government is committed to tackling the horrendous crime of domestic abuse, in line with our manifesto commitment to halve violence against women and girls within a decade, with improved support for victims.

Since 2021, councils in England have a duty to ensure that all victims, including their children, have access to support within safe accommodation when they need it.

This is a locally led duty. Each council must work closely with their Local Partnership Board to assess the needs of victims locally and commission the right safe accommodation support services needed to meet the identified need. MHCLG statutory guidance makes clear that all support provided under the duty should meet

appropriate quality standards, such as the MHCLG Quality Standards, which state that victims should be assessed and offered trauma informed services on the basis of their individual need for safety and support.

MHCLG also leads the cross-government Changing Futures programme which works with 15 local partnerships in England to improve outcomes for people facing multiple disadvantages, including domestic abuse, using trauma informed approaches.

Government guidance is available [here](#) on help available to domestic abuse victims.

■ Housing: Natural Gas

David Simmonds: [\[14184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what her Department's policy is on gas boilers being (a) installed in new homes and (b) re-installed or replaced in existing homes.

Alex Norris:

Future standards next year will set our new homes and buildings on a path that moves away from relying on volatile fossil fuels and ensures they are fit for a net zero future. These homes will be future proofed with low carbon heating and high levels of energy efficiency. No further energy efficiency retrofit work will be necessary to enable them to become zero-carbon over time as the electricity grid continues to decarbonise.

For existing homes, the Government's position is not to force anyone to rip out a working boiler and will incentivise moves to cleaner, affordable heating. The Government has started delivery of the Warm Homes Plan which will support investment in heat pumps and other home improvements to cut bills. More detail will be set out in due course.

■ Housing: Undocumented Migrants

Richard Tice: [\[14211\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an estimate of the annual cost of providing (a) housing and (b) welfare support for people residing in the UK illegally; and what steps she is taking to reduce these costs.

Rushanara Ali:

The department has made no such estimate. Persons residing in the UK illegally who have no recourse to public funds are not eligible for an allocation of social housing or statutory homelessness assistance.

More broadly, the Home Office is responsible for tackling illegal immigration.

■ Levelling Up Fund

Dame Caroline Dinéage: [\[14285\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions her Department has had with stakeholders on levelling up funding decisions

for previously announced (a) culture and (b) regeneration projects, in the context of the Autumn Budget 2024.

Dame Caroline Dinenge:

[\[14286\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of changes in the Autumn Budget 2024 to the level of funding for cultural regeneration through levelling up projects on (a) local economic regeneration and (b) the maintenance of cultural assets.

Alex Norris:

The Autumn Budget 2024 confirmed that the government is minded to cancel unfunded Levelling Up Culture and Capital Projects, and the West Midlands culture and inward investment funding, that were announced at Spring Budget 2024, but will consult with potential funding recipients before making a final decision. This consultation is now underway.

Potential recipients have been given the opportunity until mid-December to set out the financial, strategic and community impacts which withdrawing this funding would have. Ministers will then take these into consideration and will confirm the outcome of this process as soon as possible.

■ Service Charges

Neil Duncan-Jordan:

[\[14435\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will bring forward legislative proposals to cap service charge rises annually at the rate of CPI inflation.

Neil Duncan-Jordan:

[\[14436\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will bring forward legislative proposals to extend to ten years the time limits for tenants and residents to request invoices and receipts in relation to service charges.

Neil Duncan-Jordan:

[\[14437\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will bring forward legislative proposals to require (a) all service charge accounts to be audited every year by independent accountants and (b) that the cost of this audit cannot be passed onto residents through service charges.

Matthew Pennycook:

I refer my Hon Friend to the answer I gave to Question [UIN 7465](#) on 15 October 2024.

■ Social Rented Housing: Fire Prevention

Siân Berry:

[\[14274\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the oral contribution of 4 September 2024 by the Prime Minister, Official

Report, column 326, if she will take steps to require housing associations to publish fire risk assessments for their properties.

Alex Norris:

The Building Safety Act 2022 and associated regulations set out requirements for information that must be provided to residents in Higher-Risk Buildings - buildings which contain at least two residential units and are at least 18 metres in height, or have at least seven stories. Whilst not published, the Principal Accountable Person for these buildings must provide information to residents that will enable them to understand the safety of their building, including information on what they can do to make the building safer. This information includes the residents engagement plan, a summary of the safety case report, and a summary of the fire risk assessment for the building.

The government has also committed to introducing new access to information requirements for housing associations so tenants can access the information they need about the management of their homes, including on matters relating to safety, to hold their landlords to account. Further details on the requirements will be set out in due course.

■ **West Midlands Pension Fund**

Max Wilkinson:

[\[14380\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she has had recent discussions with representatives of the West Midlands Pension Fund on (a) delays in payments and (b) planned resolutions.

Jim McMahon:

Members of the local government pension scheme should be able to expect that their pensions are paid in a timely manner. I am aware of some delays to the pension payments at the West Midlands Pension Fund, which is responsible for the administration of the scheme in the area. I have written to the Fund and met with them to ask for a thorough explanation, and to understand the steps are being taken to resolve the unacceptable delays. We will continue to engage with the Fund as they work to improve the service to Members.

JUSTICE

■ **Gender Based Violence**

Chris Vince:

[\[14425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps she is taking to ensure that victims of (a) violence against women and girls and (b) rape (i) receive adequate access to justice and (ii) do not have long waits for court dates.

Alex Davies-Jones:

The Government was elected with a landmark mission to halve violence against women and girls (VAWG) within a decade. Timely and effective justice are central to this mission and to increasing victim confidence in the justice system.

We have announced that we will be piloting Domestic Abuse Protection Orders from November, and in the family court we will further expand the Pathfinder courts model and ensure that children and families are better supported with access to domestic abuse specialists. We have also committed to banning the creation of sexually explicit deepfakes, as well as strengthening the law to help the police better respond to the crime of spiking. These are just some of the early steps we are taking to ensure more victims see justice for these crimes. I am also working closely with my cross-government colleagues to ensure every department is focused on tackling VAWG.

For victims of rape, we have committed to fast-track rape cases through the criminal justice system, driving down waiting times for this abhorrent offence. In addition, we have announced that we plan to roll out free, independent legal advocates for victims of adult rape, ensuring that they have support to enforce their legal rights, for example in relation to use of their personal records during an investigation or in court.

■ Marriage: Ceremonies**Freddie van Mierlo:**[\[14161\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of enabling (a) non-religious belief organisations and (b) Humanists to conduct legally binding weddings as religious organisations.

Alex Davies-Jones:

We are aware that non-religious belief organisations, such as humanists, have long been campaigning to conduct legally binding weddings. Given marriage is such a valued part of our society, I hope you will understand that as a new Government we will need time to properly consider our marriage law, including the Law Commission's 2022 wedding report, before publicly setting out our position.

■ Prison and Probation Service: Employers' Contributions**Liz Saville Roberts:**[\[14316\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of proposed changes to employer national insurance contributions on the financial sustainability of the prison and probation service.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The settlement agreed for Ministry of Justice through Phase 1 of the Spending Review provides funding of £13.8 billion in 2025-26. The settlement is an increase of £1.3 billion compared to 2023-24 and ensures an above inflation pay rise for prison and probation staff, helping with recruitment and retention, whilst meeting demand increases across prisons, courts and probation.

The impact of the rise in employer National Insurance Contribution for 2025/26 on public sector organisations is being met by public funds, independently of the investment to be allocated to HM Prison and Probation Service by the Ministry of Justice.

■ Prisoners' Release: Rehabilitation

James McMurdock: [\[14271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of work to reintegrate prisoners released via the early release scheme.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The government inherited a prisons system in crisis and was forced to change the release point for standard determinate sentences in order to avert disaster and total gridlock of the criminal justice system.

Once released, offenders are subject to the same set of strict licence conditions that would apply had they been released at a 50% automatic release point, and are liable to recall to prison if they do not comply with these conditions or are judged by probation practitioners to be a risk to public safety.

There is robust and varied support available informed by an assessment of individual needs, to ensure effective resettlement into the community. This includes Prison Employment Leads, Employment Hubs, ID and Banking Administrators and Employment Advisory Boards in every resettlement prison.

■ Reparation by Offenders

Freddie van Mierlo: [\[14862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of the implementation of restorative justice in the criminal justice system.

Alex Davies-Jones:

This Government supports the use of restorative justice, which is why, under the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime ('the Victims' Code'), all adult victims must be told about the option of restorative justice and how to access it. We also provide Police and Crime Commissioners with grant funding for victim support services, including restorative justice services. They are best placed to assess local need and commission services based on the needs of the population in the local area. Restorative justice can also be used as part of out of court resolutions, depending on the circumstances of the case.

We know that restorative justice can improve victim satisfaction and reduce reoffending when delivered in the right circumstances. This not only benefits the victims and the offender but also their community.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY**■ Broadband: Rural Areas****Sir Geoffrey Cox:**[\[14016\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether it is his Department's policy that properties in hard-to-reach hamlets in rural areas (a) must receive gigabit-capable broadband or (b) can receive slower-speed broadband to ensure connectivity.

Chris Bryant:

Project Gigabit is delivering gigabit-capable broadband to UK premises that are not included in suppliers' commercial plans. Our goal is for nationwide gigabit coverage by 2030, ensuring at least 99% of UK premises can access a gigabit-capable connection.

Although the vast majority of premises will receive a gigabit capable broadband connection through commercial activity or Project Gigabit, it will be prohibitively expensive to provide a gigabit capable fibre connection to a very small proportion of premises. These very hard to reach premises may require additional government intervention by alternative means to help provide them with ultrafast connections.

Rachel Gilmour:[\[14228\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he plans to take to support rural households in Tiverton and Minehead constituency with gaining broadband connections, in the context of (a) Connecting Devon and Somerset and (b) Airband deciding to scale back Airband's contract agreements to deliver full fibre to properties in the region.

Chris Bryant:

We are considering how Project Gigabit can support the rollout of fast, reliable broadband to premises that have been descoped from Airband's contracts with Connecting Devon and Somerset. This may include bringing more premises into the scope of Project Gigabit contracts in the region or supporting suppliers to deliver more projects through the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme. In some cases, premises that were set to be connected by Airband have since been included in suppliers' commercial plans, so will no longer require public subsidy to receive access to a gigabit-capable broadband connection.

■ 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.

■ **WiFi: Rural Areas****Stuart Anderson:**[\[14319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he is taking to reduce the number of rural areas with no wifi access.

Chris Bryant:

Presuming that the Member is referring to broadband access via Wi-Fi in the home or premises, rather than public Wi-Fi, Project Gigabit is delivering gigabit-capable broadband (accessible to consumers as Wi-Fi) to UK premises, with the goal for nationwide gigabit coverage by 2030, ensuring at least 99% of UK premises can access a gigabit-capable connection. For parts of the UK where this is not possible, the government is considering alternative ways to improve connectivity. These may include wireless or satellite provision.

Premises unable to access a decent broadband connection, may be able to get an improved connection through the broadband Universal Service Obligation (USO), which provides a right to request a decent broadband service of at least 10 Mbps download and 1 Mbps upload speed.

TRANSPORT■ **Driving Licences: Applications****Rupert Lowe:**[\[14198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will provide a breakdown by place of birth of all new driving licence applications in each of the last 10 years.

Lilian Greenwood:

The information requested can only be provided at disproportionate cost as a scan of the DVLA's driving licence database and subsequent manual scrutiny and organisation of the data would be necessary to obtain the information requested.

■ Motor Vehicles: Crime

Clive Jones:

[\[14189\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to tackle (a) fraudulent V62 applications and (b) car cloning.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) has robust measures in place to help prevent fraudulent V62 applications being processed. When a V62 application is received for a vehicle for which there is already a registered keeper on record, the DVLA will write to the current keeper to check if they still have the vehicle. If the registered keeper confirms that they are still in possession of the vehicle, the V62 application will not be processed, no new vehicle registration certificate will be issued and further investigations will be made.

The law requires that anyone who supplies number plates for road use in the UK must be registered with the DVLA. It is a legal requirement for suppliers to carry out checks to ensure that number plates are only sold to those who can prove they are entitled to the registration number. Number plate suppliers must also keep records of the plates they have supplied.

The DVLA is currently working with the National Police Chiefs' Council and other government departments on ways to improve the identification and enforcement of number plate crime.

■ Railways: North East

David Smith:

[\[14150\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of the public ownership of railways for the North East.

Mike Kane:

Public ownership will end the failed franchising system, allowing operators to serve the interests of passengers and taxpayers in the North-East and across the country, rather than private operators and their shareholders. Public ownership will mean all parts of the railway can pull together for the benefit of passengers and bringing passenger services into public ownership is the first step in the Government's wider programme of reform. Public ownership will also save the taxpayer up to an estimated £150 million a year in fees that are currently paid out to private-sector operators.

■ Roads: Havering

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[14928\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what funding her Department is allocating to Havering Council to tackle potholes in the next financial year.

Lilian Greenwood:

This Government is committed to tackling the poor state of our roads and has pledged to help local authorities to fix our pothole-ridden road networks. As part of this, it will help enable local highway authorities in England to fix up to a million more potholes a year.

At Budget 2024, the Chancellor announced an extra £500 million for local highway maintenance for the 2025/26 financial year, an increase of nearly 50% compared to the current financial year. The Government will confirm 2025/26 funding allocations to local highway authorities in due course.

TREASURY**■ Agriculture: Inheritance Tax****John Glen:****[14052]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make it her policy to publish an impact assessment which has been assessed by the Regulatory Policy Committee on the potential impact of the changes to agricultural and business property relief announced in the Autumn Budget 2024.

James Murray:

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

www.gov.uk/government/publications/agricultural-property-relief-and-business-property-relief-reforms, and further explanatory information at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/what-are-the-changes-to-agricultural-property-relief>.

It has not been successive governments' policy since 2010 for tax policy changes to be assessed by the Regulatory Policy Committee. In accordance with standard practice, a tax information and impact note will be published alongside the draft legislation before the relevant Finance Bill.

John Glen:**[14300]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 2.51 of the Autumn Budget 2024, HC295, whether an (a) equality impact assessment, (b) family test assessment, (c) regulatory impact assessment, (d) rural impact assessment, and (e) environmental principles assessment were produced for the changes to Agricultural Property Relief on family farms.

James Murray:

The government publishes tax information and impact notes (TIINs) for tax policy changes when the policy design is final or near final.

TIINS for tax measures with legislation published at Autumn Budget 2024 have been published and can be found here: [Tax information and impact notes - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/what-are-the-changes-to-agricultural-property-relief).

TIINS for other announcements made at Autumn Budget 2024 will be published at the appropriate time when the policy design is final or near final.

This has been successive Government's policy since the introduction of TIINS in 2011.

■ Budget October 2024

John Glen: [\[14126\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will place in the House of Commons Library a copy of the equality impact assessments for each of the tax measures in the Autumn Budget 2024.

Darren Jones:

The Treasury carefully considers the impact of its decisions on those sharing protected characteristics in line with both legal obligations and with our strong commitment to promoting fairness.

In the interests of transparency HM Treasury and HMRC already publish summaries of equality impacts for tax measures being legislated for in the Finance Bill in tax information and impact notes (TIINs).

These can be found under the Autumn Budget 2024 subheading here: [Tax information and impact notes - GOV.UK](#).

John Glen: [\[14294\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what her planned timetable is for publishing tax information and impact notes for tax measures announced in the Autumn Budget 2024.

James Murray:

The government publishes tax information and impact notes (TIINs) for tax policy changes when the policy design is final or near final.

TIINS for tax measures with legislation published at Autumn Budget 2024 have been published and can be found here: [Tax information and impact notes - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

TIINS for other announcements made at Autumn Budget 2024 will be published at the appropriate time when the policy design is final or near final.

This has been successive Government's policy since the introduction of TIINS in 2011.

■ Business Rates

John Glen: [\[14297\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what is the latest estimate by HM Treasury of the total revenue from business rates in England in each year from 2023-24 for which projections are available.

James Murray:

The Office for Budget's Responsibility's (OBR) October 2024 Economic and Fiscal Outlook includes forecasts for UK business rates receipts. This is available online: https://obr.uk/docs/dlm_uploads/OBR_Economic_and_fiscal_outlook_Oct_2024.pdf.

Additionally, the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) publish non-domestic ratings receipts data and forecasts for the financial year ahead in England. Local authorities reported that the non-domestic rates income for 2023-24 was £25.1 billion. This is the amount that authorities collected after all reliefs, accounting adjustments and sums retained outside the rates retention scheme are taken into consideration. This is available online:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-non-domestic-rates-collected-by-councils-in-england-2023-to-2024/national-non-domestic-rates-collected-by-local-authorities-in-england-2023-to-2024>.

For 2024-25, local authorities estimate the non-domestic rating income is forecast to be £26.3 billion: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-non-domestic-rates-collected-by-councils-in-england-forecast-2024-to-2025/national-non-domestic-rates-collected-by-councils-in-england-forecast-for-2024-to-2025>

At the Autumn Budget, the government announced business rates policy for the 2025-26 period. The small business multiplier has been frozen at 49.9p and the standard multiplier has been uprated by CPI inflation from 54.6p to 55.5p. The Government also announced 40 per cent relief to Retail, Hospitality and Leisure (RHL) properties up to a cash cap of £110,000 per business. This package is worth more than £1.6 billion in 2025-26. Projections for non-domestic rates income for this period will be published subsequently by MHCLG. Business rates policy for 2026-27 will be announced at Autumn Budget 2025.

John Glen:**[14301]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she plans to replace the business rates system.

James Murray:

Over this Parliament, we will create a fairer business rates system that protects the high street, supports investment, and is fit for the 21st century.

Fulfilling all our manifesto objectives on business rates is a multi-year process. The 2024 Autumn Budget began that work of levelling the playing field for high streets by announcing permanently lower business tax rates for RHL properties, including those on the high street, with rateable values below £500,000.

The Discussion Paper published at Budget, Transforming Business Rates, sets out the Government's areas of focus for broader reforms to the system and invites stakeholders to have a say in wider reforms.

■ Business Rates and Council Tax: Valuation

David Simmonds:

[\[14181\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the Valuation Office Agency's NextGen Rating (NGR) programme will include (a) business rate and (b) council tax valuations.

James Murray:

The Valuation Office Agency's NextGen Rating Programme includes the upgrade of its internal operational technology for business rates valuations and the reforms legislated for in the Non-Domestic Rating Act 2023. It does not cover council tax valuations.

■ Business Rates: Tax Yields

David Simmonds:

[\[14179\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 6 November 2024 to Questions 11930 and 11931 on Business Rates: Tax Yields, whether the real terms monetary value of the tax reduction from the new Retail, Hospitality and Leisure multiplier from the 2026-27 financial year is intended to be the same as the real terms monetary value of the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure rate relief provided to qualifying hereditaments in the 2024-25 financial year.

James Murray:

The existing retail, hospitality, and leisure (RHL) relief has been repeatedly extended year-by-year as a temporary stopgap measure. The Government recognises that this creates cliff-edges and uncertainty for businesses, as well as significant fiscal pressure.

That is why, from 2026-27 the Government intends to introduce permanently lower tax rates for RHL properties, including those on the high street. There will be two lower RHL multipliers, with the lowest rates paid on smaller RHL properties with a rateable value under £51,000.

This permanent tax cut for RHL properties must be sustainably funded, and so the Government intends to apply a higher rate from 2026-27 on the most valuable properties - those with a Rateable Value of £500,000 and above. These represent less than one per cent of all properties, but include the majority of large distribution warehouses, including those used by online giants.

The exact rates for all new business rate multipliers will not be set until Budget 2025 so that the Government can take into account the revaluation outcomes as well as the economic and fiscal context.

However, the Government recognise that RHL businesses will need support during the interim period for 2025-26, and so we are providing 40 per cent relief to RHL properties up to a cash cap of £110,000 per business. Alongside freezing the small business multiplier, this is a support package worth more than £1.6 billion in 2025-26.

■ Civil Servants**John Glen:** [\[14295\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 1 November 2024 to Question 10443 on Civil Servants, what data her Department holds on the estimated financial impact of previously planned reductions in the size of the civil service in (a) 2024-25, (b) 2025-26 and (c) 2026-27.

Darren Jones:

In a public statement on 2 October 2023, the previous Chancellor announced a cap on civil service numbers. This statement includes data on the estimated financial impacts of this policy for the remainder of the SR21 Spending Review period, ending in March 2025. It can be accessed [online](#).

This government lifted the headcount cap announced by the previous administration in July. At Autumn Budget, the government committed to developing a strategic plan for a more efficient and effective civil service through phase two of the multi-year spending review.

■ Civil Servants: Recruitment**John Glen:** [\[14088\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answers of 1 November 2024 to Question 10988 on Treasury: recruitment, of 14 October 2024 to Question 6117 on Department for Transport: Civil Servants and of 4 October 2024 to Question 2937 on Department of Health and Social Care: Civil Servants, how many of the civil servants appointed under exception 1 worked in their previous role for (a) the Labour Party, (b) Labour Together and (c) a Labour Parliamentarian.

Darren Jones:

As is the case here, where the number of individuals is fewer than 5, we consider that to provide an exact figure would constitute the disclosure of personal data.

■ Diego Garcia: Military Bases**Priti Patel:** [\[14333\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on the cost of the proposed lease of the military base at Diego Garcia following the UK and Mauritius joint statement, published on 3 October 2024; and what provisions she has made in the Budget and Spending Review for these costs.

Darren Jones:

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury has engaged in discussions and reached an agreement with Cabinet colleagues on the financial elements of the proposed lease of the military base on Diego Garcia, as part of the UK-Mauritius agreement announced on 3 October 2024.

The treaty is still being finalised and will require ratification before coming into force. No payments will be made until the treaty is legally binding.

This agreement secures the future of Diego Garcia as a vital part of the UK's global defence network, reinforcing regional and global security. It also supports a new era of economic partnership with Mauritius and demonstrates the UK's commitment to the welfare of Chagossian communities. The financial package includes an annual payment, an economic partnership programme, and a Trust Fund to benefit Chagossians.

As is standard practice, the UK does not disclose the specific costs of payments for military bases to ensure their secure operation. Any financial obligations arising from this agreement will be managed responsibly within the government's fiscal framework.

■ Digital Technology: Taxation

Tristan Osborne:

[14133]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to HMRC's policy paper on making tax digital, updated on 19 December 2022, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a digital tax system for managing duty on vaping.

James Murray:

The government is committed to modernising tax administration to enhance efficiency and compliance.

HMRC operates on a 'digital by default' basis and will look to mandate digital channels by which all businesses within the scope of the Vaping Products Duty (VPD) must register, report and pay online, with exceptions only for those who are digitally excluded by virtue of protected characteristics. This was set out in VPD consultation response document:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/672263b43ce5634f5f6ef582/Vaping_Products_Duty_consultation_response.pdf

■ Employers' Contributions

John Glen:

[14053]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make it her policy to publish an impact assessment which has been assessed by the Regulatory Policy Committee on the potential impact of the changes to National Insurance contributions announced in the Autumn Budget 2024 on employers.

James Murray:

A Tax Information and Impact Note that covers the employer NICs changes was published by HMRC on 13 November.

It has not been successive Government's policy since 2010 for tax policy changes to be assessed by the Regulatory Policy Committee.

■ Employers' Contributions: Business

Susan Murray:

[\[14219\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she has made a comparative assessment of the potential impact of the proposed increase in employers National Insurance contributions on (a) small and medium businesses and (b) large businesses.

James Murray:

A Tax Information and Impact Note that covers the employer NICs changes was published by HMRC on 13 November

The government has protected the smallest businesses from the impact of the increase to employers' National Insurance by increasing the Employment Allowance from £5,000 to £10,500, which means that 865,000 employers will pay no employer NICs at all next year.

More than half of employers see no change or gain overall from this package and eligible employers will be able to employ up to four full-time workers on the National Living Wage and pay no employer NICs.

■ Employers' Contributions: Civil Society

Kim Johnson:

[\[14103\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of changes to employer National Insurance contribution rates on third sector organisations; and whether she plans to provide further funding to support charities with these costs.

James Murray:

The Government recognises the important role charities play in our society, and has made it a priority to reset the relationship with civil society and build a new partnership to harness their full potential by developing a Civil Society Covenant recognising the sector as a trusted and independent partner. Within the tax system, we provide support to charities through a range of reliefs and exemptions, including reliefs for charitable giving. The tax reliefs available to charities are a vital element in supporting charitable causes across the UK, with more than £6 billion in charitable reliefs provided to charities, CASCs and their donors in 2023 to 2024.

To repair the public finances and help raise the revenue required to increase funding for public services, the government has taken the difficult decision to increase employer National Insurance.

The Government recognises the need to protect the smallest businesses and charities, which is why we have more than doubled the Employment Allowance to £10,500, meaning more than half of employers with NICs liabilities either gain or see no change next year. Charities will still be able to claim employer NICs reliefs including those for under 21s and under 25 apprentices, where eligible.

The Government has committed to provide support for departments and other public sector employers for additional Employer NICs costs only. This is the usual approach

the Government takes to supporting the public sector with additional Employer NICs costs, as was the case with the previous Government's Health and Social Care Levy.

■ Employers' Contributions: Social Services

Stuart Anderson:

[\[14071\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of changes to employer National Insurance contribution rates on social care providers in South Shropshire constituency; and whether she plans to provide additional funding to help them with these costs.

James Murray:

The Budget will provide support for government departments and other public sector employers for additional Employer NICs costs. Private sector firms or charities, including social care providers, that are contracted by central or local Government will not be exempt from these changes.

This is consistent with the approach to previous Employer NICs changes, as was the case with the previous Government's Health and Social Care Levy.

The Government is supporting local authority services through a real terms increase in core local government spending power of around 3.2%, including at least £600 million of new grant funding to support social care.

■ Fertilisers: Carbon Emissions

Tim Farron:

[\[14287\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 5.81 of the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 October, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the carbon border adjustment mechanism on the cost of imported fertiliser.

Tim Farron:

[\[14288\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 5.81 of the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 October, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the carbon border adjustment mechanism on the fertiliser supply chain.

Tim Farron:

[\[14289\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 5.81 of the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 October, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the carbon border adjustment mechanism on food prices.

Tim Farron:

[\[14290\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 5.81 of the Autumn Budget 2024, HC295, what discussions she has had with stakeholders in the farming sector on the introduction of a carbon border adjustment mechanism.

Tim Farron:

[\[14291\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 5.81 of the Autumn Budget 2024, HC295, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of a phased introduction of the carbon border adjustment mechanism on the cost of imported fertiliser.

James Murray:

The government will introduce the UK Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) on 1 January 2027, as first announced in December 2023.

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.

UK manufacturers already face a carbon price via the UK Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS). The UK CBAM rate that is charged on imports will reflect the final carbon price paid by domestic industries after support mechanisms (such as free allowances within the UK ETS) have been taken into account. As a result, we expect initial liabilities arising from the UK CBAM to be modest whilst encouraging the supply and use of fertiliser with lower levels of embodied carbon than would otherwise have been the case.

The Government expects that there will be no material impact on UK food prices, as a result of the UK CBAM.

Over the course of the last year, His Majesty's Treasury and His Majesty's Revenue and Customs have undertaken significant and comprehensive engagement on the design and implementation of the UK CBAM. This includes discussions with stakeholders in the farming and fertiliser sectors.

The Government Response to the recent consultation on the introduction of a UK CBAM, including a summary of responses, can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-the-introduction-of-a-uk-carbon-border-adjustment-mechanism>

■ High Income Child Benefit Tax Charge

John Glen:

[\[14054\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 5.146 of the Autumn Budget 2024, HC 295, what estimate her Department has made of the potential savings to the public purse for changes to the High Income Child Benefit Charge in each of the next five financial years.

Darren Jones:

It is estimated that reforming the High Income Child Benefit Charge to be charged on a household income basis, with thresholds set to £120,000-£160,000 so that no families lose out, would cost £1.4 billion in 2029-30. This is an internal HM Treasury

estimate provided by HM Revenue and Customs and based on Spring 2024 assumptions. The government has announced that it will not proceed with this reform.

■ Higher Education: VAT

Ian Sollom:

[R] [\[14160\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of exempting VAT charges for universities that undertake shared services as a cross-sharing group.

James Murray:

Universities can already benefit from exempting VAT charges for shared services within a cost sharing group providing certain conditions are met. This enables them to make efficiency savings by working together and sharing qualifying costs without incurring additional irrecoverable VAT.

■ Holiday Accommodation: Taxation

Dame Caroline Dinenge:

[\[14031\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to Table 5.2 of the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 October 2024, for what reason the estimated revenue from the abolition of the Furnished Holiday Lettings tax regime in the 2026-27, 2027-28 and 2028-29 financial years is lower than was set out in her Department's Tax Information and Impact Note published on 29 July 2024.

James Murray:

The estimated revenue from the abolition of the Furnished Holiday Lettings tax regime has been updated to reflect latest economic forecasts from the Office for Budget Responsibility and latest tax return data.

■ Insurance

Max Wilkinson:

[\[14383\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will bring forward legislative proposals to require insurance companies to set industry-wide definitions for claims classifications.

Tulip Siddiq:

The Government has no plans to propose legislation requiring insurance companies to set industry-wide definitions for claims classifications.

■ Loans: Developing Countries

Steve Race:

[\[14217\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will amend the Debt Relief (Developing Countries) Act 2010 to make private sector loans to Global South countries (a) lawful and (b) transparent.

James Murray:

The UK is a strong advocate for sustainable lending and enhancing debt transparency, including across the private sector. In this regard, we firmly support the Principles for Debt Transparency published by the Institute for International Finance (IIF), which applies to loans.

The UK continues to engage closely with the private sector and other relevant stakeholders through international fora, such as the Global Sovereign Debt Roundtable, to promote the importance of transparency across the debt architecture, and to explore ways to build on existing efforts.

■ Ministerial Powers**Mr Richard Holden:****[14351]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether any ministerial directions have been issued since 6 July 2024.

Darren Jones:

Details of all published Ministerial Directions can be found on the GOV.UK website [1]

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There have been no Ministerial directions published since 6 July 2024.

Information on confidential Ministerial Directions is not published. As set out in Managing Public Money, where confidentiality is required, the accounting officer will share the direction request and the direction itself with the chairs of the Committee of Public Accounts and the relevant departmental select committee, along with an explanation of the reasons for requiring confidentiality, and when they expect the need for confidentiality to fall away and publication to take place.

[1] <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/ministerial-directions>

■ Motor Vehicles: Tax Allowances**Christine Jardine:****[14070]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of granting an exemption to the extra money owed in vehicle tax for cars with a list price of more than £40,000 if the vehicle is a registered taxi with wheelchair accessibility improvements.

James Murray:

The Expensive Car Supplement (ECS) is an additional Vehicle Excise Duty (VED) supplement payable from year 2-6 of a car's lifecycle, and liable on new cars with a list price of £40,000 or more.

Any vehicle modifications for disabled users made prior to first registration are not included when calculating the list price for the purposes of ECS. However, there is no exemption from the ECS for modifications made to taxis for disabled users after the first registration.

■ Pensions: Tax Allowances

John Glen:

[\[14293\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what her policy is on (a) the level of the pension annual allowance and (b) the application of a lifetime allowance to pensions.

James Murray:

The Government wishes to encourage pension saving, to help ensure that people have an income, or funds on which they can draw, throughout retirement. There is no limit to the total amount you can build up in your lifetime pension savings without incurring a tax charge. Additionally, the £60,000 annual allowance ensures that saving into a pension is rewarding for everyone.

HMRC provided an update in its August newsletter that it will proceed with finalising changes to the abolition of the Lifetime Allowance for pensions and we have since laid the relevant legislation to do so. This came into force on 18 November and will have retrospective effect from 6 April 2024. There are no plans to reintroduce the lifetime allowance.

All taxes are kept under review as part of the Budget process.

■ Public Expenditure

John Glen:

[\[14087\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to Item 26 of Table 5.1 of the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 October 2024, HC 295, whether the funding includes monies to devolved administrations under the Barnett formula.

Darren Jones:

The allowance for the impact on public sector organisations in item 26 of Table 5.1 of the Autumn Budget 2024 does include funding for the devolved governments, which will be provided via the Barnett formula.

The UK Government will provide support for departments and other public sector employers for additional employer National Insurance contribution costs only. This funding will be allocated to UK Government departments, with the Barnett formula applying in the usual way. Given the impacts of this policy change will need to be worked through in further detail, this additional support has not yet been included in departmental or devolved government settlements in 2025-26.

The overall outcome of the Barnett formula on devolved government funding is that they all receive at least 20% more funding per person than equivalent UK Government spending in the rest of the UK.

■ Public Finance

John Glen:

[\[14302\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will publish her Department's contingent liability database.

Darren Jones:

The government recognises the importance of monitoring and managing contingent liabilities, as these are fiscal obligations we need to ensure are consistent with the sustainability of the public finances. The government has taken steps to ensure this by publishing the Contingent Liability Approval Framework (CLAF) to provide a clear policy framework for approving and managing contingent liabilities, as well as establishing the Contingent Liability Central Capability (CLCC) within UK Government Investments (UKGI) to offer expert advisory support to departments to ensure contingent liabilities are priced and structured to get the best value for money results for taxpayers.

The Charter for Budget Responsibility, published alongside the Autumn Budget, commits the government to publish an annual report on central government's material contingent liabilities, financial guarantees, insurance contracts, and provisions. The CLCC first published an annual comprehensive assessment of government exposure to contingent liabilities in November 2023 and will continue to do so annually, with the next report due by the end of the financial year. This level of transparency goes beyond accounting requirements to provide the public and parliament with detailed information on the government's risk exposure.

In addition, as set out in Managing Public Money (MPM) government reports new contingent liabilities not taken on in the normal course of business, to parliament. Finally, to ensure transparency in line with the Government Financial Reporting Manual (FRM), departments disclose information on their contingent liabilities annually through their annual report and accounts, specifically within the Notes to the Accounts. These notes provide a clear explanation of the circumstances under which the liabilities may arise, estimated financial effects, and any uncertainties involved.

Public Sector: Finance**David Simmonds:**[\[14182\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the answer of 8 November 2024 to Question 11936 on Public Sector: Finance, how local authorities will bid to receive funding from the Public Sector Reform and Innovation Fund.

Darren Jones:

I refer the hon Member to the answer given to Question UIN 11936 on 8 November 2024.

The Public Sector Reform and Innovation Fund allocates £165 million to a range of projects in 2025-26, including support for foster care, delivering apprenticeships and planning reforms.

Partnering with local leaders, the Budget allocates a further £100 million over the next three years to reform public services with a focus on experimentation and learning. We will announce more details on this in due course.

■ Social Services: Finance

John Glen:

[\[14055\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the Government plans to allocate additional funding to social care organisations outside the NHS to cover proposed increases in employers national insurance contributions.

James Murray:

The Budget will provide support for government departments and other public sector employers for additional Employer NICs costs. Private sector firms or charities, including social care providers, that are contracted by central or local Government will not be exempt from these changes.

This is consistent with the approach to previous Employer NICs changes, as was the case with the previous Government's Health and Social Care Levy. The government has protected the smallest businesses from the impact of the increase to employers' National Insurance by increasing the Employment Allowance from £5,000 to £10,500, which means that 865,000 employers will pay no employer NICs at all next year. The government will support local authority services through a real terms increase in core local government spending power of around 3.2%, including at least £600 million of new grant funding to support social care.

■ Tax Yields

John Glen:

[\[14296\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent estimate she has made of the total revenue from (a) central government and (b) local government taxation in each year from 2023-24 for which projections are available.

Darren Jones:

The Treasury does not publish forecasts of the economy or public finances; the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) is the UK's official forecaster and provides independent analysis of the UK's public finances.

The forecast breakdown of current receipts for central government and local government can be found in the OBR's October 2024 Economic and Fiscal Outlook detailed forecast tables (aggregates) – Table 6.2.

■ Treasury: Anacta

John Glen:

[\[14089\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether special advisers in her Department have met representatives of Anacta since the general election.

Darren Jones:

All relevant meetings attended by special advisers are declared in the normal way in the department's quarterly transparency releases.

■ Treasury: Cost Effectiveness**John Glen:**[\[14051\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will list each (a) saving and (b) efficiency planned by her Department for the 2024-25 financial year to help meet the Government's overall savings target.

Darren Jones:

Through Spending Review 2025 Phase 1 HM Treasury received funding in 2024-25 for discrete, new pressures that have arisen since the previous Spending Review, such as the Post Office Enquiry and Extraordinary Revenue Acceleration funding for Ukraine. No additional funding beyond that was requested for pay uplifts, inflation, financial pressures in the departments Arms-Length bodies, or to support work on the new priorities of the government, for example for the establishment of the Office for Value for Money. These financial pressures have instead been managed within the department, including through the re-prioritisation of staff.

In accordance with the published Government Efficiency Framework (GEF), the department has a programme of efficiency initiatives which it monitors centrally and will continue to do so into the next Spending Review period. This includes pursuing tech solutions including the use of AI, standardising processes and reviewing delivery models. Information on the individual workstreams is not published publicly.

■ Valuation Office Agency: Cognizant**David Simmonds:**[\[14180\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will publish (a) the contract, (b) the agreed programme of work and (c) other side documentation for the Valuation Office Agency's agreement with Cognizant; and what the (i) value and (ii) length of that contract is.

James Murray:

Details of the contract can be found on Contracts Finder: [Valuations Office Agency Programme - Valuations Cloud App - Contracts Finder](#). The published contract covers new services developed through the Valuation Office Agency's (VOA) transformation programmes. It includes the call off capacity for these programmes to deliver transformation through new technology solutions, and additional capacity to support live operations for new VOA services.

■ Workplace Pensions: Inheritance Tax**John Glen:**[\[14298\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 5.52 of the Autumn Budget 2024, HC 295, whether the application of inheritance tax to unused pension funds and death benefits will apply to the pension scheme established under The Pensions Increase (Pension Scheme for Keir Starmer QC) Regulations 2013.

John Glen:

[\[14299\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 5.52 of the Autumn Budget 2024, HC 295, whether the application of inheritance tax to unused pension funds and death benefits will apply to the (a) BBC and (b) Channel 4 defined benefit pension scheme.

Darren Jones:

As announced at Autumn Budget 2024, from 6 April 2027 most unused pension funds and death benefits will be included within the value of a person's estate for Inheritance Tax purposes

This change will apply to all UK registered pension schemes

The impact this will have on specific schemes depends on their scheme rules.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ Government Equalities Office: Ministers' Private Offices

Sir Ashley Fox:

[\[9062\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, how much was spent on (a) new furniture and fittings and (b) other refurbishment of Ministerial offices in her Department since the dissolution of the last Parliament; and on what items this was spent.

Anneliese Dodds:

The data requested is not held centrally. The Office for Equality and Opportunity is not a standalone department, and Ministerial offices are located across various Government departments.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Child Maintenance Service: Finance

Jodie Gosling:

[\[14166\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will take steps to increase the funding for the Child Maintenance Service to ensure prompt responses to correspondence from (a) residents of Nuneaton constituency and (b) other correspondents.

Andrew Western:

The Child Maintenance Service (CMS) continues to make significant investments in improving customer communications and correspondence through digital transformation and the Service Modernisation Programme.

A proportion of the overall funding for the programme is and will continue to be used to improve the service, including response times to correspondence.

One aim of the Programme is to improve CMS response times by increasing the capability of our self-service platforms, simplifying guidance and internal systems for our colleagues, and by freeing up caseworker time.

We strive to ensure staff are equipped with the tools needed to respond quickly and comprehensively to customer correspondence, however response times can vary depending on the complexity of individual cases. We will continue to invest in improving our contact channels for customers to offer a more flexible and responsive service to all customers.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[14674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent estimate she has made of the average time taken to respond to hon. Members correspondence to her Department.

Andrew Western:

[Holding answer 21 November 2024]: The Department attaches great importance to the effective and timely handling of correspondence and keeps this under constant review.

The Cabinet Office publishes statistics on Departmental performance which can be found on the gov.uk website and can be viewed [here](#).

■ **State Retirement Pensions: Women**

David Smith: [\[14421\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has had discussions with the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman on the contents of it's report entitled Women's State Pension age: our findings on injustice and associated issues, published on 21 March 2024.

Emma Reynolds:

The Secretary of State has not had discussions with the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman since the report into Women's State Pension age was published on 21 March 2024.

As Pensions Minister, on behalf of the ministerial team, I had a meeting with the acting Ombudsman on 22 October to discuss the report.

■ **Winter Fuel Payment**

Blake Stephenson: [\[14707\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of the support available to pensioners (a) this winter and (b) in winter 2023/24.

Emma Reynolds:

From 2024/25, Winter Fuel Payments in England and Wales will be targeted to low-income pensioners. Payments will continue to be paid to pensioner households with someone receiving Pension Credit or certain other income-related benefits. They will continue to be worth £200 for households with someone aged 66-79, or £300 for eligible households with someone aged 80 or over.

Eligible pensioners in England and Wales will also receive Cold Weather Payments for each seven day period of very cold weather, and an annual rebate on their energy bill of £150, through the Warm Home Discount.

The powers to make winter heating assistance payments were devolved to the Scottish Parliament under the Scotland Act 2016.

The Government is investing £421 million to extend the current Household Support Fund in England for six months, running from 1 October 2024 until 31 March 2025. In addition, at the Autumn Budget 2024, the Government announced that £1 billion, including Barnett impact, will be invested to extend the Household Support Fund in England by a full year until 31 March 2026.

This Government remains absolutely committed to supporting pensioners and giving them the dignity and security they deserve in retirement. We are honouring our commitment to the Triple Lock with a 4.1% increase to the basic State Pension, the new State Pension, and to the standard minimum guarantee in Pension Credit. As such, according to the latest OBR projections, the full yearly rate of the new State Pension is forecast to increase by around £1,900 over the course of this parliament whilst the full yearly amount of the basic State Pension is forecast to increase by around £1,500.

In 2023/24, Winter Fuel Payments were universal for those of State Pension age. Pensioner households received a Winter Fuel Payment combined with a cost of living payment of £500 / £600 depending on age. Cold Weather Payments and rebates from the Warm Home Discount Scheme were also payable in 2023/24.