



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 2 December 2024 and the information is correct at the time of publication (07:04 P.M., 02 December 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

■ Companies: Registration

Mr Joshua Reynolds:

[\[16695\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of requiring a company to confirm an address before registering it at Companies House.

Justin Madders:

Through the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023 we have given the registrar more powers to ensure address (and other) information on the register of companies is as accurate and complete as reasonably possible. Additionally, next year will see the introduction of identity verification for company officers, beneficial owners and those who file information on companies' behalf. We will assess the merits of these various improvements before considering what, if any, further measures might be appropriate to improve the quality and reliability of company information.

■ Employment Rights Bill

Kevin Hollinrake:

[\[15759\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether his Department plans to classify new measures in the Employment Rights Bill as a burden via the New burdens doctrine.

Justin Madders:

Our Impact Assessments provide an initial, indicative assessment of the impacts that could result from primary legislation. This represents the best estimate for the likely impacts given the current stage of policy development. We intend to refine our analysis and conduct further assessment as the Bill progresses, in line with Better Regulation requirements.

The New Burdens Doctrine does not apply to policies which apply the same rules to local authorities and to private sector bodies, such as employment legislation that applies to all organisations, unless these have a disproportionate effect on local government.

■ Export Controls

Liam Byrne:

[\[14018\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what his export controls policy priorities are.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

The Government's export controls regime protects global security by restricting who has access to sensitive technologies and capabilities, ensuring UK exports do not contribute to WMD proliferation, a destabilising accumulation of conventional weapons, or are used to commit or facilitate internal repression or a serious violation of international humanitarian law. Our priorities for export controls policy include:

- Working with international partners, and like-minded states, to ensure our export controls properly address the threats we face, keep pace with new technologies, and adapt to changing circumstances.
- Agility in responding to volatile global situations through keeping all extant licences under continuous and careful review.
- Supporting key international alliances in areas such as AUKUS and ITAR collaboration.
- Effective delivery of the licensing service to exporters via the continued roll-out of LITE and ensuring we are always identifying ways we can develop and evolve the service we provide.

Health Services: Regulation**Jim Shannon:**[\[15749\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make a comparative assessment of (a) the UK's regulatory system and (b) those of international comparators.

Justin Madders:

The Government is committed to delivering a regulatory system that addresses market failures, creates economic certainty, and drives innovation to stimulate growth while protecting consumers and businesses. As part of this, HMG regularly makes comparative assessments of the UK's regulatory system and those of international comparators.

Living Wage**Mr Gregory Campbell:**[\[16452\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what recent estimate his Department has made of the number of people who earn the national living wage in (a) full-time and (b) part-time employment.

Justin Madders:

The Low Pay Commission (LPC) estimate that 2.9% of full-time employee jobs and 12.0% of part-time employee jobs were covered by the relevant National Minimum Wage and National Living Wage rate in 2023. The LPC will publish updated analysis in early 2025.

■ Motor Vehicles: Manufacturing Industries

Andrew Griffith:

[\[16573\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what meetings he has had with representatives of (a) the automotive industry and (b) automotive companies.

Sarah Jones:

My Department has had regular and frequent engagement with representatives of the automotive industry and automotive companies covering a wide range of automotive issues.

My officials and I also engage with the Automotive Council and the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT) on a regular basis.

■ Vauxhall Motors: Luton

Blake Stephenson:

[\[16357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he had discussions with Stellantis prior to the announcement of the closure of the Vauxhall site in Luton.

Sarah Jones:

The Secretary of State has been in contact with Stellantis since July to discuss the pressures in their UK and global business and the future of the Luton plant.

He met them again on 26 November where they regrettably shared their proposals to consult on the closure Luton and consolidation at Ellesmere Port.

We know this will be a concerning time for the families of employees at Luton who may be affected, and we will continue to work closely with Stellantis, as well as trade unions and Luton Borough Council on the next steps of their proposals and how the impact on employees affected and the local area.

Blake Stephenson:

[\[16358\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if his Department will make an assessment of the impact of the closure of the Stellantis Vauxhall site in Luton on the economy of (a) Luton Borough and (b) Bedfordshire.

Sarah Jones:

Stellantis announced on 26 November that it was starting a consultation with staff at its Luton plant on its plans for the future of its manufacturing there.

The Department is actively engaging with the company and has asked them to share the full details of its plans, including the site.

We will continue to work closely with Stellantis, trade unions and Luton Borough Council to understand the impact of their proposals on the economy of Luton and Bedfordshire.

Blake Stephenson:[\[16359\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether his Department plans to take steps to help Luton Borough Council secure the long-term future of employment at the Stellantis Vauxhall site in Luton.

Sarah Jones:

Stellantis announced on 26 November that it was starting a consultation with staff on its plans to consolidate its two UK manufacturing sites into one plant at Ellesmere Port.

The Department is actively engaging with the company and has asked them to share the full details of its plans, including for the future for the site.

We will continue to work closely with Stellantis, as well as trade unions and Luton Borough Council on the next steps of their proposals.

CABINET OFFICE■ **Cabinet Office: Software****John Glen:**[\[8803\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the three entries totalling £189,870 for Fujitsu Services Ltd under the GPG - Interoperability One Data Programme, in his Department's transparency data entitled Cabinet Office: spend data over £25,000 - July 2024, published on 29 August 2024, what other suppliers were considered for those software services.

Georgia Gould:

In January 2024, Fujitsu said it would withdraw from bidding for contracts with new Government customers until the Post Office Horizon inquiry concludes – it would only bid for work with existing Government customers where it already has a contract with them, or where there is an agreed need for Fujitsu's skills and capabilities. Fujitsu's bid approach is detailed in [this letter](#), deposited in Parliament.

The spend published on 29 August 2024 relates to work done on an existing contract awarded to Fujitsu in March 2023 under the previous administration.

In selecting the supplier in March 2023, the Tech Services 3 framework was employed. This was chosen as other frameworks did not have the quantity of suppliers needed to attract adequately competitive bids or would lead to direct awards. 125 companies were invited to bid, of which 3 did, including Fujitsu. Following an evaluation, which assessed technical ability to meet the requirements, how well they understood these by developing a proof of concept, social value and costs, Fujitsu were successful.

■ Civil Servants: Freedom of Expression

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[14067\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that civil servants can express their lawful beliefs on (a) biological sex and (b) other issues.

Georgia Gould:

Civil servants can express their lawful beliefs, as long as how they do so is consistent with the Civil Service Code, which outlines the standards of behaviour all civil servants are expected to uphold.

■ Civil Servants: Recruitment

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[15240\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 8 October 2024 to Question 5742 on Civil Servants, whether his Department has a policy on recruitment to the civil service in advance of the spending review.

Georgia Gould:

The Government is committed to delivering value for money for the taxpayer. In the Budget, the Chancellor announced a 2% productivity, efficiency, and savings target for all government departments. Decisions on the future size of the Civil Service will form a part of the comprehensive Spending Review.

The Government is committed to attracting, retaining and developing the very best talent to create a more efficient and effective civil service that is equipped to deliver the Government's missions for the UK.

■ Ministers: Official Cars

Charlie Dewhirst:

[\[16598\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Answer of 25 November 2024 to Question HL2426 on Ministers: Official Cars, how many of those cars in each year listed were electric cars.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

The number of electric vehicles in the Government Car Service operational fleet for the specified years is:

1.2016: 4

2. 2023: 36

3.2024: 36

■ Official Cars

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[\[16354\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, which vehicle makes comprise the fleet of Government cars.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

The Government Car Service operational fleet comprises the following makes of vehicles:

- Ford
- Nissan
- Jaguar
- Land Rover
- Honda
- Toyota

■ Public Private Partnerships**Gareth Davies:**[\[16246\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will make an estimate of the number of people who are employed to deliver public services by private sector organisations that have been contracted for this purpose by Government Departments.

Georgia Gould:

The Cabinet Office does not hold information on the estimated number of people employed by private sector organisations contracted by Government Departments to deliver public services. Individual departments are responsible for managing their contracts in the usual way.

■ Senior Civil Servants: Official Cars**Charlie Dewhirst:**[\[16599\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Answer of 25 November 2024 to Question HL2426 on Ministers: Official Cars, how many vehicles of the Government Car Service were available for senior official use in (a) 2023 and (b) in the latest period for which data is available.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

The Government Car Service (GCS) does not determine the allocation of vehicles to senior officials, this is carried out by individual Departmental Private Offices. The arrangements relating to the use of vehicles from the Government Car Service are set out in the Civil Service Management Code. There has been no change in this policy since 2023.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Arts Festivals

Samantha Niblett:

[15897]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what recent assessment she has made of the potential economic contribution of community (a) arts and (b) literary festivals.

Chris Bryant:

This Government recognises the importance of community arts and literary festivals in bringing local communities together, providing them with high-quality culture, and stimulating local growth.

Data collection plays an integral role in how the Department for Culture, Media and Sport assesses the economic contribution of its sectors to the UK economy. DCMS publishes official statistics (DCMS Sectors Economic Estimates) including data on Gross Value Added, employment and business demographics, which are available at national and regional levels. These data can be found on the DCMS website at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/dcms-sectors-economic-estimates>

DCMS Sectors Economic Estimates does not, however, provide data specific to community arts and literary festivals.

■ Sports: Gender Based Violence

Tonia Antoniazzi:

[16189]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the potential implications for her policies of the report by the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls entitled Violence against women and girls in sports, published on 27 August 2024.

Stephanie Peacock:

We note the UN Special Rapporteurs's report and support the aim of promoting safe sporting environments for women and girls. We are dedicated to supporting every aspect of women's sport and ensuring all women and girls, no matter their background, have access to high quality sport.

The Government has been clear that sporting bodies have a responsibility to protect the integrity and fairness of women's sport and the safety of all participants, particularly when it is not possible to balance those factors with inclusion.

With respect to eligibility, National Governing Bodies set their own policies for who can participate in their sports in domestic competitions, and rules for international competitions are set by International Federations. To help, in the UK, our Sports Councils have produced guidance, which is clear that inclusion, fairness and safety cannot be balanced in gender-affected sport.

DEFENCE

■ **Ajax Vehicles****Ben Obese-Jecty:**[\[16680\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 27 November 2024 to Question 15669 on Ajax Vehicles, what the planned future operational establishment is for an infantry battalion structured around the Boxer platform.

Maria Eagle:

On current plans, BOXER will be delivered to four Heavy Mechanised Infantry Battalions and Divisional Enablers. We do not routinely disclose specific details in relation to operational establishments, noting these are in any case subject to the outcomes of the Strategic Defence Review concluding in early 2025.

■ **Defence Equipment: Procurement****Rupert Lowe:**[\[15863\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what equipment produced in China his Department has bought at what cost to the public purse in each of the last five years.

Maria Eagle:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) welcomes foreign trade where it allows us to provide our Armed Forces with the equipment they require, meets our stringent legal and regulatory requirements and does not compromise our national security. Defence utilises Chinese manufactured goods throughout its supply chain, however the Department's direct spend for goods manufactured in China for the last five years is as follows:

YEAR	SPEND (ROUNDED TO NEAREST £100,000)
2023-24	£4.6 million
2022-23	£3.6 million
2021-22	£3 million
2020-21	£2.6 million
2019-20	£3.7 million

We are unable to provide details of the specific items purchased as this spend data is captured by the MOD to monitor contractual spend. Statistical analysis and reporting is a secondary function.

Transactions continue to be monitored where there are potential national security concerns from any country, and the Department will investigate and apply appropriate mitigations where required.

■ Defence: Industry

Mike Wood:

[\[15746\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions he has had with the defence sector on the potential impact of environmental, social and governance policies on levels of divestment.

Maria Eagle:

There is nothing contradictory between Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) consideration and the defence sector. A strong national defence is a pre-requisite for the freedoms and aspirations that investors and financial services companies seek to address using ESG considerations.

The Government is committed to bringing forward a Defence Industrial Strategy which ensures the imperatives of national security and a high-growth economy are aligned. Through the Defence Industrial Strategy we will consider the impact of environmental, social and governance policies. The Ministry of Defence also strongly supports the introduction of the regulation of ESG ratings providers which will improve transparency and promote good conduct and address some of the issues which defence companies have raised.

■ Israel: F-35 Aircraft

Brian Leishman:

[\[16083\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many times F-35 components were sent from RAF Marham to Israel between October 2023 and August 2024.

Maria Eagle:

At the request of the US led F-35 Programme there were 14 transfers of F-35 components from RAF Marham to Israel between October 2023 and August 2024. The transferred components are the property of the US Department of Defence.

In keeping with the Government's announcement on arms exports in September, there have been no exports of F-35 parts direct to Israel via RAF Marham since the licensing suspension.

Brian Leishman:

[\[16084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many times F-35 components have been sent from RAF bases in the UK, not including RAF Marham, to Israel between October 2023 and August 2024.

Maria Eagle:

Excluding the 14 transfers of US Department of Defense owned F-35 components from RAF Marham, no F-35 components have been sent by the RAF from the UK to Israel between October 2023 and August 2024.

EDUCATION

■ Apprentices and Vocational Education: Standards

Damian Hinds: [\[15642\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what representations she has received on the potential merits of having employers set standards for (a) apprenticeships and (b) T Levels through (i) Trailblazers and (ii) T Level Panels.

Janet Daby:

Employers are well placed to specify what knowledge, skills and behaviours lead to competence in an occupation, yet they tell the department that the current processes for preparing occupational standards can feel slow, bureaucratic, and time-consuming. This is a barrier to their engagement. We want to focus their input where it has most impact, including through Education Trailblazer Groups and T Level Panels.

■ Apprentices: Finance

Neil O'Brien: [\[16537\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of (a) apprenticeship courses started and (b) apprenticeship levy spent were for (i) Level 6 and (ii) Level 7 apprenticeships in each year since 2016.

Janet Daby:

The proportions of apprenticeships starts at level 6 and level 7, as a percentage of total apprenticeship starts at all levels, are provided in the table below for each academic year between 2015/16 and 2023/24.

ACADEMIC YEAR	PROPORTION OF TOTAL STARTS AT LEVEL 6 (%)	PROPORTION OF TOTAL STARTS AT LEVEL 7 (%)
2015/16	0.10%	<0.05%
2016/17	0.30%	<0.05%
2017/18	1.70%	1.20%
2018/19	2.80%	3.00%
2019/20	4.70%	4.80%
2020/21	6.10%	6.10%
2021/22	6.70%	5.60%
2022/23	7.40%	6.50%
2023/24	7.70%	7.00%

Further information on numbers of apprenticeship starts by detailed level can be found at: <https://content.explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/api/releases/bfd06312-7732-41bc-97e7-94a6d85d2400/files/1ff3ab06-a956-4baa-921c-7166db33c723>.

The apprenticeship levy was introduced in 2017, from which the department is allocated an apprenticeships budget for England. This budget is used to fund training and assessment for new apprenticeship starts in apprenticeship levy and non-levy paying employers, and to cover the ongoing costs of apprentices already in training and any additional payments made to employers and providers.

The table below shows total spend on level 6 and level 7 apprenticeships, in both levy-paying and non-levy paying employers in England, as a proportion of the total spend on the apprenticeship programme since the 2017/18 financial year.

FINANCIAL YEAR	LEVEL 6 SPEND (£MILLION)	LEVEL 7 SPEND (£MILLION)	TOTAL APPRENTICESHIPS SPEND (£MILLION)	PROPORTION OF TOTAL SPEND AT LEVEL 6 (%)	PROPORTION OF TOTAL SPEND AT LEVEL 7 (%)
2017/18	50	12	1,586	3%	1%
2018/19	71	50	1,738	4%	3%
2019/20	114	103	1,919	6%	5%
2020/21	172	165	1,863	9%	9%
2021/22	296	236	2,455	12%	10%
2022/23	349	234	2,458	14%	10%
2023/24	387	238	2,509	15%	9%

Spend is rounded to the nearest million and proportions to the nearest whole number.

■ Autism

Alex Sobel:

[\[15779\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department has taken to support (a) people diagnosed with pathological demand avoidance and (b) their carers.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department wants all children and young people to be able to receive the right support to succeed in their education and we recognise that children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) often require access to additional support. All teachers are teachers of SEND, including those with pathological demand avoidance, and they should support children and young people through a needs-led approach.

The SEND code of practice is clear that education settings should put in support to meet the needs of the child or young person when they are identified. A diagnosis is not required for an education, health and care (EHC) needs assessment or to issue an EHC plan. Where assessment of needs indicates that support from specialist services is required, it is important that children and young people receive it as quickly as possible. Agencies across EHC should work together to support children and young people.

The department also holds and funds the Universal SEND Services contract, which brings together SEND-specific continuous professional development and support for the school and further education workforce. The programme aims to improve outcomes for children and young people, including those with autism. As part of the contract, the Autism Education Trust (AET) provide a range of training and support for staff on autism. Since the contract began in May 2022, over 200,000 professionals have received training from AET training partners.

The department has two contracts which allows us to talk directly to both parents and carers of children with SEND and the specialist charities who support them in order to get their input. Within these contracts, we fund a charity called Contact who are a specialist organisation that specifically supports parents, carers and the families of children with SEND. Additionally, we also fund the National Network of Parent Carer Forums who support parent and cares within their local areas.

■ **Breakfast Clubs: Disadvantaged**

Damian Hinds:

[\[15737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 23 October 2024 to Question 5982 on Breakfast Clubs: Disadvantaged, whether this data was used to assess eligibility for the national schools breakfast programme in the 2024-25 academic year.

Stephen Morgan:

School-level data on the proportion of pupils living in bands A-F on the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index was used to assess the eligibility for new schools joining the National Schools Breakfast Programme in the 2024/25 academic year.

■ **Carers: Finance**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[16180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 22 November 2024 to Question 14130, whether the local authorities to take part in the kinship allowance trial have been selected.

Janet Daby:

The government has recently announced a £40 million package to trial a new Kinship Allowance in up to 10 local authorities to test whether paying an allowance to cover the additional costs of supporting the child can help increase the number of children

taken in by family members and friends. Further details on the process for selecting local authorities will be shared shortly.

The programme will begin in 2025 and decisions about future national rollout will be informed by the findings of the evaluation. We will share further detail on the timetable and delivery of the programme in due course.

■ **Childcare: Employers' Contributions**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[15789\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the rate paid to nursery providers for free hours childcare will increase proportionately to cover the increase in employer national insurance contributions.

Stephen Morgan:

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

■ **Free School Meals**

Damian Hinds:

[\[15735\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of making all children from families that receive Universal Credit eligible for free school meals.

Damian Hinds:

[\[15736\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of adjusting the eligibility criteria for free school meals so as to maintain the proportion of children who are eligible at the same level as in academic year 2023-24.

Stephen Morgan:

The new government has a central mission to break down barriers to opportunity for every child.

The government has inherited a trend of rising child poverty and widening attainment gaps for children eligible for free school meals (FSM) and their peers. Child poverty has increased by 700,000 since 2010, with over four million children now growing up in a low-income family. The government is committed to delivering an ambitious strategy to reduce child poverty, by tackling the root causes and giving every child the best start at life. To support this, a new Ministerial taskforce has been set up to develop a Child Poverty Strategy, which will be published in spring 2025. The taskforce will consider a range of policies in assessing what will have the greatest impact in driving down rates of child poverty. As with all policies, the government keeps the approach to FSM under review.

■ Further Education: Finance

Sarah Green:

[\[15965\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made an assessment of the adequacy of funding for further education colleges to meet staffing costs in the light of (a) increased employer National Insurance contributions and (b) sector pay agreements.

Janet Daby:

As a part of the public sector, further education (FE) colleges will be compensated for the increased employer National Insurance contributions. Details about this compensation will be announced in the future.

My right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced £300 million in 2025/26 for FE at the Autumn Budget 2024, to ensure young people are developing the skills they need to succeed. The department will set out in due course how this is distributed.

The government does not set pay or conditions within FE. This remains the responsibility of individual providers.

To boost the recruitment and retention of teachers, the department has extended targeted retention incentive payments of up to £6,000 after tax to eligible early-career FE teachers in key subject areas.

■ Holiday Activities and Food Programme

Mr James Frith:

[\[15790\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the Child Poverty Strategy will include the Holiday Activities and Food Programme.

Catherine McKinnell:

Tackling child poverty is at the heart the government's mission to break down barriers to opportunity and improve the life chances for every child. For too many children, living in poverty robs them of the opportunity to learn and to prosper.

The Child Poverty Taskforce will consider the range of policies which can boost household incomes and tackle essential costs: government-funded childcare support including during the school holidays can both tackle families' essential costs and support parents to work boosting incomes. More detail on the approach and priorities for the Strategy is set out in the 23 October publication 'Tackling Child Poverty: Developing our Strategy', which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tackling-child-poverty-developing-our-strategy>.

The holiday activities and food programme provides free childcare places, enriching activities and healthy meals to children from low-income families, benefiting their health, wellbeing and learning throughout the school holidays.

■ Mental Capacity

Laura Trott:

[\[15691\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if her Department will take steps to increase the use of Deprivation of Liberty orders.

Janet Daby:

Depriving a child of their liberty must always be a last resort in order to keep the child safe. A growing number of children in England and Wales, often with complex behavioural needs, are being deprived of their liberty through Deprivation of Liberty Orders (DOLOs) under the inherent jurisdiction of the High Court, due to a lack of suitable registered placements.

The department would like to see fewer children given DOLOs and an improved quality of provision for these children. As set out in the department's recent policy statement, 'Keeping Children Safe, Helping Families Thrive', we want to see new forms of provision to address the rising need for suitable, registered homes capable of depriving a child of their liberty. This provision needs to be able to respond flexibly to children's changing and fluctuating needs, as well as provide the crucial therapeutic care and, when necessary, restriction.

The department intends, when Parliamentary time allows, to amend primary legislation to provide a statutory framework for local authorities seeking to place children in such new forms of accommodation, rather than relying on a DOLO. This new legislation will ensure that, where a secure children's home cannot meet a child's needs, there are clear criteria for when children may need to be deprived of liberty and mandatory review points to ensure that no child is deprived of liberty for longer than is required to keep them safe, while in high quality, registered provision.

This is part of a wider programme of work to improve outcomes for children with complex needs. This includes a programme of capital investment to support local authorities to maintain existing capacity and expand provision in both open and secure children's homes, including for children with complex needs. This also includes the creation of 350 additional open children's homes placements by March 2025. The recent Autumn Budget 2024 announced £90 million for the 2025/26 financial year which includes a multi-million pound package of match funding to support local authorities to build additional open children's home placements. This will provide high quality, safe homes for some of our most vulnerable children and young people.

We have also recently commissioned independent research to understand the existing system and how we can achieve better outcomes for children who are, or are at risk of, being deprived of liberty. We aim to publish this in summer 2025. This will build on the insights gained from the research commissioned by the department from the Office of the Children's Commissioner's 'Children with complex needs who are deprived of liberty' report, published on 18 November, which interviewed children with complex needs who are deprived of liberty, their parents and the professionals who support them.

■ Primary Education: Pupil Exclusions

Ian Sollom: [16263]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many pupils were (a) suspended and (b) permanently excluded from primary schools in England in 2023-24; and what proportion of such pupils were identified as having SEND.

Ian Sollom: [16279]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many pupils were (a) suspended and (b) permanently excluded from secondary schools in England in 2023-24; and what proportion of those pupils were identified as having SEND.

Stephen Morgan:

The department publishes figures from the school census on suspensions and permanent exclusions from state-funded schools in England. The most recent full academic year release, for the 2022/23 academic year, is available at:

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/suspensions-and-permanent-exclusions-in-england/2022-23>.

The latest release covers the 2023/24 autumn term and is available at:

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/suspensions-and-permanent-exclusions-in-england/2023-24-autumn-term>.

Published figures include numbers and rates of suspensions and permanent exclusions by school phase and characteristics, including special educational needs provision. A table has been created from the 2022/23 academic year publication here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/f661eaa5-0158-4c2d-710a-08dd0ae16946>.

Data is not yet available for the whole 2023/24 academic year. Data is collected two terms in arrears to allow time for Independent Review Panels to review exclusion decisions before data is collected.

■ Pupils: Bullying

Liz Jarvis: [15919]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to help schools maintain the wellbeing of young people affected by bullying.

Stephen Morgan:

All schools must have a behaviour policy with measures to prevent all forms of bullying. Schools are free to develop their own anti-bullying strategies to suit their specific needs and are held to account by Ofsted.

The department has published advice to support schools with addressing incidences of bullying. The guidance is clear that schools should make appropriate provision for a bullied child's social, emotional and mental health needs. It is available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/625ee64cd3bf7f6004339db8/Preventing_and_tackling_bullying_advice.pdf.

The department also published a practical tool to help schools, which can be found on the Educate Against Hate website. It is available here:

<https://educateagainsthate.com/resources/respectful-school-communities-self-review-signposting-tool-2/>.

We know that children experiencing bullying are more susceptible to mental health challenges. The government will work to ensure the right support is available to every young person that needs it, including providing access to specialist mental health professionals in every school. The government will also be putting in place new Young Futures Hubs, including access to mental health support workers, and will recruit an additional 8,500 new mental health staff to treat children and adults.

The department has launched a mental health leads resource hub to help schools select the most effective evidence-based support options, including a range of resources that focus on supporting the wellbeing of those who have experienced bullying. This is available on the Mentally Healthy Schools website, available here: <https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/whole-school-or-college-resources/>.

■ Schools and Youth Centres: North Warwickshire and Bedworth

Rachel Taylor:

[15937]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many (a) educational spaces for children and (b) youth centres have closed in North Warwickshire and Bedworth constituency since 2010.

Catherine McKinnell:

Information on mainstream primary and secondary school places is published annually in the School Capacity publication, which is accessible here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-capacity>. Time series data are not published at constituency level, which is difficult to track over time due to changing boundaries and school-reorganisations. School capacity data is published at school level and can be combined with information from 'Get information about schools' to identify the number of places based on the current parliamentary constituency.

The latest data at local authority level shows that between 2009/10 and 2022/23, the number of school places in Warwickshire increased by 14,143. This data is available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/33b1bea3-efe4-4b37-f914-08dd0adc50ad>. This represents an increase of 7,634 primary and 6,509 secondary places.

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) do not collect individualised data on youth centre closure. As set out in section 507B of the Education Act 1996, local authorities have a statutory duty to secure, so far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient provision of educational and recreational leisure-time activities for young people in their area.

In September 2023, DCMS published updated statutory guidance to support local authorities' understanding of the existing duty and how to deliver it. The statutory duty, and therefore local authorities' responsibilities, have not changed.

Alongside this, DCMS funds a peer review programme for local authorities to learn from each other about the best approaches to youth service provision.

In 2025/26, the department will also be launching the Local Youth Transformation pilot, which will support local authorities to build back capacity in the youth space and improve local youth offers.

■ Schools: Playing Fields

Max Wilkinson:

[\[16299\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many state-funded school playing pitches have been sold in each of the last five years.

Stephen Morgan:

As part of the department's transparency data, a register of decisions to dispose of school playing field land is published on GOV.UK:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-land-decisions-about-disposals.

Playing field land is defined as land in the open air which is provided for the purposes of physical education or recreation.

85 applications were given consent to dispose of playing field land between 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2023 (12 in 2019, 21 in 2020, 14 in 2021, 20 in 2022 and 18 in 2023). The majority of those were disposals by way of freehold sale, but the figures also include appropriation of playing field land to another local authority use, such as, social housing or highways, or the grant or surrender of a lease of more than 30 years.

18 applications were given consent to dispose of playing field land between 1 January and 31 October 2024. The department anticipates the cases will be added to the published list on GOV.UK by the end of January 2025.

■ Secondary Education: Staffordshire

Adam Jogee:

[\[15611\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the average staff to student ratio was in secondary schools in (a) Newcastle-under-Lyme and (b) Staffordshire 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 here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england>.

In the 2023/24 academic year, which is the latest data available, the ratio of pupils to teachers (qualified and unqualified) was 16:8 in state-funded secondary schools in England, the same as the previous year.

The attached table provides the pupil to adult ratio and the pupil to teacher ratio for state-funded secondary schools in Newcastle-under-Lyme constituency, Staffordshire local authority and England for the 2010/11 to 2023/24 academic years.

Attachments:

1. 15611 Table [15611_attachment_staff_to_student_ratio.xls]

■ Skilled Workers: Training

Adam Dance:

[\[16701\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to encourage upskilling for tradespeople.

Janet Daby:

The department is developing a comprehensive strategy for post-16 education and skills, to break down barriers to opportunity, support the development of a skilled workforce and drive economic growth through our Industrial Strategy.

My noble Friend, the Minister for Skills' keynote speech on 12 November at the Association of Colleges conference recommitted to this pledge and to working collaboratively with the sector to bring forward this strategy, building on the Curriculum and Assessment Review, the introduction of Skills England, and with a continued focus on lifelong learning.

The newly established Skills England will provide authoritative assessments of national and regional skills needs now and for the future, combining the best available statistical data with insights generated from employers and other key stakeholders.

It will also ensure that there is a comprehensive suite of apprenticeships, training and technical qualifications available that are aligned with what employers need, including those in the construction industry.

The construction sector is vital in driving economic prosperity and providing career opportunities for people at all ages and stages of their careers. Construction employers can benefit from a wide range of government-funded programmes, including apprenticeships, T Levels, sector-based work academies, Skills Bootcamps, and Free Courses for Jobs.

Employers in the construction sector have developed a number of apprenticeships to help meet their skills needs. T Levels are a high-quality technical option for 16 to 19-year-olds, offering classroom learning with hands-on experience and a built-in 45-day industry placement. This means students spend 20% of their time working with an employer, gaining the skills and confidence they need for the workplace.

The department is working across government and in partnership with industry through the Construction Skills Delivery Group to ensure that our skills offer meets the needs of individuals and employers in the sector.

■ **Special Educational Needs: Hertfordshire**

Daisy Cooper:

[\[15834\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has plans to publish the Stocktake report on Hertfordshire County Council's SEND improvement plan.

Catherine McKinnell:

Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspected local arrangements for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) in Hertfordshire in July 2023 and found widespread and/or systemic failings. Area SEND inspection reports are published on Ofsted's website and the department publishes formal intervention decisions on GOV.UK. Local area partnerships are expected to publish their SEND strategic plan and their local offer, including on the local authority website. However, internal working documents such as post-stocktake reports are not routinely published. This is to allow the necessary space for frank and open discussions that maximise the opportunity for the local area to improve. For example, stocktake reports can include personal reports from children and families about their experiences of the SEND system, which are shared in confidence.

The department continues to provide support and challenge to the Hertfordshire local area partnership by monitoring progress against its priority action plan and improvement plan, and by providing advice and guidance via a SEND expert advisor.

■ **Special Educational Needs: Teachers and Classroom Assistants**

Baggy Shanker:

[\[16032\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 14 November 2024 to Question 12858 on Special Educational Needs: Teachers and Classroom Assistants, if she will make it her policy to add (a) specialist support teaching assistants and (b) teachers of sensory impairment to the staff roles collected in the annual census.

Catherine McKinnell:

There are currently no plans to change the collected list of staff roles in the school workforce census.

■ **STEM Subjects: Girls**

Samantha Niblett:

[\[15905\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans she has to encourage more girls into STEM subjects.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department is committed to ensuring that anyone, regardless of their gender or background, can pursue an education in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects.

The government continues to fund and support the STEM Ambassadors programme, a nationwide network of over 28,000 registered volunteers from over 7,000 STEM and related employers. Over the last year, STEM Ambassadors have delivered 356,000 volunteer hours, serving as relatable role models to illustrate to young people that science, research, engineering and innovation is for everyone. Notably, 56% of STEM Ambassadors are under 35, 48% are women and 20% come from ethnic minority backgrounds. The programme has been active for over 20 years.

The department is a partner signatory to the Tomorrow's Engineers Code pledging to work with the engineering community to improve the quality, targeting, inclusivity and reach of engineering inspiration activities.

In addition, the department funds the National Centre for Computing Education to improve the teaching of computing and increase participation in computer science qualifications. This support includes programmes designed to encourage greater participation by girls and industry-led career events that raise pupils' awareness of careers in computing. The department also funds the Stimulating Physics Network, which provides tailored support to schools to increase rates of progression to physics A level the Maths Hubs programme, which has a focus on all pupils being given equal access to the curriculum and the Advanced Mathematics Support Programme, which delivers high-quality teacher professional development for level 3 mathematics.

■ Teachers: Recruitment**Jo Platt:**[\[15837\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what progress her Department has made on recruiting 6,500 teachers.

Catherine McKinnell:

The government has a central mission to break down barriers to opportunity and boost life chances for every child. The within-school and college factor that makes the biggest difference to a young person's education is high-quality teaching, but this government inherited years of rising teacher vacancies and low recruitment resulting in shortages of qualified teachers across the country. This is why this government is committed to recruiting an additional 6,500 new expert teachers across our schools, both mainstream and specialist, and our colleges over the course of this parliament.

This government has already made good early progress towards this key pledge by ensuring teaching is once again an attractive and respected profession. We have accepted in full the School Teachers' Review Body's recommendation of a 5.5% pay award for teachers and leaders in maintained schools, which is effective from September. The department has expanded its school teacher recruitment campaign, 'Every Lesson Shapes a Life' and the further education teacher recruitment campaign

'Share your Skills'. The government has also reformed the school inspection system to remove Ofsted's single headline grades.

This government has recently announced the Initial Teacher Training financial incentives package for the 2025/26 recruitment cycle, which is worth up to £233 million, a £37 million increase on the last cycle. This includes a range of measures, including bursaries worth £29,000 tax-free and scholarships worth £31,000 tax-free, to encourage talented trainees into key subjects such as mathematics, physics, chemistry and computing.

This government wants to support retention alongside recruitment so that teachers stay and thrive in the profession. As of 14 October, eligible early career teachers in priority science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and technical subjects can claim targeted retention incentive payments worth up to £6,000 after tax, with payments made available to college teachers in key STEM and technical subjects for the first time.

In addition, the department is supporting teachers to improve their workload and wellbeing and have made a range of resources available to support teachers including the 'Improve workload and wellbeing for school staff' service and the 'education staff wellbeing charter'. The department is also working with schools to increase opportunities for greater flexible working, for example we have clarified that teachers can undertake their planning, preparation and assessment time remotely.

■ T-levels: South Holland and the Deepings

Sir John Hayes:

[\[15644\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many people started T-levels in South Holland and the Deepings constituency in each year since 2020.

Janet Daby:

The department does not currently publish T Level student recruitment data at this level. We have announced that we will start publishing provider level data on T Level students, starting 2023/24 academic year. We are currently finalising plans on our approach to do this and the data will be published in due course. The publication date will be announced as soon as possible in line with the requirements of the Code of Practice for Statistics.

■ Vocational Education: Qualifications

Damian Hinds:

[\[15641\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what representations she has received on the potential merits of transferring standards approval powers for technical and vocational qualifications from the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education to herself.

Janet Daby:

A consistent theme of the feedback the department receives from employers is the need for a system for developing training to become more responsive to their current and future skills needs. The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education

(Transfer of Functions etc.) Bill will help enable the government to deliver a more responsive skills system which is better able to quickly and efficiently meet businesses' skills needs.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

■ Carbon Emissions

Tom Hayes:

[\[16578\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to help ensure that the Government meets its targets for (a) clean power, (b) net zero and (c) energy security by 2030 in a way that complements the steps it is taking to meet its targets for 2050.

Michael Shanks:

In November the Government received advice from the NESO on how to achieve our clean power 2030 target. We will review this advice and outline our approach to clean power by 2030 in our action plan later this year. The move to a clean power system by 2030 is vital to support the transition to technologies that will reduce our reliance on fossil fuels, including electric vehicles and heat pumps.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Agricultural Products

Jo White:

[\[15338\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to encourage the public to buy British produce.

Daniel Zeichner:

This Government will always back British farmers who produce some of the highest quality food in the world, contribute billions to our economy, and are the custodians of our countryside. We want more people to be able to access nutritious, and locally sourced food.

Our ambition, set out in our election manifesto, is for half of all food supplied into the public sector to be from local British producers, or certified to higher environmental standards whilst being in line with World Trade Organisation and domestic procurement obligations.

The department strongly supports retailer efforts to promote British food. Defra officials regularly engage with major supermarkets to understand their work to promote British produce.

In addition, the Government currently protects 93 British food and drink product names through its Geographical Indications schemes and welcomes further applications from British producers. Consumers can find these products with unique links to Britain's gastronomic heritage by looking out for the black and gold 'Protected

Designation of Origin', 'Protected Geographical Origin,' and 'Traditional Specialty Guaranteed' logos.

■ Agriculture: Inheritance Tax

Harriet Cross:

[\[15988\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps to prevent (a) large corporations and (b) investment firms from acquiring agricultural land sold to meet inheritance tax liabilities.

Daniel Zeichner:

From 6 April 2026, the full 100% relief from inheritance tax will be restricted to the first £1 million of combined agricultural and business property. Above this amount, landowners will access 50% relief from inheritance tax and will pay inheritance tax at a reduced effective rate up to 20%, rather than the standard 40%. This tax can be paid in instalments over 10 years interest free, rather than immediately, as with other types of inheritance tax.

This is on top of all the other spousal exemptions and nil-rate bands that people can access for inheritance tax too. This means that two people with farmland, depending on their circumstances, can pass on up to £3 million without paying any inheritance tax. This is an assumption based on the £1 million limit and nil-rate bands and does not take into consideration the specific circumstances that may affect the tax calculation. Furthermore, if land is transferred seven years before death, farmers pay no inheritance tax at all.

With 73% of claims being for less than £1 million, the majority of estates will be unaffected, and they will be able to pass the family farm down to their children just as previous generations have always done. This is a fair and balanced approach that protects the family farm while also fixing the public services that we all rely on.

■ Agriculture: Land Use

Sir Alec Shelbrooke:

[\[15744\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 22 November 2024 to Question 12061 on Agriculture: Land Use, if he will commission research into the potential impact of solar farms on soil (a) carbon storage, (b) structure and (c) biodiversity.

Mary Creagh:

Defra has no current plans to undertake research on the specific impact of solar farms on soil properties.

We have undertaken an evidence review evaluating opportunities for agrivoltaic systems in England and Wales. Impacts on soil were not considered.

■ Animal Welfare: Fireworks

Chris Evans:

[\[16479\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions his Department has had with charities and advocacy groups on the impact of fireworks on (a) wild animals and (b) pets.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Department regularly engages with stakeholders on a wide range of issues. Government officials intend to engage with businesses, consumer groups and charities to gather evidence on issues with and impacts of fireworks, including on animal welfare.

Officials have already been working with Combat Stress, Help for Heroes and the Dogs Trust to share information about safe and considerate use of fireworks. The government launched an awareness campaign during the fireworks season to provide guidance on minimising the impacts of fireworks on people and animals to encourage responsible use - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/my-safety-fireworks>.

■ Animals: Imports

Samantha Niblett:

[\[13603\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps to ensure that animals are declared correctly as rescued at UK borders; and how many animals have been (a) accepted and (b) rejected at the border in the last five years.

Daniel Zeichner:

Where the purpose of the movement of an animal is relating to the sale or any other form of transfer of ownership of the animal, including rescue animals, the commercial importation rules should be used.

Animals which are imported under the incorrect regime or without the correct documentation may be detained or returned to the country of dispatch.

The table below shows the number of all animals (including but not limited to dogs, cats, ferrets, bovines and equines) entering Great Britain from the EU that have been declared as rescue in the Import of Products, Animals, Food and Feed System (IPAFFS).

YEAR	NUMBER OF ANIMALS RECORDED AS RESCUE IN IPAFFS
2021	61,884
2022	30,624
2023	30,077
2024 (Up to 31 October 2024)	20,801

The Department does not hold data on the number of consignments or animals that have been rejected at the border.

■ Avian Influenza: Disease Control

Dr Neil Hudson:

[\[16562\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what progress his Department has made on tackling avian influenza outbreaks in England.

Daniel Zeichner:

Following the detection of notifiable avian influenza in poultry in England, Defra and the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) have stood up their well-established outbreak structures to control and eradicate disease, restore normal trade, and assist local communities' recovery. This includes putting in place control zones to help manage disease.

All bird keepers are urged to remain vigilant and take action to protect their birds following a further increase in the avian influenza risk levels in Great Britain, and check GOV.UK regularly to remain informed of the controls in their area. Scrupulous biosecurity remains best practice for protecting the health and welfare of flocks. All registered bird keepers will receive regular updates and guidance to help protect their birds from avian influenza.

Supporting bird keepers, the public and conservation bodies to manage and prepare for avian influenza continues to be one of our main priorities. Defra and APHA will continue to work closely with industry to ensure good flock management and husbandry practices are implemented on all farms regardless of size or scale.

Defra continue to monitor the situation and the need for an Avian Influenza Prevention Zone (AIPZ) will be considered in response to further increases in risk.

■ Birds of Prey: Rodenticides

Satvir Kaur:

[\[15384\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent progress he has made on decreasing the killing of birds of prey (a) generally and (b) by the (i) incorrect and (ii) illegal use of rodenticides.

Mary Creagh:

Defra supports the National Wildlife Crime Unit (NWCU) which helps prevent and detect bird of prey crime by gathering intelligence, undertaking analysis and directly assisting law enforcers. Defra also provides funding to the Wildlife Incident Investigation Scheme which makes enquiries into the death of wildlife that may have resulted from pesticide or rodenticide poisoning.

It is challenging to confirm whether the efforts of NWCU and partners is leading to a decrease in crimes against birds of prey as figures are not officially collected at a national level. The decision to make such offences 'notifiable' sits with the Home Office.

In answer to b(i), to ensure risks associated with professional use of anticoagulant rodenticides could be properly managed, the Health and Safety Executive (having policy responsibility for rodenticides) worked with the Campaign for Responsible Rodenticide Use UK to develop an industry-led stewardship regime to promote responsible use. The stewardship scheme is overseen by Government and is currently under review.

For b(ii), it is illegal to supply rodenticides unless they are authorised, and they must only be used in accordance with the conditions of that authorisation. There are robust, multi-agency arrangements in place for taking enforcement against the misuse of rodenticides.

Alistair Strathern:

[\[15890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment has he made of the potential impact of the Rodenticide Stewardship Scheme on bird species populations and their health.

Mary Creagh:

The Rodenticide Stewardship Scheme is overseen by the Government Oversight Group (GOG) for Rodenticide Stewardship. This group is chaired by the Health and Safety Executive and includes representatives from relevant Government departments and agencies. It is conducting a review of rodenticide stewardship to consider how it can be strengthened in the UK. The work of this review is expected to be completed in 2025.

Natural England has investigated exposure and effects of second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides (SGARs) on non-target bird species. It commissioned the Predatory Bird Monitoring Scheme (PBMS) to undertake monitoring of, and reporting on, exposure of red kites to SGARs. The analysis examines data including from the Defra-funded Wildlife Incident Investigation Scheme data, and the reports are published and presented to GOG annually. Secondly, to understand the implications of SGAR exposure levels on the health of predatory birds, Natural England has worked with PBMS, using red kite and buzzard exposure data to develop a statistical model, to predict the probability of mortality rates due to SGAR exposure. More data and work would be required to apply the model and directly answer the question on impacts at a population level.

■ **Bluetongue Disease: Disease Control**

Dr Neil Hudson:

[\[16561\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to help (a) farmers and (b) animal-related industries to reduce the likelihood of bluetongue virus spreading.

Daniel Zeichner:

Early identification was crucial to enabling a rapid response to a bluetongue outbreak. Defra provided free pre-movement testing to animal keepers in counties at the highest risk of incursion from infected midges originating from the continent.

A restriction zone has been established to cover the counties affected by bluetongue. This measure has been carefully considered to protect the free-area from disease spread while allowing free-movement of animals within the zone, keeping businesses disruption to a minimum.

Bluetongue is a vector-borne disease transmitted by midges and is challenging to control without vaccination. Responding to the emerging bluetongue-3 epizootic, Defra have worked at pace with vaccine manufacturers, the Veterinary Medicines Directorate, and industry to permit the use of three vaccines, enabling keepers to voluntarily protect their stock.

To reduce the impact on animal businesses Defra have designated numerous slaughterhouses and published General Licences enabling animals from the zone to be slaughtered at those slaughterhouses with minimal disruption. Markets within the restricted zone can operate and Defra has approved markets located outside the zone to take animals from the zone.

The situation is reviewed regularly with consideration given to the proportionality of controls informed by science and the department's close working with industry.

■ **Cats: Imports**

Sir John Hayes:

[\[16451\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will ban the importation of pregnant cats in the last half of their pregnancy.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Government recently announced its support for the Animal Welfare (Import of Dogs, Cats and Ferrets) Bill, a Private Members' Bill sponsored by Dr Danny Chambers MP. The Bill will give the government powers to prevent the supply of low-welfare pets to Great Britain's pet market. We will use these powers to prohibit the bringing into Great Britain of cats that are more than 42 days pregnant.

We are fully supportive of this Bill and would like to see it pass through both Houses as soon as Parliamentary time allows.

■ **Coastal Erosion and Flood Control: Finance**

Perran Moon:

[\[14535\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of establishing a fund which is financed through a charge on the sale or transfer of benefiting properties to support (a) coastal protection and (b) flood prevention.

Emma Hardy:

To speed up the delivery of new defences and ensure that the challenges facing businesses and rural and coastal communities are adequately taken into account, a consultation will be launched in the new year which will include a review of the existing formula for allocating money to proposed flood defences.

We want to ensure that floods funding policy drives close partnership working and brings in wider financial contributions to flood and coastal erosion schemes, to make Government funding go further. We plan to consider this as part of the abovementioned review.

■ Conservation Areas

Jessica Toale:

[\[15604\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of reducing impact risk zones around (a) sites of special scientific interest and (b) special areas of conservation to support appropriate development.

Mary Creagh:

Impact Risk Zones (IRZs) are a digital geographical information tool developed by Natural England to help Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) assess the potential risks to Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) from development proposals. They also cover Habitat Sites that are underpinned by a terrestrial SSSI designation, including Special Areas of Conservation.

Natural England supports the delivery of sustainable development by providing advice to LPAs on how to protect and enhance the natural environment. The IRZ tool helps LPAs know when to consult Natural England for advice and is designed to aid better spatial planning and early consideration of the risks to SSSIs to reduce delays in the planning process.

Natural England is satisfied that the zones provide appropriate advice to LPAs but continues to review the evidence that underpins the IRZs to ensure it reflects the latest understanding of SSSI sensitivities.

■ Crime: Northern Ireland

Jim Shannon:

[\[10724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in Northern Ireland on changes in the level of rural crime in Northern Ireland.

Daniel Zeichner:

There is regular engagement with the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in Northern Ireland on a range of issues and we will explore opportunities to discuss this shared challenge and options for future collaboration.

■ Dangerous Dogs

Dave Robertson:

[\[15364\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to tackle dog attacks; and whether his Department has made an

assessment of the potential merits of reintroducing dog licences, in the context of recent increases in the number of dog attacks.

Daniel Zeichner:

Defra is working with the police, local authorities and animal welfare groups to help prevent dog attacks by encouraging responsible dog ownership, making sure dog control issues are addressed before they escalate and that the full force of the law is applied.

We have no plans currently to reintroduce a mandatory dog licence. The old licensing system was repealed by the Local Government Act 1988 because it cost more to administer than the revenue it generated. The old licensing system was in effect an ownership registration scheme. Now that microchipping is mandatory, this is no longer necessary.

■ **Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Consultants**

Dan Carden:

[\[15516\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much his Department has spent on consultancy fees in each year since 2021.

Daniel Zeichner:

Expenditure on consultancy is reported each year in the Annual Report and Accounts.

For 2021-22, this is shown on page 111 at

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/635a7f1e8fa8f5653f83f4f0/defra-annual-report-2021-2022.pdf>

For 2022-23, this is shown on page 108 at

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/653a9479e6c9680014aa9be8/annual-report-and-accounts-2022-23.pdf>

The 2023-24 figures are being audited and are not yet finalised or published.

The Government is committed to restoring the public finances and delivering value for the taxpayer.

As part of this wider mission, the Government has pledged to reduce wasteful spend on non-essential and expensive consultants in order to save over £1.2 billion by 2026.

■ **Dogs**

Rebecca Paul:

[\[16402\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if his Department will publish guidance on (a) how many dogs may be walked by one professional dog walker at one time and (b) other issues relating to professional dog walking.

Daniel Zeichner:

Professional dog walkers must comply with the Animal Welfare Act 2006 and other relevant legislation. The Canine and Feline Sector Group has published best practice guidance to assist dog walkers which can be found here: <https://www.cfsg.org.uk/>. Some local authorities have introduced licensing schemes for professional dog walkers and often apply CFSG's guidance or produce their own.

The guidance published to support the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) 2018 Regulations places limitations on dog walking undertaken as part of the dog breeding or dog boarding activities. The guidance limits the number of dogs walked in these circumstances to six. The guidance also requires licensees secure the owner's consent to their dog being walked in a group, and to ensure that dogs are familiarised with each other beforehand. The Government has no current plans to issue additional guidance.

■ Dogs: Import Controls**Victoria Collins:****[16006]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what his planned timetable is for banning the import of dogs with cropped ears.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Government recently announced its support for the Animal Welfare (Import of Dogs, Cats and Ferrets) Bill, a Private Members' Bill sponsored by Dr Danny Chambers MP. The Bill will give the Government powers to prevent the supply of low-welfare pets to Great Britain's pet market. We will use these powers to prohibit the bringing into Great Britain of dogs with non-exempted mutilations such as cropped ears.

We are fully supportive of this Bill and would like to see it pass through both Houses as soon as Parliamentary time allows.

■ Electrical Goods: Recycling**Ruth Jones:****[15830]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing (a) discounts, (b) vouchers, (c) other financial incentives and (d) deposit-return schemes to recycle small consumer electronics that no longer (i) work and (ii) are used.

Mary Creagh:

We have not made an assessment of introducing these measures to recycle small consumer electronics. Future policy related to waste electricals will be guided by the government's work to transition to a circular economy.

■ Electrical Goods: Repairs and Maintenance**Ruth Jones:** [\[15827\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department plans to amend the right to repair requirements within the Ecodesign for Energy-related Products and Energy Information Regulations 2021.

Mary Creagh:

Policy development for waste electricals including right-to-repair and ecodesign will be guided by the Government's work to transition to a circular economy.

■ Electronic Cigarettes: Waste Disposal**Dr Caroline Johnson:** [\[15785\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Regulations 2013, how many times the Office for Product Safety and Standards has taken enforcement action in relation to vape (a) distributors, (b) importers, (c) manufacturers and (d) producers that have not registered with an appropriate authority in (a) 2023 and (b) 2024 to date.

Mary Creagh:

Distributors are not required to register under the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Regulations 2013. There are takeback obligations on vape distributors which are enforced by the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS). OPSS regulates in a proportionate, evidenced and risk-based manner, that utilises a range of regulatory interventions to promote compliance. OPSS has taken no enforcement action, such as prosecutions, on vape distributors in either 2023 or 2024. OPSS has, however, been working closely checking compliance with distributors through 2024 to build the takeback network with some 10,500 points added so far this year.

Importers and manufacturers of electrical and electronic equipment are required to register with their appropriate environment regulator, with companies based in England registering with the Environment Agency. OPSS does not have an enforcement role under the WEEE regulations in respect of importers and manufacturers, whether registered or not.

Dr Caroline Johnson: [\[15786\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Waste Batteries and Accumulators Regulations 2009, what information his Department holds on the number of vape (a) distributors, (b) importers, (c) manufacturers and (d) producers registered with (i) the Environment Agency and (ii) a producer compliance scheme.

Mary Creagh:

The Environment Agency (EA) holds a public register of battery producers and approved battery (producer) compliance schemes. Only battery producers that qualify as large producers are required to join a battery compliance scheme. Large

producers are those that place more than one tonne of batteries on the UK market during a year.

There are currently 25 vape producers that are also registered as battery producers, 21 of which have joined a battery producer compliance scheme.

There is no regulatory requirement for battery distributors to register with the EA or a producer compliance scheme.

Dr Caroline Johnson:

[\[15787\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Waste Batteries and Accumulators Regulations 2009, how many times his Department has taken enforcement action in relation to vape (a) distributors, (b) importers, (c) manufacturers and (d) producers that have not registered with an appropriate authority in (a) 2023 and (b) 2024 to date.

Mary Creagh:

No enforcement action has been taken against vape producers or distributors under the Waste Batteries and Accumulators Regulations 2009 in either 2023 or 2024 to date.

■ **Electronic Equipment: Recycling**

Ruth Jones:

[\[15825\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make a comparative estimate of the volume of electronics (a) repaired and (b) refurbished before being fed back into the circular economy compared to the rest of the world.

Mary Creagh:

Currently we do not collect separate data on reuse activities for electrical items and electronic equipment.

Ruth Jones:

[\[15826\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to encourage people to (a) repair and (b) refurbish more (i) household appliances and (ii) electronic waste.

Mary Creagh:

There is currently an existing right-to-repair scheme for a range of industrial and domestic energy-related products.

Further policy development for waste electricals including on right-to-repair and ecodesign will be guided by the Government's work to transition to a circular economy.

■ **Electronic Equipment: Repairs and Maintenance**

Ruth Jones:

[\[15828\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of tech manufacturers building barriers into their

device systems to stop repairing by independent technicians on recent trends in the volume of electronic waste.

Mary Creagh:

We have not made this assessment. Further policy development around promoting greater circularity for electricals, including right-to-repair, will be guided by the government's work to transition to a circular economy.

■ **Electronic Equipment: Waste Disposal**

Ruth Jones: [\[15824\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if his Department will make a comparative estimate of the UK's total electronic waste compared to the rest of the world.

Mary Creagh:

The Environment Agency regularly [publishes data](#) on the volumes of waste electricals collected. Currently we do not compare this figure to that of other countries or the rest of the world.

■ **Fisheries**

Tristan Osborne: [\[16112\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the Government plans to incorporate harvest control rules into future fisheries management plans.

Daniel Zeichner:

Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) are evidence-based action plans ensuring stocks can be sustainably harvested. Work is being done to implement actions in the six published FMPs. Collectively, these can be considered as equivalent to the 'harvest control rules' for the individual fisheries. Defra published a harvest standard specification in September setting out the broad framework within which individual harvest strategies can be developed for English fisheries. [Harvest standard specification for fisheries management plans in English waters - GOV.UK](#) Harvest Control Rules require a sufficient level of data and understanding of a stock. Currently, there are some FMP stocks that they cannot apply to until there is a better evidence base.

■ **Flood Control: Finance**

Mr Lee Dillon: [\[15085\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department plans to take to provide additional support to local authorities to prepare for flooding in winter 2024-25.

Emma Hardy:

We set up the first ever Floods Resilience Taskforce on 12 September. The Taskforce sets out a new approach to preparing for flooding, and working cohesively between national, regional and local government, including the devolved administrations and flood risk partners. This Taskforce will ensure that the UK's preparedness for, and resilience to, flooding is reviewed regularly and robustly. It will ensure we continuously improve to ensure optimum protection to people, homes and businesses.

The Environment Agency has also completed briefing sessions with the Local Resilience Forum chairs group, providing an overview of winter preparedness activity and the likely scenarios for this winter.

■ Flood Control: Surrey**Monica Harding:**[\[15576\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what flood (a) prevention and (b) relief measures have been put in place to support communities along the Thames between Weybridge and Long Ditton in the event of flooding in winter 2024-25.

Emma Hardy:

Following Storm Henk, the Environment Agency (EA) has undertaken a significant amount of debris clearance on weir structures, including the removal of a number of sunken & stricken vessels. The cost of the clean-up operation undertaken by our teams and supply chain partners has been more than £1 million over the last 6 months.

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

The EA are also looking at how to reduce the impact of flooding in Thames Ditton. Measures under consideration include raised barriers and property flood resilience measures to reduce the impact of flooding and allow a faster recovery. Any solution must be cost beneficial to attract public funding.

■ Floods: Finance**Freddie van Mierlo:**[\[15581\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 15 October 2024 to Question 8075 on Floods: Government Assistance, for

what reason her Department's Property Flood Resilience grant scheme was not activated in response to flooding in September.

Emma Hardy:

The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) coordinates the Government's [Flood Recovery Framework \(FRF\)](#). Although Defra's Property Flood Resilience (PFR) grant scheme is not part of FRF, it has always been activated alongside the FRF.

The September flooding was not at the scale where MHCLG, the Department for Business and Trade and Defra would expect to activate the FRF or PFR grant schemes. The PFR grant scheme has been previously activated where more than 2,000 properties have been flooded. The Environment Agency identified that around 1,000 properties were flooded across England in September.

Affected householders should ask their insurance provider if they will be eligible for Build Back Better within their claim, which can provide for flood resilient repairs.

■ **Food Supply: Carbon Emissions**

Mr Andrew Snowden:

[\[15906\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the Government's net zero policies on food supply from British producers.

Daniel Zeichner:

This Government is committed to delivering net zero by 2050, while ensuring that the transition to more climate friendly practices goes hand in hand with food security and farm productivity from British producers.

We will work with farmers to support economic growth while protecting the environment by accelerating uptake of innovative technologies, to increase productivity and efficiency in the agriculture sector. This will in turn support net zero, food production, efficient use of land and nature recovery.

To further support our farming businesses during net zero transition, we will protect our producers being undercut during international negotiations, make the supply chain work more fairly and prevent shock rises in bills by switching on GB Energy.

■ **Greyhounds: Animal Welfare**

Will Stone:

[\[16331\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his Department's policies of trends in the number of greyhounds that have died at racetracks since 2023.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Greyhound Board of Great Britain (GBGB) has published data for injuries, retirements and euthanasia of greyhounds from GBGB affiliated tracks and trainers

each year since 2018. This data is published online at

<https://www.gbgb.org.uk/welfare-care/injury-and-retirement-data/>

The long-term trend for the total number of greyhounds that have died at racetracks has shown, with the exception of figures for 2023, a welcome decline. Defra will continue to monitor figures published by GBGB in the coming years to see whether any new trends are identifiable.

■ Horses

Mr Lee Dillon:

[15079]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of designating thoroughbred horses as high health animals.

Daniel Zeichner:

On 25 November 2024 we announced that physical checks at Border Control Posts for live animals imported from the European Union, including horses and other equines, and goods and live animals arriving at west coast ports from Ireland, will not begin in 2024, and we committed to a further update on timelines for these controls in summer 2025. During this period, we will work closely with stakeholders across all sectors on the planned implementation of further border controls, including the most appropriate way to assure the health of imported equines.

■ Horses: Databases

Mr Lee Dillon:

[15078]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department is taking steps to introduce digital equine identification.

Daniel Zeichner:

This is a devolved matter and the information provided therefore relates to England only.

The Government recognises the importance of the equine sector to the UK economy and of improving equine identification and traceability. Digital enhancements are unlikely in the near future, though Defra is considering other improvements in the meantime.

■ Hunting: National Parks

Victoria Collins:

[16007]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 15 October 2024 to Question 5849 on Hunting: National Parks, what was the outcome of the initial discussions held with officials from other Departments on trail hunting.

Mary Creagh:

This is a devolved matter with regard to Scotland and Northern Ireland; hunting with dogs is a reserved matter with respect to Wales and therefore, the information provided relates to England and Wales only.

These discussions brought together officials with an interest in this manifesto commitment in order to consider its implications on their work. As this work is ongoing, no concrete outcomes have been determined as yet. Public announcements will be made in due course.

■ Marine Environment: International Cooperation**Abtisam Mohamed:**[\[15573\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking with international counterparts to help protect marine environments.

Emma Hardy:

Internationally, the UK continues to work to protect the marine environment.

The United Nations Convention Law on the Sea is the legal framework for all activities in the ocean. The UK supports a moratorium by the International Seabed Authority on the granting of exploitation licences until there is sufficient scientific evidence about the potential impact on deep sea ecosystems and strong, enforceable Regulations are in place. The UK is committed to ratifying the Agreement on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of the Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement),

In the Convention on Biological Diversity, we are leading efforts as Chair of the Global Ocean Alliance to effectively conserve and manage at least 30% of the ocean by 2030. In the International Whaling Commission, the UK is steadfast in our support for the global moratorium on commercial whaling. In the Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) the UK supports designations of large-scale Marine Protected Areas. Through UN climate talks, the UK promotes ocean action. The UK is currently working towards agreeing a legally binding treaty on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, as a member of the High Ambition Coalition.

The UK is one of 19 countries of the ' *High-Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy* ' – a leader level initiative pressing for sustainable management of 100% of national waters.

UK Ocean science is recognised as world leading, and UK overseas aid includes technical assistance through the £500 million Blue Planet Fund to support developing countries around the world to reduce poverty and protect the marine environment. The £50 million Blue Belt Programme supports marine protection and sustainable management across the UK Overseas Territories.

■ Marine Protected Areas: Fisheries

Tristan Osborne: [\[16111\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to publish proposed measures for the Stage 3 offshore Marine Protected Areas.

Emma Hardy:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Rotherham on 16 September 2024, PQ [4529](#).

■ Packaging: Recycling

Gareth Snell: [\[12722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to announce the (a) fees and (b) invoicing periods for the extended producer responsibility scheme.

Mary Creagh:

Final fees for the packaging Extended Producer Responsibility Scheme can only be calculated and issued after the deadline for large organisations to report their packaging data, which is 1 April 2025. Invoicing periods for the scheme each year will cover the period 1 April to 31 March.

■ Per- and Polyfluorinated Alkyl Substances

Jess Asato: [\[15104\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of banning per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances where alternatives are available.

Emma Hardy:

The Government has launched a rapid review of the Environmental Improvement Plan to deliver on our legally binding targets to save nature. This includes how best to manage chemicals, including the risks posed by per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). A Regulatory Management Options Analysis (RMOA), published in April 2023, made a detailed assessment of the range of hazards and risks from PFAS identified in Great Britain, as well as a preliminary analysis of the availability of alternatives for a range of applications. The RMOA recommended a range of actions including the development of UK REACH restrictions for a wide range of PFAS uses. We have started work on a UK REACH dossier investigating whether to restrict PFAS in fire-fighting foams, and we are scoping further action across a wide range of industrial and consumer PFAS uses.

■ Pet Travel Scheme

Dan Tomlinson: [\[16089\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of re-joining the EU pet passport scheme.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Government will seek to negotiate a veterinary/Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) agreement to deliver benefits to businesses and consumers in the UK and the EU. It is too early to provide an update on specific elements of any agreement at this point, including on pet travel.

■ **Pets: Smuggling****Johanna Baxter:****[R]** [\[16243\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of including (a) cats and (b) kittens in legislation to prevent pet smuggling.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Government recently announced its support for the Animal Welfare (Import of Dogs, Cats and Ferrets) Bill, a Private Members' Bill sponsored by Dr Danny Chambers MP. The measures in the Bill will extend to cats and kittens, and close loopholes exploited by unscrupulous pet traders.

■ **Recycling****Ruth Jones:**[\[15829\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with the Welsh Government on the development of a UK-wide strategy on the circular economy.

Mary Creagh:

The Secretary of State has asked his department to convene a taskforce of experts to develop a Circular Economy Strategy for England. The taskforce will consider the evidence for action right across the economy, and as such will evaluate what interventions may be needed. This will support the Government's Missions to kickstart economic growth and make Britain a clean energy superpower and deliver net zero. I will continue to discuss the work of this department with the three devolved Governments, including learning from their experience, as the work progresses.

Ruth Jones:[\[15831\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what sectors his Department has considered within scope for interventions in the context of his planned circular economy strategy.

Mary Creagh:

Defra will work with experts from industry, academia, civil society, and other government departments to prepare for the transition to a circular economy. This will include consideration of the evidence for sectoral interventions.

■ Rivers: Standards

Mr Lee Dillon:

[\[15086\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to increase the cleanliness of rivers.

Emma Hardy:

For too long, sewage and pollution have contributed to the uncleanliness of our rivers, lakes, and seas.

The Water (Special Measures) Bill will deliver on the Government's commitment to put water companies under special measures. It will drive meaningful improvements in the performance and culture of the water industry as a first important step in enabling wider, transformative change across the water sector.

The Secretary of State has also commissioned a full, independent review of the water sector to shape further legislation that will transform how our water system works and clean up rivers, lakes and seas for good.

Defra and its Arm's-Length Bodies continue to work with farmers to tackle agricultural pollution through a suite of regulations, advice and incentives; this includes the rollout of Environmental Land Management schemes.

■ Seed Potatoes: Contamination

Dave Doogan:

[\[10128\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps to compensate seed potato farmers that lose potato cyst nematode clear status due to contamination caused by the construction of national infrastructure including overhead lines.

Dave Doogan:

[\[10129\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an estimate of the potential loss of revenue for seed potato farmers that lost potato cyst nematode clear status due to contamination during the construction of national infrastructure in the last 12 months.

Daniel Zeichner:

Landowners, businesses and homeowners that have electrical equipment, such as pylons or towers, sited on their land have the right to compensation for the value of their land, as well as for any losses or expenses incurred. Acquiring authorities can also put in place discretionary schemes offering additional compensation. Such compensation is provided by network licence holders, not the Government.

■ Sewage: Waste Disposal

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[15282\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent steps his Department has taken to hold water companies to account for non-compliance with sewage management rules.

Emma Hardy:

We will not let companies get away with illegal activity and where breaches are found, the Environment Agency (EA) will not hesitate to hold companies to account.

From 1 January 2025, water companies will be required to publish data related to discharges from all storm overflows within one hour of the discharge beginning. In addition to this, the Water (Special Measures) Bill will introduce a similar duty for emergency overflows. This will create an unprecedented level of transparency, enabling the public and regulators to see where, and how often, overflows are discharged, and hold water companies to account.

The Bill will also provide the most significant increase in enforcement powers to the regulators in a decade. These include new powers to enable the EA to recover costs associated with their enforcement activity of the water industry.

In May 2024, the EA confirmed a tougher inspections and enforcement regime that will be backed by at least £55 million each year and will make better use of data analytics and technology. This will be fully funded through a combination of increased grant-in-aid from Defra and additional funding from water company permit charges.

■ Sky Lanterns

Munira Wilson:

[\[15841\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has made a recent assessment of the potential merits of banning sky lanterns.

Mary Creagh:

An assessment of sky-lanterns was carried out in 2023.

The research examined the risks that sky lanterns, and other items including helium balloons, pose to the environment. The research suggests the risks posed by sky lanterns and helium balloons remain low. It also explored a ban on the sale of sky lanterns and indicated this would result in lost economic activity. The research report is available at: <https://sciencesearch.defra.gov.uk/ProjectDetails?ProjectId=21420>. Based on this assessment, we therefore consider existing controls to be sufficient.

Local authorities already have powers to apply local controls to restrict or ban the use of sky lanterns or balloons on council or public land and, according to stakeholders, around 150 councils have already introduced a ban.

We also support voluntary initiatives aimed at minimising the risks associated with sky lanterns. Initiatives include a voluntary Code of Practice for sky lanterns

developed by industry with Government support to ensure that they are manufactured to be safe and are sold responsibly.

■ Sustainable Farming Incentive

Ben Goldsborough: [\[15562\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many Sustainable Farming Incentive payments were made (a) within and (b) after four months.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Sustainable Farming Incentive has a rolling application window with the first payment normally issued four months after the start of the agreement and quarterly thereafter.

As of 21 November 26,329, payments have been made within fourth months and 371 not within four months.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ British Indian Ocean Territory: Sovereignty

Priti Patel: [\[14332\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will publish an (a) timeline and (b) list of all (i) meetings and (ii) discussions his Department has had with the Government of Mauritius on the sovereignty of the British Indian Ocean Territory since 5 July 2024.

Stephen Doughty:

The Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary met the then Mauritian Prime Minister in London on 23 July. Following this, officials held Rounds 12 and 13 of negotiations on 2-5 September and 23-26 September before the political agreement between the Prime Minister and then Mauritian Prime Minister was reached on 3 October. This engagement has been supplemented by numerous official level meetings, including a meeting between the Prime Minister's Special Envoy with BIOT negotiations, Jonathan Powell and PM Ramgoolam on 25 November.

■ Development Aid

Rupert Lowe: [\[15713\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will publish a breakdown of planned foreign aid by country for 2025.

Anneliese Dodds:

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

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

[available on gov.uk](#). Outturn data on the countries and multilateral organisations in receipt of the FCDO's ODA in 2025 will be published in autumn 2026.

■ Development Aid: Agriculture

Rupert Lowe: [\[15698\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will take steps to ensure that no foreign aid is spent on overseas farmers.

Anneliese Dodds:

Internationally, agriculture and food systems play an important role in tackling poverty and hunger, addressing climate change and driving economic growth. They contribute to global food security and help ensure stable, sustainable and resilient global food markets to the benefit of British farmers, exporters and consumers.

Official Development Assistance (ODA) brings other direct benefits to UK farmers. For example, for each £1 the UK invests in CGIAR, the world's leading agricultural innovation organisation, UK farmers receive between £1.60 and £2.40 in benefits from the increased productivity of of the farming of wheat, dairy, beef and pulses.

■ Polio: Disease Control

Dan Tomlinson: [\[16088\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing £100 million to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative for the 2025-26 financial year.

Anneliese Dodds:

The UK is a longstanding supporter of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI), having contributed £1.4 billion since 1995. Flexible UK funding enables the GPEI to be responsive. UK funding was used to facilitate the two rounds of poliovirus vaccination campaigns recently completed in Gaza. The UK is working with international partners to ensure sustainable resources for upcoming global health replenishments. These are being considered together to ensure we are best placed to deliver for the global health challenges ahead. Funding decisions will be taken following the conclusion of the Spending Review in 2025.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Accident and Emergency Departments: Injuries

Alex Mayer: [\[15947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what data his Department holds on the number of A&E visits resulting from animal bites.

Karin Smyth:

NHS England publishes data on the number of hospital attendances, and this information is available at the following link:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/hospital-accident-emergency-activity/2023-24>

This includes the number of attendances due to external causes, including animal bites. In 2023/24, there were 53 hospital attendances in England where the primary diagnosis was recorded as an animal bite.

■ Achalasia: Health Services

Alex Mayer:

[15949]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of amending the Rare Diseases Framework to include provisions for improving patient-centred care pathways for Achalasia.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Government is committed to improving the lives of those living with rare diseases, such as achalasia. The UK Rare Diseases Framework sets out four priorities, collaboratively developed with the rare disease community, which include better coordination of care and improving access to specialist care, treatments, and drugs. We remain committed to delivering under the framework, and will publish an annual England action plan in 2025.

There are no plans to amend the UK Rare Disease Framework for this condition. The framework is a high-level document focused on improving the lives of all people living with rare conditions. Whilst there are approximately 7,000 rare conditions, many share common challenges, which the framework seeks to address.

Pathways for managing patients with achalasia are set out in the NHS England Specialised Commissioning Paediatric Medicine: Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition Service Specification. This specification is due to be updated in 2024/25.

■ Alcoholism and Drugs: Rehabilitation

Siân Berry:

[16058]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what funding he will provide for drug and alcohol treatment through (a) the Public Health grant and (b) other funding streams beyond March 2025; and if he will continue funding for the Supplementary Substance Misuse Treatment and Recovery grant.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Government supports investment in drug and alcohol treatment and recovery services to ensure that those people with a substance use need get the appropriate help and support. In addition to the Public Health Grant, the Department has allocated local authorities a further £267 million in 2024/25 to improve the quality and capacity of drug and alcohol treatment and recovery. This is alongside the £105 million made available by the Department of Health and Social Care, the Department for Work and Pensions, and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to improve employment and housing support.

My Rt. Hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced updates to the fiscal framework, and earlier this year launched the Spending Review, which has now settled 2025/26 departmental budgets. She has also made clear that the Government will conclude a multi-year Spending Review in spring 2025. In future, we anticipate that Spending Reviews will be set every two years to cover a three-year period, including a one-year overlap with the previous Spending Review, helping build in greater certainty and stability over public finances.

Now that the Autumn Budget has been completed, the Department is working to be able to announce future funding allocations for drug and alcohol treatment and recovery systems. We will communicate with the sector about this as soon as we are able to, as we recognise the importance of this information in maintaining delivery and planning for 2025/26.

■ Blood Cancer: Diagnosis

Luke Taylor:

[\[16328\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the effectiveness of non-specific symptom pathways in diagnosing blood cancers in each of the last three years.

Andrew Gwynne:

We will get the National Health Service diagnosing cancer earlier and treating it faster, including blood cancer. This is supported by NHS England's key ambition on cancer, to meet the Faster Diagnosis Standard, which sets a target of 28 days from urgent referral by a general practitioner or screening programme to patients being told that they have cancer, or that cancer is ruled out.

NHS England has implemented non symptom specific pathways for patients who present with non-specific symptoms, or combinations thereof, that can indicate several different cancers. This includes leukaemia, which can present non-specific symptoms, such as unexpected weight loss and night sweats. From our national evaluation, blood cancers are one of the most common cancer types diagnosed through these pathways.

Luke Taylor:

[\[16329\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help reduce the number of cases of late diagnoses of blood cancers in emergency NHS settings.

Andrew Gwynne:

It is a priority for the Government to support the National Health Service to diagnose cancer, including blood cancer, as early and quickly as possible, and to treat it faster, to improve outcomes.

The Department is committing to this by improving waiting times for cancer treatment, starting by delivering an extra 40,000 operations, scans, and appointments each week, to support faster diagnosis and access to treatment.

In addition to improving cancer waiting time performance, the NHS has implemented non-specific symptom pathways for patients who present with vague and non-site-specific symptoms, which do not clearly align to a tumour type. This includes leukaemia, which the national evaluation found was one of the most common cancers diagnosed via these pathways.

■ **Blood: Donors**

Dr Caroline Johnson:

[\[15218\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure there is an adequate supply of (a) donated blood and (b) blood products.

Andrew Gwynne:

NHS Blood and Transplant (NHSBT) is responsible for the collection, manufacture, and supply of blood and blood products to National Health Service hospitals.

The Department provided seed funding in 2023 to support NHSBT to increase its collection capacity. New donor centres will open in Brixton and Brighton in 2025 to increase and diversify the donor base.

Since July 2024, NHSBT has been responding to an Amber Alert for O group blood. NHSBT is now meeting the demand for blood and blood products, thanks to increased donations and better management of stock.

With respect to blood products, the Department, in conjunction with NHSBT and NHS England, has led a programme to increase self-sufficiency and resilience in life-saving plasma-based medicines, in response to the lifting of the ban on United Kingdom donor plasma in 2021. The first of these medicines will be given to NHS patients in early 2025.

NHSBT runs campaigns throughout the year, partners with trusted brands, and funds community groups to promote both donation of blood and blood products, stem cells, and organs.

■ **Brain Cancer: Health Services**

Clive Jones:

[\[R\] \[16840\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to include policies on (a) diagnosis, (b) care and treatment and (c) research into brain tumours in the (i) NHS 10-year plan and (ii) cancer strategy.

Andrew Gwynne:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Gordon and Buchan on 28 November 2024 to Question [15703](#).

■ **Breast Cancer: Diagnosis and Medical Treatments**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[15788\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve (a) diagnosis times and (b) treatment of invasive lobular breast cancer.

Andrew Gwynne:

We will improve cancer survival rates and hit all National Health Service cancer waiting time targets so no patient waits longer than they should.

Improving early diagnosis of cancer, including breast cancer, is a priority for the Government. There are multiple NHS initiatives and funding streams across the NHS in England that support the early detection of breast cancer, and many organisations across the health service are involved.

The Department spends £1.5 billion each year on research through its research delivery arm, the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), with cancer the largest area of spend at more than £121.8 million in 2022/23. NIHR spends more on cancer than any other disease group, reflecting its high priority. Our investments in cancer, including lobular breast cancer, are pivotal to informing efforts to improve cancer prevention, treatment, and outcomes.

We are proud to have invested £29 million into the Institute of Cancer Research (ICR) and the Royal Marsden NIHR Biological Research Centre in 2022, supporting their efforts to strengthen research into cancer, including lobular breast cancer. This is complemented by wider investments into breast cancer research including, for example, a £1.3 million project to determine whether an abbreviated form of breast magnetic resonance imaging can detect breast cancers missed by screening through mammography, again including lobular breast cancer.

The NIHR continues to encourage and welcome applications for research into any aspect of human health, including lobular breast cancer. Applications are subject to peer review and judged in open competition, with awards made based on the importance of the topic to patients and health and care services, value for money and scientific quality.

■ Cancer: Drugs**Jim Shannon:**[\[15180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of proposals to end funding of IsaPD.

Karin Smyth:

We have made no such assessment. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) makes recommendations on whether new medicines should be routinely funded by the National Health Service based on an assessment of their costs and benefits.

The NICE is currently updating its existing guidance on the use of isatuximab with pomalidomide and dexamethasone for treating relapsed and refractory multiple myeloma, following a period of managed access via the Cancer Drugs Fund.

The NICE was unable to recommend isatuximab with pomalidomide and dexamethasone as a clinically and cost-effective use of NHS resources in its final draft guidance published on 20 June. The NICE received two appeals against its draft

recommendation which were heard by an independent panel. The panel has upheld the appeal on some grounds and the NICE's appraisal committee will meet to consider the appeal panel's findings.

Any changes to the NICE's recommendations for isatuximab with pomalidomide and dexamethasone are not intended to affect people who started treatment during the period of managed access, who will continue to have access to isatuximab with pomalidomide and dexamethasone until they and their clinician consider it appropriate to stop.

It is right that the NICE makes its decisions at arm's length of the Government and in line with its carefully developed methods and processes. As such, it would not be appropriate for the Department to intervene in the NICE's decision-making.

■ Cancer: Health Services

Clive Jones: [R] [[16416](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether (a) children and (b) young people under 25 with cancer will be distinctly recognised in the National Cancer Plan.

Clive Jones: [R] [[16417](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the (a) differences between cancer in (i) children and young people under 25 and (ii) older adults and (b) strategic approaches to meet the needs of each population.

Clive Jones: [R] [[16418](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what account the development of the National Cancer Plan is taking of the Children and Young People's Cancer Plan published by Young Lives vs Cancer and the Children's Cancer and Leukaemia Group in January 2023.

Andrew Gwynne:

My Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has been clear in his view that there should be a national cancer plan, and we are now in discussions about what form it should take, including how we will account for children and young people. We will develop and publish the 10-Year Health Plan before publishing a new national cancer plan, and will provide updates in due course.

We recognise that cancer in children and young people is different to cancer in adults, and should be treated as such, particularly in regard to treatment, diagnosis, and wider support. We are committed to carefully considering this as part of our work.

In spring 2024, a series of stakeholder workshops, carried out in preparation for the Children and Young People Cancer Taskforce, identified several key areas where we know further work is required to improve the care and treatment of children and young people with cancer. These include data, early detection and diagnosis, and access to clinical trials. The work carried out to date on the taskforce was incredibly

valuable, and remains important to the Department's work. We are committed to progressing work in this area and we will set out more details on next steps for the taskforce in due course.

Young Lives vs Cancer is a valued stakeholder with a unique perspective on this issue. We will continue to engage with them, as well as other children and young people cancer charity stakeholders as we progress this work.

■ Care Homes

Tom Hayes: [\[16054\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to increase the role of patients in decision making around care home placements.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Health and Care Act 2022 contains a duty for National Health Service trusts and foundation trusts to involve both patients and carers, including young carers, at the earliest opportunity in discharge planning for adult patients who are likely to need care and support after their hospital discharge, where they consider it appropriate to do so.

The statutory discharge guidance sets out how local areas can plan and implement hospital discharge services that cater to individual patients' needs. This is aimed at senior leaders in NHS commissioning bodies, local authorities, and relevant sectors such as care providers.

■ Childbirth and Infant Mortality

Abtisam Mohamed: [\[15960\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will set clear and measurable targets to help tackle socio-economic and ethnic disparities in the rates of (a) neonatal death, (b) brain injury and (c) pre-term birth.

Abtisam Mohamed: [\[15961\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to (a) monitor and (b) reduce (i) socio-economic and (ii) ethnic disparities in the rates of (A) neonatal death, (B) brain injury and (C) pre-term birth.

Karin Smyth:

The Government is committed to ensuring that all women and babies received safe, personalised, equitable, and compassionate care. I am urgently considering the immediate action needed across maternity and neonatal services to improve outcomes and address the stark inequalities that persist for women and babies across ethnicity and deprivation, including what targets are needed. This includes consideration of what comes beyond the national maternity safety ambition, ensuring that we take an evidence-based approach, and that any targets set are women and baby-centred and focused on tackling inequalities.

There has been some good progress to date. As part of NHS England's three-year delivery plan for maternity and neonatal services, all trusts are rolling out version three of the Saving Babies Lives Care Bundle, which provides maternity units with guidance and interventions to reduce stillbirths, neonatal brain injury, neonatal death, and preterm birth, and includes initiatives to reduce inequalities. All Local Maternity and Neonatal Systems have published Equity and Equality actions plans to tackle inequalities for women and babies from ethnic minorities and those living in the most deprived areas.

The Government is currently piloting a training programme to help avoid brain injury in childbirth, and to address variation and improve safety for mothers and their babies. If successful, national rollout is expected to commence next year.

The Department's officials work closely with NHS England and maternity and neonatal sector partners to monitor inequalities in perinatal outcomes by ethnicity and deprivation, including through the published Mothers and Babies: Reducing Risk through Audits and Confidential Enquiries across the UK reports.

■ Children: Death

Rebecca Paul:

[\[9375\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason his Department's Notification of Child Death Form asks about the gender with which the child identified at the time of their death in cases where the child was over 10; and whether his Department consulted on that change.

Karin Smyth:

The Notification of Child Death Form, part of the National Child Mortality Database, continues to capture the sex of the child for anyone under the age of 18 years old, in line with sex being a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010.

Although questions relating to gender identity already existed within one part of the National Child Mortality Database collection, specifically for suicide and self-harm, the change in October expanded these questions to all deaths. This was to capture the language used by young people and their families to improve system learning and to support the prevention of future deaths. It was not subject to public consultation.

■ Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease: Health Services

Jim Shannon:

[\[15751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to develop a respiratory action plan to support patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

Andrew Gwynne:

The 10-Year Health Plan will consider the change needed to meet the three Health Mission goals, those being: a fairer system where everyone lives well for longer; a National Health Service that is there when people need it; and fewer lives lost to the biggest killers.

We will carefully be considering policies with input from the public, patients, health staff, and our stakeholders as we develop the plan.

NHS England is leading on the development of an approach for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease management, to proactively manage rising risk patients in winter, to reduce demand on primary and secondary care. This includes the identification of rising risk patients, optimisation of care, support and management through remote monitoring and a greater focus on self-management and education, and access to strengthened support in the community.

■ Colonoscopy: Older People

Clive Jones:

[R] [[16856](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the capacity of colonoscopy services; and whether his Department plans to increase the capacity of these services ahead of the extension of the bowel cancer screening programme to people aged 50 and above by April 2025.

Andrew Gwynne:

NHS England is responsible for delivering the NHS Bowel Cancer Screening programme and planning for the age extension in the programme from 60 years old down to 50 years old.

The age extension for bowel screening started in April 2021 with the 56-year-old cohort and, based on modelling and clinical advice, has been planned to gradually reduce to age 50 years old by 2025. This has been done to ensure that screening centres could manage any required increase in colonoscopy capacity.

■ Coronavirus and Influenza: Vaccination

Alex Mayer:

[[15948](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to promote the uptake of (a) Covid-19 and (b) flu vaccinations in the Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes ICB area.

Andrew Gwynne:

The 2024 Get Winter Strong campaign supports the uptake of winter vaccinations for influenza and COVID-19. Launched on 23 September, it focuses on eligible cohorts with low uptake, including pregnant women, parents of two to three-year-olds, for the flu only, and people with long-term health conditions.

Activity includes paid-for marketing and partnerships, no-cost national media, and social and stakeholder engagement. Advertising is delivered across public spaces, video on demand, and live television. Partnerships with YouTube creators and the online network for parents Netmums target specific, eligible audiences. Media and other no-cost activities will continue into 2025, using virus surveillance and vaccine uptake data from the UK Health Security Agency and the National Health Service.

Specific actions by the Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care Board include a well-publicised winter plan, promoting vaccine uptake via a variety of mediums, and outreach campaigns targeted to low uptake groups, schools, and health settings.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[16448\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether any of the vials of (a) Pfizer and (b) Moderna covid-19 vaccines supplied to patients in the United Kingdom contained (i) variable and (ii) excessive levels of residual plasmid DNA.

Andrew Gwynne:

All batches of the Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines released in the United Kingdom to date have passed their release specifications for DNA levels. The specifications are set in line with their respective controlled manufacturing process and in accordance with, for example, World Health Organization guidance on the quality, safety, and efficacy of vaccines. No batches that have excessive levels of residual DNA have been released.

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[16449\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many claims to the Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme on Covid-19 vaccinations have been (a) received, (b) successful, (c) unsuccessful as a result of the claim not meeting the 60 per cent disability threshold, (d) rejected and (e) still awaiting resolution.

Andrew Gwynne:

As of 22 November 2024, the Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme (VDPS) has received 17,379 claims related to COVID-19 vaccinations. Of these, 194 claims have resulted in a payment being awarded, 9,196 have been rejected, 7,173 are awaiting resolution, and 816 were found to be invalid due to either being outside the scope of the VDPS or for being a duplicate claim. Of the 9,196 rejected claims, 416 were rejected for not meeting the 60% disability threshold.

■ **Dental Services**

Andy McDonald:

[\[15768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the population per NHS dentist was in each (a) integrated care board and (b) local authority area in England in each year since 2010.

Stephen Kinnock:

Data on the population per National Health Service dentist in each integrated care board for the years 2019 to 2024 is published on the NHS Business Services Authority website, and is available at the following link:

<https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/statistical-collections/dental-england/dental-statistics-england-202324>

Data prior to 2019 was published by NHS Digital, and is available at the following link:

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

We do not hold data for the population per NHS dentist in each local authority area in England, each year since 2010.

Tim Farron: **[16464]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of (a) young people have seen a dentist in the last 12 months and (b) adults have seen a dentist in the last two years.

Stephen Kinnock:

In England in 2023/24, the number and proportion of adult patients seen in the 24 months up to the end of June 2024 was 18.4 million, or 40.3% of the adult population. The number and proportion of child patients seen in the 12 months up to the end of June 2024 was 6.7 million, or 56% of the population of children.

Figures are published by the NHS Business Services Authority and are available at the following link:

<https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/statistical-collections/dental-england/dental-statistics-england-202324>

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Consultants

Jon Trickett: **[15740]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much his Department has spent on consultants since 5 July 2024.

Karin Smyth:

Information regarding expenditure on consultants for the period since 5 July 2024 for the core Department is unavailable, as it is currently unaudited. Fully audited figures for the year from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 will be available upon the publication of the Department's Annual Report and Accounts (ARA) next year. The Accountability Report within the ARA includes a table on expenditure for Consultancy, Agency and Temporary workers.

■ Down's Syndrome

David Davis: **[15729]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 30 July 2024 to Question 1398 on Down Syndrome Act 2022, what recent progress his Department has made on producing statutory guidance under the Down Syndrome Act 2022; and whether he plans to publish that guidance before the end of the year.

Stephen Kinnock:

Officials are taking forward, as a priority, development of the Down Syndrome guidance, as required under the Down Syndrome Act 2022. Engagement with relevant stakeholders, including people with Down syndrome and organisations that

work in support of people with Down syndrome, people with other genetic conditions, and a learning disability, or both, is taking place to inform the guidance. Most recently, a roundtable on improving life outcomes for people with Down syndrome was held on 26 November 2024.

We expect to publish the draft guidance for public consultation as soon as possible in the new year.

■ **Family Hubs: Finance**

Steve Darling:

[\[15873\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to make a decision on funding for the Family Hubs and Start for Life programme beyond 31 March 2025.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Family Hubs and Start for Life programme is central to the Government's commitments to give every baby the best start in life, and to deliver the healthiest generation of children ever.

The Government recognises the importance of providing local authorities with certainty of future funding across the Family Hubs and Start for Life programme. The Autumn Budget announcement included £69 million to continue delivery of a network of Family Hubs in 2025/26. The Department will confirm Start for Life funding in due course.

■ **General Practitioners: Research**

Dan Tomlinson:

[\[16082\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has commissioned research into the factors causing increased GP consultation rates.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Department has not formally commissioned research into this topic. General practice consultation rates have increased in recent years, as a result of significant growth in the clinical workforce. This increase also represents a recovery from the abnormally low level of consultations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

■ **Heart Diseases: Screening**

Liam Conlon:

[\[16291\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of including in his 10 Year Plan offering young people pre-participation cardiac screening within the community.

Andrew Gwynne:

No assessment has been made on the potential merits of including community pre-participation cardiac screening into the 10-year plan.

This is because the UK National Screening Committee does not recommend offering screening for sudden cardiac death in people under the age of 39 years old.

Research showed that current tests are not accurate enough to use in young people without symptoms. Individuals with the condition may receive a negative test result, a false negative, giving them false reassurance.

Furthermore, individuals who do not have the condition may receive a positive test result, a false positive, which can lead to unnecessary tests, treatments, and caution against exercise, which itself is harmful.

■ Heart Diseases: Young People

Peter Fortune:

[\[16442\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of running a public health campaign raising awareness of cardiac risk in young people.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Government is committed to improving access to Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) in public spaces and reducing inequalities in access to these life saving devices. Following the depletion of the existing AED fund, launched in September 2023, the Government approved a further £500,000 in August 2024 to fulfil existing applications to the fund.

The Department selected a joint bid from Smarter Society as its independent partners to manage grant applications. Smarter Society has reviewed funding applications against requirements specified by the Department. These requirements are to ensure that resources are allocated to where there is the greatest need, for example remote communities with extended ambulance response times, places with high footfall and high population densities, hotspots for cardiac arrest, including sporting venues and venues with vulnerable people, and deprived areas.

■ Long Covid

Dr Caroline Johnson:

[\[15214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) people and (b) children are living with long covid.

Andrew Gwynne:

The most recent data from the Winter Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection Study, a joint study carried out by the Office for National Statistics and the UK Health Security Agency, shows that, for the period between 6 February 2024 and 7 March 2024, an estimated 1.8 million people across all ages, or 3.3% of the population, in private households in England, reported experiencing long COVID symptoms more than four weeks after a COVID-19 infection.

The data shows that for the same period, an estimated 111,816 or 1% of those aged between three and 17 years old, in private households in England and Scotland,

reported experiencing long COVID symptoms more than four weeks after a COVID-19 infection.

The data is available at the following link:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/conditionsanddiseases/datasets/>

■ Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency: Fees and Charges

Jim Shannon:

[15739]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the proposed reform of Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency statutory fees on investment in the UK market by medical technology companies in the (a) short and (b) long term.

Karin Smyth:

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) regulates medicines, medical devices, and blood components for transfusion in the United Kingdom.

Most of the MHRA's income comes from charging fees for its services. Its fees are set to recover the full cost of delivering the respective services. This is in compliance with the HM Treasury guidance, Managing Public Money.

The MHRA aims to update its fees every two years, so that it can continue to recover its costs. This ensures the agency's continued financial sustainability, and the ongoing delivery of its services.

The MHRA has recently consulted on its current fee uplift. The consultation has now closed, and they are analysing the responses. The Government response to the consultation should be published in the new year.

By ensuring that the MHRA is fully recovering costs, it is in a better position to deliver the level of service that industry, patients, and the public want and expect. The fees uplift is not expected to adversely impact the UK favourability in the short- or the long-term. Regular fee increases are standard practice across all regulators.

■ Mental Health Services: Disclosure of Information

Paula Barker:

[15868]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what he is taking to ensure effective intelligence sharing between mental health services and (a) the police and (b) other relevant services when a patient is deemed to pose a risk to the wider public.

Stephen Kinnock:

Mental health services work and engage with a range of services to manage patients identified as a potential risk. The nature of this engagement will vary depending on the nature and level of the risk. For example, this may be through formal processes such as multi-agency public protection arrangements.

In matters of national security, health services work with Counter Terrorism policing and the wider security sector to ensure that information is shared appropriately, to provide a complete picture of any risk, and to provide the right interventions and care for patients.

Local level arrangements will also be in place, as police forces are operationally independent. Whilst the roll out of the Right Care, Right Person approach has reduced the involvement of police in mental health incidents, they will continue to engage where there is a serious risk of harm, and local level arrangements have been put in place to support safe roll out between police, and health and social care services.

We intend to use the Code of Practice following the Mental Health Bill to further underline good practice for how mental health services should work with other services, including the police, to keep people safe, particularly regarding consideration of discharge.

■ **NHS: Negligence**

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[15838\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of his Department's spending relates to medical negligence and claims (a) nationally and (b) in Warrington North constituency.

Andrew Gwynne:

NHS Resolution (NHSR) manages clinical negligence and other claims against the National Health Service in England.

In NHSR's annual report and accounts, published on 23 July 2024, reports that the total of payments made by NHSR for clinical negligence claims in 2023/24 was £2,821,200,000. This is approximately 1.6% of the NHS resource budget.

Regarding the specific cost of clinical negligence claims in the Warrington North Constituency, NHSR has advised that it does not record the cost claims in the format requested.

■ **Nurses: Recruitment and Training**

Dan Tomlinson:

[\[16079\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of recent changes to funding for nurse training on (a) the recruitment of mature graduates and (b) other nurse recruitment; and what plans he has for future levels of medical school and nursing course places, in the context of recent trends in levels of NHS staffing.

Karin Smyth:

No such assessment has been made. Tuition fees and student maintenance loans for nursing training are set by the Department for Education. Through the Department of Health and Social Care, eligible students also continue to receive support whilst they

are studying, through the Learning Support Fund, which includes a non-repayable grant of £5,000 a year. The Government keeps the funding arrangements for all healthcare students under close review.

We have launched a 10-Year Health Plan to reform the National Health Service. A central and core part of this plan will be our workforce, and how we ensure we train and provide the staff the NHS needs, including doctors and nurses, to care for patients across our communities.

■ Nutrition

Jim Shannon:

[16167]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking with Cabinet colleagues to help encourage people to have healthy diets.

Andrew Gwynne:

Supporting people to stay healthier for longer is at the heart of this government's Health Mission. Government advice on a healthy, balanced diet is encapsulated in the United Kingdom's national food model, the Eatwell Guide. The Eatwell Guide depicts a healthy, balanced diet that is based on fruit, vegetables and higher fibre starchy carbohydrates. The Eatwell Guide principles are promoted through the NHS.uk website and the Government's social marketing campaign, Better Health, including Healthier Families and Start for Life. The guide is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-eatwell-guide>

The Healthy Start scheme was introduced in 2006 to encourage a healthy diet for pregnant women, babies, and young children under four from very low-income households. It can be used to buy, or put towards the cost of, fruit, vegetables, pulses, milk, and infant formula. Healthy Start beneficiaries have access to free Healthy Start Vitamins for pregnant women and children aged under four. In October 2024, Healthy Start supported over 353,000 beneficiaries; this figure is higher than the previous paper voucher scheme.

The School Fruit and Vegetable scheme provides children in Key Stage 1 at state-funded primary schools with a free portion of fruit or vegetable every school day, to help to encourage healthier eating.

The Government is also committed to implementing the advertising restrictions for less healthy food and drink on TV and online, bringing forward the necessary secondary legislation to deliver our commitment to ban the sale of high-caffeine energy drinks to children under 16 years old, and limiting school children's access to fast food. Further action under the Government's Health Mission will be set out in due course.

■ Pharmacy: Kent**Mike Martin:** [\[16382\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the name of the pharmacy most recently set up in Kent is; and when it was set up.

Mike Martin: [\[16383\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the name of the pharmacy most recently set up in the Tunbridge Wells constituency is; and when it was set up.

Stephen Kinnock:

The most recent pharmacy set up in Kent is Delmergate Ltd, located at Unit 4, Castle Hill Local Centre, 69 Cherry Orchard, Ebbsfleet, Kent, DA10 1AD. It's opening date was 19 July 2021.

The most recent pharmacy set up in the Tunbridge Wells constituency is Carrs Pharmacy, located on 94 Caverley Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent, TN21 2UN. It's opening date was 1 February 2011.

■ Pharmacy: Surrey**Monica Harding:** [\[16044\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many community pharmacies have closed in (a) Surrey and (b) Esher and Walton constituency in each year since 2019.

Monica Harding: [\[16045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of community pharmacy closures on (a) local health provision and (b) patient outcomes in (i) England and (ii) Surrey.

Stephen Kinnock:

Since 2019, there have been a total of 39 pharmacy closures in Surrey, and four in the Esher and Walton Constituency. In Surrey, this has broken down as: seven closures in 2019; six in 2020; four in 2021; two in 2022; and 15 in 2023, with a further five having closed between January and 30 September 2024. In Esher and Walton, there were no closures between 2019 and 2022. Three closed in 2023, and one closed between January and 30 September 2024.

We are aware of the reduction in the number of pharmacies in recent years, and recognise that pharmacy closures can impact on local communities. Local authorities are required to undertake a pharmaceutical needs assessment (PNA) every three years to assess whether their population is adequately served, and must keep these assessments under review. Integrated care boards give regard to the PNAs when reviewing applications from the new contractors. Contractors can also apply to open a new pharmacy to offer benefits to patients that were not foreseen by the PNA.

Patients can also access the approximately 400 Distance Selling Pharmacies who must operate nationally and send medicines to patients' home free of charge. In rural areas, dispensing doctors can also supply medicines.

■ Prostate Cancer: Screening

Edward Morello:

[\[16655\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to ensure that guidance to primary care clinicians on screening for prostate cancer includes reference to the potential impact of the BRCA2 gene variation on risk levels.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Prostate Cancer Risk Management Programme provides guidance for general practitioners on how to counsel men who have no symptoms but wish to have a Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) test for prostate cancer. It highlights the potential benefits and harms of PSA testing so that men including those at higher risk, such as men with a family history, can make an informed decision about whether to have the test.

The UK National Screening Committee is carrying out an evidence review of prostate cancer screening which includes looking at the evidence for targeted screening of specific high-risk groups, such as men over 50, Black men and those with a family history, such as carriers of the BRCA2 mutation. This will determine whether a PSA test-based screening programme for high-risk groups could provide more good than harm.

■ Respiratory System: Diseases

Jim Shannon:

[\[15750\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to ensure Integrated Care Systems are resourced to provide medicines for (a) chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and (b) other life-threatening respiratory diseases.

Andrew Gwynne:

As part of the 2024 Autumn Budget, the Government has allocated the National Health Service an extra £25.7 billion over this year and the next.

Medicines for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and other respiratory diseases are commissioned by local NHS integrated care boards, who are responsible for developing commissioning policies in line with national guidance.

NHS England has established 13 Respiratory Clinical Networks across the country. These have been vital in providing clinical leadership for respiratory services and supporting services in primary care.

■ Terrorism: Reading East**Paula Barker:**[\[15864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that (a) NHS England and (b) Berkshire Healthcare NHS Trust respond to Sir Adrian Fulford's prevention of future deaths report following the Forbury Garden terrorist incident in June 2020.

Andrew Gwynne:

It is the responsibility of the individual organisations named within a Report to Prevent Future Deaths to take action to address any identified failures. Following Sir Adrian Fulford's report, each organisation, including NHS England and the trusts, has written to the Judge Coroner, setting out what action they have taken to address the points he has made.

As a first step, NHS England included a requirement in the National Health Services' 2024/25 priorities and operational planning guidance that all integrated care boards (ICBs) 'review their community services by Q2 2024/25 to ensure that they have clear policies and practice in place for patients with serious mental illness, who require intensive community treatment and follow-up but where engagement is a challenge'. Further information on the 2024/25 priorities and operational planning guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/operational-planning-and-contracting/>

The outcome of these reviews and local action plans will be presented at the ICBs' Public Boards, to ensure the outcome of the review is transparent and locally led.

■ Trastuzumab Deruxtecan**Mike Martin:**[\[15984\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to help negotiate an agreement between (a) AstraZeneca, (b) Daiichi Sankyo and (c) the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence to ensure Enhertu can be prescribed on the NHS to women with breast cancer.

Karin Smyth:

Decisions on whether new medicines should be routinely funded by the National Health Service in England are made on the basis of recommendations from the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), following an evaluation of a treatment's costs and benefits. These are very difficult decisions to make, and it is important that they are made independently and on the basis of the available evidence.

The NICE published guidance in July 2024 on the use of Enhertu for the treatment of HER-2 low metastatic and unresectable breast cancer, and was unfortunately unable to recommend it for routine NHS funding. I understand that the NICE and NHS England have sought to apply as much flexibility as they can in their considerations of

Enhertu for HER2-low breast cancer, and have made it clear to the companies that their pricing of the drug remains the only obstacle to access.

Ministers recently met with the manufacturers of Enhertu, AstraZeneca, and Daiichi Sankyo, to encourage them to re-engage in commercial discussions with NHS England. Despite the NICE and NHS England offering unprecedented flexibilities, the companies were unable to offer Enhertu at a cost-effective price. The NICE's guidance, published in July, will therefore remain unchanged. Although the deadline for a rapid review has now passed, the NICE has reassured me that the door remains open for the companies to enter into a new NICE appraisal, if they are willing to offer Enhertu at a cost-effective price.

■ Tuberculosis

Dr Caroline Johnson:

[\[15273\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of rates of tuberculosis in (a) adults and (b) children in each of the last ten years.

Andrew Gwynne:

The following table shows the total number and rate of tuberculosis (TB) notifications in England, each year from 2012 to 2024:

YEAR	TOTAL NUMBER OF NOTIFICATIONS	TOTAL RATE PER 100,000 (95% CONFIDENCE INTERVAL)
2012	8,087	15.12 (14.79 to 15.45)
2013	7,266	13.49 (13.18 to 13.80)
2014	6,472	11.92 (11.63 to 12.21)
2015	5,735	10.47 (10.20 to 10.74)
2016	5,620	10.17 (9.90 to 10.44)
2017	5,067	9.11 (8.86 to 9.36)
2018	4,610	8.24 (8.00 to 8.48)
2019	4,704	8.36 (8.12 to 8.60)
2020	4,122	7.29 (7.07 to 7.52)
2021	4,411	7.80 (7.57 to 8.04)
2022	4,380	7.75 (7.52 to 7.98)
2023	4,850	Not available
2024	4155	Not available

Notes:

1. for 2023, the provisional data rate is awaited; and
2. for 2024, data is only available up to September.

Data on rates of TB in adults alone is not published. In line with the reporting to the World Health Organisation, children are defined as those aged under 15 years old. The following table shows the number and rate of TB notifications in children in England from 2012 to 2022:

YEAR	TOTAL NUMBER OF NOTIFICATIONS IN CHILDREN	RATE PER 100,000 (95% CONFIDENCE INTERVAL)
2012	396	4.2 (3.8 to 4.6)
2013	293	3.1 (2.7 to 3.4)
2014	263	2.7 (2.4 to 3.1)
2015	215	2.2 (1.9 to 2.5)
2016	208	2.1 (1.8 to 2.4)
2017	178	1.8 (1.5 to 2.1)
2018	147	1.4 (1.2 to 1.7)
2019	168	1.6 (1.4 to 1.9)
2020	148	1.4 (1.2 to 1.7)
2021	127	1.3 (1.1 to 1.5)
2022	136	1.3 (1.1 to 1.6)

Provisional data is not subdivided by age, hence the data in the tables is presented up to 2022, where age specific rates are available. TB rates in children have been declining since 2012 and remained stable at 1.3 per 100,000 in 2021 and 2022.

TB data for England is published by the UK Health Security Agency, and is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tuberculosis-in-england-2023-report-data-up-to-end-of-2022>

Provisional TB data for England is published quarterly, with the latest quarterly reports available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/tuberculosis-in-england-national-quarterly-reports>

Detailed data for 2023 will be published in the TB in England 2023 annual report.

■ Vaccination: Older People

Dr Caroline Johnson:

[\[15265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of elderly people have received their (a) influenza, (b) RSV and (c) covid-19 vaccination in the last six months.

Andrew Gwynne:

As of 17 November 2024, 68.7% of those aged 65 years old and over had been vaccinated for influenza, whilst 54.2% had been vaccinated for COVID-19.

The respiratory syncytial virus adult vaccination programme in England began on 1 September 2024, however only data for the catch-up cohort, adults aged 75 to 79 years old before the programme start date, has been published. As of 30 September, 22.6% of the catch-up cohort had been vaccinated. Further data will be published in due course.

■ Visual Impairment: Rehabilitation

Sir Julian Lewis:

[\[15716\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to extend the remit of the Care Quality Commission to include vision rehabilitation services for blind and partially sighted people.

Andrew Gwynne:

[Holding answer 28 November 2024]: Under the Care Act 2014, local authorities in England have a legal duty to support people with sight loss to develop practical skills and strategies to maintain independence.

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) is now assessing how local authorities are meeting the full range of their duties under Part 1 of the Care Act 2014. These assessments identify local authorities' strengths and areas for development, facilitating the sharing of good practice and helping us to target support where it is most needed.

Therefore, although the CQC is not currently required to assess vision rehabilitation services as a regulated activity, under the Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014, this does mean that sensory services, including vision rehabilitation, form part of the CQC's overall assessment of local authorities' delivery of adult social care. In that context, the CQC will report on sensory services when there is something important to highlight, for example, something being done well, innovative practice, or an area for improvement.

The CQC's reports and ratings of local authorities are made public on their website.

■ X-linked Hypophosphataemia**Jim Shannon:**[\[16163\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have been diagnosed with X-linked hypophosphatemia in the last two years.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Department does not hold the data requested. The Government is committed to improving the lives of those living with rare diseases, such as X-linked hypophosphatemia. The UK Rare Diseases Framework sets out four priorities collaboratively developed with the rare disease community; these include better coordination of care and improving access to specialist care, treatments, and drugs. We remain committed to delivering under the Framework and will publish an annual action plan for England in 2025.

Understanding patient data will facilitate access to treatments and care for patients. The National Congenital Anomaly and Rare Disease Registration Service (NCARDRS) collects data on people with rare diseases. In the 2023 action plan we committed under action 22 to improving the 'findability' of people living with rare diseases using the National Disease Registration Service. NCARDRS collects data from a variety of sources to support rare disease registration, including from eight highly specialised services currently to support rare disease registration. Discussions are underway with other highly specialised services to establish dataflows.

HOME OFFICE**■ Anti-social Behaviour: Motorcycles and Electric Bicycles****Vikki Slade:**[\[16650\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, to the Home Office, with reference to her Oral Statement of 27 November 2024 on Respect Orders and anti-social behaviour, whether police officers will be able to pursue (a) off road bikes and (b) e scooters when these vehicles are being used in (i) an anti-social or (b) dangerous manner.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The police are able to pursue off road bikes and electric scooters when they are used anti-socially or dangerously. Any decision on whether to undertake a pursuit is an operational one for the police and should take account of the risk factors and proportionality in each situation.

The Home Office works closely with the NPCC to understand how the safety of police pursuits can be improved.

■ Asylum

Rupert Lowe:

[\[15709\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will take steps to ensure that asylum seekers do not fraudulently use sexual orientation as part of the basis of their claim.

Dame Angela Eagle:

If any individual is found not to require the protection for which they have claimed asylum, then their claim will be refused.

Rupert Lowe:

[\[15710\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people whose application for asylum was initially refused were subsequently granted asylum in the last 15 years.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Home Office publishes data on asylum in the [‘Immigration System Statistics Quarterly Release’](#). Data on initial and latest outcomes of asylum claims is published annually in table Asy_D04 of the [‘Outcome analysis of asylum applications detailed datasets’](#). Information on how to use the dataset can be found in the ‘Notes’ page of the workbook. The latest data relates to claims made up to the end of 2023 with the latest case outcomes recorded as at July 2024. Please note that many claims, particularly from more recent years, will still be awaiting an initial decision or the outcome of an appeal or review and their latest case outcome will be subject to change.

■ Asylum: Employment

Susan Murray:

[\[15337\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of allowing asylum seekers to undertake paid work.

Dame Angela Eagle:

At present, asylum seekers who have had their claim outstanding for 12 months or more, through no fault of their own, can apply for permission to work. Those permitted to work are restricted to jobs on the Immigration Salary List. This list is based on expert advice from the independent Migration Advisory Committee.

■ Asylum: Hotels

Sir John Hayes:

[\[15169\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the potential cost to the public purse is for hotels that have opened to provide contingency accommodation for people seeking asylum since 5 July 2024.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Home Office regularly publishes details of the department's expenditure on asylum, published in the Home Office Annual Report and Accounts, available at [Home Office annual reports and accounts - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/home-office-annual-reports-and-accounts).

Rupert Lowe:**[15598]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the oral contribution by the Minister for Border Security and Asylum to the Urgent Question on Asylum Seekers: Hotel Accommodation of 20 November 2024, Official Report, column 277, in which constituencies the 220 hotels are; and what the star rating is of each hotel.

Dame Angela Eagle:

For the safety and security of residents and staff at its accommodation sites, the Home Office does not publish detail of each site in use. However, data on the number of supported asylum seekers in accommodation, by local authority and accommodation type, can be found within the Asy_D11 tab for the most recent stats release: [Immigration system statistics data tables - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-data-tables).

Rachel Taylor:**[15938]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to reduce the number of asylum seekers being housed in hotels in the West Midlands.

Dame Angela Eagle:

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

This Government inherited an asylum system under unprecedented strain, with thousands stuck in a backlog without their claims being processed.

The Home Secretary took immediate action by restarting asylum processing and scrapping the unworkable Rwanda policy. This will save an estimated £4 billion for the taxpayer over the next two years. We are delivering a major uplift in returns to remove people with no right to be in the UK. Over the long term this will reduce our reliance on hotels and costs of accommodation.

We remain absolutely committed to ending the use of hotels to accommodate asylum seekers as part of this programme to reduce overall asylum costs.

■ Asylum: Rwanda**Chris Philp:****[16235]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to her Oral Statement of 22 July 2024 on Border Security and Asylum, Official Report, columns 384-387, if she will publish a breakdown of the £700 million.

Dame Angela Eagle:

I refer the Honourable Member to my answer of 25th November to question UIN 15092.

■ Community Policing: Cambridgeshire

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[\[16677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how Cambridgeshire Constabulary will benefit from the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee.

Dame Diana Johnson:

As part of the Government's Safer Streets mission, the Home Secretary has made a clear commitment to strengthen neighbourhood policing through the introduction of a Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee.

This includes delivering an additional 13,000 police officers, PCSOs and special constables in neighbourhood policing roles up and down the country.

We are working closely with policing to implement this commitment and will announce our plans for the delivery of neighbourhood officers shortly.

■ Domestic Abuse: Victim Support Schemes

Sir John Hayes:

[\[15647\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to help support victims of domestic abuse in (a) rural and (b) remote areas.

Jess Phillips:

This Government recognises that victims in rural and remote areas face particular barriers to fleeing abuse and accessing support. That is why we continue to fund specialist domestic abuse helplines for victims across England and Wales to enable everyone to access advice and support.

We are already driving forward a range of activities which will support rural victims. The Victims and Prisoners Act will require local commissioners to develop joint needs assessments for victims of domestic abuse to identify and address gaps in support. Furthermore, on 24 October, the Home Secretary announced a package of reforms to improve the police response to victims of VAWG related crimes.

Our new VAWG strategy to be published next year will lay out our plans for any future initiatives and research, including for victims in rural and remote areas.

■ Entry Clearances: Palestinians

Abtisam Mohamed:

[\[15675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many entry clearance applications from Palestinians in Gaza have been approved since 7 October 2023.

Abtisam Mohamed:

[\[15676\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many requests for (a) predetermination and (b) biometric excusal have been granted to Palestinians in Gaza seeking to reunite with family members in the UK since 7 October 2023.

Abtisam Mohamed:

[15677]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Palestinians in Gaza seeking to reunite with family members in the UK have died while waiting for her Department to decide requests for (a) predetermination and (b) biometric excusal since 7 October 2023.

Seema Malhotra:

Since 7 October 2023, the Home Office have granted 143 predetermination requests, and 5 biometric excusal requests to Palestinians located in Gaza.

The Home Office is aware from legal representatives that two Palestinian nationals located in Gaza died before their applications for predetermination/bio excusal had been concluded.

■ Fire and Rescue Services: Floods

Alex Mayer:

[15664]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many flooding incidents the fire and rescue services have responded to in England in each year since 2010.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The latest available data (year ending March 2024) on the number flooding incidents attended by Fire and rescue Services in England is published in FIRE0901, available here:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67165e5c9242eccc6c849b5e/fire-statistics-data-tables-fire0901-241024.xlsx>

This provides the number of flooding incidents by year for England, for each fire and rescue service (FRS), designated as either metropolitan or non-metropolitan, for each FRS, designated as either predominantly rural, significantly rural, or predominantly urban, and for each individual FRS.

The table below provides the number of flooding incidents in England between the years ending March 2010 and years ending March 2024.

YEAR ENDING MARCH	NUMBER OF FLOODING INCIDENTS
2010	15,069
2011	16,784
2012	11,886
2013	17,908
2014	14,486
2015	12,391
2016	13,714

YEAR ENDING MARCH	NUMBER OF FLOODING INCIDENTS
2017	14,120
2018	15,674
2019	13,370
2020	15,543
2021	14,922
2022	15,959
2023	17,837
2024	17,797

■ Food: Undocumented Migrants

Rupert Lowe:

[15593]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much was spent on food for irregular migrants housed in hotels in each year since 2018.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Home Office has a statutory obligation to support and accommodate asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute. It does not collect or publish a breakdown of the resulting costs by type.

The total expenditure on asylum is published in the Home Office Annual Report and Accounts, available at HO annual reports and accounts: [Home Office annual reports and accounts - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/114444/2023-24-annual-report-and-accounts).

■ Gender Based Violence

Samantha Niblett:

[15893]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking with (a) regional mayoralities and (b) wider local government to help tackle violence against women and girls.

Jess Phillips:

This Government has set out an ambition to halve violence against women and girls (VAWG) within a decade and will treat it as the national emergency that it is. Achieving this requires a transformative approach to the way we work together across Government, public services, the private sector, and charities.

We are already driving forward a range of activities which will support local governments to tackle VAWG. We are continuing to implement Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act to ensure that victims of domestic abuse are able to access

accommodation-based support. The Victims and Prisoners Act will require local commissioners, which includes Police and Crime Commissioners and local authorities, to identify and address gaps in support for victims of domestic abuse, and we also continue to champion the work being done by many PCCs and Deputy Mayors for Crime and Policing to tackle violence against women and girls in their local areas.

■ Hate Crime: Disability

Rebecca Paul: [\[15972\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential implications for her policies of the recommendation in the report by The Law Commission entitled Hate Crime Laws: Final Report, published on 6 December 2021, HC 942, that hate crime law be reformed to offer greater protections for disabled persons.

Dame Diana Johnson:

As set out in our manifesto, we have committed to changing hate crime legislation to bring parity of protection for disabled people under the aggravated offences. This mirrors one of the recommendations made by the Law Commission in 2021.

■ Homes for Ukraine Scheme

Josh Babarinde: [\[15670\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has for the Homes for Ukraine Scheme beyond April 2025.

Seema Malhotra:

To provide future certainty, Ukrainians who have been provided with sanctuary in the UK under the Ukraine schemes will be able to apply for 18 months further permission to remain in the UK through a bespoke Ukraine Permission Extension (UPE) scheme due to open in early 2025.

The Homes for Ukraine scheme will also remain open, uncapped and free of charge for Ukrainians to apply to come to the UK.

■ Immigration: Palestinians

Abtisam Mohamed: [\[15673\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to enable Palestinians from Gaza to be reunited with their family members in the UK.

Seema Malhotra:

Palestinian nationals who wish to come to the UK and do not have a current UK visa can apply under one of the existing visa routes available.

The routes available for families to reunite will depend on the status of the sponsor. Options available may include appendix family reunion, appendix family migration -

where the sponsor is a British national or has indefinite leave, and can also include dependents of those with most work or certain postgraduate study visas.

Any application for a UK visa will be assessed against the requirements of the Immigration Rules.

It is the decision of the Israeli authorities as to who can leave Gaza.

Abtisam Mohamed:

[\[15674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to collect biometric data from Palestinians seeking to reunite with family members in the UK in the absence of a functioning visa application centre in Gaza.

Seema Malhotra:

In most circumstances, foreign nationals who are required to apply for entry clearance to come to the UK are required to enrol their biometrics in the form of a facial image and fingerprints as part of the application process.

The Visa Application Centre in Gaza has been closed since 7 October 2023 due to the conflict in the region and to ensure the safety of staff and customers. UKVI will continue to monitor the situation and work closely with the supplier, VFS, to re-open the centre when it becomes safe to do so.

In the interim, those who wish to make a UK visa application are required to enrol their biometrics at an alternative Visa Application Centre. For those in OPT this includes Ramallah or Jerusalem. Customers can visit [Welcome to VFS Global | vfsglobal](#) for an up to date list of Visa Application Centres in the region.

The Government is working with the Israeli, Jordanian and Egyptian authorities to identify alternative safe routes for British nationals and other eligible people to leave Gaza. Ultimately, it is at the discretion of the Israeli authorities as to who can leave Gaza.

■ Migrants: Detainees

Abtisam Mohamed:

[\[15681\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of implementing the recommendations of the 14th Report of Session 2017-19 of the Home Affairs Committee entitled Immigration Detention, HC 913, published on 12 March 2019, in the context of her Department's review of the Adults at Risk in Immigration Detention policy.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Adults at Risk review is a wholesale review of the policy, including Rule 34 and Rule 35 of the detention centre rules. Accordingly, the review will engage broadly with some of the themes in the Report, since the focus of the review centres on vulnerability in detention.

Abtisam Mohamed: [\[15682\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has had discussions with (a) people that have experienced immigration detention and (b) charities and NGOs on the review of the Adults at Risk in Immigration Detention policy.

Dame Angela Eagle:

We will be engaging with NGOs as part of the review at the appropriate time, to ensure that they have the opportunity to share their views and experiences of working with those who have been in immigration detention.

■ **Offenders: Foreign Nationals**

Rupert Lowe: [\[15891\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an estimate of the average amount of time that elapsed between the arrival in the UK of foreign nationals who go on to offend and the date of their offence by nationality in the last 12 months.

Dame Angela Eagle:

I refer the Honourable Member to the Answer I gave on 27 November to his Question UIN 15076.

■ **Official Visits: Sanctions**

Jim Shannon: [\[16149\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what guidance her Department issues on inviting people sanctioned by foreign Governments to the UK.

Dan Jarvis:

The Immigration Rules provide for the refusal of entry clearance, permission to enter and permission to stay on general grounds, regardless of the category in which an individual makes an application.

A person will usually be refused on general grounds if there is any evidence in their background, immigration history, criminal records or past behaviour which shows that they should not be allowed to enter or stay in the UK.

Guidance is published on Gov.UK.

■ **People Smuggling**

Sir John Hayes: [\[15636\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what criteria her Department plans to use to assess the effectiveness of its policy to tackle smuggling gangs involved in illegally trafficking people into the UK.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Government will make further statements in due course regarding the ways in which progress on its key priorities will be assessed.

■ Radicalism

Nadia Whittome: [\[15694\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish the terms of reference for the ongoing rapid review into extremism.

Dan Jarvis:

The Home Secretary will report on the Government's plans to tackle extremism in due course, including setting out the scope and findings of the rapid review carried out in this area.

■ Shoplifting: Prosecutions

Rupert Lowe: [\[15848\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 18 November 2024 to Question 13342 on Shoplifting Prosecutions, what estimate her Department has made of the (a) number of people who avoided charges and (b) value of goods lost because of the effective immunity on shoplifted goods under £200 in value in the last three years.

Dame Diana Johnson:

It is not possible to estimate the number of people who have avoided criminal sanctions, or the value of items stolen, as a result of the effective immunity on shoplifted goods under £200 introduced by the last Government.

However, this Government will send a clear message that all those who take part in this criminality should face the full force of the law and we are determined to remove any perception that offenders will escape punishment. That's why we will end the effective immunity granted to shop theft of goods under £200.

This Government will also introduce a new offence of assaulting a retail worker to protect the hardworking and dedicated staff that work in stores, because everybody has a right to feel safe on the job.

■ Undocumented Migrants

Rupert Lowe: [\[15699\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what contractors provide what services related to irregular migration at what cost to the public purse.

Rupert Lowe: [\[15700\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with what companies for what services at what cost to the public purse her Department has contracts relating to (a) dispersal and (b) contingency accommodation for asylum seekers.

Dame Angela Eagle:

Information about contracts worth over £12,000 (including VAT) agreed by the Government and its agencies is available at: [Contracts Finder - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/contracts-finder).

The Home Office publishes information on asylum expenditure in the Home Office Annual Report and Accounts at [Home Office annual reports and accounts - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/115122/2023-24-annual-report-and-accounts.pdf).

■ Undocumented Migrants: English Channel

Rupert Lowe: **[15613]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps the Government is taking to use (a) section 24(1)(a) of the Immigration Act 1971 and (b) section 2 of the Asylum & Immigration Act 2004 to stop people entering the country via small boats.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Nationality and Borders Act 2022 amended Section 24(1)(a) of the Immigration Act 1971, to introduce tougher criminal offences for those attempting to enter the United Kingdom (UK) illegally or found to be facilitating illegal immigration.

Since the Act came into force on 28 June 2022, Home Office Immigration Enforcement teams have pursued a number of suspects for offences brought in under the Nationality and Borders Act 2022.

For example, in the current calendar year to 18 November 2024, 53 individuals identified as small boat pilots have been convicted under the Act.

■ Undocumented Migrants: Hotels

Rupert Lowe: **[15391]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether there is an official process to inform local residents when a hotel is used to house irregular migrants.

Dame Angela Eagle:

For the safety, security and wellbeing of those individuals staying in Home Office accommodation and the staff who work there, we do not disclose information about specific hotels which may or may not be utilised by the Home Office to the general public.

However, to ensure that views of key external stakeholders are sought and partners are engaged, the Home Office works with Regional Strategic Migration Partnerships to engage directly with local authorities and other statutory partners when there are plans to open a hotel in their local area.

Rupert Lowe: **[15392]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many hotels have been used to house irregular migrants since 2018.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Home Office does not publish data on the number of hotels in use. However, we can confirm that hotel use peaked at more than 400 under the previous government.

Rupert Lowe:

[\[15393\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the cost of providing security services to hotels used for housing irregular migrants was in each year since 2018.

Dame Angela Eagle:

Security for asylum accommodation is part of the service requirements that are provided by the Home Office accommodation providers under the Asylum Accommodation and Support Contracts (AASC). The HO does not publish a breakdown of costs by individual elements of the AASC service - and could only do so at disproportionate cost

■ **Undocumented Migrants: Housing**

Rupert Lowe:

[\[15603\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will encourage local authorities with (a) hotels and (b) other accommodation housing irregular migrants to impose (i) Public Space Protection Orders and (ii) Community Protection Notices around (A) hotels, (B) schools and (C) other public spaces.

Dame Angela Eagle:

It is for each relevant agency to decide how best to effectively implement PSPOs and CPNs in their local areas depending on the specific circumstances they are dealing with. The Home Office has published statutory guidance to support local areas to make effective use of those powers.

■ **Undocumented Migrants: NHS and Welfare State**

Lee Anderson:

[\[15501\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department is taking steps to prevent (a) undocumented and (b) illegal migrants in the UK workforce from accessing (i) NHS and (ii) welfare services.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The UK has in place a framework of laws, policies and administrative arrangements to regulate migrant access to work, benefits and services. These measures ensure only those who are lawfully present and with the right to access are able to do so, whilst preventing access for those not entitled.

Migrants in the UK without lawful status are subject to a No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) condition, which prevents them from accessing most publicly funded benefits and services. An individual's immigration status is checked prior to administering benefits and service. Benefits are either denied or terminated where an individual is subject to an NRPF condition.

■ Undocumented Migrants: Public Opinion**Rupert Lowe:** [\[15294\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has commissioned public opinion polling on irregular migration in the last five years.

Dame Angela Eagle:

Contracts are in place for polling on a range of Home Office policy areas, including irregular migration.

■ Undocumented Migrants: Pupils**Rupert Lowe:** [\[15714\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether officials from her Department are responsible for collecting irregular migrants attending school at the end of each day.

Dame Angela Eagle:

No.

■ Undocumented Migrants: Temporary Accommodation**Rupert Lowe:** [\[15702\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what information her Department holds on the number of irregular migrants in (a) contingency and (b) dispersal accommodation broken down into (i) single and (ii) multiple occupancy rooms, in the latest period for which data is available.

Dame Angela Eagle:

Data on the number of supported asylum seekers in accommodation, by local authority and accommodation type, can be found within the Asy_D11 tab for our most recent stats release: [Immigration system statistics data tables - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)\(opens in a new tab\) \(opens in a new tab\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-data-tables). The Home Office does not publish data disaggregated by room type.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Samantha Niblett:** [\[901562\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what role her Department expects the (a) Mayoral Council and (b) Leaders Council to play in supporting regional governance.

Jim McMahon:

The Mayoral Council will support regional governance by building stronger partnership working between the UK Government and Mayors of Combined Authorities to deliver economic growth and effective public services.

The Leaders Council brings together ministers and local leaders, who know their communities best, to tackle shared problems and co-design policy solutions.

Jon Trickett:

[\[901563\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of funding for local government.

Jim McMahon:

We are taking immediate action to begin addressing the challenges facing local government by ensuring that funding goes to the places that need it most.

At the Autumn Budget, we announced over £4 billion in additional funding for local government services, including £1.3 billion which will go through the Settlement.

Peter Lamb:

[\[901567\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what role the Office of Local Government will play in examining council spending.

Jim McMahon:

We are currently reviewing the role of Office for Local Government and we will announce the outcome shortly. Scrutiny of council spending is clearly important, and that is why we are committed to overhauling the broken local audit system we inherited.

We have already taken decisive action to help clear the significant backlog of unaudited accounts and will shortly set out longer-term plans to fix local audit.

Olly Glover:

[\[901568\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will have discussions with Cabinet colleagues on the potential merits of reforming the electoral system used to elect Members of Parliament.

Rushanara Ali:

The Government has no plans to change the voting system for Parliamentary elections.

■ Care Homes: Finance

Martin Wrigley:

[\[15665\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions she has had with local authorities on the level of funding for care homes.

Jim McMahon:

The Department works closely with local government and other government departments to understand specific demand and cost pressures facing local government on an ongoing basis. This involves looking at a range of cost and demand data, as well as regular engagement with local authorities.

These engagements have informed the 2025-2026 Settlement, where the Government is providing over £10 billion in 2025-26 Settlement funding for social

care through the Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund (MSIF), Better Care Fund (including discharge funding), Social Care Grant, Children's Social Care Prevention Grant and Children and Families Grant.

Local authorities are responsible for deciding how they use available funding to fulfil their duties under the Care Act (2014). The Department recognises the significant pressures that councils are facing and will ensure that councils are able to continue to deliver the services their communities rely on.

We will set out allocations at the provisional Settlement in December, on which we will consult, and we will continue to work closely with local government to review specific demand and cost pressures to ensure councils are supported in delivering essential services.

■ Government Departments: Trade Unions

Kevin Hollinrake: [\[15443\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 30 October 2024 to Question 10435 on Government Departments: Trade Unions, what the check-off arrangements in her Department are.

Alex Norris:

The Department for Housing, Communities and Local Government honours the historic contractual rights of employees to pay subscriptions via a check off arrangement. Existing payroll mechanisms are in place to facilitate this.

■ High Speed 2 Line: Construction

Alex Mayer: [\[13899\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate she has made of the amount of private finance required to deliver the HS2 Euston quarter development.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Department for Transport is responsible for delivering tunnelling for HS2 to Euston, as well as developing a much-improved station site.

To support the delivery of a significant number of homes alongside this project, MHCLG has established the Euston Housing Delivery Group. As outlined in the Written Ministerial Statement made on 31 October 2024 ([HCWS182](#)), the Delivery Group will be chaired by Bek Seeley and will be made up of industry experts in urban design, architecture, affordable housing delivery and the financing of large-scale projects.

Identifying the infrastructure, services, and green space required for the area, as well as the private finance needed to deliver the scheme, is a core objective for the group in the coming months. It will be for the delivery group to determine and advise on the quantum of private finance required to deliver wider regeneration around Euston.

We will continue to update Parliament on the work of the Delivery Group.

■ Homelessness

Mike Amesbury:

[\[15663\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will publish a timetable for (a) the consultation period and (b) the publication date for the cross-government strategy on homelessness; and what steps she will take to ensure it involves people with lived experience,

Rushanara Ali:

The Deputy Prime Minister is leading cross-government work to deliver the long-term solutions we need to get us back on track to ending all forms of homelessness. This includes chairing a dedicated Inter-Ministerial Group, bringing together ministers from across government to develop a long-term strategy.

We have also established an Expert Group to bring together representatives from across the homelessness and rough sleeping sector, local and combined authorities and wider experts to help Government understand what is working well nationally and locally and where improvements are needed.

We will engage with those with lived experience through a lived experience forum to ensure their voices are reflected in the homelessness strategy.

We expect to publish the strategy following the conclusion of Phase 2 of the Spending Review in late spring.

■ Housing: Autism

Dan Tomlinson:

[\[16085\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that adults with autism receive suitable advice on housing.

Matthew Pennycook:

Legislation is in place which requires local authorities to ensure that advice and information on how to apply for social housing is accessible and that any necessary assistance in making an application is made available for people who are likely to have difficulty in doing so without assistance.

For autistic adults already living in social housing, registered providers of social housing are required to deliver the outcomes set out in the Regulator of Social Housing's Transparency, Influence and Accountability standard. This requires registered providers to understand the diverse needs of their tenants, to ensure that communication with tenants is appropriate to their diverse needs, and to ensure that landlord services are accessible.

■ Housing: Construction

Dan Tomlinson:

[\[16086\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of housing regulations on the (a) number of windows, (b) size of windows, (c) natural light and (d) residents' wellbeing in new homes.

Alex Norris:

Building regulations do not place specific restrictions on the number, type or size of windows. Windows can contribute to the health and wellbeing of occupants by providing daylight, ventilation and regulating temperatures. Part O of the Building Regulations, which was introduced in 2021, requires that new buildings are built to mitigate the risk of overheating.

New residential buildings, including houses, flats, residential care homes, student accommodation, and children's homes must now be designed to minimise unwanted heat from the sun and to allow windows to be opened to provide appropriate ventilation and to remove excess heat when it is cooler outside than inside.

This is an important part of our work to adapt our country to face climate change, and it will protect the most vulnerable, the elderly and the very young where they live and sleep. Our expectation is that there will continue to be adequate daylight for occupiers of buildings.

■ Leasehold: Fees and Charges

Mike Amesbury:

[\[15658\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of leasehold fees on the (a) mental health and (b) finances of leaseholders.

Matthew Pennycook:

The government recognises that far too many leaseholders are struggling with punitive and escalating ground rents; unjustified permissions and administration fees; unreasonable or extortionate charges; and onerous conditions imposed with little or no consultation.

As set out in the Written Ministerial Statement made on 21 November 2024 ([HCWS244](#)), we have a clear plan to implement those reforms to the leasehold system already in statute and to progress the wider set of reforms necessary to finally bring the feudal leasehold system to an end.

■ Right to Buy Scheme

Mr Will Forster:

[R] [\[16043\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to introduce a moratorium on Right to Buy sales before proposed changes come into effect.

Matthew Pennycook:

The government does not intend to introduce a moratorium on Right to Buy sales before any further changes come into effect.

■ **Service Charges****Marie Goldman:**[\[15693\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will legislate to cap annual service charge rises at consumer price index inflation rates.

Matthew Pennycook:

I refer the Hon Member to the answer to Question UIN [7465](#) on 15 October 2024

■ **Social Rented Housing: Dagenham and Rainham****Margaret Mullane:**[\[15151\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what progress her Department has made on increasing the number of social housing available in Dagenham and Rainham constituency.

Matthew Pennycook:

I refer my Hon Friend to my answer to Question UIN [11383](#) on 31 October 2024.

■ **UK Shared Prosperity Fund: Wales****Ben Lake:**[\[16233\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how much funding her Department plans to provide through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to projects in Wales in the (a) 2024-25 and (b) 2025-26 financial year by project.

Alex Norris:

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) operates under a delegated delivery model, meaning lead local authorities are responsible for managing the funding for their area and the allocation of funds to projects.

Lead local authorities in Wales have been paid £260 million of the £307 million Core UKSPF allocation and £5 million of the £35 million Multiply allocation available to them this financial year for delivery up to March 2025. The outstanding amounts remain available to be paid to lead local authorities at the end of the financial year, based on actual spend. We intend to confirm allocations for 2025-26 as soon as possible.

JUSTICE**■ Courts: Fines**

Rupert Lowe: [\[15369\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the total amount of outstanding court fines are.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Financial penalties imposed by the courts will often consist of multiple elements including, amongst others, compensation, victim surcharge, prosecutor's costs and a fine.

The Government takes the recovery and enforcement of all financial impositions very seriously and remains committed to ensuring impositions are paid. The courts will do everything within their powers to trace those who do not pay and use a variety of sanctions to ensure the recovery of criminal fines and financial penalties. These sanctions can include deducting money from an individual offender's earnings or benefits, if they are unemployed, or issuing warrants instructing approved enforcement agents to seize and sell goods belonging to the offender. If the offender does not pay as ordered and the money cannot be recovered by other means, then the court can take other actions which includes sending them to prison for non-payment of the financial penalty including a fine.

The total amount of outstanding fines is published annually in note 4 of the HMCTS Trust Statement. ([Trust Statement 2023-24](#)).

The amount outstanding at 31 March 2024 was £1,064,286,669.

■ Fraud: Internet

Jim Shannon: [\[16162\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people have been convicted of online fraud in the last 12 months.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The Ministry of Justice publishes data on convictions for a wide range of offences, including fraud up to and including June 2024 in the Outcomes by Offences data tool, that can be downloaded from the Criminal Justice Statistics landing page here:

[Criminal justice statistics - GOV.UK.](#)

However, data held centrally does not include if the fraud offence involved online activity. This information may be held in the court records but to examine individual court records would be of disproportionate costs.

■ People Smuggling: English Channel

Rupert Lowe: [\[15394\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people smugglers have been sentenced in relation to irregular migration across the English Channel since 2018.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The Ministry of Justice publishes data on offenders sentenced for irregular migration offences at criminal courts in England and Wales in the Outcomes by Offences data tool, that can be downloaded from the Criminal Justice Statistics landing page here: [Criminal Justice Statistics Quarterly: June 2024](#).

However, data held centrally does not include information on whether offenders were people smugglers involved in irregular migration specifically across the English Channel. This information may be held in court records but to examine individual court records would be of disproportionate costs.

Prisoners' Release: Homelessness

Ian Lavery: [\[15423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of temporarily housing acquitted remand prisoners who are homeless.

Ian Lavery: [\[15426\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prison leavers there were (a) in total and (b) in permanent homes in April (i) 2023 and (ii) 2024.

Ian Lavery: [\[15428\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many high risk prison leavers have no fixed address.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The Government inherited a prison system in crisis, in which the remand prison population has risen to record highs. We are committed to working with partners across the criminal justice system to ensure this is effectively managed, including looking at resettlement support to those who have served a period of time on remand and were subsequently acquitted. The rehabilitation contracts for specialist accommodation support have been extended to include remanded and unsentenced people in prison, including those who are un-convicted, held on remand and then acquitted. We know that a settled place to live is key to help people reintegrate with communities and reduce the likelihood of reoffending, as prison leavers without settled accommodation on release are almost 50 percent more likely to reoffend than those with settled accommodation.

Data on accommodation outcomes on release from prison are published annually and include total releases and settled accommodation outcomes. Monthly and annual data for the period April 2019 – March 2024 is in the 'Housed on Release from Custody' tables, available here: [Offender Accommodation Outcomes, update to March 2024 - GOV.UK](#). The data for April 2024 - March 2025 is due for publication in July 2025.

Accommodation outcomes for prison leavers are recorded against the categories of settled accommodation, other housed, bail/probation accommodation, homeless (not rough sleeping) and rough sleeping, rather than 'no fixed address'. An individual's

risk of serious harm level is determined in accordance with the Risk of Serious Harm guidance, available here: [Risk of Serious Harm Guidance](#). In the year to March 2024, 4.7% of the total caseload of offenders were high risk of harm offenders and released homeless or rough sleeping.

Prison leavers at risk of becoming homeless and who are supervised by probation can be offered up to 12 weeks of basic accommodation on release by HM Prisons and Probation, with support to move to settled accommodation. This programme has been gradually rolled out nationwide since July 2021 and since then has supported over 12,200 prison leavers who would otherwise have been homeless.

■ Trials

Rupert Lowe:

[15708]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will make an estimate of the proportion of (a) Magistrate Court, (b) Crown Court and (c) County Court trials that have collapsed due to (i) delay and (ii) error by the Crown Prosecution Service in each of the last five years.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

We have interpreted this question as an estimate of the proportion of ineffective trials at the criminal courts that have not gone ahead on the day as planned in the last 5 years. We do not hold data that details delay or error by the Crown Prosecution Service. The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) is also not involved in County Court proceedings and therefore the answer to this question covers the criminal jurisdiction only.

There are multiple reasons why a trial may not go ahead on the day, as planned. These include other cases over-running and there being insufficient court time, prosecution or defence witnesses being absent, the defendant not attending when required and either the prosecution or defence not being ready to proceed.

The Ministry of Justice publishes data on trial effectiveness for a wide range of reasons, up to and including data to December 2023, in the Trial Effectiveness at the Criminal Courts tool. This can be downloaded from the latest Criminal Court Statistics publication here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/criminal-court-statistics-quarterly-october-to-december-2023>.

Our latest published data at the end of December 2023 shows that the ineffective trial rate at the Crown Court sat at 27%. Similarly, the ineffective trial rate at the Magistrates' Court sat at 22%.

Across all jurisdictions, we are working closely with partners across the justice system to improve readiness of cases for hearing at court and reduce delays. This includes the use of Case Coordinators to improve adherence to the principles of Better Case Management. These principles link key initiatives to improve the way cases are processed through the system, covering areas such as robust case management, reduced but more effective hearings, and compliance with the rules and directions of the criminal court. The proof-of-concept is currently scheduled to

conclude in August 2025, and the full evaluation at that point will test the business case for any further rollout.

The Criminal Courts Improvement Group (CCIG), chaired by the Senior Presiding Judge, works to improve adherence to Better Case Management Principles. CCIG focuses on improving efficiency across the system and aims to improve case management practices.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ **Gambling: Northern Ireland**

Jim Shannon:

[\[16159\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what discussions he has had with the Northern Ireland executive on gambling laws.

Hilary Benn:

Gambling policy is devolved to the Northern Ireland Executive. It is for the Northern Ireland Department of Communities to consider any changes to gambling laws.

■ **Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act 2023**

Dr AI Pinkerton:

[\[16413\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, with reference to the Written Statement of 29 July 2024 on the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act 2023, HCWS30, what steps he plans to take to consult stakeholders on proposals relating to that Act.

Hilary Benn:

As part of my commitment to repeal and replace the Legacy Act, I am undertaking a wide range of engagements, consulting with interested parties, including victims and survivors, veterans, statutory bodies, Northern Ireland political parties, and wider civil society. This of course includes continued close discussion with the Irish Government, which this Government considers to be a valued partner in this process. These discussions focus on finding a pragmatic way forward that can both comply with human rights and command public confidence. I am encouraged by the willingness of those I have met to date to engage constructively, and I look forward to further discussions in the period ahead.

Dr AI Pinkerton:

[\[16419\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, with reference to the judgment in Summary of judgment - In re Dillon and others - NI Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act 2023 - CA, whether he plans to repeal Section 44 of the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act 2023.

Hilary Benn:

The Government remains committed to repealing and replacing the Legacy Act. In my statement to the House on 29 July, I made clear my commitment to propose

measures to allow inquests previously halted under Section 44 of the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act 2023 to proceed. I intend to implement the changes to the Act that I have promised, including allowing Troubles-related inquests to continue and reinstating prospective civil proceedings.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

■ Gender Based Violence: Digital Technology

Samantha Niblett:

[\[15895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what recent assessment he has made of the potential effectiveness of (a) artificial intelligence and (b) other digital innovation for tackling violence against women and girls.

Feryal Clark:

Innovative technology solutions are key to improving online safety outcomes and delivering the government's commitment to halving violence against women and girls in a decade. The Online Safety Act and Ofcom's codes of practice are designed to keep pace with emerging technologies, with Ofcom continuing to research, review and, if necessary, iterate their codes of practice to adapt to technological developments.

On 20th November the government published a draft Statement of Strategic Priorities for online safety. This sets out five priorities, including the expectation that services are safe by design to improve the safety of all users and tackle violence against women and girls, as well as the importance of innovation in online safety technologies.

■ Smart Infrastructure Pilots Programme: Finance

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[\[16682\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he plans to extend funding for the Smart Infrastructure Pilots Programme beyond March 2025.

Chris Bryant:

Through the Programme, six local authorities are installing "smart" multi-purpose columns or lampposts, to test the benefits of this hosting multiple services, such as mobile connectivity, electric vehicle charging, Wifi and CCTV.

The Government is currently carrying out an evaluation of the Programme, which is due to conclude next year. We will decide our next steps following this process.

TRANSPORT**■ Baldock Station: Access****Chris Hinchliff:****[15697]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of disabled access at Baldock station; and whether her Department plans to upgrade access to that station.

Simon Lightwood:

This government is committed to improving the accessibility of Britain's railway and recognise the social and economic benefits this brings to communities.

Ministers are carefully considering the best approach to the Access for All programme. We are unable to comment on next steps regarding specific stations, including at Baldock station. Once we can confirm our approach to Access for All programme, we will ensure MPs and stakeholders are informed.

■ Bus Services: Concessions**Mr Will Forster:****[16385]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of widening the accessibility criteria for the English national concessionary travel scheme to include peak travel for disabled bus pass holders to help ensure that they can reach (a) work and (b) educational commitments.

Mr Will Forster:**[16386]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what information her Department holds on the number of local authorities in England which provide bus travel concessions beyond the legal statutory requirements of the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme.

Simon Lightwood:

The English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) provides free off-peak bus travel to those with eligible disabilities and those of state pension age, currently sixty-six. Local authorities in England have the power to go beyond their statutory obligations under the ENCTS and offer additional discretionary concessions, such as extending the times at which concessionary passes can be used.

The Department publishes statistics on concessionary travel annually on GOV.UK at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/concessionary-travel-statistics-year-ending-march-2024/concessionary-travel-statistics-year-ending-march-2024>. For the year ending March 2025, 83 out of 85 Travel Concessionary Authorities are offering some form of enhanced discretionary concession in addition to meeting the statutory requirements under the ENCTS.

■ Crossrail 2 Line**Lewis Cocking:** [\[15846\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether it is her Department's policy to support the Crossrail 2 project.

Simon Lightwood:

Crossrail 2 has not received government funding since 2020 when the scheme was paused. The Department for Transport will be considering its future investment priorities as part of the current Spending Review.

■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points**Alex Mayer:** [\[15939\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if her Department will take steps to reduce the cost of electric vehicle public charging.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Government is committed to delivering an equitable transition to zero emission vehicles, which works for all drivers.

Under the Public Charge Point Regulations 2023, all chargepoint operators must display the price of charging using a common metric of p/kwh and make their data on pricing available freely. This will allow drivers to easily compare the price of charging, and find the best chargepoint for their needs.

Alex Mayer: [\[15940\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of planning regulations on the installation of electric vehicle charge points.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Government is committed to ensuring that planning regulations support the installation of charging infrastructure. The previous government consulted earlier this year on amending the permitted development rights for off-street electric vehicle charging points. Further announcements will be made in due course.

Graham Leadbitter: [\[16015\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department plans to take fiscal steps to support households without driveways to access home electric vehicle charging equipment.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Government's Electric Vehicle Chargepoint Grant for Households with On-Street Parking provides up to £350 off the cost of purchasing and installing a chargepoint, when paired with a cross-pavement solution.

The Government keeps grants for chargepoint infrastructure under review.

Graham Leadbitter:

[\[16017\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to help ensure that households without driveways have access to (a) infrastructure that can be supplied from their property at a cheaper domestic electricity tariff and (b) other electric vehicle charging infrastructure.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Government is committed to accelerating the roll-out of charging infrastructure so that everyone, no matter where they live or work, can make the transition to an electric vehicle (EV). Those without off-street parking can access the Electric Vehicle Chargepoint Grant for Households with On-Street Parking. Eligible applicants can get up to £350 off the cost of installing a domestic chargepoint, enabling the use of domestic electricity tariffs when paired with a cross-pavement solution.

In addition, as of 1 November, there are over 71,000 publicly available charging devices in the UK, supporting drivers to switch to EVs.

Graham Leadbitter:

[\[16018\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of an increase in financial incentives to enable households without driveways to invest in home-connected on-street charging infrastructure.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Government's Electric Vehicle Chargepoint Grant for Households with On-Street Parking provides up to £350 off the cost of purchasing and installing a chargepoint, when paired with a cross-pavement solution.

The Government keeps all grants for chargepoint infrastructure under review.

Graham Leadbitter:

[\[16019\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment her Department has made of the implications for her policies of the barriers facing households without driveways in the transition to electric vehicles.

Lilian Greenwood:

To support the electric vehicle transition more charging infrastructure will be needed across the country. The exact number in a location will depend on a variety of factors such as availability of off-street parking, future charging behaviour and local driving patterns.

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

Graham Leadbitter:

[\[16020\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment her Department has made of the implications for her policies of the disparities between households (a) with and (b) without off-street parking in accessing electric vehicle charging infrastructure.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Government is committed to making EV charging infrastructure more affordable and accessible, particularly for those without off-street parking. The Government confirmed in the October 2024 Budget that it will continue to support the uptake of EVs by investing over £200 million in 2025/26 to further accelerate chargepoint rollout.

Alongside support for public charging, the Department is also supporting the installation of cross-pavement charging solutions through the Electric Vehicle Chargepoint Grant for Households with On-Street Parking. Eligible applicants can receive 75% off the cost of purchasing and installing a socket, up to a maximum of £350 when installed alongside a cross-pavement solution.

Graham Leadbitter:[\[16021\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that households without off-street parking are not left behind in the electric vehicle transition.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Government is committed to accelerating the roll-out of charging infrastructure so that everyone, no matter where they live or work, can make the transition to an electric vehicle (EV). As of 1 November, there are over 71,000 publicly available charging devices in the UK, supporting drivers to switch to EVs.

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

■ Kings Norton Station**Laurence Turner:**[\[15995\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether capital funding was allocated to restore disused platforms at Kings Norton railway station before 4 July 2024.

Simon Lightwood:

Proposals to bring the island platforms at Kings Norton station back into use are part of the Midlands Rail Hub programme. In March this year £123m was allocated to design the first phase, which includes Kings Norton.

However, the Chancellor has been clear about the state of the nation's finances and launched a multi-year Spending Review. This includes a thorough review of plans to ensure our transport infrastructure portfolio drives economic growth and delivers value for money for taxpayers.

■ **Motor Insurance: Older People**

Graham Leadbitter:

[\[15970\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has had recent discussions with the (a) car insurance industry and (b) Financial Conduct Authority on the potential merits of bringing forward regulations to require car insurance providers to not disproportionately increase premiums for older drivers beyond what is justified by the specific risk.

Lilian Greenwood:

This Government committed in its manifesto to tackle the high costs of motor insurance. To deliver on this commitment, the UK Government has formed a cross-government Taskforce on motor insurance, co-chaired by the Department for Transport and His Majesty's Treasury, which met for the first time on 16th October.

The Taskforce is comprised of ministers from relevant government departments and by the Financial Conduct Authority and Competition and Markets Authority. The Taskforce is supported by a separate Stakeholder Panel of industry experts representing the insurance, motor, and consumer sector.

This Taskforce has a strategic remit to set the direction for UK Government policy, identifying short- and long-term actions for departments that may contribute to stabilising or reducing premiums, while maintaining appropriate levels of cover. It will evaluate the impact of increased insurance costs on consumers and the insurance industry, including how this impacts different demographics, geographies, and communities.

■ **Motor Vehicles: Manufacturing Industries**

Blake Stephenson:

[\[16361\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department has taken to help the automotive industry meet the 2030 phase-out date for petrol and diesel cars.

Lilian Greenwood:

We will continue to support industry and consumers to make the switch to zero emission vehicles, with over £300 million announced in the Budget to drive uptake of electric vehicles and £2 billion to support the transition of domestic manufacturing and supply chain.

■ **Motorcycles: Bus Lanes**

Mark Garnier:

[\[16133\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to her Department's Motorcycles in bus lanes consultation outcome, updated on 21 November 2024, what account her Department took of the outcomes of local authority trials allowing motorcycle access to bus lanes.

Lilian Greenwood:

The consultation was designed to gather up to date information primarily from local authorities to expand the evidence base. The questions for local authorities included

asking about existing levels of motorcycle use in bus lanes on their networks and what factors had been taken into account in their decision making. However, the number of local authorities responding was too small to draw useful conclusions.

■ Public Transport: Lincolnshire

Sir John Hayes:

[\[15728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to improve access to public transport in rural areas within (a) South Holland and the Deepings constituency and (b) Lincolnshire.

Simon Lightwood:

The government knows that Britain needs a modern transport network to help kickstart economic growth. Good local bus services are an essential part of prosperous and sustainable communities. As announced in the King's Speech, the Government will pass the Better Buses Bill to put the power over local bus services back in the hands of local leaders right across England, to ensure networks can meet the needs to the communities who rely on them, including in South Holland and Deepings, Lincolnshire and rural areas right across England.

In addition, the government has confirmed £955 million for the 2025 to 2026 financial year to support and improve bus services in England outside London. This includes £243 million for bus operators and £712 million allocated to local authorities. Local authorities can use this funding to introduce new bus routes, make services more frequent and protect crucial bus routes for local communities. Lincolnshire County Council has been allocated £11.8 million.

■ Railways: Accidents

Lewis Cocking:

[\[15851\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many people were hit by a train across the railway network in the last 12 months; and what steps she taking to prevent such incidents.

Simon Lightwood:

According to British Transport Police (BTP) data, from November 2023 to October 2024, 358 people have been struck by a train on the railway; of these, sadly 304 people lost their lives. Of the 304 who died, 297 of those are suspected to have taken their own life by suicide, and 6 died in rail accidents (with one classification pending).

The Department is committed to working with the rail industry to reduce the number of deaths by suicide. Each rail operator is responsible for delivering a suicide prevention plan and maintaining accreditation to the independently assessed Safeguarding on Rail Scheme. Their plan must include training of public-facing staff in suicide prevention, putting in place mitigation measures at stations and promoting avenues of help for vulnerable people at risk of suicide or self-harm.

The rail industry works together, using campaigns and education, physical barriers, training staff and working with charities to prevent these incidents.

BTP works in collaboration with its partners to ensure all incidents are managed swiftly and people are treated with dignity.

Network Rail has a long-standing relationship with The Samaritans and funds the 'Small Talk Saves Lives' campaign. Since launching in 2017, the campaign has successfully raised awareness within railway stations and other public settings about the need to trust your instincts and start a simple conversation if you think someone might need help.

■ Railways: Midlands

Shivani Raja:

[\[15854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of a new direct rail link between Leicester and Coventry for Leicester's economy.

Simon Lightwood:

The Department is conducting a thorough review of the previous Government's transport plans to ensure that our transport infrastructure portfolio drives economic growth and delivers value for money for taxpayers. Decisions about individual projects will be informed by the review process and confirmed in due course.

Shivani Raja:

[\[15855\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the potential economic impact of the Midlands Rail Hub on people in Leicestershire.

Simon Lightwood:

We are working closely with Network Rail and Midlands Connect to maximise the benefits of Midlands Rail Hub throughout the region, including in Leicestershire. Midlands Connect are leading on the development of the rationale for the scheme including the distribution of the socio-economic benefits and will be able to provide more detail.

Shivani Raja:

[\[15856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what information her Department holds on the number of rail journeys made between Coventry and Leicester in each of the last five years.

Simon Lightwood:

The Department holds information on the estimates of the number of journeys between all pairs of mainline stations in Great Britain by financial year in the Origin and destination matrix (ODM), published by the Office of Rail and Road (ORR). The total number of journeys between Coventry Station and Leicester Station (in either direction) is reported below.

Table: Number of journeys between Coventry Station ¹ and Leicester Station by Financial Year

2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23 ²	2023/24
64,210	9,110	29,272	55,402	40,796

Source: *Origin and destination matrix (ODM), Office of Rail and Road*

[https://raildata.org.uk/dataProducts?textSearch=Origin%20and%20destination%20matrix%20\(ODM\)](https://raildata.org.uk/dataProducts?textSearch=Origin%20and%20destination%20matrix%20(ODM)) Notes: 1. The figures are for Coventry Station and Leicester Station only. They do not include journeys to or from Coventry Arena.

2. There is a break in series after 2021/22. Data quality improvements mean that data from 2022/23 onwards is not comparable with previous years.

■ Road Traffic Offences: Fines

Alex Mayer: [\[15941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what data her Department holds on penalty charge notice rates for different offences, broken down by (a) year and (b) location.

Alex Mayer: [\[15942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what data her Department has on increases in penalty charge notice fees for parking compared to fines for other traffic contraventions.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Department for Transport does not hold data on penalty charge notice levels applied by local authorities with civil enforcement powers, either on an annual basis, or between parking or other road traffic contraventions by location.

Local authorities outside London with civil parking enforcement powers may only select from two banded Parking Penalty Charge Notice levels as prescribed in the Civil Enforcement of Road Traffic Contraventions (Approved Devices, Charging Guidelines and General Provisions) (England) Regulations 2022. Penalty charges for parking contraventions in London are set by the Mayor for London with the consent of the Secretary of State.

The Department for Transport's [statutory guidance](#) for local authorities in England on civil enforcement of parking contraventions recommends local authorities should adopt the lowest charge level consistent with a high level of public acceptability and compliance.

Banded penalty charge levels for other civilly enforceable contraventions, i.e. bus lane and moving traffic contraventions, are set in the 2022 regulations in line with penalties for higher level parking contraventions, for example parking in a disabled bay.

■ Roads: Greater London

Peter Fortune: [\[16439\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what funding for pothole repairs is available to London boroughs.

Simon Lightwood:

Transport policy is devolved to the Mayor of London and Transport for London. It is up to the Mayor to decide how much of the wider funding for London's transport is passed down to the boroughs, who are also able to use other sources of locally raised income to fund highway maintenance activities in their areas.

This Government takes the condition of local roads very seriously and is committed to maintaining and renewing the local highway network. As part of this, it has a commitment to enable local highway authorities in England to fix up to a million more potholes a year.

The Government will confirm funding allocations for 2025/26 to English local highway authorities in due course.

■ Roads: Repairs and Maintenance

Peter Fortune: [\[16440\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she plans to reallocate £8.3 billion of HS2 funding for road repairs.

Peter Fortune: [\[16441\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much new funding is available for pothole repairs excluding funding previously allocated following the cancellation of HS2.

Lilian Greenwood:

The additional £500 million that the Chancellor has announced at the Budget for local highway maintenance for the 2025/26 financial year represents an increase of nearly 50% in comparison to the current financial year. This goes above and beyond the funding that had been provisionally earmarked for 2025/26 as part of the previous Government's Network North programme and shows that this Government is serious about tackling the maintenance backlog on local roads.

■ Roads: Suicide

Laurence Turner: [\[16629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 25 November 2024 to Question 15053 on Roads: Suicide, if she will publish the operational data with a description of the data quality issues for each of the last ten years.

Lilian Greenwood:

National Highways understand that suicide is not inevitable, it is preventable, with the vision that no one attempts to take their life on our roads. National Highways uses its Post Collision Fatal Reporting (PCFR) process to internally report fatal incidents,

including suspected suicides on the Strategic Road Network. However, unless a coroner rules National Highways does not know if these numbers are correct and the coronial process can take many months to complete. National Highways therefore cannot be confident that every suspected suicide recorded was a confirmed suicide. Unvalidated operational data from PCFR covering the period of 2016 – 2024 is as follows:

YEAR	NUMBER OF SUSPECTED SUICIDES	COMMENTS
2016	15	From May onwards
2017	31	
2018	41	
2019	40	
2020	39	
2021	59	
2022	59	
2023	59	
2024	56	Up to November 28th

■ **Stellantis: Motor Vehicles**

Blake Stephenson:

[\[16360\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has had discussions with Stellantis on the phase-out timeline for petrol and diesel cars.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Secretary of State met Stellantis on multiple occasions throughout the summer and more recently in relation to its manufacturing presence in the UK. The Department has close engagement with the vehicle industry and engages regularly on topics including the transition to zero emission vehicles.

■ **Taxis: Licensing**

Alberto Costa:

[\[15646\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of making the LGA's voluntary shared database on taxi driver licenses mandatory.

Simon Lightwood:

On 27 April 2023, the remainder of the Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles (Safeguarding and Road Safety) Act 2022 was commenced, and the Department designated the use of a database, which previously operated on a voluntary basis supported by the Local Government Association, for the purposes of this Act. The Act mandates the use of a national database in England to record every decision to refuse, revoke or suspend a taxi or private hire vehicle driver licence due to safeguarding, road safety or discrimination concerns.

■ **Tolls****Peter Fortune:**[\[16437\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the potential impact on motorists of pay-per-mile road charges.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Department has not undertaken any such assessment since the conclusion of the road pricing demonstrations project in 2011.

TREASURY■ **Agriculture: Inheritance Tax****Harriet Cross:**[\[15987\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether an impact assessment has been undertaken of the proposed changes to Agricultural Property Relief on (a) the agricultural rental market and (b) the sale of agricultural land.

Harriet Cross:[\[15989\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of changes to agricultural property relief in the Autumn Budget 2024 on (a) patterns of agricultural land ownership, (b) rural employment, (c) agricultural supply chains and (d) food production.

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.

It is expected that up to around 2,000 estates will be affected by the changes to APR and BPR each year, with around half of those being claims that involve AIM shares. Almost three-quarters of estates claiming agricultural property relief (including those claiming agricultural property relief and business property relief together) each year are expected to be unaffected by these reforms.

In accordance with standard practice, a tax information and impact note will be published alongside the draft legislation before the relevant Finance Bill.

■ Development Aid

Sarah Champion: [\[16509\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, by what process the percentage of 0.5 of Gross National Income for Official Development Assistance was decided.

Darren Jones:

The Government remains committed to restoring ODA spending to 0.7% of GNI as soon as fiscal circumstances allow, but the latest OBR forecasts show that ODA fiscal tests which determine a return to 0.7% are not due to be met within this Parliament. HMT has therefore set departmental ODA budgets which enable the UK to spend 0.5% of GNI in calendar years 2024 and 2025. On current forecasts, this will mean spending £13.7 billion on ODA in 2024. These plans strike an appropriate balance between fiscal responsibility at home and our responsibility to support the most vulnerable, using ODA resources to save lives whilst tackling key global challenges such as climate change, conflict, and epidemics. The UK will remain one of the most generous development assistance donors amongst the G7.

■ High Rise Flats: Fire Prevention

Torsten Bell: [\[16634\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate the Financial Services Compensation Scheme has made of the costs (a) of high rise building remediation work taken on by the FSCS and (b) to each insurance company that originally wrote the building insurance.

Tulip Siddiq:

The Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS) provides protections to the eligible customers of failed insurers regulated by the Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA), subject to the conditions, limits and requirements set out in PRA rules.

In the context of high-rise building remediation work, East West Insurance Company Limited (EWIC) is the sole insurer default where FSCS has stepped in, in line with its remit. The best estimate for the costs to resolve building remediation work covered by EWIC policies is approximately £335m. However, it is too early to estimate the costs that will fall specifically to the FSCS in this case, as some costs may be met by other parties.

The FSCS does not hold information on the costs to each insurance company that originally wrote the building insurance to cover this type of risk, as insurers in the live market have not been declared in default.

■ Mortgages: First Time Buyers

Jim Shannon: [\[15734\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she has had discussions with mortgage providers on the availability of fixed term mortgages to first time buyers.

Tulip Siddiq:

The Government is regularly in contact with mortgage lenders on all aspects of their business, including the provision of finance to first time buyers.

This Government will turn the dream of owning a home into a reality by fixing the planning system and building 1.5 million more homes, as well as helping buyers who are struggling to save for a large deposit by introducing a permanent Mortgage Guarantee Scheme.

Personal Income: Budget October 2024**Danny Kruger:**[\[15913\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of Autumn Budget 2024 on trends in the level of household income.

Tulip Siddiq:

UK living standards, as measured by Real Household Disposable Income (RHDI) per capita, have not grown at the pace many would have hoped for over recent years. If RHDI per capita had grown at the same rate between 2010 and 2023 as it did between 1997 and 2010, people's incomes would have been over £4,000 higher in 2023.

The 2019-2024 parliament was the worst for living standards growth since ONS records began in the 1950s, with average annual growth of just 0.2%.

In their October 2024 Economic and Fiscal Outlook, the OBR forecast living standards to grow by an annual average of 0.5% over this parliament. This is more than double the pace of living standards growth observed in the 2019-2024 parliament.

GDP per capita, an alternative measure of living standards that captures higher spending on public services, is set to grow even faster, at an annual average of 1.1% over this parliament. This compares to a 0.1% annual average decline in GDP per capita over the 2019-2024 parliament.

Through the growth mission, the government is restoring stability, increasing investment, and reforming the economy to drive up prosperity and living standards across the UK.

Rescue Services: National Insurance Contributions**Mr Andrew Snowden:**[\[15909\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of exempting (a) the Royal National Lifeboat Institution and (b) other voluntary lifesaving services from the changes made to employers' National Insurance contributions at the Autumn Budget 2024.

James Murray:

The Government recognises the important role charities play in our society and has made it a priority to reset the relationship with civil society by developing a Civil Society Covenant.

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

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

More broadly, within the tax system, we provide support to charities through a range of reliefs and exemptions, including reliefs for charitable giving., with more than £6 billion in charitable reliefs provided to charities, CASCs and their donors in 2023 to 2024.

■ Social Services: Disability**Claire Young:**[\[15877\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for what reason her Department categorises social care providers specialising in supporting working-aged disabled adults as businesses rather than public services.

Claire Young:[\[15878\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps she plans to take to exempt (a) academy trusts, (b) further education colleges, (c) the NHS and (d) other public services from the increase to employer National Insurance contributions.

James Murray:

As set out in the Autumn Budget, the government has set aside funding to support the public sector with employer National Insurance Contributions. The Government plans to update Parliament on allocations by department in the usual way as soon as possible. For the purposes of defining support for Employer NICs costs, the Government has used the Office for National Statistics (ONS) classification of the public sector boundary. This is the usual approach for classification of the public sector boundary, for example in relation to public sector spending, public sector borrowing and public sector debt, as was the case with the previous Government's Health and Social Care Levy

■ Tax Avoidance: British Overseas Territories**Abtisam Mohamed:**[\[15672\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps her Department is taking to tackle tax avoidance in British Overseas Territories.

James Murray:

The Overseas Territories are an integral part of the British family, and the elected governments of inhabited Overseas Territories are responsible for many fiscal matters, including tax.

The Overseas Territories have all made commitments to following the highest international tax standards, including the Common Reporting Standard (CRS) for the automatic exchange of information for tax purposes.

The UK provides support to the Overseas Territories to implement those standards.

The communiqué from the Joint Ministerial Council on 19 to 21 November included commitments to improving corporate transparency by completing plans to implement Accessible Registers of Beneficial Ownership.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-and-overseas-territories-joint-ministerial-council-2024-communiqué/b71f1ac8-d55c-44fb-b6a3-365f07a98689>.

WORK AND PENSIONS■ **Carers: Bedfordshire****Blake Stephenson:**[\[16289\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if her Department will make an assessment of the adequacy of financial support available to unpaid carers in Bedfordshire.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Unpaid carers play a vital role in supporting elderly or disabled relatives or friends. Sometimes unpaid carers will need to turn to the benefit system for financial support, so it is right that we keep Carer's Allowance under review, to see if it is meeting its objectives, and giving unpaid carers the help and support they need and deserve.

Unpaid carers may be able to receive financial and/or employment support from the department depending on their circumstances. Carer's Allowance provides a measure of financial support and recognition for people who are not able to work full time due to their caring responsibilities. The rate of Carer's Allowance is £81.90 a week in 2024/25, and from April 2025 this will increase by 1.7% to £83.30 a week, net of allowable expenses.

Spending on Carer's Allowance in the mid-Bedfordshire parliamentary constituency in 2023/4 was £3.6 million. 912 people in mid-Bedfordshire were in receipt of Carer's Allowance in May '24.

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

amount for a carer in Pension Credit is £45.60 a week. These additional amounts are worth around £2400 a year.

■ Children: Maintenance

Danny Kruger: [\[15917\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of issuing a commencement order for curfews for non-compliant parents refusing to pay child maintenance.

Andrew Western:

The Child Maintenance Service already has a suite of strong enforcement powers at its disposal. These include using Enforcement Agents (previously known as bailiffs) to take control of goods, forcing the sale of property, removal of driving licence or UK passport, deductions directly from earnings and bank accounts or even commitment to prison.

The Department has explored how curfews could be implemented as an additional enforcement measure to improve compliance. Several enforcement initiatives aimed at improving compliance are currently in train. These initiatives need to be implemented and their effects assessed before we can best see how curfews might fit with them.

The Department plans to enhance effectiveness in collecting arrears payments by delivering changes via regulations, thereby streamlining the enforcement process. This will remove the requirement to obtain a court issued liability order and instead allow the Secretary of State to issue an administrative liability order. The introduction of this simpler administrative process will enable the CMS to take faster action against those Paying Parents who actively avoid their responsibilities.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Civil Servants

Sir Ashley Fox: [\[15035\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 23 October 2024 to Question 9286 on Department for Work and Pensions: Civil Servants, how many individual desks were occupied in her Department's HQ office in the most recent four weeks for which figures are available; and how many staff assigned to that HQ workplace attended the office in person on average in the same period.

Andrew Western:

Office occupancy data for the period July - September has been published, with further publications on a quarterly basis. The data is published here:

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

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Travel

Rupert Lowe:

[15042]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how much her Department spent on staff (a) travel, (b) subsistence and (c) stays in hotels in each of the last five years.

Andrew Western:

The Department does not keep this information centrally and to provide it would incur disproportionate costs.

Information on annual DWP spend can be found [here](#).

■ Elections: Disability

Shaun Davies:

[15901]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of establishing a permanent Access to Elected Office fund for disabled election candidates.

Sir Stephen Timms:

It is the Government's ambition to see more disabled people in public office.

The Government has been clear that it will champion disabled people's rights, and work closely with them so that disabled people's voices and views are at the heart of all we do.

We know that some disabled people still face additional financial barriers when standing for elected office. We are looking at how we might work with political parties and others to help tackle this.

■ Employment: Young People

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[16594]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to her Oral Statement of 26 November 2026 on "Get Britain Working" White Paper, Official Report, column 656, what additional funding for the Government's Youth Guarantee will be allocated to (a) Cambridgeshire and (b) Peterborough.

Alison McGovern:

In the Get Britain Working White Paper, the government announced £45 million of funding for eight trailblazers in England to test delivery of the Youth Guarantee. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Mayoral Combined Authority are one of the eight areas set to receive approximately £5 million to support 18-21 year olds access education, training and employment opportunities.

■ Jobcentres and Universal Credit: Telephone Services

Rupert Lowe:

[15704]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many calls to her Department on (a) universal credit and (b) Jobcentre Plus were translated by language code in each

of the last 10 years; and what the cost to her Department was for each type of call in the same period.

Alison McGovern:

The tables attachment shows the volume of calls translated by language code since 2021 together with the associated costs. Please note, this information is not available for the last 10 years and also the data is not available by (a) universal credit or (b) JobCentre Plus.

	2021		2022		2023	
	Deliverable Cost for calls answered	Telephone Interpreting	Deliverable Cost for calls answered	Telephone Interpreting	Deliverable Cost for calls answered	Telephone Interpreting
Jan	56372	£423,363.84	84377	£449,734.87	68435	£335,948.16
Feb	62083	£519,333.68	81380	£514,435.08	66693	£405,578.24
Mar	77497	£429,554.78	100223	£473,036.50	79789	£396,991.36
Apr	65215	£476,330.52	83086	£560,301.57	58822	£468,493.76
May	62432	£385,025.19	48612	£450,943.38	64013	£337,248.96
Jun	78102	£362,537.22	64390	£314,083.09	67090	£341,527.04
Jul	78297	£461,935.67	61484	£402,505.71	62621	£360,482.56
Aug	70124	£473,769.82	60582	£383,110.72	62589	£342,224.96
Sep	77618	£423,828.76	62005	£386,230.72	64527	£338,154.88
Oct	78399	£457,728.59	66447	£388,296.64	74288	£360,275.63
Now	86701	£478,442.90	72931	£414,528.00	82226	£418,088.00
Dec	72605	£540,289.30	56186	£438,235.20	64943	£456,997.76

The data shown is unpublished management information, collected and intended for internal departmental use and has not been quality assured to National Statistics or Official Statistics publication standard.

■ **Local Housing Allowance**

Mike Amesbury:

[\[16218\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to support people in receipt of Local Housing Allowance with housing costs.

Sir Stephen Timms:

In April 2024, Local Housing Allowance (LHA) increased to the 30th percentile of local market rents for one year at a cost of £7bn over 5 years.

For those in receipt of LHA who need further support with housing costs, Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) are available from local authorities. DHPs can be paid to those entitled to Housing Benefit or Universal Credit and can be used to support with a rent deposit, rent in advance, a shortfall in rent, and other associated costs with housing need such as moving costs.

We also appreciate the importance of increasing availability of affordable housing. The Government will publish a Long-Term Housing Strategy in the Spring which will set out a plan to reform the housing market so that it works better for communities, to build 1.5m high-quality homes, and delivers the biggest increase in affordable housing for a generation.

■ Rodenticides: Safety**Alex Mayer:**[\[15944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department is taking steps to strengthen restrictions on the use of rodenticides in order to reduce exposure to non-target wildlife.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Rodenticide products are regulated under the Great Britain Biocidal Products Regulations (GB BPR). Under this legislation, evaluations of the safety of biocides to humans, animals and the environment are carried out by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) on behalf of Ministers.

The Rodenticides Stewardship Scheme was developed by The Campaign for Responsible Rodenticide Use UK to further promote responsible use by the three groups of professional users (pest controllers, farmers and gamekeepers). Compliance with the scheme and its principles is a legal requirement as part of the authorisation and use of rodenticide products.

The scheme is overseen by the Government Oversight Group for Rodenticide Stewardship (GOG), chaired by HSE and includes representatives from relevant government departments and agencies. The GOG is conducting a review to consider how rodenticide stewardship in the UK can be strengthened. It will consider all relevant and appropriate evidence. The detailed work of this review is expected to be completed in 2025.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ **Online Advertising: Taskforce Progress Report 2023-24**

Minister for Creative Industries, Arts and Tourism (Chris Bryant): [\[HCWS272\]](#)

The Online Advertising Taskforce is publishing today its Progress Report 2023-24, summarising work carried out since the publication of its Action Plan last year.

The Online Advertising Taskforce brings government and industry together to help tackle harms associated with paid-for online advertising and improve transparency, accountability and trust in the online advertising supply chain. Its primary focus has been on tackling illegal advertising and minimising children being served advertising for products and services illegal to sell to them.

The Taskforce Action Plan brought together and built on work that was in progress to strengthen evidence, minimise harm and protect consumers and businesses, including promoting and extending industry initiatives which address in-scope harms associated with paid-for online advertising.

In response to the Action Plan, six working groups were formed, each with a specific focus on an area identified within the Plan. Some focussed on pre-existing industry initiatives that could be enhanced, while others focussed on particular issues affecting transparency and accountability in online advertising, and the development of responsive strategies. These groups have been key drivers of action, enabling closer collaboration and development of more detailed insight and there is further work that these groups can take forward to build on the achievements so far.

Alongside this report I am also publishing an Online Advertising Experiences survey commissioned by DCMS and carried out by Ipsos. This report covers perceived exposure to illegal and misleading advertising online, including parental perception of child exposure. It provides insight into the type and scale of exposure, impacts, and any follow up actions taken. It was commissioned to provide a baseline understanding of how people understood the risks online, particularly those associated with online advertising. While this report provides useful evidence and takes us a step further in understanding online advertising behaviours, the Research Working Group, under the Taskforce, will assess how we can build on this evidence.

I chaired a further meeting of the Taskforce on 4 November, at which we agreed updated terms of reference and a renewed focus for the next year. The continued work of the Taskforce and its working groups will be very important to help us understand and address the issues facing the online advertising sector, particularly those around trust and transparency. This will allow for further work in this area, with the work already completed enabling a sharper focus moving forward.

The progress report and research are published on gov.uk today and copies will be deposited in the Libraries of both Houses.

DEFENCE**■ Defence Industrial Development****Secretary of State for Defence (John Healey):**[\[HCWS273\]](#)

Today I am announcing plans to develop a new Defence Industrial Strategy that will be published in late spring 2025. I have published a Statement of Intent setting out the focus of the strategy and invitation to consultation on GOV.UK.

The UK faces acute and growing threats to our national security: Putin's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and the threat of escalation against NATO allies; conflict in the Middle East; tensions in the Indo-Pacific region and rising geopolitical instability.

The deteriorating security environment means we need a New Era for Defence: to restock our Armed Forces for today and the future; enact a deep reform of MOD procurement; add urgency and co-ordination to our efforts to support Ukraine; and develop a new Defence Industrial Strategy that is aligned to the Government's growth mission, creates new partnerships with industry, innovators and allies, and is matched to the urgency of the situation.

The Government's primary mission is to secure the highest sustained growth in the G7 – with good jobs and productivity growth in every region and nation in the UK. Defence has a significant role to play, and the Government has confirmed Defence as one of the eight priority growth sectors in its new industrial strategy.

Our aim is to produce a **better, more integrated, more innovative and more resilient defence sector**. A defence industry that can innovate at speed to help Ukraine defeat Russia; with the resilience to deter aggression by our adversaries; able to seize the opportunity presented by the technologies of the future, while growing our share of today's market through a new focus on exports.

The Statement of Intent published on GOV.UK outlines the proposed framework we will adopt and provides an early signal of our approach. It also sets out the priorities for this strategy which will inform extensive consultation with the defence sector.

I invite all stakeholders to respond to this Statement of Intent and consultation questions, either publicly or privately, by end of February 2025.

HOME OFFICE**■ 2023/24 Annual Report of the Biometrics and Surveillance Camera Commissioner****The Minister of State for Policing, Fire and Crime Prevention (Dame Diana Johnson):**[\[HCWS276\]](#)

I am pleased to announce that my rt hon Friend the Home Secretary is today publishing the Annual Report of the Biometrics and Surveillance Camera Commissioner.

The Biometrics and Surveillance Camera Commissioner covers independent statutory roles, who is appointed by the Home Secretary under the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012.

The Report covers the exercise of the statutory functions over the reporting year from April 2023 – March 2024.

This was the first and final report by Tony Eastaugh before leaving his post on 18 August 2024. I am grateful for his contribution to this important area of work and will be seeking to appoint a new Commissioner to fill this position as soon as possible.

The report has been laid before the House and will be available from the Vote Office and on GOV.UK.

■ **Emergency Evacuation Information Sharing Plus (EEIS+) consultation response and Residential PEEPs policy**

The Minister of State for Policing, Fire and Crime Prevention (Dame Diana Johnson):

[\[HCWS271\]](#)

I am today publishing the Government's response to the Emergency Evacuation Information Sharing Plus (EEIS+) consultation, which provides further detail of our new Residential PEEPs policy.

This policy, which was previously announced in a written ministerial statement on 2 September 2024 ([HCWS62](#)), introduces new measures to improve the fire safety for vulnerable residents in high-rise and higher-risk residential blocks of flats, and represents a milestone in addressing the recommendations of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry, a key priority for this Government.

Following publication of this Government response, subject to parliamentary approval, we will move to lay Regulations to implement the new policy.

A copy of the Government response will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses and it will also be published on GOV.UK.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ **Building Safety**

Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (Angela Rayner):

[\[HCWS274\]](#)

More than seven years after the Grenfell Tower tragedy, too many buildings in England still have unsafe cladding and the speed with which the problem is being addressed is far too slow. Only 30% of buildings identified in England with unsafe cladding have been fixed, with potentially thousands to be identified. As the remediation process drags on, residents continue to face distress, uncertainty and rising costs as they wait for action. This situation is completely unacceptable and must change.

For the first time, we have set firm targets for this important work. By the end of 2029 all buildings 18 metres and above with unsafe cladding in a government-funded scheme will be remediated, and all buildings 11 metres and above with unsafe cladding will either have been remediated, have a completion date or the landlords will be liable for severe penalties.

To drive this progress and ensure we meet these targets, I am today publishing our new Remediation Acceleration Plan which sets out decisive measures so that buildings with unsafe cladding are fixed faster, remaining buildings still at risk are identified and residents are supported throughout the process. The Remediation Acceleration Plan will be deposited in the House Libraries.

Many of the highest risk buildings are known to us. We must ensure they are urgently fixed. We intend to introduce new legal obligations on landlords to remediate unsafe cladding, with severe penalties, including criminal and civil sanctions for inaction. We also intend to provide further powers and resources to regulators so that bad actors are held to account.

We recognise the power of collaborative working and will drive coordination between regulators including through empowering metro mayors to lead local acceleration plans. Work is already underway with mayors being supported to play a new crucial role in driving remediation progress by leading local remediation acceleration plans alongside partners in local government, and this Government is determined to support and work effectively with mayors and combined authorities, who know their areas best, to deliver for residents.

Our plan sets out measures to accelerate cladding remediation in the social housing sector. From April 2025, we will also increase funding for social landlords applying for government remediation funding so that remedial works can start sooner. We will work with social housing providers and regulators to agree a long-term strategy for social housing remediation, to be announced in Spring 2025.

We are also publishing a joint plan that commits developers for the first time to stretch targets to assess all of their buildings by July 2025, to start or complete remedial works on 80% of their buildings by July 2026, and on all their unsafe buildings by July 2027. To meet these targets, developers will need to more than double the pace at which they have been assessing buildings and starting works so far this year. At least 28 developers have already endorsed the joint plan, covering over 95% of the buildings that developers need to remediate. We welcome the commitment that developers have made.

Developers have also agreed to expedite their work with social landlords to resolve contributions they should make towards works to make social sector buildings safe. This will mean that remedial works on affected social sector buildings will start sooner.

We will also ensure that the burden of paying for fixing historical building safety defects does not fall on leaseholders or further burden taxpayers. We intend that the Building Safety Levy will come into effect in Autumn 2025 and will be charged on all new eligible residential buildings in England. The levy will raise around £3.4 billion for remediation and

help to ensure that those who are responsible for the building safety crisis help pay to put it right.

There is a long way to go to be confident that all buildings with unsafe cladding have been identified. Those responsible for their buildings' safety are failing to come forward to make their buildings known. There is a requirement to register buildings above 18m, but there is currently no single register that records all relevant buildings, and so identifying these buildings is a complex task. Through this plan we intend to introduce new legislation to drive action from those responsible for their buildings' safety by tightening building assessment requirements and to create a comprehensive building register so that all relevant buildings can be more quickly identified.

However, we cannot wait for this change to start to make progress. We expect to have reviewed 175,000 Ordnance Survey building records for potential buildings at 11 metres in height and above by the end of March 2025. Through this approach, we expect to have reviewed 80% of the 11m+building stock, contacting responsible entities for those we believe might have a cladding risk concurrently, with plans to increase this to over 95% by late 2025.

We will share data with metro mayors, combined authorities and local regulators so that, when required, they can take action locally to ensure buildings are identified and remediated quickly. Residents who believe that their building may be unsafe can report this to regulators, or directly to us through the 'Tell Us' tool.

This government is clear that much more needs to be done to better protect blameless residents. All remediation projects should adhere to and evidence their compliance of the Code of Practice for the Remediation of Residential Buildings.

We will introduce new measures to support residents with the costs they face.

This includes new shared ownership guidance allowing leaseholders to sub-let their properties at market rates so that they are no longer penalised for issues that are no fault of their own and an updated process to limit the number of valuations that shared owners have to pay for when selling their homes. Social landlords continue to have the option to buy back homes where shared owners are unable to sell due to building safety issues.

Buildings insurance premiums are unacceptably high for too many leaseholders in buildings with fire safety issues. The Government will therefore work with insurers to consider whether, for the duration of remediation programmes, government might support the industry to reduce fire related liabilities in order to reduce the high insurance bills leaseholders are facing. We are also launching a public consultation on the introduction of a fair and transparent fee for leaseholders to pay to those who manage insurance for their buildings.

This Government has already reopened the Waking Watch Replacement Fund (WWRF) which has provided alarms in 346 high risk buildings. We estimate the fund has saved affected leaseholders on average £172pcm and it has played a role in preventing residents being evacuated from their homes. We are extending the Waking Watch Replacement Fund until the end of the next financial year, and will confirm long-term

plans at the next stage of the spending review to protect leaseholders from costs while they wait for remediation to take place.

Finally, we are taking several actions that address criticisms the Grenfell Inquiry Report made of the manufacturers of cladding and insulation products. This includes action towards preventing the most egregious companies, found to be part of the horrific failings that led to the Grenfell Tower tragedy, from being awarded government contracts. It also commits to system-wide construction products reform, including proposals on liabilities, robust sanctions and penalties against manufacturers.

The Remediation Acceleration Plan marks a pivotal moment in addressing the building safety crisis in England. We are taking decisive steps to fix buildings faster, identify all buildings with unsafe cladding, and ensure residents are safe and protected. We will work tirelessly to this end with resident groups and industry. I will provide an update in Summer 2025.

JUSTICE

■ **Determination of the Personal Injury Discount Rate**

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

[\[HCWS275\]](#)

This morning, I notified the London Stock Exchange group that I would today lay a Statutory Instrument to change the discount rate applicable to personal injury lump sum compensation payments in England and Wales to 0.5% . The new rate will come into force on 11 January 2025, in line with the statutory timelines set out in the Damages Act 1996, as amended by the Civil Liability Act 2018.

As Lord Chancellor, it is my statutory duty under the Damages Act to periodically determine the discount rate which courts must consider when awarding compensation for future financial losses in the form of a lump sum payments in personal injury cases. This rate is commonly known as the Personal Injury Discount Rate.

On 15 July 2024, I met the requirement to review this rate at least every five years when I commenced a review and consulted both HM Treasury and an independent Expert Panel for their advice. I have now received their advice, for which I am very grateful, and considered it alongside the responses to two recent Calls for Evidence and further advice, evidence and analysis which has been made available to me. It is on the basis of this evidence, and having followed the review framework set out in the Damages Act, that I have determined that a single rate of 0.5% is the appropriate determination for me to make in this review.

A full statement of reasons, explaining how I have decided upon this rate, will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses. It will also be published on gov.uk, alongside the full advisory report that was provided to me by the Expert Panel.

NORTHERN IRELAND**■ Consent process under Schedule 6A Northern Ireland Act 1998****Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Hilary Benn):**[\[HCWS277\]](#)

Schedule 6A of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Article 18 of the Windsor Framework provides Members of the Northern Ireland Assembly (MLAs) with the opportunity to consider whether Articles 5-10 of the Windsor Framework (concerning the trade in goods) should continue to apply.

The upcoming vote is a decision for the Assembly, in accordance with the law. However, under the terms of Schedule 6A, where an MLA other than the First and deputy First Minister table a motion on democratic consent, I am under a legal duty to take reasonable steps to provide MLAs with such explanatory materials as it is reasonable to provide in order to assist them when deciding the question.

In recognition of the short time window within which the motion would be tabled and the vote held, I have written to the Speaker of the Assembly today and enclosed explanatory materials that would discharge that duty. These materials have been published on GOV.UK and I shall ask that a copy be placed in the Library of the House for the record.

More broadly, the Government has also set out its commitment to resetting relations with the EU and negotiating new agreements which can remove unnecessary barriers to trade for businesses in the UK trading with the EU. In the Government's view, only the Windsor Framework arrangements in place under Articles 5-10 provide a credible basis to pursue those negotiations whilst also respecting Northern Ireland's unique circumstances and its place in the UK's internal market. The Government will listen carefully to the result of the vote, meet its legal duties flowing from that, and will engage fully with business, civic society and political leaders in Northern Ireland as that work continues and will update the House in due course.