



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 5 December 2024 and the information is correct at the time of publication (07:29 P.M., 05 December 2024). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

CONTENTS

ANSWERS	7	■ Fertility	12
ATTORNEY GENERAL	7	■ Government Communication Service	13
■ Driving under Influence: Drugs	7	■ Government Departments: Equality	13
BUSINESS AND TRADE	7	■ Ministers: Training	13
■ Business and Consumers	7	■ Population: Statistics	14
■ Consumers: Subscriptions	8	■ Public Bodies: Conflict of Interests	14
■ Employment Rights Bill	8	■ Public Sector: Civil Society	14
■ Fireworks: Safety	8	CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT	15
■ Foreign Investment in UK and Job Creation: Paisley and Renfrewshire North	9	■ Arts and Music Venues: Rural Areas	15
■ Insolvency Service	9	■ Arts: Copyright	15
■ Public Bodies	9	■ BBC	16
CABINET OFFICE	10	■ Civil Society: Employers' Contributions	16
■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]	10	■ Leisure: Facilities	17
■ Cabinet Office: Cultural Heritage	10	■ Running: Public Places	18
■ Cabinet Office: ICT	11	■ Sports Competitors: Injuries	18
■ Cabinet Office: Ministers' Private Offices	11	■ Sports: Training	18
■ Cabinet Office: Policy	11	DEFENCE	19
■ Cabinet Office: Senior Civil Servants	11	■ Air Force: Training	19
■ Civil Servants: Location	12	■ Armed Forces	19
■ Council of the Nations and Regions	12	■ Defence: Finance	20
		■ Defence: Industry	20

■ Hawk Aircraft	20	■ Schools: Finance	34
■ HMS Albion and HMS Bulwark	20	■ Sixth Form Colleges: Pay	37
■ HMS Albion and HMS Bulwark: Repairs and Maintenance	21	■ Special Educational Needs	37
■ Israel: F-35 Aircraft	22	■ Training	38
■ Ministry of Defence: Aviation	22	ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO	39
■ Ministry of Defence: ICT	22	■ Business Premises: Energy Performance Certificates	39
■ Multi-role Ocean Surveillance Ships	23	■ Business: Energy	40
■ Nuclear-free Zones: Treaties	23	■ Coal: Imports and Mining	40
■ Puma Helicopters	24	■ Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: Policy	41
■ Reserve Forces	24	■ Electricians: Certification	41
■ Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Associations Review	24	■ Energy Company Obligation and Great British Insulation Scheme: Public Consultation	41
■ Strategic Defence Review	24	■ Energy: Housing	42
■ Type 26 Frigates	25	■ Energy: Prices	42
■ Veterans: Charities	25	■ Energy: Storage	42
■ Veterans: Identity Cards	26	■ Green Homes Grant Scheme	43
■ Veterans: Women	27	■ Green Homes Grant Scheme: Complaints	43
EDUCATION	27	■ Heat Pumps	43
■ Bereavement Counselling: Children	27	■ Insulation: Green Homes Grant Scheme	44
■ Children: Protection	28	■ Insulation: Housing	44
■ Class Sizes	29	■ National Grid	45
■ Department for Education: Employers' Contributions	29	ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS	45
■ Further Education: Finance	30	■ Agriculture: Carbon Emissions	45
■ Gambling: Education	30	■ Air Pollution: Ashbourne	46
■ Higher Education: Science	31	■ Birds of Prey: Rodenticides	46
■ Holiday Activities and Food Programme	32	■ Dairy Farming	47
■ Mathematics and English language: GCSE	32	■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Policy	47
■ Schools: Essex	33	■ Farms: Domestic Visits	47

■ Fish: Animal Welfare	48	■ Smoking: Nightclubs and Public Houses	60
■ Fishing Catches	48	■ Streptococcus: Diagnosis	60
■ Horticulture	48	■ Vaccination: Undocumented Migrants	61
■ Land Drainage: Property Development	49	HOME OFFICE	61
■ Milk	49	■ Asylum and Undocumented Migrants: Housing	61
■ Scallops: Conservation	49	■ Asylum: Northern Ireland	62
■ Sea Bass: Quotas	50	■ Campsfield House Immigration Removal Centre	62
FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE	51	■ Community Policing: Cambridgeshire	63
■ China: Mauritius	51	■ Crime Prevention: Thames Valley	64
■ Climate Change: Finance	51	■ Crossbows	64
■ Development Aid: Agriculture	51	■ Immigration	65
■ Mauritius	52	■ Migrant Workers: Arts	65
■ Sustainable Development: International Cooperation	52	■ Police: Equality	66
■ Visas: EU Countries	52	■ Refugees: Resettlement	66
HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	53	HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT	66
■ Bowel Cancer: Screening	53	■ Affordable Housing: Construction	66
■ Colonoscopy: Waiting Lists	53	■ Buildings: Insulation	67
■ Food: Nutrition	54	■ Councillors: Data Protection	67
■ Health Services: Prosecutions	54	■ Derelict Land	67
■ Inflammatory Bowel Disease: Health Education	55	■ Domestic Abuse: Stoke-on-Trent	68
■ Low Alcohol Drinks: Labelling	56	■ Economic Growth: Environment Protection	68
■ Neurological Diseases: Health Services	56	■ Employment Tribunals Service: Local Government	69
■ Neurology: Students	57	■ Environment Protection and Sustainable Development: Rural Areas	69
■ NHS: Employment Tribunals Service	58	■ Green Belt	69
■ NHS: Undocumented Migrants	58		
■ Patients: Compensation	59		
■ Prostate Cancer: Screening	59		
■ Radiotherapy: Westmorland and Lonsdale	60		

■ Grenfell Tower Inquiry	70	■ Private Rented Housing	80
■ Grenfell Tower: Ministerial Responsibility	70	■ Regional Planning and Development	80
■ Homelessness: Sherwood Forest	70	■ Rented Housing: Pets	80
■ Housing: Construction	71	■ Right to Buy Scheme	81
■ Housing: Greater London	72	■ Right to Buy Scheme: Reform	81
■ Housing: Infrastructure	72	■ Social Rented Housing: Construction	82
■ Housing: Regeneration	73	■ Solar Power: Land Use	82
■ Infrastructure: Planning	74	■ Voting Rights: Young People	83
■ Infrastructure: Planning Permission	74	JUSTICE	83
■ Land Use: Planning Permission	74	■ Crown Prosecution Service	83
■ Land: Reform	75	■ Dartmoor Prison: Radon Gas	84
■ Leasehold: Ground Rent	75	■ Legal Aid: Undocumented Migrants	85
■ Local Government and Mayors: Elections	76	■ Parole	85
■ Local Government Pension Scheme	76	■ Prisoners' Release: Curfews	87
■ Local Plans: Finance	76	■ Probation Service: Welsh Language	89
■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Buildings	77	■ Reoffenders: Foreign Nationals	89
■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Freedom of Information	77	■ Reoffenders: Sherwood Forest	89
■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Staff	78	■ Sentencing	90
■ Offices: Change of Use	78	■ Spiking: Northern Ireland	90
■ Permitted Development Rights: Public Consultation	79	SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY	91
■ Planning Permission	79	■ Animal Experiments	91
■ Planning Permission: Carbon Emissions	79	■ Artificial Intelligence: Cybersecurity	91
		■ Broadband and Mobile Phones: Montgomeryshire and Glyndŵr	92
		■ Broadband: Runcorn and Helsby	92
		■ Food: Research	92

■ Government Digital Service: Contracts	93	TREASURY	105
■ Innovate UK: Finance	94	■ Agriculture: Inheritance Tax	105
■ Special Educational Needs: Internet	94	■ Arden Strategies	106
■ Technology: Women	94	■ Bicycles: VAT	107
TRANSPORT	95	■ Discretionary Trusts: Inheritance Tax	107
■ Aviation: Crew	95	■ Domicil: Taxation	108
■ Blue Badge Scheme	95	■ Employers' Contributions	108
■ Cycling: Clothing	96	■ Employers' Contributions: Public Sector	108
■ Driving Licences: Medical Examinations	96	■ Employers' Contributions: Voluntary Organisations	109
■ Driving Tests	97	■ Employment	109
■ Driving Tests: Gosport	97	■ Fire and Rescue Services: Employers' Contributions	109
■ Driving Tests: Prices	98	■ Ian Corfield	110
■ Driving Tests: Slough	98	■ Inheritance Tax: Tax Avoidance	110
■ Driving: Health	99	■ Kamella Hudson	111
■ Electric Vehicles	99	■ Private Education: Business Rates	111
■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points	100	■ Public Houses: Business Rates and Employers' Contributions	111
■ Electric Vehicles: Grants	100	■ Rachel Reeves: Members' Staff	112
■ Gatwick Airport: Noise	100	■ Self-assessment: Fines	112
■ Motor Insurance: Fees and Charges	100	■ Small Businesses: Employment	113
■ Motor Vehicles: Carbon Emissions	101	■ Treasury: Impact Assessments	114
■ Motor Vehicles: Theft	102	WOMEN AND EQUALITIES	114
■ Motorways: ICT	102	■ Race Equality Unit: Staff	114
■ Railways: East of England	103	■ Sexual Harassment: Surveys	114
■ Railways: North of England	103	WORK AND PENSIONS	115
■ Roads: Repairs and Maintenance	103	■ Autism Employment Review	115
■ Roads: Safety	104	■ Connect to Work	115
■ Rolling Stock	105		
■ Thameslink Line: Bedford	105		

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Aviation	116	■ State Retirement Pensions: Women	123
■ Department for Work and Pensions: Freedom of Information	116	■ WorkWell	124
■ Department for Work and Pensions: Software	117	MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS	125
■ Department for Work and Pensions: Staff	117	CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT	125
■ Employment Rights Bill	117	■ Holiday Accommodation: Registration	125
■ Employment Schemes: Finance	118	ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS	126
■ Employment Schemes: Public Consultation	118	■ Shellfish: Transport	126
■ Employment: Devolution	119	HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	126
■ Pension Credit	119	■ Continuing Care: Waiting Lists	126
■ Pension Credit: Social Security Benefits	120	HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT	127
■ Self-employed: Adoption	121	■ Empty Property	127
■ Social Security Benefits	121	WRITTEN STATEMENTS	128
■ Social Security Benefits: Bank Services	122	CABINET OFFICE	128
■ Social Security Benefits: Fraud	122	■ House of Lords (Appointments)	128
■ Social Security Benefits: Veterans	122	PRIME MINISTER	128
		■ Plan for Change: Milestones for mission-led government	128

Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

ATTORNEY GENERAL

■ Driving under Influence: Drugs

Mr Andrew Snowden:

[\[15346\]](#)

To ask the Solicitor General, what steps she is taking with Cabinet colleagues to help increase the number of prosecutions for people found to be driving under the influence of drugs.

Lucy Rigby:

Enforcement of drug driving legislation and how available resources are deployed is an operational matter for individual Chief Constables and Police and Crime Commissioners to determine in conjunction with local crime and policing plans, taking into account the specific local problems and demands with which they are faced.

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) prosecutes cases that are referred to it by the police.

The Government has announced more than half a billion pounds of additional central government funding for policing next year to support the Government's Safer Streets Mission.

Section 5A of the Road Traffic Act 1988, introduced in 2015, aligned enforcement of drug driving with that of drink driving by introducing a strict liability offence to avoid the need to prove impairment. CPS management information shows that in the financial year 2023/2024, 25,559 offences were charged under this section which proceeded to a first hearing in the magistrates' courts.

BUSINESS AND TRADE

■ Business and Consumers

James McMurdock:

[\[17755\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of proposed increases in stamp prices on (a) consumers and (b) businesses.

Justin Madders:

The Government does not have a role in Royal Mail's commercial decisions, including the prices of stamps and other services.

In setting its prices, Royal Mail must observe the regulatory framework set by Ofcom which imposes price controls, 'safeguard caps', on certain second-class products to ensure a basic universal service is available to all at affordable prices.

Information on Ofcom's decisions regarding retail price caps on Royal Mail's universal postal services to apply from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2027 is available on its website: www.ofcom.org.uk/post/deliveries-and-charges/consultation-review-of-second-class-safeguard-caps-2024.

■ Consumers: Subscriptions

Peter Fortune: [\[16891\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of the accessibility of the consultation on the implementation of the new subscription contracts regime, published on 18 November 2024.

Justin Madders:

The consultation on the implementation of the subscription contracts follows the UK Government Consultation principles ([Consultation principles: guidance - GOV.UK](#)).

The subscription consultation is available in HTML and PDF formats. HTML provides greater accessibility for users. The PDF was published as an accessible PDF.

Alternative methods of completing the consultation are available including online, via email and via post.

■ Employment Rights Bill

Helen Whately: [\[16741\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment his Department has made on the potential impact of the Employment Rights Bill on levels of (a) employment, (b) unemployment and (c) economic inactivity.

Justin Madders:

The Employment Rights Bill Impact Assessments was published on October 21 and can be found [here](#). It illustrates that the provision of better-quality work, more family friendly employment protections and flexible working rights could increase the range of jobs and working patterns that suit individuals. Further, the Impact Assessment finds evidence that the Bill could particularly benefit those who are currently inactive or intermittently working due to childcare responsibilities, long term illness or disabilities. The Impact Assessment also deemed the risk of significant unemployment effects as a result of the Bill to be 'low'.

■ Fireworks: Safety

Jayne Kirkham: [\[17421\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if his Department will make an assessment of the adequacy of the Fireworks Regulations 2004 at protecting (a) people and (b) animals from the negative impacts of fireworks.

Justin Madders:

Most people use fireworks in a responsible, safe, and appropriate manner and there are laws in place to address situations where fireworks are misused. The current

regulatory framework is designed to support people to enjoy fireworks whilst lowering the risk of dangers and disruption to people, pets, and property.

To inform any future decisions the Government intends to engage with businesses, consumer groups and charities to gather evidence on the issues and impacts of fireworks.

■ **Foreign Investment in UK and Job Creation: Paisley and Renfrewshire North**

Alison Taylor:

[16645]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what recent steps his Department has taken to (a) encourage inward investment and (b) support job creation in Paisley and Renfrewshire North constituency.

Sarah Jones:

Growth is the number one mission of this government. Our Industrial Strategy is central to that Mission - targeting key sectors to deliver high quality, well-paid jobs. My Honourable Friend's constituency is strong in sectors identified in our Green Paper, particularly Advanced Manufacturing and Life Sciences including being home to the National Manufacturing Institute of Scotland and the Medicines Manufacturing Innovation Centre. We are working closely with the Scottish government and other partners to attract new investment and jobs. Senior officials from the Office for Investment recently visited the National Manufacturing Institute of Scotland to see the investment potential first-hand.

■ **Insolvency Service**

Chris Webb:

[16699]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to improve public confidence in the Insolvency Service.

Justin Madders:

The Department regularly reviews the work of the Insolvency Service to ensure that it is appropriately equipped to achieve the objectives and goals set out in its published [Agency Strategy 2021-2026](#) and reported on in its [Annual Report and Accounts 2023-24](#).

■ **Public Bodies**

Alison Griffiths:

[17395]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the Autumn Budget 2024 on the public bodies for which his Department is responsible.

Justin Madders:

At Autumn Budget 2024 HM Treasury announced the funding settlement agreed for my department for 2024-25 and 2025-26. By working with HM Treasury we have ensured that the settlement provides the funding required for the public bodies, for

which my department is responsible, to successfully deliver against their objectives and priorities.

CABINET OFFICE

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Helen Maguire:

[901650]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on improving public engagement with politics.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

Following the general election, the Prime Minister was clear that he wanted national renewal and a return of politics to public service.

The Government is committed to ensuring the public has diverse opportunities to take part in our vibrant democracy. The Government is taking steps to ensure meaningful public involvement in the work of government, including as part of mission-driven government and the broader toolkit for policy development and public engagement.

In addition to regular national and local elections, the public can engage in our political system and the policy-making process through various avenues. These include writing to their MP or to a government department, attending constituency surgeries, signing a petition which may end up the subject of debate in Parliament, taking part in a consultation (see [the GOV.UK website](https://www.gov.uk) for current consultations) or a parliamentary call for evidence, and of course taking part in politics directly by, for example, standing for office. The public are also encouraged to come and visit the UK Parliament to meet with their representatives and see the work of politics in action.

■ Cabinet Office: Cultural Heritage

Nick Timothy:

[11646]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he plans to decolonise the (a) artwork and (b) heritage assets in (i) his Department and (ii) each of its Arm's Length Bodies; and what the policy of the Government Property Agency is on this.

Georgia Gould:

There has been no change in the Cabinet Office's management of artwork or heritage assets since the previous administration.

As separate entities, the responsibility for creating policy and guidance for artwork sits with each individual Arm's Length Body, rather than with the Department.

The Government Property Agency does not have a national policy on this topic and will follow any policy and/or guidance provided by relevant client departments.

■ Cabinet Office: ICT

Mr Richard Holden: [\[16511\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what changes have been made to the planned delivery date of the Rosa Renewal Project since inception.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

The Rosa Renewal Project remains on track to complete by March 2025. It is an agile project planned to ensure the resilience of HMG's existing shared service capability for working on very sensitive information, and managed under the Government Major Projects Portfolio.

■ Cabinet Office: Ministers' Private Offices

Sir Ashley Fox: [\[9833\]](#)

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

Georgia Gould:

The total cost (excl. VAT) spent on refurbishments to ministerial private offices since the dissolution of the last Parliament is £2,954.67, of which £1,911.93 was for painting. The remainder was spent on television installations, three sets of coasters, and five standing mirrors. The majority of refurbishment costs were incurred before rooms were assigned to or occupied by current ministers.

■ Cabinet Office: Policy

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[16816\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how their Department defines strategy.

Georgia Gould:

The definition is detailed in the Functional Standards Common Glossary, which is published on the gov.uk website.

■ Cabinet Office: Senior Civil Servants

Charlie Dewhirst: [\[16596\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to his Department's advert for Second Permanent Secretary, European Union and International Economic Affairs, reference number 380316, if he will publish the panel members of that competition.

Georgia Gould:

Details of the panel members will be confirmed and published in due course.

■ Civil Servants: Location

Mike Wood: [\[14098\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Places for Growth Formative Evaluation Report, published on 30 October 2024, what steps his Department is taking to reach the targets of (a) 50% UK based Senior Civil Service outside of London and (b) reduced workforce in London to 75,000 by 2030.

Georgia Gould:

The Formative Evaluation report, commissioned by the previous Government, identified challenges they faced in delivering the SCS target and ambition to reduce the London workforce to 75 000 by 2030. We will tackle these challenges through a focus on a strong regional offer and UK-wide government presence. Our plans will be announced in due course, aligned with the upcoming Spending Review.

■ Council of the Nations and Regions

David Simmonds: [\[16550\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, which (a) individuals and (b) organisations attended the first meeting of the Council of the Nations and Regions.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

The inaugural Council of the Nations and Regions met on 11 October in Edinburgh to discuss growth and investment. On 17 October the UK Government published a communique for the meeting on gov.uk which sets out the attendees and their organisations. The government also published the terms of reference which include the names and roles of the standing invitees.

■ Fertility

Mr Richard Holden: [\[16334\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Office for National Statistics has made an assessment of the causes of reductions in levels of fertility; and which Department is responsible for Government policy relating to the (a) size and (b) demographics of the UK population.

Georgia Gould:

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

A response to the Hon. Gentleman's Parliamentary Question of 26 November is attached.

Attachments:

1. Letter from the National Statistician [PQ16334 V2.pdf]

■ Government Communication Service

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[16512\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the answer of 4 October 2024 to Question 4668 on Government Communication Service, for what reason the Government will not provide this information.

Georgia Gould:

The audit contains the personal information of circa 6,500 communicators across government. Even if the data was anonymised, there is still a risk that individuals could be identified.

■ Government Departments: Equality

Charlie Dewhirst:

[\[16597\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, for what reason his Department renamed the Cross-Government Women's Network as the Cross-Government Gender Network.

Georgia Gould:

The network has been operating under this name since it was changed in July 2020, under the previous administration. The decision was made by the Cross-Government network itself, not by the Cabinet Office.

■ Ministers: Training

Charlie Dewhirst:

[\[16590\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether his Department has provided (a) media and (b) speech training to Ministers across government.

Georgia Gould:

Since July 2024, there has been no provision of media or speech training to Ministers from the Cabinet Office.

Charlie Dewhirst:

[\[16591\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the cost to the public purse was of Government Campus ministerial induction sessions since July 2024; and what the estimated cost is of future scheduled sessions.

Georgia Gould:

In July 2024, two ministerial induction events were held.

One event was in-person and incurred costs of £55.00 for refreshments. One was held online and incurred no specific costs. The cost of future events will depend on the format chosen for delivery, but will be based on an appropriate use of public money.

■ Population: Statistics

Mr Richard Holden: [\[16335\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent assessment the Office for National Statistics has made of the accuracy of UK resident population statistics.

Mr Richard Holden: [\[16336\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what estimate the Office for National Statistics has made of the (a) number and (b) proportion of the UK population that have migrated to the UK in the last two years.

Georgia Gould:

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

A response to the Hon. Gentleman's Parliamentary Question of 27 November is attached.

Attachments:

1. Letter from the National Statistician [PQ16335_16336 (2).pdf]

■ Public Bodies: Conflict of Interests

Dan Carden: [\[16526\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of the National Audit Office's report entitled Managing conflicts of interest, HC 307, published on 22 November 2024.

Georgia Gould:

We are committed to restoring public confidence in government and ensuring that all those in public service are held to the highest standards.

We will consider carefully the National Audit Office's recommendations in its recent report 'Managing Conflicts of Interest'.

■ Public Sector: Civil Society

Sarah Hall: [\[16696\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to support the third sector to deliver public services.

Georgia Gould:

The recent announcement of the Civil Society Covenant marks a new era of partnership between Government and civil society that will drive forward plans to foster closer collaboration in tackling some of society's most pressing issues. The Covenant, which will launch in the New Year, seeks to establish a new relationship with the third sector and will support the delivery of the Government's missions as well as our ambitious project of reform to public services so they deliver for working people.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Arts and Music Venues: Rural Areas****Samantha Niblett:**[\[16781\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she is taking steps to increase the number of grassroots community (a) arts and (b) music venues in rural areas.

Chris Bryant:

The Government recognises the value of the grassroots music and arts sectors - they provide the foundation for both industries, fostering creativity, innovation and cultural expression.

The Government response to the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee's report on grassroots music venues, published 14 November, sets out our commitment to working with the sector to support the sustainability of the entire music ecosystem. In particular, the Government is urging the live music industry to introduce a voluntary levy on tickets for stadium and arena shows, to help safeguard the future of the grassroots music sector.

Following the Autumn Budget, we are continuing to support Arts Council England's (ACE's) successful Supporting Grassroots Music Fund which provides grants to grassroots music venues, recording studios, promoters and festivals across England.

More generally, ACE plays an important role in supporting grassroots community arts venues through the National Portfolio and other funding schemes such as Creative People and Places and National Lottery Project Grants. ACE also has a national dialogue with rural stakeholders from across England, and uses this to inform their policy and work. ACE is committed to responding to the specific needs of rural areas, supporting artists working in rural areas, improving access for rural audiences and building partnerships for growth.

■ Arts: Copyright**Gareth Snell:**[\[17194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sports, what assessment she has made of the potential implications for her policies of the Design and Artists Copyright Society's report entitled, UK Visual Artists a survey of earnings and contracts, published on 25 November 2024; and if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of digital copying on artists' and performers' remuneration.

Chris Bryant:

My department has made no recent assessment of the potential impact of digital copying on artists' and performers' remuneration. However, the Government wants to see remuneration arrangements that create the right conditions for sparking and driving innovation and investment, whilst rewarding creators for their work and is proud that it was a Labour Government that introduced the Artists Resale Right which is administered by DACS.

We recognise the importance of copyright protection in ensuring creators are protected and rewarded. The Government welcomes the publication of this informative report from the Design and Artists Copyright Society.

■ BBC

Mr Gregory Campbell: [\[17078\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will hold discussions with the BBC on (a) breaches of a broadcasting licence and (b) other matters raised in the report by Ofcom entitled Annual Report on the BBC 2023-2024, published on 29 November 2024.

Stephanie Peacock:

The BBC has a duty to reflect, represent and serve the diverse communities of all of the United Kingdom's nations and regions. We want it to reflect the full diversity of people, communities and experiences across the UK so that more people can see and hear themselves reflected as part of our national story.

Ofcom, the BBC's independent regulator, is required to prepare and publish an Operating Framework for the BBC, which must contain provisions to secure the effective regulation of the activities of the BBC as set out by the Charter and Framework Agreement. It is for Ofcom to hold the BBC to account in meeting these obligations.

The Government welcomes Ofcom's reports into the BBC's performance in 2023/24, and notes its findings.

Ministers regularly meet with the BBC's leadership, and as part of the next Charter Review, the Government will engage with the BBC and others to consider how to ensure the BBC thrives well into the next decade and beyond and in doing so, how it best delivers for the whole country.

■ Civil Society: Employers' Contributions

Clive Lewis: [\[16222\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department has made a recent assessment of the potential impact of the proposed increase in the rate of employers' National Insurance contributions on (a) social enterprises and (b) voluntary and community sector organisations.

Dr Al Pinkerton: [\[16436\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the proposed increase in employers' National Insurance contributions on not-for-profit organisations.

Stephanie Peacock:

At the recent Budget, the government took a number of difficult decisions on tax, welfare, and spending to fix the foundations on public finances, fund public services, and restore economic stability.

Ministers have met with representatives from the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector to discuss this issue and the department is aware of their concerns about the impacts of the increase to employer National Insurance Contributions (NICs).

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. This means that more than half of businesses (including charities) with NICs liabilities will either gain or see no change next year.

We are also expanding eligibility of the Employment Allowance by removing the £100,000 eligibility threshold, to simplify and reform employer NICs so that all eligible employers now benefit. Businesses and charities will still be able to claim employer NICs reliefs including those for under 21s and under 25 apprentices, where eligible.

The Government publishes Tax Information and Impact Notes (TIINs) for tax policy changes, which give a clear explanation of the policy objective and an assessment of the impacts. The TIIN for the employer NICs changes was [published on 13 November 2024](#).

Within the tax system, we provide support to charities through a range of reliefs and exemptions, including reliefs for charitable giving. More than £6 billion in charitable reliefs was provided to charities, Community Amateur Sports Clubs and their donors in 2023 to 2024. The biggest individual reliefs provided are Gift Aid at £1.6 billion and business rates relief at nearly £2.4 billion.

■ Leisure: Facilities

Max Wilkinson:

[\[16298\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, how many local authority owned leisure facilities have been sold in each of the last five years.

Stephanie Peacock:

Since 2019, 89 Health and Fitness facilities owned by Local Authorities have closed. Over the same period, 83 Health and Fitness facilities have opened.

The breakdown for closures per year is as follows:

2019: 23

2020: 16

2021: 15

2022: 16

2023: 11

2024: 2 (as of end of August 2024)

■ Running: Public Places

Samantha Niblett:

[\[16632\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has had recent discussions with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on the safety of public spaces for runners.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport regularly engages with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on a range of issues.

Sport and physical activity are incredibly important for our physical and mental health and this Government is committed to ensuring that everyone, regardless of background, should have access to and benefit from quality sport and physical activity opportunities in safe environments including open spaces such as parks and streets.

■ Sports Competitors: Injuries

Chris Evans:

[\[16478\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions she has had with relevant stakeholders on protecting sport participants from (a) concussion and (b) chronic traumatic encephalopathy.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Government takes the issue of head injuries very seriously. The first national guidance for concussion in grassroots sport was introduced in 2023, developed by international experts on concussion and acquired brain injury to better identify, manage and prevent the issue. We continue to encourage National Governing Bodies to adapt the guidance to their own sport where appropriate.

The Government will continue to discuss athlete safety with relevant stakeholders and the sports sector in the coming months to ensure that everyone can take part in sport as safely as possible.

■ Sports: Training

Samantha Niblett:

[\[16649\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she plans to help increase diversity in sports coaching.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Government is committed to promoting diversity and inclusion in sport at all levels. We will continue to work with the sport sector to help it be inclusive and welcoming to its spectators, participants and workforce. Coaches play a hugely important role in facilitating sporting activity and acting as a source of inspiration and encouragement for people to remain active.

Sport England's ten year strategy, Uniting the Movement, reinforces their commitment to tackling inequalities faced in sport by underrepresented groups. Sport England is investing £120 million to increase participation in sport and boost diversity at the grassroots level to give more and better opportunities to all.

Additionally, the updated Code for Sports Governance requires sports that receive substantial public funding from either UK Sport or Sport England to have detailed and ambitious diversity and inclusion action plans in place, which are published and updated annually.

DEFENCE

■ Air Force: Training

Mr Mark Francois:

[\[16459\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost has been of delivering the Military Flying Training System since its inception; and whether the programme is on track to meet its operational target.

Maria Eagle:

The cost of delivering the UKMFTS since its inception has been £2.2 billion, with the programme continuing to deliver trained UK military pilots to meet the requirements of the Front Line Operational Conversion Unit. Incremental growth is planned in line with the Front Line Command requirements out to the contract end date in 2033.

■ Armed Forces

Mr Mark Francois:

[\[16454\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if his Department will provide a table detailing the most recent data on UK Regular Forces by (a) Service and (b) Medical Deployability Standards.

Al Carns:

The following table provides the Medical Deployability Standards for UK Armed Forces personnel, broken down by service as of the 1 October 2024:

	MEDICALLY FULLY DEPLOYABLE (MFD)	MEDICALLY LIMITED DEPLOYABLE (MLD)	MEDICALLY NOT DEPLOYABLE (MND)
Total	99,560	14,350	13,522
Royal Navy	22,838	2,363	2,922
Army	55,005	9,456	6,879
RAF	21,717	2,531	3,721

■ Defence: Finance**James Cartlidge:** [\[17186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he plans to publish his Department's pathway for reaching 2.5% of GDP being spent on Defence; and whether he has made any changes to that timetable since 1 November.

Maria Eagle:

As the Prime Minister has confirmed the path to spending 2.5% of GDP on Defence will be set out in spring 2025.

■ Defence: Industry**Andrew Griffith:** [\[17272\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the Autumn Budget 2024 on the defence sector.

Maria Eagle:

The Budget increased defence spending in real terms by £2.9 billion for next year and we are committed to setting a path to 2.5% of GDP on defence.

The Department's Statement of Intent regarding the Defence Industrial Strategy was published on 2 December. This will ensure the imperatives of national security and a high-growth economy are aligned.

■ Hawk Aircraft**Mr Mark Francois:** [\[16460\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of maintaining sovereign capability in the (a) production and (b) sustainment of the Hawk aircraft; and what the estimate he has made of the economic impact of that capability on the defence industry.

Maria Eagle:

The Hawk T1 aircraft is scheduled to remain in service until 2030 and the Hawk T2 aircraft out-of-service date is in 2040. A decision on the production, sustainment and replacement of the aircraft will not be taken until after the Strategic Defence Review is completed.

■ HMS Albion and HMS Bulwark**James Cartlidge:** [\[17148\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the potential operational implications are of retiring HMS (a) Albion and (b) Bulwark in March 2025.

James Cartlidge: [\[17149\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the retirement of HMS (a) Albion and (b) Bulwark on the capability of the armed forces.

David Reed:

[R] [[17476](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the capability of Bay Class landing dock ships to fulfil the amphibious operational requirements in the absence of HMS Albion and HMS Bulwark until the introduction of Multi-Role Support Ships.

David Reed:

[R] [[17477](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the capability of RFA Argus to fulfil the UK's amphibious operational requirements in the absence of HMS Albion and HMS Bulwark until the introduction of Multi-Role Support Ships.

David Reed:

[R] [[17478](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of retiring HMS Albion and HMS Bulwark on the ability of the Armed Forces to conduct amphibious operations; and how amphibious troops will undertake such operations before the planned delivery of Multi-Role Support Ships.

Luke Pollard:

The retirement of HMS Albion and Bulwark will not impact the operational programme of the Royal Marines, who continue to deploy globally.

Both are currently held at lower readiness having not been to sea since 2023 and 2017 respectively. This Government inherited a position where neither was due to go to sea again before their planned out of service dates of 2033 and 2034.

The Royal Marines are supported by the three Bay Class Landing Ship Dock (Auxiliary) and RFA ARGUS, which also provides aviation support and can act as a casualty receiving ship. These ships will continue to support amphibious capability until they are succeeded by planned Multi Role Support Ships.

■ HMS Albion and HMS Bulwark: Repairs and Maintenance

Mr Mark Francois:

[[16458](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost is of refits to HMS (a) Albion and (b) Bulwark since 2010.

Maria Eagle:

The total cost of refits to HMS Albion and HMS Bulwark since 2010 is £132.7 million. This excludes HMS Bulwark's 2022-2025 refit which was estimated to cost £72.1 million. As HMS Bulwark was retired before her refit was completed, the refit costs are under review.

■ Israel: F-35 Aircraft

Clive Lewis: [\[16963\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 29 November 2024 to Question 15836, whether any F-35 components manufactured in Britain are designed specifically for use by the Israeli air force.

Maria Eagle:

F-35 components are designed for use by all three variants of F-35 aircraft. The UK manufactures components for all F-35 variants.

■ Ministry of Defence: Aviation

Rupert Lowe: [\[16885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many international (a) air miles and (b) flights have been completed by (i) Ministers and (ii) officials in their Department since 5 July 2024.

Al Carns:

Information about use of international flights for official overseas Ministerial and senior officials travel is published as part of the Cabinet Office transparency returns and made available on the GOV.UK website.

Data from 5 July 2024 will be published in due course.

■ Ministry of Defence: ICT

Helen Maguire: [\[17464\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many of his Department's (a) computers, (b) laptops, (c) phones and (d) USB sticks were (i) lost and (ii) stolen in each month in 2023.

Maria Eagle:

The table below shows the number of computers, laptops, phones and USB sticks which were either lost or stolen in each month in 2023.

DATE	COMPUTERS	LAPTOPS	USBS	PHONES
Jan-23	0	13	2	9
Feb-23	0	10	0	3
Mar-23	0	38	2	10
Apr-23	0	10	0	3
May-23	0	8	2	8
Jun-23	0	10	1	12
Jul-23	0	9	6	8

DATE	COMPUTERS	LAPTOPS	USBs	PHONES
Aug-23	0	51	3	9
Sep-23	0	7	3	8
Oct-23	0	8	1	9
Nov-23	0	9	0	11
Dec-23	0	3	0	11

We take the security of defence assets very seriously and have robust policies and procedures to prevent losses and thefts. Defence personnel are regularly reminded of their responsibilities to safeguard Defence assets.

Proportionate security controls are used to protect electronic devices according to the classification and nature of the information which the asset can hold.

■ Multi-role Ocean Surveillance Ships

David Reed:

[R] [\[17481\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the timeline for the introduction of the Multi-Role Support Ships remains on track to meet operational requirements.

Maria Eagle:

The Multi-Role Strike Ship (MRSS) programme will recapitalise the Royal Navy (RN)'s amphibious fleet, which consists of the three Bay class landing ships (RFA Lyme Bay, Mounts Bay and Cardigan Bay) and RFA Argus, which provides medical and aviation support. These vessels, which are planned to have left service by 2034, are due to be replaced by MRSS. The MRSS programme is in the concept phase and aims to deliver the first of class by 2033.

■ Nuclear-free Zones: Treaties

Mr Mark Francois:

[\[16455\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the (a) applicability of the Treaty of Pelindaba to the Chagos Archipelago and (b) potential impact of that Treaty on the UK's Defence arrangements.

Luke Pollard:

The agreement with Mauritius has been negotiated based on international law, and with regards to both parties' obligations under international law. The UK is not a Party to the Pelindaba Treaty, although it is a Party to Protocols I and II to that Treaty.

The operation of the UK/US base on Diego Garcia will continue unchanged.

■ Puma Helicopters**James Cartlidge:** [\[16734\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his Oral Statement of 20 November 2024, Official Report, columns 287-289, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of retiring 17 Puma helicopters on the UK's contribution to NATO's Next Generation Rotorcraft Capability programme.

Luke Pollard:

The retirement of 17 Puma helicopters at the end of their current lifespan will not affect the UK's contribution to NATO's Next Generation Rotorcraft Capability Programme.

■ Reserve Forces**James Cartlidge:** [\[17188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he received the External Scrutiny Team Report 2024 into the Reserves as referred to in Section 113a of the Reserve Forces Act 1996; and whether he plans to publish his response.

Al Carns:

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence received the External Scrutiny Team's 2024 report on 29 July 2024. We are most grateful to the team for their work. The Ministry of Defence will place their 2024 report in the Library of the House in the next few weeks and will provide a substantive response to the report at the same time.

■ Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Associations Review**Mr Mark Francois:** [\[16456\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he plans to conclude his Department's review into cadets and reserves; and whether he plans to publish that review.

Al Carns:

The review of Reserves and Cadets is underway and is closely aligned with the Ministry of Defence's wider Strategic Defence Review which will report in the first half of 2025. Once Ministers have considered the findings of the Reserves and Cadets review, a decision will be taken about publication.

■ Strategic Defence Review**James Cartlidge:** [\[17185\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when the Strategic Defence Review will be (a) delivered to Ministers and (b) made available to the public.

Luke Pollard:

As previously announced by the Secretary of State for Defence to the House of Commons, the Reviewers will make their final report to the Prime Minister, Chancellor of the Exchequer and Secretary of State for Defence in the Spring of 2025. The

Secretary of State for Defence will subsequently publish a version of that report to Parliament.

■ Type 26 Frigates

David Reed:

[R] [17482]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the progress of (a) the Type 26 frigate programme and (b) its delivery schedule.

Maria Eagle:

The Ministry of Defence continues to work closely with BAE Systems (BAES) to ensure the Type 26 programme remains on track to meet all user requirements and deliver world-class Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) frigates to replace the Type 23.

Following the recent steel-cut ceremony for HMS Sheffield on 28 November 2024, five of the eight Type 26 frigates are now under construction on the Clyde. HMS Glasgow is forecast to achieve Initial Operating Capability in 2028, with construction of all eight frigates expected to be completed by the mid-2030s. HMS Cardiff recently completed her float-off operation successfully and has joined HMS Glasgow in the dry dock at Scotstoun for the outfitting phase.

■ Veterans: Charities

Helen Maguire:

[17465]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what funds the Government has committed to veterans charities in each of the last two years; and how much each such charity has received.

Al Carns:

The information is not held in the format requested.

Information held by the Ministry of Defence (MOD) does not differentiate between veterans' charities; charities that generally support the Armed Forces community including veterans; and charities that have a wider remit but include support to veterans.

For the MOD, the majority of grant programmes supporting veterans are administered via the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust (AFCFT), and are listed on their website: <https://covenantfund.org.uk>

During financial year (FY) 2022-23 the AFCFT awarded 134 grants, totalling just over £7 million to 112 different not-for-profit organisations towards projects to support veterans.

During FY 2023-24 the AFCFT awarded 180 grants, totalling £23.8 million to 122 different organisations.

In addition, the Office for Veterans' Affairs (OVA), now part of the MOD, has also funded grant programmes to support veterans, some of which were awarded to charities.

For OVA grants administered by the AFCFT, a total of £12 million has been allocated to the following programmes in FYs 2022-23 and 2023-24, some of which were awarded to charities:

- Veterans' Capital Housing Fund
- Reducing Veteran Homelessness Programme
- Veterans' Employment Enhancement Programme
- Veterans' Mobility Fund
- LGBT Support Fund

In addition, during FY 2022-23 and 2023-24 the OVA has directly administered grants to veterans' charities as detailed in the table below.

CHARITY	FY 2022-23	FY 2023-24
Blesma	£50,000	£150,000
Bravo Victor	£40,310	£178,255
Combat Stress	-	£65,000
Dame Kelly Holmes Trust	-	£500
Defence Medical Welfare Service	£34,801	£304,204
Fighting with Pride	£15,000	£1,500
Forward Assist	£40,000	£76,500
LGBT Foundation	£10,210	£1,500
Nuclear Community Charity Fund	-	£35,000
Royal British Legion	£250,000	-
Total	£440,321	£812,459

■ Veterans: Identity Cards

Mr Mark Francois:

[16469]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the data associated with the new digital veterans ID will be stored only within the UK.

Mr Mark Francois:

[\[16470\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what security protocols have been implemented to ensure the protection of personal data in the digital veterans ID system.

Mr Mark Francois:

[\[16471\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether independent security audits will be conducted on the digital veterans ID system.

Al Carns:

All data associated with the new virtual HM Armed Forces Veteran Card will be stored within the UK. The digitisation project is currently in the Discovery Phase. However, when it moves into development, it will operate under Government Security and Ministry of Defence Secure by Design frameworks as part of the whole life management of the service. This will include independent IT health checks and penetration testing throughout the duration of use.

■ **Veterans: Women**

James Cartlidge:

[\[17187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he plans to commission a Women's Veterans Strategy.

Al Carns:

This Government will always stand up for those who have served our country, and I am leading work across Government and with civil society to look at the best ways to ensure all veterans get access to the support and opportunities they need and deserve.

Women are a crucial part of the Armed Forces community, both through the value of their service and their contribution to society as veterans. We do not have any plans to commission a Women Veterans' Strategy, however we will set out our plans in due course for all veterans in our updated Veterans' Strategy, which will include a specific section on women.

EDUCATION

■ **Bereavement Counselling: Children**

Mike Amesbury:

[\[16997\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a new protocol to ensure that (a) local authorities and (b) public bodies inform children who have recently been bereaved about the (i) local, (ii) national and (iii) online support services available to them.

Catherine McKinnell:

This government is committed to improving the support available to all children and young people, including those struggling with bereavement. This is why we are

prioritising improving mental health support for all children and young people, which includes providing access to specialist mental health professionals in every school. In addition, the department provides a list of resources for schools on supporting pupils' mental health and wellbeing, which may include supporting children dealing with loss and bereavement.

As I set out at a Westminster Hall Debate on childhood bereavement on 2 December, the cross-government bereavement working group, chaired within the Department of Health and Social Care, will continue to look at options for improving support for bereaved children and young people across government, including the potential to improve data collection.

■ Children: Protection

Jess Asato:

[\[16770\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential implications for her policies of the report by the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel, published on 26 November 2024; and what steps she is taking to include the (a) prevention and (b) tackling of child sexual abuse in her Department's plans for introducing Multi-Agency Child Protection Units.

Janet Daby:

This government is committed to keeping children safe and to breaking the link between young people's backgrounds and their success. Reforming children's social care is critical to giving hundreds of thousands of children and young people the start in life they deserve.

The department is very grateful for the work of the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel, including their report published last week on child sexual abuse in the family environment. Any instance of child abuse is abhorrent, and this report importantly highlights the weaknesses in the system that have shielded abusers and left children at risk of harm. There is a renewed government focus in which we will be driving a holistic and ambitious response to tackling all forms of abuse, including child sexual abuse. Multi-agency child protection teams are based on a recommendation from a previous Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel report, Child Protection in England. They are part of the Families First for Children (FFC) pathfinders that draw on evidence from the 'Supporting Families' and 'Strengthening families, protecting children' programmes, which deliver multi-agency and multi-disciplinary whole-family support for children and young people. Evaluation of the 'Supporting Families' programme showed a 32% reduction in children going into care from families within two years of being on the programme. The 'Family Safeguarding' programme evaluation also found significant reductions in the numbers of new looked after children aged under 12, which reduced by 26%, average number of children on Child Protection Plans aged under 12, which reduced by 43%, and police call outs, the monthly average of which reduced by 64%.

In the ten FFC pathfinder areas, multi-agency child protection practitioners from the local authority, police, health and other relevant agencies are working together in a much more integrated way with overall responsibility for protecting children from harm, alongside social workers with the highest levels of knowledge and skills in child protection work. We know that by working together, agencies are better able to accurately and quickly identify when children are likely to experience, or are experiencing, significant harm and take decisive and skilled action to address this.

In addition to the £45 million already invested in the FFC pathfinder programme, last week the government announced two grants for Children's Services in 2025/26 which should be used together, alongside the £680 million increase in the Social Care Grant:

- A Children's Social Care Prevention Grant worth £250 million of new funding to enable direct investment in additional prevention activity through transition to Family Help.
- A Children and Families Grant worth £415 million, including £253.5 million of what was 'Supporting Families' funding in 2024/25.

■ Class Sizes

Andrew Cooper:

[17383]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the average (a) primary and (b) secondary school class size was in (i) Mid Cheshire constituency, (ii) Cheshire and (iii) England in each of the last five years.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department publishes annual statistics on class sizes in state-funded schools in England here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics>. The England averages for the most recent five years are available in the 'Class size' section of the publication. Comparable figures for local authorities can be found in files in the data catalogue or displayed via the interactive table tool. Figures for parliamentary constituencies can be calculated from the school level files listed under the heading 'Additional supporting files' for each annual publication. Data on parliamentary constituencies use boundaries as they were when the statistics were last published for January 2024. Statistics using new boundaries will be available in the next publication of the series in June 2025.

■ Department for Education: Employers' Contributions

Neil O'Brien:

[13231]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to paragraph 2.40 of the Autumn Budget 2024, HC 295, published on 30 October 2024, what estimate she has made of the potential impact of the increase in the rate of employer National Insurance Contributions on (a) direct and (b) indirect departmental costs.

Neil O'Brien:

[\[13232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to paragraph 2.40 of the Autumn Budget 2024, HC 295, published on 30 October 2024, what estimate she has made of the potential impact of the increase in the rate of employer National Insurance Contributions on the costs of (a) schools, (b) colleges, (c) higher education institutions and (d) early years settings in each year to 2030.

Janet Daby:

My right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, made an announcement at the Autumn Budget 2024 setting out changes to Employers National Insurance Contributions policy. Alongside this, she announced funding to the public sector to support them with the additional associated cost.

The department will work closely with HM Treasury (HMT) to understand the implications for our sectors. This process will conclude when HMT confirm funding allocations by department as part of setting baselines and planning assumptions for the second phase of the spending review.

■ Further Education: Finance

Kim Johnson:

[\[16527\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the findings of the Association of Colleges' report entitled The educational provision for 14 to 16-year-olds in further education colleges in England, published in November 2024, whether she plans to increase funding of college places for 14 to 16 year olds.

Janet Daby:

The department has noted with interest the Association of Colleges report about educational provision for 14 to 16-year-olds in further education (FE) colleges in England. Funding for 14 to 16-year-olds in FE colleges is based on the same approach as for 16 to 19-year olds. In 2024/25 there will be a significant increase of £750 per full time 14 to 16-year-old student that has not yet achieved GCSE English and mathematics. This is as a result of extending to programmes at all levels the English and mathematics funding only previously available for those on Level 3 programmes without grade 4 in the subjects. 14 to 16-year-olds in colleges will also benefit from the £300 million funding boost for FE in 2025/26 that my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced at budget to ensure young people are developing the skills they need to succeed and a further £300 million to support colleges to maintain, improve and ensure suitability of their estate.

The department will work through priorities for future investment as part of the next spending review.

■ Gambling: Education

Shockat Adam:

[\[17340\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport's response to the Government's consultation on the structure,

distribution and governance of the statutory levy on gambling operators, published on 27 November 2024, what steps her Department is taking to improve education for (a) children and (b) young people on the issue of gambling harms.

Catherine McKinnell:

Within schools, statutory relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) supports children and young people to make informed decisions in relation to their mental wellbeing and online behaviour. The RSHE statutory guidance is clear that children and young people should be taught about the risks related to gambling including the accumulation of debt, how advertising and information is targeted at them and how to be a discerning consumer of information online.

These subjects support children and young people to develop self-control and their ability to self-regulate, as well as providing strategies for doing so.

Young people attending further education (FE) colleges, take part in regular tutor sessions that are devoted to their personal development. This includes financial education and the informed use of money where the dangers of gambling can be discussed. The department continues to work closely with the FE sector to promote and support providers to develop and implement a whole college approach to mental health and wellbeing. This includes establishing Mental Health Support Teams in schools and colleges to provide early intervention for students experiencing mild to moderate mental health issues.

■ **Higher Education: Science**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[16539\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many university (a) biology, (b) chemistry and (c) physics departments (i) opened and (ii) closed in the last five years.

Janet Daby:

The government is committed to promoting science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education and skills to ensure the UK remains competitive in the global economy.

Universities operate as autonomous institutions, therefore specific data on the number of university biology, chemistry and physics departments that have opened and/or closed in the last five years is not collected or maintained by the department.

The government recognises the financial environment of the higher education sector is increasingly challenging and the department is aware that some providers are making difficult decisions in order to safeguard their financial sustainability. The department is committed to working with the sector to create a secure future for our world-leading universities.

■ Holiday Activities and Food Programme**Helen Maguire:**[\[17058\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made a recent assessment of the potential merits of maintaining real-term levels of funding for the Holiday Activities and Food programme beyond March 2025.

Stephen Morgan:

Now that the department has been given its overall budget, we are working through the details of the budget settlement. Departmental budgets for 2025/26 will be confirmed in due course, including the exact funding available to support children, young people and families during the holidays.

■ Mathematics and English language: GCSE**Mr Richard Holden:**[\[16524\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans she has to increase the number and proportion of pupils attaining a pass grade in GCSE (a) maths and (b) English by the age of (i) 16 and (ii) 18.

Catherine McKinnell:

High and rising school standards are at the heart of the government's mission to break down barriers to opportunity and give every child the best life chances.

The government has established an independent Curriculum and Assessment Review which will seek to deliver, amongst other things, an excellent foundation in core subjects of reading, writing and mathematics. The reformed curriculum will drive high and rising standards in schools, ensuring children are prepared for life, work and the future. The review will look closely at the key challenges to attainment that children and young people face, in particular those with SEND, as it seeks to ensure that all pupils benefit from a broad curriculum. This will also include looking at how the assessment system can be improved.

The review group will publish an interim report in early 2025 setting out their interim findings and confirming the key areas for further work. The final review with recommendations will be published in autumn 2025.

High-quality teaching is the most important in-school factor supporting pupils' attainment and outcomes. The department is committed to recruiting an additional 6,500 new expert teachers in secondary schools, special schools and colleges to drive high standards for children and young people. Our measures will include getting more teachers into shortage subjects, supporting areas that face recruitment challenges and tackling retention issues. Additionally, in October the department introduced a teacher retention incentive of £6,000 for teachers in secondary schools and colleges in shortage subjects including science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

The department's English and Maths Hubs are providing school to school expertise and advice on how to strengthen outcomes in these subjects.

From early 2025, new Regional Improvement for Standards and Excellence (RISE) teams will support all state schools by facilitating networking, sharing best practice and enabling schools to better access support, including for English and mathematics, and learn from one another. For schools requiring more intensive support, RISE teams and supporting organisations will work collaboratively with their responsible body to agree bespoke packages of targeted support, based on a school's particular circumstances.

The department considers level 2 English and mathematics to be essential for enabling students to realise their potential, and seize opportunities in life, learning and work. That is why we have the mathematics and English condition of funding (CoF), which enables all students on 16-19 study programmes or T Levels who have not yet attained grade 4+ GCSE (or equivalent) in English and mathematics to access support that leads to the best outcomes for them. A GCSE pass grade includes students with a prior attainment of grade 9-1, but a pass below grade 4 is not a level 2 pass which is why those students are supported by this policy.

The department has announced updates to the CoF requirements to help more students without a level 2 pass to progress in English and mathematics, the updated requirements ensure all students are offered a minimum number of teaching hours for English and/or mathematics. These are three hours for English and four hours for mathematics per week for 2024/25 academic year, and 100 hours for English and 100 hours for mathematics for the 2025/26 academic year. This support must be delivered as in-person, whole class, stand-alone teaching. The 2024/25 requirements are 'best efforts', whereas the updates from 2025/26 are mandatory. We also encourage providers to offer an extra 35 hours of mathematics teaching in the 2025/26 academic year, continuing their best efforts in delivering these. We are also reducing the tolerance by which providers may opt out students from these requirements to 2.5% in 2025/26 (from its current level of 5%) so as many students as possible get support for English and mathematics.

■ Schools: Essex

Priti Patel:

[\[16755\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Written Statement of 28 November 2024 on School Funding: Provisional 2025-26 allocations, HCWS 264, what funding she has provided to (a) primary schools, (b) secondary schools and (c) special and alternative provision in (i) Witham constituency and (ii) Essex.

Catherine McKinnell:

At the Autumn Budget 2024, the government announced an additional £2.3 billion for mainstream schools and young people with high needs for the 2025/26 financial year, compared to the 2024/25 financial year. This means that overall core school funding will total almost £63.9 billion next year.

Through the schools national funding formula (NFF), Essex will receive £5,379 per primary pupil and £6,984 per secondary pupil in mainstream schools in the 2025/26

financial year. These per pupil figures will be used to calculate final allocations for 2025/26 through the dedicated schools grant (DSG) in December, based on updated pupil numbers.

The provisional funding allocation for primary and secondary schools in Essex based on the 2024/25 DSG pupil numbers is £642.0 million and £587.2 million respectively. These figures do not include premises funding or growth funding.

The department does not provide school funding figures at constituency level. The individual allocations that schools within Witham constituency will actually receive are determined each year by the local funding formula set by Essex County Council.

Almost £1 billion of the £2.3 billion increase announced at the Autumn Budget 2024 has been allocated to high needs budgets in the 2025/26 financial year, bringing total high needs funding for children and young people with complex special educational needs and disabilities and those in alternative provision (AP) to £11.9 billion.

Of that total, Essex County Council is being allocated a provisional high needs funding amount of over £259 million through the high needs NFF. This represents an 8.9% increase per head of their 2 to 18 year old population, on their equivalent 2024/25 financial year NFF allocation. It is for local authorities to decide how to distribute the funding to special and AP schools in their local area.

Essex County Council will also be allocated extra funding for pay and pensions costs in special schools and AP. This funding is additional to the allocations through the high needs NFF, and the department will confirm shortly how the funding allocations will be calculated.

■ Schools: Finance

Priti Patel:

[\[16756\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Written Statement of 28 November 2024 on School Funding: Provisional 2025-26 allocations, HCWS 264, whether the allocations include provision for schools to cover the additional costs of the employer National Insurance contributions increases from April 2025.

Catherine McKinnell:

At Budget, HM Treasury confirmed that all public sector organisations will be funded for the increase in employer contributions to national insurance in the 2025/26 financial year. This included additional funding for schools.

The allocations for the national funding formula for the 2025/26 financial year do not include the additional funding for the increase in employer contributions to national insurance from April 2025.

The department anticipates providing this funding to schools through a separate grant in the 2025/26 financial year. It will provide more information on this, including funding rates and allocations, as soon as practicable.

Priti Patel:

[\[16757\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Written Statement of 28 November 2024 on School Funding: Provisional 2025-26 allocations, HCWS 264, what funding has been provided to (a) primary schools, (b) secondary schools and (c) special and alternative provision in (i) Witham constituency, (ii) Essex and (iii) nationally to cover the costs of additional pupils entering the state sector from independent provision as a result of the introduction of VAT and business rate changes to independent schools.

Stephen Morgan:

The government announced at Budget a £2.3 billion increase to the core schools budget for the 2025/26 financial year. This funding increase includes funding for mainstream schools and high needs funding for complex special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Funding for mainstream schools will be distributed to schools following the existing funding formula, which includes consideration of pupil numbers and other characteristics. The funding allocations to local authorities for 2025/26 are calculated using the latest pupil numbers from the October 2024 census.

Local authorities are responsible for securing enough school places for children in their area. We provide capital funding through the Basic Need grant to support local authorities to provide school places, based on their own pupil forecasts and school capacity data. They can use this funding to provide places in new schools or through expansions of existing schools and can work with any school in their local area, including academies and free schools.

Departmental Pupil Place Planning Advisors engage with councils on a regular basis to review their plans for creating additional places and to consider alternatives where necessary. When local authorities are experiencing difficulties, we support them to find solutions as quickly as possible. Where local authorities are failing in their duty, the government will intervene.

Andrew Cooper:

[\[17384\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much funding her Department allocated to (a) primary and (b) secondary schools in (i) Mid Cheshire constituency, (ii) Cheshire and (iii) England in each of the last 10 years.

Andrew Cooper:

[\[17385\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the average per-pupil funding was that her Department allocated to (a) primary and (b) secondary schools in (i) Mid Cheshire constituency, (ii) Cheshire and (iii) England in each year since 2010.

Catherine McKinnell:

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

funding in the 2018/19 financial year, and instead funded separately through the central school services block from that year onwards.

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

The department has also provided the link to the recently published schools national funding formula (NFF) allocations for the 2025/26 financial year. In these tables we provide total allocations and per pupil funding amounts for each local authority and at national level. These per pupil figures will be used to calculate final allocations for 2025/26 through the DSG in December, based on updated pupil numbers.

The department does not provide school funding figures at constituency level. The individual allocations that schools within Mid Cheshire constituency receive are determined, each year, by the local funding formula set by Cheshire local authority.

Links to the published DSG tables from 2018/19 onward are below.

The 2018/19 financial year DSG:

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

The 2019/20 financial year DSG:

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

The 2020/21 financial year DSG:

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

The 2021/22 financial year DSG:

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

The 2022/23 financial year DSG:

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

The 2023/24 financial year DSG:

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

The 2024/25 financial year DSG:

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

The NFF table for the 2025/26 financial year:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-funding-formula-tables-for-schools-and-high-needs-2025-to-2026>.

■ Sixth Form Colleges: Pay

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[16523\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to take steps to ensure that pay rates of teachers in sixth form colleges match those of school teachers.

Janet Daby:

This government is committed to ensuring that there is a thriving further education (FE) sector, which is vital to its missions to break down the barriers to opportunity and boost economic growth.

The government is not responsible for, and plays no role in, setting or making recommendations about teacher pay in FE colleges. It is for individual colleges and providers to set the pay of their staff.

At the Autumn Budget, my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer set out an additional £300 million revenue funding for FE in 2025/26 to ensure young people are developing the skills this country needs, as well as £300 million new capital funding to address condition and capacity issues in the FE estate. The department will set out how this funding will be distributed in due course.

■ Special Educational Needs

Shivani Raja:

[\[16656\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that all SEND pupils are able to access (a) education and (b) training opportunities; and if she will make an assessment of the potential implications for her policies of the consultation by Leicester City Council entitled Post-16 education transport for young people with SEND, published on 7 November 2024.

Catherine McKinnell:

For too long the education and care system has not met the needs of all children and young people, particularly those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), with parents struggling to get their children the support they need and deserve.

This government's ambition is that all children and young people with SEND receive the right support to succeed in their education and develop the skills they need as they move into adult life. We are committed to improving inclusivity and expertise in mainstream settings, as well as ensuring specialist settings cater to those with the most complex needs, restoring parents' trust that their child will get the support they need.

Local authorities must provide to all young people aged 13 to 19, and to those between 20 and 25 with special educational needs, support it considers appropriate to encourage, enable or assist them to effectively participate in education or training. Alongside this there is also a guaranteed place in education and training for all 16 and 17 year olds, expanded work experience and careers advice, action to tackle

school attendance and improved access to mental health services for young people in England.

Through our new 'Youth Guarantee', this government will ensure that every young person aged 18 to 21 that needs it, is supported in accessing further learning or receives help to get a job or an apprenticeship. This guarantee will bring together and enhance provision and support for young people by offering them tailored support that will help them into further learning or fulfilling work. This will provide support for young people with SEND who may be particularly at risk of not being in education, employment or training. To respond to this challenge, this government will launch trailblazers in eight mayoral combined authorities starting from April 2025, with £45 million of funding being invested in 2025/26 to design and develop the guarantee.

Furthermore, as part of our commitment to helping children and young people with SEND to develop the skills they need as they move into adult life, the department is investing up to £18 million until March 2025 to build capacity in supported internships. The department aims to double the number of internships each year to around 4,500, to support more young people with education, health and care plans to gain the skills to transition into employment.

With regards to the question about transport in Leicester, local authorities must consult with stakeholders in developing their policy statement and any proposed changes to the way post-16 transport is provided. This is to ensure that it provides a full picture of the available transport and support.

■ Training

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[16519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing further skills boot camps to help tackle specific sectoral shortages.

Janet Daby:

Skills Bootcamps remain an important offer in the skills landscape, and in the longer term the department intends to fund Skills Bootcamps through funding Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs) and local areas directly. MCAs and the Greater London Authority have the flexibility to use up to 50% of their grants to test Skills Bootcamps in additional sectors. As of the 2024/25 financial year, two trailblazer areas, the West Midlands Combined Authority and Greater Manchester Combined Authority can use 100% of their grants to this effect.

More broadly, the department is introducing Skills England to develop a coherent picture of our national and regional skills needs and to shape the technical education needed to meet that demand. Our levy-funded growth and skills offer will deliver greater flexibility for learners and employers, aligned with the government's industrial strategy, creating routes into good, skilled jobs in growing industries and helping to address skills shortages.

As a first step, this will include shorter duration and foundation apprenticeships in targeted sectors, helping more people learn new high-quality skills at work, fuelling innovation in businesses across the country, and providing high-quality entry pathways for young people. Skills England is currently engaging with employers over this autumn on how these apprenticeships can support them to develop their workforces and fill skills gaps. We will receive their findings in the new year which will help to inform our offer, and we will set out more detail on the offer in due course.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

■ Business Premises: Energy Performance Certificates

Tom Hayes:

[\[16669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to encourage businesses to (a) prepare for changes to the minimum EPC rating for commercial properties in 2030 and (b) help the UK meet its net zero targets.

Sarah Jones:

The Government has consulted on raising non-domestic Private Rented Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards and we are aiming to publish the Government response early next year. We will publish updated guidance to support landlords with compliance where necessary.

The Government has also introduced a number of policies to encourage businesses to help meet net zero targets. This includes Climate Change Agreements which provides business rates exemptions and tax discounts in exchange for businesses meeting energy and carbon reduction targets, the Business Energy Advice Service for SMEs which is currently being piloted in the West Midlands, the Boiler Upgrade Scheme which provides up to £7,500 off the installation of new heat pumps and the Industrial Energy Transformation Fund providing grants for energy efficiency and deep decarbonisation projects.

Tom Hayes:

[\[16670\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to provide (a) financial and (b) advisory support to help commercial property owners meet the new EPC rating guidelines for 2030.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government has consulted on raising non-domestic Private Rented Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards and will publish the Government response early next year. The Government continues to engage with trade bodies and other key stakeholders to help property owners understand the requirements and what support is available to them and will be publishing updated guidance to support landlords with compliance where necessary.

Non-domestic properties are eligible for the Boiler Upgrade Scheme offering up to £7,500 off the installation of a heat pump.

■ Business: Energy

Tom Hayes: [\[16671\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to encourage businesses to (a) engage with knowledge-sharing platforms and (b) share case studies on (i) improving energy efficiency and (ii) using renewable energy.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government is committed to engaging and supporting business small and large through the transition to net zero. We know that SMEs can face particular decarbonisation challenges and it is important they have access to reliable information and advice to help them take action to reduce their emissions.

We encourage small and medium-sized businesses to visit the UK Business Climate Hub, which provides advice to reduce their emissions and case studies, highlighting examples of businesses taking action. It is run by the Broadway Initiative, in partnership with government and a coalition of business organisations.

Tom Hayes: [\[16674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to promote the adoption of energy monitoring technologies to help businesses identify energy savings.

Sarah Jones:

Smart meter-enabled energy monitoring technologies are key to helping businesses understand their energy use in an accessible way to identify savings. Since 1st October 2024, the Government has required energy suppliers to provide all small businesses with free and regular information on their energy use based on their smart meter data, for example via an App, online platform or display. Suppliers must also open up access to data to third parties who are working to provide innovative energy management tools on behalf of businesses of all sizes.

■ Coal: Imports and Mining

Mr Richard Holden: [\[16563\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what comparative assessment he has made of the potential impact of (a) importing coal from overseas and (b) mining coal in the UK on the environment.

Michael Shanks:

On 14th November 2024 the Government announced its intention to restrict the licensing of new coal mines: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2024-11-14/hcws215>

The Department has not undertaken an assessment of the environmental impact of mining coal domestically set against importing product from overseas but notes that imports fell 45 per cent in comparison with 2022 to 3.4 million tonnes in 2023. This is a trend expected to continue following the closure of the last coal fired power station

at the end of September, which reduced coal's contribution to UK electricity supply to 0%'.

■ Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: Policy

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[16801]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how their Department defines strategy.

Michael Shanks:

The definition is detailed in the Functional Standards Common Glossary, which is published on the gov.uk website.

■ Electricians: Certification

Tom Hayes:

[16673]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment has he made of the of the costs faced by (a) electricians and (b) installers in obtaining necessary certifications for renewable energy solutions.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

Short courses for electricians training to install EV chargers and solar PV are estimated to cost £300 and £650 (+ VAT) respectively. For heat pump and heat network courses, the Heat Training Grant offers trainees a £500 discount, which covers most of the course costs.

Contractors installing heat pumps and solar PV within Government schemes are required to be Microgeneration Certification Scheme (MCS) certified. The overall cost of MCS membership can be over £1,000 a year. Many installers are also members of Competent Person Schemes.

The Department will continue to assess the cost of training and certification.

■ Energy Company Obligation and Great British Insulation Scheme: Public Consultation

Peter Fortune:

[16897]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of the accessibility of the consultation entitled Energy Company Obligation 4 and the Great British Insulation Scheme: mid-scheme changes, published on 14 November 2024.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

Accessible versions of the Energy Company Obligation (ECO4) and Great British Insulation Scheme (GBIS) mid-scheme changes consultation (and all related documents) can be made available upon request at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/energy-company-obligation-4-and-the-great-british-insulation-scheme-mid-scheme-changes>

Requestors are asked to submit a form to the relevant team to ensure accessibility requests are reasonable and proportionate.

■ Energy: Housing

Helen Hayes: [\[17141\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to ensure that support is available for households that (a) are not on low incomes and (b) do not have access to capital upfront to retrofit their homes.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

As part of the Warm Homes Plan, the Government has committed an initial £3.4 billion over the next 3 years towards heat decarbonisation and household energy efficiency, with £1 billion of this allocated to next year. Additional funding will be considered in Phase 2 of the Spending Review, as the Warm Homes Plan is further developed.

In addition, the Government is exploring the role of incentives and private finance for households to support homeowners with the upfront costs of energy efficiency improvements and low carbon heating. This includes the Green Home Finance Accelerator Programme which has made £20 million available to support in developing green finance products.

■ Energy: Prices

Ian Roome: [\[16624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what fiscal steps he is taking with Cabinet colleagues to help support households with energy bills.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government is continuing to deliver the Warm Home Discount which provides an annual £150 rebate off energy bills for eligible low-income households.

In November Energy UK, in collaboration with the Government, published a Winter 2024 Commitment which promises £500m of industry support to billpayers this winter. It also outlines how 15 energy suppliers representing almost the entire market will continue to provide a range of financial support tailored to the needs of their customers.

■ Energy: Storage

Jess Asato: [\[16576\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he plans to provide funding for thermal storage in homes where it is difficult to install a traditional hot water cylinder.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government recognises that thermal storage can be advantageous, because of its smaller physical size, for properties that may struggle to install a traditional hot

water cylinder. If installed at the same time as a heat pump, the installation of thermal storage will be zero rated for VAT purposes.

The Boiler Upgrade Scheme does not fund thermal storage because we are directing funding at heat pumps and in limited circumstances biomass boilers. However, we will keep our policy under review as further evidence emerges. In addition, Government is funding innovation in thermal storage through its energy research programmes.

■ Green Homes Grant Scheme

Tom Gordon: [\[17288\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the (a) voucher approval, (b) issuance and (c) payment processes for the Green Homes Grant.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

An evaluation of the Green Homes Grant Voucher Scheme was published in November 2023 under the previous Government. It can be found on GOV.UK: www.gov.uk/government/publications/green-homes-grant-voucher-scheme-evaluation.

Further evaluation of the scheme will support the delivery of future schemes under the Warm Homes Plan, which will be upgrading up to 300,000 homes next year alone.

■ Green Homes Grant Scheme: Complaints

Tom Gordon: [\[17286\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what proportion of complaints to the Trustmark scheme in relation to the Green Homes Grant scheme have been upheld; how much compensation has been paid to Green Homes Grant recipients due to upheld complaints to the Trustmark scheme in total; and how many Green Homes Grant recipients have since received compensation due to an upheld complaint.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The department does not hold the Trustmark complaint data regarding the Green Homes Grant Voucher Scheme.

■ Heat Pumps

Jess Asato: [\[16575\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he plans to provide funding for alternative low carbon technologies in places where it is (a) difficult and (b) expensive to install a heat pump.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

Heat pumps will have a major role to play in all net zero pathways and the Government expects most properties will ultimately switch to heat pumps as these are a proven technology and have been installed in high numbers in other countries.

We recognise that heat pumps may not be feasible in a small number of off-gas-grid properties and have commissioned a package of research to collect data on the costs of different approaches to decarbonising the most complex housing archetypes, including the use of alternative low carbon heating solutions. We expect to receive results from that research in 2025.

■ Insulation: Green Homes Grant Scheme**Tom Gordon:****[17289]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what data his Department holds on the number of homes that used Green Homes Grant vouchers for spray foam insulation.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

A breakdown of measures installed under the Green Homes Grant voucher scheme can be found in the Green Homes Grant evaluation report:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/green-homes-grant-voucher-scheme-evaluation.

■ Insulation: Housing**Tom Gordon:****[17285]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he will take steps to provide redress to people whose (a) property values or (b) access to mortgage finance has been impacted by spray foam insulation installed using a Green Homes Grant Voucher.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Department has worked with the insulation industry and lending community to address concerns relating to spray foam. Protocols were published in March 2023 to support surveyors to assess spray foam, provide reassurance to lenders, and inform consumers.

While the Department cannot comment on the decisions made by individual lenders, the presence of spray foam should not automatically prevent lending. Decisions should be made on a case-by-case basis following a survey. Recent indications are that most mortgage lenders no longer have blanket policies on spray foam insulation.

Any borrower seeking to take out a mortgage may find it useful to shop around and speak to a mortgage broker to find the best possible product for them.

Tom Gordon:**[17287]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department has taken to (a) identify and (b) notify people who may have had spray foam

installed through a Green Homes Grant about (i) potential damage caused by spray foam to their property and (ii) the potential impact of spray foam installation on their ability to secure a mortgage.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Green Homes Grant Voucher Scheme required that consumers seek advice from a suitably qualified TrustMark registered installer before they applied for a voucher. It also required that installations meet Publicly Available Standard (PAS) 2035.

If a homeowner believes that any installation work carried out in their home under a government scheme is faulty, they should first contact the installer. The TrustMark website contains further guidance on steps consumers can take if things go wrong (<https://www.trustmark.org.uk/homeowners/if-things-go-wrong>). If a product has been installed to the standard it should not require removal.

A surveyor should be able to use the published inspection protocol (<https://www.property-care.org/resources/spray-foam-insulation-inspections>) to make an assessment as part of the mortgage lending process.

■ **National Grid**

James Cartlidge:

[17189]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, pursuant to the Answer of 26 November 2024 to Question 16211 on National Grid: Costs of the Western and Eastern Links, whether (a) he and (b) Ofgem is able to provide the estimate requested.

Michael Shanks:

The analysis of an onshore reinforcement (i.e. overhead pylons) for Western Green Link was conducted 16 years ago and cost estimates for alternative options are not available.

As the option of an onshore reinforcement for Eastern Green Link 1&2 did not meet the timeline for delivery, it was not progressed to the cost benefit analysis stage. As such, an estimate was not made for that option. Analysis of further stages of Eastern Green Link will be available in the future.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ **Agriculture: Carbon Emissions**

Julia Buckley:

[16059]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department plans to take to help family-run farms with any increased costs associated with the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism.

Daniel Zeichner:

Overall, the Government expects any impact on UK farmers to be modest. The level of the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) and impact on fertiliser prices

is a function of the effective carbon price under the Emission Trading Scheme (ETS) for fertiliser producers, after accounting for Free Allowances.

Currently, fertiliser producers have high coverage by Free Allowances. What happens to Free Allowance allocations in the coming years is a matter for the UK ETS Authority.

■ Air Pollution: Ashbourne

John Whitby:

[\[17466\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help reduce air pollution levels in Ashbourne, in the context of the establishment of an air quality management area following elevated levels of nitrogen dioxide on Buxton Road in 2021.

Emma Hardy:

When an Air quality management area (AGMA) is declared, local authorities are required to produce an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) to bring air pollution down to within statutory limits. Defra has been engaging with Derbyshire Dales District Council to ensure they have an AQAP that will achieve this.

Air pollution has been reducing in Derbyshire Dales, but they have a localised area of exceedance in Buxton Road partly caused by HGV's using this stretch of road. Improving air quality will require localised action by councils and national measures. The Government is supporting the transition to electric vehicles and is turbocharging the rollout of EV infrastructure which will help reduce NO2 emissions UK wide.

■ Birds of Prey: Rodenticides

Mark Pritchard:

[\[14955\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to tackle the illegal use of rat poison to kill birds of prey.

Mary Creagh:

Where birds of prey are killed by illegal use of rat poison, the full force of the law should apply to proven perpetrators of the crime. We have significant sanctions in place including an unlimited fine and/or a six-month custodial sentence.

Bird of prey crime has been identified as a national wildlife crime priority. Defra supports the work of the National Wildlife Crime Unit which helps prevent and detect wildlife crime by, for example, directly assisting law enforcers.

Defra also provides funding for England's Wildlife Incident Investigation Scheme which determines the underlying cause of death in birds of prey where illegal use of pesticides or rodenticides/rat poison is suspected.

The Health and Safety Executive has responsibility for the GB Biocidal Products Regulation which covers rodenticides. Given the potential risks posed to the environment by rodenticides, they are subject to strict regulation. To ensure risks associated with professional use of anticoagulant rodenticides could be properly

managed, a stewardship regime was developed by the Campaign for Responsible Rodenticide Use UK to promote responsible use. This is currently under review. As of July 2024, it is no longer possible to purchase anticoagulant rodenticides for use outdoors in open areas.

■ Dairy Farming

Helen Morgan:

[\[17282\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure (a) transparency and (b) accountability in dairy supply chains.

Daniel Zeichner:

Defra is committed to delivering this Government's ambition to support British farmers to boost Britain's food security. Central to achieving this ambition will be pursuing the right approach to fairness across the supply chain.

The Fair Dealing Obligations (Milk) Regulations (2024) came into force for new contracts on 9 July 2024 and will apply to all existing contracts from 9 July 2025. These Regulations will enhance transparency in the dairy supply chain, ensuring that contracts are agreed in writing, are clear on a range of important terms including pricing and termination, and cannot be altered without mutual agreement.

The Regulations will be enforced by the Agricultural Supply Chain Adjudicator (ASCA), who can exercise powers to investigate relevant complaints.

■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Policy

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[16802\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how their Department defines strategy.

Daniel Zeichner:

The definition is detailed in the Functional Standards Common Glossary, which is published on the GOV.UK website.

■ Farms: Domestic Visits

Rupert Lowe:

[\[15138\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many farms he has visited since 5 July 2024.

Daniel Zeichner:

Since 5 July the Secretary of State has had frequent engagement with the sector, including; attending the Great Yorkshire Agriculture Show in July 24; visiting a farm and meeting with a group of local farmers in Essex in September 24; meeting with the President of the CLA and speaking at the CLA Annual Conference last week, and; more broadly, continued frequent engagement, particularly with the NFU President Tom Bradshaw.

Furthermore, Minister Zeichner has also spoken with the sector on numerous occasions since 5 July.

■ Fish: Animal Welfare

Jess Brown-Fuller:

[\[17463\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of restricting the use of treble barbed fishhooks in England and Wales.

Daniel Zeichner:

The use of barbed hooks is currently restricted by several byelaws covering specific fisheries in areas throughout England and Wales. The suitability and need for these restrictions will continue to be monitored and may inform changes if appropriate, however there are currently no plans for a wider assessment to be made.

■ Fishing Catches

Alex Mayer:

[\[17351\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to introduce a timebound legal duty to end overfishing in UK waters.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Fisheries Act 2020 contains a commitment to recover stocks to sustainable levels through the development of Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs). We are taking this approach having learned from the well-intentioned but ultimately unachievable single deadline set out in the European Union's Common Fisheries Policy for getting all fish stocks to "Maximum Sustainable Yield" (MSY). Our FMPs allow us to assess the state of the stocks and set out a series of tailored and evidence-based short-, medium- and long-term measures to maintain or restore stocks to MSY.

■ Horticulture

Sir John Hayes:

[\[16913\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will publish a horticulture strategy for England.

Daniel Zeichner:

We appreciate the vital work of the horticulture industry and recognise that a long-term vision would recognise the specific needs and huge diversity of the sector.

As part of our mission-driven government, and in partnership with the sector, we are considering a number of ways to ensure our strategic approach to horticulture aligns with wider Government ambitions for the food system and represents the unique needs of the sector.

This includes a 25-year Farming Roadmap, which we will work with horticulture growers to develop a forward-looking plan for farming, making the sector more profitable and sustainable in the decades to come.

■ Land Drainage: Property Development

Daisy Cooper:

[\[17232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 11 October 2024 to Question 6534 on Land Drainage: Property Development, whether he (a) has made and (b) plans to make an assessment of the potential regulatory burden of implementing Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 to require the formation of sustainable urban drainage systems.

Emma Hardy:

A full regulatory impact assessment, including consideration of costs and benefits, would be prepared as part of any implementation of Schedule 3 to the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.

No such assessment is available at this stage.

■ Milk

Helen Morgan:

[\[17283\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to publish a consultation on potential changes to the Fair Dealing Obligations (Milk) Regulations 2024.

Daniel Zeichner:

Defra is committed to enhancing fairness across supply chains, which will support farmers to boost Britain's food security. The Fair Dealing Obligations (Milk) Regulations (2024), which were introduced earlier this year, represent an important step forward in ensuring fairness and transparency for dairy farmers. However, some within the sector have raised concerns about potential unintended consequences of the Regulations, which the Government is seeking to address.

To ensure that the Regulations meet their original aims, we are undergoing a process of engagement with industry stakeholders and representatives, as well as the Devolved Governments. The Government will make any changes before the Regulations apply to existing contracts, on 9 July 2025.

■ Scallops: Conservation

Peter Fortune:

[\[16893\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of the accessibility of the consultation entitled ICES area 7d and Lyme Bay king scallop dredge fishery closure 2025, published on 18 November 2024.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) works closely with the fishing industry and other stakeholders and understands the need for information to be put to them in a manner that allows them to contribute meaningfully to Government consultations. Management of the king scallop fishery in the English Channel is an annual consultation and MMO listens and responds to how the consultation was received and amends its processes for the consultation the following year.

To ensure that there is a balance between simple and technical language to meet the needs of the reader, The document has been developed with the essential information in straightforward language at the start of the document and the more technical information following for those that want the detail.

MMO will provide the consultation material in different formats on request, and it has been provided in person and in video format previously. We have included the invitation to utilise alternative formats in supporting communication material. The annual consultation is accompanied by a communications plan that sees officials engaging face to face with representative industry groups and individual fishers in relevant fishing ports.

■ Sea Bass: Quotas**Rachel Gilmour:**[\[17402\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the (a) adequacy of regulations on the fishing of bass by charter boats which are also commercially-registered fishing vessels and (b) potential merits of introducing measures to enable such vessels to allocate caught fish to quotas for either (i) charter boats or (ii) commercially-registered fishing vessels.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Bass Fisheries Management Plan published in December 2023 sets out a number of goals and measures to deliver long-term sustainable management of bass fisheries in English and Welsh waters. This includes working with the newly established bass management group, comprising commercial and recreational sectors, scientists, regulators, policy officials and environmental interests. This group will help (a) improve communication and understanding of bass regulations, and collaboration between regulators on targeted enforcement; and (b) in the longer term consider the merits of a move away from bycatch limits towards a catch limit or quota approach. The bass management group will consider the adequacy of regulations for all bass fishermen, including charter boats, in these discussions.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ China: Mauritius****Mr Mark Francois:**[\[16475\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of (a) Mauritius' participation in the Forum on China- Africa Cooperation, (b) the provisions on military cooperation in and (c) the potential impact of the implementation of the Forum's Beijing Action Plan (2025-2027).

Catherine West:

53 African countries, including Mauritius, attended the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). China made a range of high-level commitments as part of the Forum's Beijing Action Plan. As with previous FOCAC commitments we will monitor their implementation and implications for UK policy.

The UK will take a consistent and pragmatic approach to China's role in Africa - we will cooperate where we can, compete where we have different interests, and challenge where we must.

■ Climate Change: Finance**Priti Patel:**[\[16728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of commitments made by the UK at COP 29 for the new collective quantified goal on climate finance.

Anneliese Dodds:

The new collective quantified goal on climate finance agreed at COP 29 is a collective goal, including finance from a broad range of sources, public and private. It does not set individual country commitments.

The UK will play its part alongside others; our contribution to the goal will be carefully considered and determined through the spending review process.

■ Development Aid: Agriculture**Sir John Hayes:**[\[15727\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure that active funding programmes focused on supporting farmers and farming communities abroad is value for money.

Anneliese Dodds:

The FCDO employs robust systems and frameworks to ensure we achieve high standards of value for money and spend British taxpayers' money well. For example, by reviewing programmes annually, assessing how they perform against FCDO priorities and making improvements.

The Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI) scrutinizes the effectiveness and value for money of UK aid. In June 2023, ICAI scored the UK's agriculture portfolio (covering all UK delivery programmes, investments and research funding related to agriculture) Green-Amber, reflecting its substantial achievements and recommending areas for improvement. The Government accepted all of ICAI's recommendations. A follow-up ICAI report in May 2024 commended the strength of FCDO's response to the recommendations.

■ Mauritius

Wendy Morton: [\[16956\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with Prime Minister Navinchandra Ramgoolam in Mauritius.

Stephen Doughty:

After his recent election, the UK sent congratulatory messages to Prime Minister Ramgoolam. The Prime Minister's Special Envoy, Jonathan Powell, then visited Mauritius and met Prime Minister Ramgoolam on 25 November. We look forward to developing our shared priorities with the new Government of Mauritius.

■ Sustainable Development: International Cooperation

Priti Patel: [\[16727\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had recent discussions with his international counterparts on the introduction of new sustainable development goals.

Anneliese Dodds:

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were agreed by all UN Member States in 2015 and have a target of being achieved by 2030. At the UN's Summit of the Future this September, the Foreign Secretary reaffirmed the UK's unwavering commitment to achieving the SDGs.

The UN Summit of the Future's inter-governmentally agreed outcome document invited the UN's High Level Political Forum to consider in 2027 how to advance sustainable development by 2030 and beyond. The UK will engage in these discussions and is focused on working with partners at home and internationally to accelerate progress towards the SDGs by 2030.

■ Visas: EU Countries

Jim Shannon: [\[15732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to issue guidance on EU visa waivers.

Stephen Doughty:

Entry requirements for British nationals travelling to the EU are set out in the FCDO's travel advice pages on gov.uk. The guidance is based on information provided by the EU and its Member States. FCDO travel advice is regularly updated to reflect our latest understanding of these requirements, with links for further information provided within the travelling abroad pages on gov.uk. The new European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) scheme is not a visa, and we continue to discuss its implementation with the European Commission and European Union Member States.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Bowel Cancer: Screening****Clive Jones:****[R] [16857]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to reduce the sensitivity threshold of the Bowel Cancer Screening Programme from 120µg/g closer to the UK National Screening Committee recommendation of 20µg/g.

Clive Jones:**[R] [16858]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the colonoscopy capacity required to implement the UK National Screening Committee's recommendations for bowel cancer that everyone aged 50-74 be offered Faecal Immunochemical Test screening every two years at a sensitivity level of 20µg/g.

Andrew Gwynne:

NHS England is responsible for delivering the NHS Bowel Cancer Screening (NHS BCSP) programme, including planning for the age extension in the programme from 60 down to 50 years old, and reducing the Faecal Immunochemical Test (FIT) down from 120 micrograms per gram.

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 50 years old by 2025. This has been done to ensure that screening centres can manage any required increase in colonoscopy capacity.

NHS England has advised that planning is well underway to lower the threshold of the FIT from 120 micrograms per gram to 80 micrograms per gram in the NHS BCSP in England. Further updates on how this will be implemented are expected early in the new year.

■ Colonoscopy: Waiting Lists**Clive Jones:****[R] [16855]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to (a) increase the capacity of colonoscopy services and (b) ensure patients from the bowel cancer screening programme are seen within the targeted waiting times.

Andrew Gwynne:

The National Health Service is taking steps to improve bowel cancer outcomes for patients across England. We will improve cancer survival rates and hit all NHS cancer waiting time targets, so no patient, including those referred through the bowel cancer screening programme, waits longer than they should.

We are transforming diagnostic services, which will support the NHS to increase capacity to meet the demand for diagnostic services, through investment in new capacity, including magnetic resonance imaging and computed tomography scanners. A national transformation project has been established to enable and support the timely recovery of gastrointestinal (GI) endoscopy services. Endoscopy services have also been established in several Community Diagnostic Centres throughout the country, which also contributes to the timely recovery of GI endoscopy services.

Furthermore, National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines encourage general practitioners to use Faecal Immunochemical Test kits for symptomatic patients to rule out the need for a colonoscopy, which increases the capacity of available colonoscopists for the bowel screening program.

Food: Nutrition**Joe Robertson:**[\[16844\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the guidance on free refills in his Department's publication entitled Restricting promotions of products high in fat, sugar or salt by location and by volume price: implementation guidance, updated on 29 September 2023, remains his policy.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Government has committed to tackling the childhood obesity crisis and raising the healthiest generation of children ever.

Under the Food (Promotion and Placement) (England) Regulations 2021 laid during the previous Parliament, restrictions on the promotion of less healthy food or drinks in prominent places in retail stores, for instance entrances, check-outs, and aisle ends, and their equivalent places online, came into force in England in 2022.

Under the same legislation, restrictions on volume price promotions of less healthy food or drinks, such as three for the price of two offers and free refills of sugary drinks in the out of home sector, are due to come into force in England on 1 October 2025.

Health Services: Prosecutions**Jeremy Corbyn:**[\[16903\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many prosecutions have been brought against corporate health bodies under section 20 of the Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014; how many of those prosecutions were successful; and what penalties were sought.

Andrew Gwynne:

There is no individual prosecutable offence under section 20 of the Health and Social Care Act 2008. Under the Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014, failure to comply with Regulation 20(2)(a) and (3) Duty of Candour is an offence. The Care Quality Commission (CQC) can either issue a Fixed Penalty Notice administratively, or can prosecute the offence through the court. The following table shows the providers the CQC has successfully prosecuted over the last five years, for Regulation 20 Duty of Candour breaches:

YEAR	PROVIDER	FINE
2020	Plymouth Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	£1,600, for a single count of Duty of Candour charged
2021	Spire Healthcare Limited	£5,000, for four counts of Duty of Candour charged
2022	Premier Care (Southern) Limited	£3,300, for two offences of Duty of Candour charged
2023	DM Care Limited	£120,000 following prosecution under Regulation 12, failure to provide safe care and treatment, with no separate penalty issued for the Duty of Candour offence
2024	Claremont Care Services Limited	£24,000 following prosecution under Regulation 12, failure to provide safe care and treatment, and an additional fine of £800 for a single Duty of Candour offence

There were no other Duty of Candour prosecutions prior to September 2020.

■ Inflammatory Bowel Disease: Health Education

Clive Jones:

[R] [[16838](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department plans to take to help improve awareness of (a) Crohn's disease, (b) ulcerative colitis and (c) inflammatory bowel disease.

Andrew Gwynne:

NHS England's Getting It Right First Time Programme on gastroenterology aims to reduce variations in care, increase early diagnosis and proactive management of Crohn's disease and colitis, and increase access to inflammatory bowel disease

(IBD) specialist nurses. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has also produced a range of guidance on IBD, Crohn's disease, and colitis, to support early diagnosis and effective management of these conditions. It ensures that the care provided to people with IBD is based on the best available evidence. In the last two years, the NICE has recommended four new drugs for the treatment of moderate to severe Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis, including Upadacitinib, Risankizumab, Mirikizumab, and Etrasimod.

NHS England's National Bladder and Bowel Health Project is delivering better care for people with IBD, with a focus on developing clinical pathways. NHS England commissions specialised colorectal services nationally to support equity of access to high-quality treatment for patients with IBD requiring complex surgery. This work is supported within NHS England by the clinical leadership of the Specialised Colorectal Services Clinical Reference Group, which is made up of experts in surgery, medicine, radiology, pathology, and nursing, alongside patient and public voice representatives.

To raise awareness of IBD among general practitioners and other primary care staff, the Royal College of General Practitioners has produced an Inflammatory Bowel Disease Toolkit. The toolkit outlines when to suspect IBD, the appropriate investigative tests and diagnostic tools for IBD, how to manage a flare-up of symptoms, and how to support patients with IBD.

■ Low Alcohol Drinks: Labelling

Joe Robertson:

[\[16845\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the answer of 18 November 2024, to Question 13469, on Low Alcoholic Drinks: Labelling, if his Department will publish a formal response to the consultation.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Government is committed to building a National Health Service fit for the future, with a greater emphasis on the prevention of avoidable health harms, supporting people to live well for longer. The Government is currently considering how best to address alcohol related harms.

■ Neurological Diseases: Health Services

Sarah Green:

[\[17274\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to his strategy for NHS workforce planning, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of shortages in the number of clinicians specialising in neurology on the adequacy of care for patients with (a) Parkinson's Disease and (b) other neurological conditions.

Karin Smyth:

Currently, there are no specific plans to make an assessment of the potential impact of shortages in the number of clinicians specialising in neurology on the adequacy of care for patients with Parkinson's disease or other neurological conditions.

As of July 2024, there were over 1,800 full-time equivalent (FTE) doctors working in the specialty of neurology in National Health Service trusts and other organisations in England. This includes over 900 FTE consultant neurologists. In 2023, the fill rate for recruitment into the specialty of neurology in England was 94%.

The NHS workforce has been overworked for years, leading to staff becoming burnt out and demoralised. We must be honest about the challenges we are facing. The NHS is broken but not beaten and together we will turn it around.

We have launched a 10-Year Health Plan to reform the NHS. The plan will set out a bold agenda to deliver on the three big shifts needed, to move healthcare from hospital to the community, from analogue to digital, and from treatment to prevention. A central and core part of the 10-Year Health Plan will be our workforce and how we ensure we train and provide the staff, technology, and infrastructure the NHS needs to care for patients across our communities.

There are a number of initiatives supporting service improvement and better care for patients with Parkinson's disease in England, including the Getting It Right First Time (GIRFT) Programme for Neurology, the RightCare Progressive Neurological Conditions Toolkit, and the Neurology Transformation Programme (NTP).

The GIRFT National Specialty Report made recommendations designed to improve services nationally and to support the NHS to deliver care more equitably across the country. In addition, the NTP has developed a model of integrated care for neurology services to support integrated care boards to deliver the right service, at the right time for all neurology patients, including providing care closer to home.

■ Neurology: Students

Sarah Green:

[\[17275\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will take steps to encourage students to take up careers in neurology.

Sarah Green:

[\[17276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of consultants specialising in the treatment of Parkinson's disease required to meet current needs of patients.

Karin Smyth:

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

No such estimate has been made. We are committed to training the staff we need, including neurologists and consultants specialising in treating Parkinson's Disease, to ensure that patients are cared for by the right professional, when and where they need it.

As of August 2024, there are 1,917 full-time equivalent (FTE) doctors working in the specialty of neurology in NHS trusts and integrated care boards in England, which is 146, or 8.2%, more than a year ago, and 473, or 32.7%, more than five years ago. Of these, there are 975 FTE consultants, which is 47, or 5%, more than a year ago, and 179, or 22.5%, more than five years ago. In 2024, there are 367 doctors in the NHS in England in postgraduate specialty training for neurology. This is 44, or 13.6%, more than five years ago.

■ NHS: Employment Tribunals Service

Helen Hayes: [\[17144\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the total cost to the public purse of out of court settlements for employment tribunal cases across the NHS in each of the last five years.

Karin Smyth:

This information is not held centrally by the Department or NHS England. No estimate has been made on the total cost to the public purse of out of court settlements for employment tribunal cases across the National Health Service in the last five years.

■ NHS: Undocumented Migrants

Rupert Lowe: [\[16826\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many visits there were by NHS staff to (a) hotels and (b) other accommodation housing irregular migrants in each of the last five years.

Rupert Lowe: [\[16871\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many optician appointments for irregular migrants there were at what cost to the public purse in each of the last five years.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Department and NHS England do not hold the information requested. The National Health Service is a residency-based system, which means that people who do not live here on a lawful, settled basis must contribute to the cost of their care. However, some of the most vulnerable people arriving in the United Kingdom, including refugees and asylum seekers, do not pay for NHS treatment.

The Home Office and its contractors work closely with the NHS, local authorities, and non-governmental organisations to ensure that people can access the health care and support they need. All asylum seeker accommodation providers have a duty and requirement to assist people who need it to access the healthcare systems in their local area. The Department of Health and Social Care does not hold information on the services commissioned by the Home Office.

As for any NHS patient, care may be delivered by independent providers as part of the public healthcare system. This does not mean asylum seekers are in receipt of private healthcare.

■ Patients: Compensation

Caroline Voaden:

[16031]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the report entitled First Do No Harm: the report of Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review, published in July 2020, what progress he has made on setting up an independent Redress Agency.

Andrew Gwynne:

The previous Government did not previously accept the recommendation to establish a redress agency, as set out in the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review. However, the Government is carefully considering the valuable work done by the Patient Safety Commissioner and the resulting Hughes Report, published in February 2024, which recommended and set out options for redress for those harmed by valproate and pelvic mesh. We will be providing an update to the Patient Safety Commissioner's report at the earliest opportunity.

■ Prostate Cancer: Screening

John Milne:

[16839]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to Prostate Cancer UK's research entitled Optimising the use of the prostate-specific antigen blood test in asymptomatic men for early prostate cancer detection in primary care: report from a UK clinical consensus, published on 25 July 2024, if he will take steps to implement the recommendation on reviewing guidelines on allowing primary care staff to proactively discuss (a) prostate cancer risk and (b) prostate specific antigen testing with men at highest-risk of developing that cancer.

Andrew Gwynne:

The UK National Screening Committee is aware of the Prostate Cancer UK report, and this will be considered as part of its evidence review process, with further information available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-nsc-evidence-review-process/uk-nsc-evidence-review-process>

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

Based on the current evidence, the PCRMP guidance is for GPs not to proactively offer a PSA to men without symptoms. This is because of the high level of inaccuracy of the PSA test which could lead to unnecessary tests and treatments that carry risks

of life-changing harm, such as urinary and faecal incontinence, sexual dysfunction, as well as a smaller but serious risk of sepsis. Additionally, some prostate cancers may not produce elevated PSA levels, leading to false-negative results that provide deceptive reassurance.

■ Radiotherapy: Westmorland and Lonsdale

Tim Farron: [\[16715\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people in Westmorland and Lonsdale constituency received radiotherapy treatment at the Rosemere Cancer Centre Royal Preston Hospital in each month in each of the last four years.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Department does not hold information regarding how many patients from a particular constituency are treated in a specific hospital. Data regarding radiotherapy treatment is published monthly by NHS England.

■ Smoking: Nightclubs and Public Houses

Joe Robertson: [\[16847\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether (a) Ministers, (b) officials and (c) special advisers from his Department have had discussions with the Mayor of London on smoking outside (i) nightclubs and (ii) pubs since 5 July 2024.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Tobacco and Vapes Bill was introduced to Parliament on 5 November 2024, and passed its second reading in the House of Commons on 25 November 2024. The bill will put us on track to a smoke-free United Kingdom, helping to reduce 80,000 preventable deaths, reduce the burden on the National Health Service, and reduce the burden on the taxpayer.

Ministers, officials, and special advisers from the Department have not met with the Mayor of London to discuss smoking outside nightclubs and pubs since 5 July 2024.

■ Streptococcus: Diagnosis

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[17001\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure (a) early and (b) consistent diagnosis of Group B streptococcus.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[17002\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to introduce routine antenatal screening for Group B streptococcus.

Andrew Gwynne:

Screening for group B streptococcus (GBS) is not routinely offered to all pregnant women. The UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC) last reviewed the evidence to screen for GBS at 35 to 37 weeks of pregnancy in 2017, and concluded that there

was insufficient evidence to demonstrate that the benefits of screening would outweigh the harms. This is because the test currently available cannot accurately distinguish between those mothers whose babies are at risk, and those who are not. This means that many women would unnecessarily be offered antibiotics during labour.

A risk-based approach is taken, whereby those women identified as being at increased risk of having a baby affected by GBS are managed according to agreed clinical guidelines on the prevention of early on-set neonatal GBS infection.

The National Institute for Health Research funded a large-scale clinical trial to compare universal screening for GBS against the usual risk factor-based strategy. The UK NSC will review its recommendation, considering the evidence from the trial, once the report is available.

■ **Vaccination: Undocumented Migrants**

Rupert Lowe:

[\[16870\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many vaccines have been administered to irregular migrants in each of the last five years.

Andrew Gwynne:

Primary care services, such as vaccinations, are available and free to all, including people who arrive in the United Kingdom through irregular routes. New arrivals are encouraged to receive a patient health check when they register in primary care, including previous vaccination history.

Vaccination data pertaining to migration status is not collected or published by the Government.

HOME OFFICE

■ **Asylum and Undocumented Migrants: Housing**

Rupert Lowe:

[\[16584\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing an official and voluntary scheme for hon. Members to house (a) asylum seekers and (b) irregular migrants.

Dame Angela Eagle:

There are currently no such Government-backed voluntary schemes for housing asylum seekers for any households in the UK, regardless of whether that household contains an MP. It is up to MPs to decide who they might wish to live with - this is not a matter for the Government. This government inherited an asylum system under unprecedented strain, with tens of thousands stuck in a backlog without their claims processed. We are determined to restore order to the asylum system and cut the costs of asylum accommodation, including ending the use of hotels over time.

■ Asylum: Northern Ireland**Mr Gregory Campbell:** [\[17080\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many hotels are being used for the provision of accommodation for asylum seekers in Northern Ireland; and if she will make an estimate of the number of hotels that will be required by 31 December 2025.

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.

The Home Office does not publish data on the number of hotels in use. However, data published quarterly on the number of supported asylum seekers in accommodation, including hotels, can be found within the Asy_D11 tab for our most recent statistics release. The data can also be broken down by local authority: [Immigration system statistics quarterly release - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-quarterly-release).

The Home Office keeps its accommodation estate under constant review.

■ Campsfield House Immigration Removal Centre**Calum Miller:** [\[17467\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 25 November 2024 to Question 15050 on Campsfield House Immigration Removal Centre, what assessment her Department has made of the cost-effectiveness of (a) Campsfield House and (b) other immigration removal centres.

Calum Miller: [\[17468\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 25 November 2024 to Question 15154 on Campsfield House Immigration Removal Centre, what review process was undertaken by her Department on the commercial agreement with Galliford Try for Phase 1 of the Campsfield House Immigration Removal Centre design and build arrangement, signed on 29 May 2024.

Calum Miller: [\[17469\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to her oral statement on Border Security and Asylum of 22 July 2024, Official Report, column 384, what assessment her Department has made of the cost effectiveness of (a) Campsfield House Immigration Removal Centre and (b) other immigration removal centres for tackling illegal migration.

Dame Angela Eagle:

Detention plays a key role in maintaining effective immigration controls and securing the UK's borders, particularly in connection with the removal of people who have no right to remain in the UK but who refuse to leave voluntarily.

The immigration removal estate is kept under review to ensure that the Home Office has sufficient resilience, geographical footprint and capacity for those men and

women it is necessary to detain for the purposes of removal, while providing value for money.

We are increasing detention spaces to support a higher pace of removals, including reopening Campsfield House Immigration Removal Centre (IRC). This increase will ensure there is additional capacity to facilitate higher levels of enforcement and returns so that rules are properly respected.

Development of Campsfield is being undertaken in two phases. A competition for the Phase 1 constructor was conducted between suppliers, using the Strategic Alliance framework, on a "Most Economically Advantageous Tender" basis, which considers both quality and costs. As part of the contracting process, tenders were reviewed by subject matter experts to assess quality, and the costs of the contract were assured by a third-party cost consultant appointed by the Home Office and independent of the constructor.

The commercial arrangements also underwent scrutiny via a multi stage approval process including the Home Office's Commercial Assurance Board, Migration and Borders Transformation Programme Board, and departmental Investment Committee, with final approval by Cabinet Office Spend Controls.

The Home Office is committed to ensuring value for money on all IRC sites, and costs are refined during the planning process and once contractors have been onboarded. The Home Office does not comment on service provider procurement exercises, which are commercially sensitive. However, contracts are published upon the Contracts Finder website, once awarded.

■ **Community Policing: Cambridgeshire**

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[\[17326\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 2 December 2024 to Question 16677 on Community Policing: Cambridgeshire, how many of the 13,000 additional police officers Cambridgeshire Constabulary will receive.

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. Every part of the country needs to benefit from this pledge, and of course that includes Cambridgeshire.

■ Crime Prevention: Thames Valley**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[16481\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent steps has she taken to help tackle crime in (a) Slough constituency and (b) Thames Valley region.

Dame Diana Johnson:

This Government has put prevention front and centre of our plans to improve the lives of people across the United Kingdom. The Safer Streets Mission is the vehicle to drive delivery across Government to halve violence against women and girls, halve knife crime, and restore confidence in the policing and justice system.

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, Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and special constables in neighbourhood policing roles up and down the country and ensuring every community has a named officer to turn to. Every part of the country needs to benefit from this pledge and that includes Slough and the Thames Valley region.

Finally, we are committed to intervening early to stop young people being drawn into crime, improving opportunities for children, and the mental health of young people. An essential part of achieving this will be the delivery of the Young Futures Programme. This will consist of the creation of Prevention Partnerships in every area and a network of Young Futures Hubs which will support young people, including those identified by Prevention Partnerships, with early adopters commencing in financial year 25/26.

■ Crossbows**Mr Bayo Alaba:**[\[16700\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will bring forward legislative proposals to ban the (a) buying and (b) selling of crossbows.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Following the call for evidence on strengthening controls on crossbows on public safety grounds, which was held between 14 February to 9 April this year, and tested ideas for different approaches to licensing and registration around the ownership and sale of crossbows and asked for evidence to understand the potential impacts, we have reviewed the responses and we are considering whether further controls on crossbows need to be introduced.

We will publish the Government's response to the call for evidence shortly and this will set out the next steps on whether to introduce further new controls.

■ Immigration

Sir John Hayes:

[\[16705\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make it her policy to introduce a cap on annual net migration.

Seema Malhotra:

The Prime Minister has made clear the Government will not be introducing a cap on migration. Instead, the Government wants to see immigration come down significantly and we will take an evidence-based approach, linking migration policy to skills policy so immigration is no longer used at the expense of home-grown talent.

■ Migrant Workers: Arts

Mr James Frith:

[\[16789\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department is taking steps to (a) issue guidance to and (b) deliver training on temporary admission procedures for entry to the UK for creative workers to Border Force officers.

Mr James Frith:

[\[16790\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of the level of training for Border Force officers on temporary visas for creative workers.

Seema Malhotra:

Border Force officers are trained to the highest of standards to be able to carry out their role to enforce immigration policy at the border. Officers undergo several weeks of training prior to taking up their role at the primary control point, within which they are trained on all manners of immigration law and policy, including entry to the UK for creative workers.

Throughout that training, officers are continually tested to ensure they have the required skills and knowledge to carry out their role. Their skills and knowledge are then continually tested throughout their career on all aspects of immigration policy.

To qualify for entry in this category, a passenger has to meet the following criteria:

- Having a valid Temporary Work - Creative Worker certificate of sponsorship (CoS).
- Coming to work in the UK for 3 months or less.
- Not normally needing a visa to enter the UK as a visitor.

Further information on how individuals can qualify to enter the UK under this category can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/creative-worker-visa/creative-worker-concession>.

■ Police: Equality**Sir John Hayes:**[\[16453\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much police forces in England and Wales spent on roles related to equity, diversity and inclusion in the last three years.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Home Office does not hold information relating to how much money is spent by police forces on roles related to equity, diversity and inclusion.

Decisions on how funding and resources are utilised are an operational matter for Chief Constables and locally elected Police and Crime Commissioners, who are best placed to make resourcing decisions within their communities based on their local knowledge and experience.

■ Refugees: Resettlement**Tim Farron:**[\[16716\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many refugees her Department plans to resettle through the UK's resettlement schemes in 2025.

Seema Malhotra:

This country will always play our part, alongside others, to help those fleeing war and persecution, but we need a proper system where rules are enforced.

The UK welcomes refugees through our global resettlement schemes which include the UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS), Community Sponsorship and the Mandate Resettlement Scheme.

The numbers resettled through the UKRS depend on a range of factors including the flow of referrals from UNHCR in the field and the availability of suitable accommodation and integration support in the UK.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**■ Affordable Housing: Construction****Kevin Hollinrake:**[\[15806\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 21 October 2024 to Question 8688 on Affordable Housing: Construction, if she will make a comparative assessment of the (a) spending profile and (b) contractual commitment profile of the 2021-26 programme with the (i) 2011-15 and (ii) 2015-18 programme.

Matthew Pennycook:

The National Audit Office's report into the Affordable Homes Programme since 2015, which can be found [here](#), assessed the programme's management and whether it

achieved the intended benefits. The report captured a range of helpful data and made a number of key findings.

As we confirmed in July, the previous government agreed but did not publish a reduction in the 2021-26 programme's delivery targets from "up to 180,000 homes should economic conditions allow" to between 110,000-130,000.

This government will seek to learn lessons from earlier affordable housing programmes as we work to deliver the biggest increase in social and affordable housebuilding in a generation.

■ **Buildings: Insulation**

David Simmonds: [\[16548\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what her planned timetable is for the publication of the new cladding remediation plan.

Alex Norris:

On Monday 2 November we announced a Remediation Acceleration Plan which sets out key measures to remove unsafe cladding from buildings faster, identify remaining buildings still at risk and ensure that residents are supported through the remediation process.

■ **Councillors: Data Protection**

David Simmonds: [\[16542\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when she plans to bring forward legislative proposals to remove the requirement for councillor's home addresses to be published.

Jim McMahon:

Primary legislation is needed to remove the requirement for local government members' home addresses to be included in published versions of registers of interests. We intend to legislate at the first available opportunity.

There are also limited circumstances where those local government candidates acting as their own election agent may need to disclose their home address during an election, when they do not provide an office address. We are considering whether to amend this requirement, whilst ensuring that agents continue to provide a correspondence address for enforcement and legal purposes.

■ **Derelict Land**

Wendy Morton: [\[16502\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department plans to utilise architects to allow development of complex brownfield sites in proposed National Planning Policy Framework reforms.

Matthew Pennycook:

National planning policy sets out the circumstances in which the development of brownfield land is considered appropriate, and the standards that are expected, including a high quality of design. It does not specify the professions which should be involved, which is a matter for the client, but is important that a range of disciplines is brought to bear as appropriate to the nature of the site, and architects will often play a key role. We have set out proposals for how brownfield development could be better supported in our consultation on changes to the National Planning Policy Framework and our discussion paper on 'brownfield passports'.

Domestic Abuse: Stoke-on-Trent**David Williams:**[\[16796\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department is taking to reduce waiting times for accommodation for (a) victims of domestic violence and (b) their families in (i) Stoke-on-Trent North constituency and (ii) Kidsgrove.

Matthew Pennycook:

Local authorities, in areas such as Stoke-on-Trent North and Kidsgrove, are responsible for designing and managing their own housing allocations policies to meet local need. As part of this, they have the freedom to manage their own waiting lists but must give priority to people who are homeless or who need to move for medical or welfare reasons. This includes victims and their families who have escaped abuse. Allocations guidance also encourages local authorities to give additional preference to people who are homeless and require urgent rehousing as a result of domestic abuse.

Further to my answer to Question UIN [2150](#) on 9 September 2024, the department will bring forward changes to social housing allocations regulations to exempt all victims of domestic abuse from local connection and residency tests to improve their access to social rented housing.

Furthermore, the government has committed to delivering the biggest increase in social and affordable housebuilding in a generation, and I refer my hon Friend to the answer I gave to Question UIN [11383](#) on 31 October 2024.

By law, local authorities in England are also required to ensure victims of domestic abuse and their children can access the support they need within safe accommodation if they have to flee their homes. This includes refuges, sanctuary schemes, and dispersed accommodation. The Government will be providing £160 million in funding to local authorities to support them to fulfil their duties in 2025/26.

Economic Growth: Environment Protection**Kevin Hollinrake:**[\[16201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Prime Minister's speech entitled PM International Investment Summit

Speech: 14 October 2024, whether she plans to remove (a) nutrient neutrality rules, (b) Environmental Information Assessments and (c) Strategic Environmental Assessments.

Matthew Pennycook:

I refer the hon Member to the answer I gave to Question UIN [556](#) on 26 July 2024 and Question [1315](#) on 26 July 2024.

■ **Employment Tribunals Service: Local Government**

Helen Hayes:

[\[17143\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate she has made of the total cost to the public purse of out of court settlements for employment tribunal cases across local government in each of the last five years.

Jim McMahon:

The information requested is not held centrally.

■ **Environment Protection and Sustainable Development: Rural Areas**

Samantha Niblett:

[\[16777\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans she has to ensure that new developments in rural areas are (a) sustainable and (b) environmentally friendly.

Alex Norris:

We fully support the need for all new homes to be well designed, sustainable and environmentally friendly, including those in rural areas.

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

Of course, the construction of new homes also results in the release of embodied carbon emissions, which come from producing, transporting, and using building materials. My department is considering the best approach to measuring and reducing these emissions.

■ **Green Belt**

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[16521\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that (a) Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects and (b) properties built on the grey belt have access to sufficient quantities of water for domestic and business use.

Matthew Pennycook:

Through the Development Consent process for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects, applicants will undertake water resource assessments for their projects and

consultations with water authorities. This ensures that water infrastructure is planned before a Development Consent Order is granted.

In our recent consultation on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system, we consulted on a definition of grey belt land. The consultation closed on the 24 September and officials in my department are currently analysing responses with a view to publishing a government response before the end of the year that will include a final definition of grey belt land and detail on the operation of the concept.

■ Grenfell Tower Inquiry

David Simmonds: [\[16545\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what her planned timetable is for responding to the policy paper entitled Publication of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry phase 2 report, published on 4 September 2024.

Alex Norris:

We are considering the recommendations set out in the Grenfell Inquiry report. The Prime Minister has committed to respond in full to the Inquiry's recommendations within six months.

■ Grenfell Tower: Ministerial Responsibility

Kevin Hollinrake: [\[16237\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, for what reason the Minister for Homelessness and Democracy is no longer responsible for the Grenfell brief.

Rushanara Ali:

Trusted relationships between ministers and the Grenfell community are essential for this Department. Before I became a Minister, I called for the French delegation of the Franco-British Colloque to cut ties with Saint Gobain. But I understand that perception matters and I therefore concluded that the building safety portfolio would be best transferred to another minister.

Updated ministerial responsibilities were published in October.

Our goals of making buildings safe and preventing another tragedy continue to be very important issues for me, and the Deputy Prime Minister and the rest of the ministerial team have my full support in delivering on this work.

■ Homelessness: Sherwood Forest

Michelle Welsh: [\[16658\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many young people are (a) classified homeless and (b) in emergency accommodation in Sherwood Forest constituency.

Rushanara Ali:

The annual homelessness statistics includes age of applicants in temporary accommodation by local authority as of 31 March 2024. This information is available at table TA5 -

[Additional temporary accommodation breakdowns 31 March 2024.ods.](#)

Housing: Construction**Kevin Hollinrake:**[\[16496\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to her Department's press release of 15 October 2024 entitled Thousands of new homes to be built as government unlocks brownfield sites, what the target date is to complete the delivery of 5,200 homes; and whether 5,200 homes is the target for the whole of the 2022-25 Brownfield Land Release Fund 2.

Matthew Pennycook:

Round three Brownfield Land Release Fund 2 land release milestones are set for 31 March 2028. Housing is then delivered up to three years after the land release milestone. The 5,200 homes forecast applies only to the Brownfield Land Release Fund 2, round three. The whole of the Brownfield Land Release Fund 2 is forecast to release land for 14,100 homes.

Kevin Hollinrake:[\[16497\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to Homes England press release of 15 October 2024, entitled Homes England invests in Schroders Capital's Real Estate Impact Fund, whether the £50 million of funding is (a) capital spending, (b) revenue spending and (c) a financial transaction.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Homes England investment into Schroders Capital's Real Estate Impact Fund was announced following the government's International Investment Summit. The investment of £50 million was a Financial Transaction from Capital Spending budgets (CDEL- FT) and sits alongside other capital from private sector investors with the aim of generating a financial return for shareholders. The commitment from Homes England will increase the ability of the fund to secure further allocations whilst also enabling the provision of new social and affordable homes and supporting town centre regeneration, key objectives of Homes England.

David Simmonds:[\[16546\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department is taking steps to help ensure that vacant homes built under section 106 agreements are occupied.

Matthew Pennycook:

The government is well aware of concerns about reduced appetite from Registered Providers of social housing to buy affordable homes delivered under Section 106

agreements. We will continue to work with housebuilders, local authorities, and Registered Providers to tackle this problem.

One of the main causes of the problem is a reduction in Registered Providers' financial capacity over recent years. The government recognises that Registered Providers need support to build their capacity and make a greater contribution to affordable housing supply. We are currently consulting on a new 5-year social housing rent settlement, to give Registered Providers the certainty they need to invest in new social and affordable housing.

We have also announced that councils will be allowed to keep 100% of the receipts generated by Right to Buy sales, so that they are better able to build and buy new homes. We have provided flexibility for councils to combine Right to Buy receipts with Section 106 contributions (this flexibility will be in place for an initial 24 months and then subject to review).

David Simmonds:

[\[16549\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many homes (a) in total and (b) by type of tenure have been financed under the Levelling Up Home Building Fund.

Matthew Pennycook:

Since the Levelling Up Home Building Fund launched in 2022, it has committed funding to support the delivery of 35,695 new homes against its target of 42,000.

Tenure breakdown information is only available once construction is started on site, so is not available against the total number of homes financed.

■ Housing: Greater London

David Simmonds:

[\[16553\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 9 September 2024 to Question 3005 on Housing: Greater London, what discussions he has had with the Greater London Authority on the reasons for housing delivery being below existing London Plan targets.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government is committed to working in partnership with the Mayor of London, boroughs and the sector to significantly increase housing delivery in the capital. My department, both ministers and officials, meet regularly with the Greater London Authority to discuss housing delivery.

■ Housing: Infrastructure

Michelle Welsh:

[\[16867\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to help ensure that new housing developments are supported by adequate local infrastructure.

Matthew Pennycook:

The National Planning Policy Framework sets out that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, including the provision of supporting infrastructure in a sustainable manner.

Local development plans should address needs and opportunities in relation to infrastructure and identify what infrastructure is required and how it can be funded and brought forward. This will remain the case irrespective of whether any proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework or wider national planning policy are taken forward.

When preparing a Local Plan, Planning Practice Guidance recommends that local planning authorities use available evidence of infrastructure requirements to prepare an Infrastructure Funding Statement. Such Statements can be used to demonstrate the delivery of infrastructure throughout the plan-period.

The government provides financial support for essential infrastructure in areas of greatest housing demand through the Housing Infrastructure Fund.

The changes proposed as part of our recent consultation on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework are intended to support the increased provision and modernisation of various types of public infrastructure.

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

The government is also committed to strengthening the existing system of developer contributions to ensure that new developments provide appropriate affordable homes and infrastructure. Further details will be set out in due course.

■ Housing: Regeneration**Kevin Hollinrake:**[\[16193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Answer of 31 October 2024 to Question HL1722 on Housing: Regeneration, whether the 1.5 million new homes target will count residential dwellings resulting from a change of use from non-residential hereditaments.

Matthew Pennycook:

As confirmed in my recent evidence to the select committee, net additional dwellings will be the main measure of the commitment to deliver 1.5 million homes over this Parliament.

This statistic includes residential dwellings resulting from a change of use from non-residential hereditaments.

■ Infrastructure: Planning**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[16462\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Institution of Civil Engineers' policy position statement on evolving the UK strategic infrastructure planning system, published on 12 July 2021, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of the ICE's recommendations on publishing a national policy statement for infrastructure.

Matthew Pennycook:

The government is committed to improving National Policy Statements and in the July speech, the Chancellor announced an immediate 12-month review of National Policy Statements. To build on the review, we will legislate, through the Planning Infrastructure Bill, to mandate the updating of National Policy Statements every five years.

Longer term, Government is developing a 10-year Infrastructure Strategy and establishing the National Infrastructure Strategy and Transformation Agency, which will play a crucial role in shaping the future of national infrastructure.

■ Infrastructure: Planning Permission**Kevin Hollinrake:**[\[16199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether any planning applications for national significant infrastructure development consent have been delayed from the original statutory deadline since 4 July 2024.

Matthew Pennycook:

There has been a total of seven planning applications delayed from the original statutory deadline since 4 July 2024.

They are as follows:

- Cambridge Waste Water Treatment Plant;
- Heckington Fen Solar;
- Hinckley National Rail Freight Interchange;
- Luton Airport;
- Lower Thames Crossing;
- North Lincolnshire Green Energy Park; and
- West Burton Solar.

■ Land Use: Planning Permission**David Simmonds:**[\[16544\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to her Department's policy paper, entitled Brownfield Passport: Making the Most of Urban Land, published in September 2024, whether it is her policy that planning

approvals under the new brownfield passport regime would still require a substantive planning application.

Matthew Pennycook:

The government's planning reform working paper regarding a brownfield passport invites views on further action the government could take through the planning system to support the development of brownfield land in urban areas. It proposes options for a form of 'brownfield passport', which would be more specific about the development that should be regarded as acceptable, with the default answer to suitable proposals being a straightforward "yes". The proposals relate to the principle, the scale, and the form of development, and to the potential wider use of Local Development Orders to grant area-wide permissions – all in a way that retains appropriate local oversight. A series of questions are posed at the end of the paper, to inform discussions with the sector before determining whether any of these proposals are taken forward. We continue to accept responses to the paper, and will set out further information on how we intend to respond in due course.

■ **Land: Reform**

Siân Berry:

[\[16643\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential implications for her Department's policies of the report by the New Economics Foundation entitled Building Hope: how land reforms will help deliver the homes we need, published on 20 November 2024.

Matthew Pennycook:

The government have made clear its intention to reform the compulsory purchase order process and land compensation rules to enable more effective land assembly that will speed-up and lower the costs of the delivery of housing and critical infrastructure in the public interest. We will work with a wide range of experts and organisations to develop our policy in this area and will consider reports such as this one as part of that work.

■ **Leasehold: Ground Rent**

Gregory Stafford:

[\[16384\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of ground rent costs on the ability of long-term leaseholders to sell their leased properties.

Matthew Pennycook:

I refer the Hon Member to the Written Ministerial Statement made on 21 November 2024 ([HCWS244](#)).

■ Local Government and Mayors: Elections

Kevin Hollinrake: [\[16495\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 14 October 2024 to Question 7872 on Local Government: Elections, if she will update the list of years in which each council's elections will be held with the (a) council and (b) combined authority mayoral elections expected to take place in (i) 2025 and (ii) 2026.

Jim McMahon:

The Government will update the list of local authority elections in England - which can be found [here](#) - to include elections for mayors for combined authorities and combined county authorities. The list already includes elections for councils and is easily found through an internet search without the need to submit a parliamentary question.

■ Local Government Pension Scheme

Mike Amesbury: [\[16534\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent assessment her Department has made of the effectiveness of the Local Government Pension Scheme in supporting local and regional economic growth.

Jim McMahon:

The LGPS already invests approximately 30% of its assets in the UK, as part of its duty to invest to pay pensions. The government believes that the LGPS can make a distinctive contribution to local and regional economic growth building on its local role and networks, through increasing its long-term investment in local communities. We are currently consulting on proposals, including requiring LGPS funds to set a target for local investment and to work with Mayoral Combined Authorities and equivalent bodies to identify suitable local investment opportunities.

■ Local Plans: Finance

Wendy Morton: [\[16501\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will take steps to ensure the provision of adequate funding to support (a) up-to-date local plans and (b) high-quality design codes.

Matthew Pennycook:

Within weeks of taking office, the government consulted on increasing planning fees to put planning services on a firmer footing and to reflect the real costs of the services they provide.

Subject to the outcome of our consultation on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework, the government will provide funding to enable eligible local authorities to progress their plans to examination quickly. Further details on the funding will be provided in due course.

More generally, the government is committed to supporting local planning authorities. At the Budget, the Chancellor announced a £46 million package of investment into the planning system to support capacity and capability in local planning authorities. This includes funding for the recruitment and training of 300 graduate and apprentice planners, along with funding to Public Practice for the recruitment of planners, architects, and urban designers. Together, this framework provides a clear basis for the delivery of more high-quality, well-designed homes.

We are also developing a wider programme of support, working with partners across the planning sector, to ensure that local planning authorities have the skills and capacity they need, both now and in the future to modernise local plans and speed up decision making, including through innovative use of digital planning data and software.

■ **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Buildings**

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:

[\[6393\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how much has been spent on refurbishment of Ministerial offices in her Department since 4 July 2024, broken down by (a) furniture, (b) fixtures, (c) fittings and (d) shoe racks.

Alex Norris:

I refer the Rt Hon Member to the answer given to Question UIN 9072 on 3 December 2024.

■ **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Freedom of Information**

Kevin Hollinrake:

[\[16488\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the (a) substantive information requested and (b) decision was for each (i) Freedom of Information Act and (ii) Environmental Information Regulation request received by her Department since the general election; and what exemption was used to (A) refuse and (B) part-refuse each request.

Alex Norris:

The Cabinet Office has responsibility for Freedom of Information policy in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and publishes information on the handling of requests at this link: [Freedom of Information statistics - GOV.UK](#).

Statistics for the period requested are attached. We have annexed the information you requested to this response.

Attachments:

1. FOI statistics [FOI Dataset PQ 16488.xls]

■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Staff**Kevin Hollinrake:** [\[16487\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 14 October 2024 to Question 6395 on MHCLG: departmental responsibilities, what the headcount number of staff is for the Policy and Strategy Unit by civil service grade.

Kevin Hollinrake: [\[16490\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 14 October 2024 to Question 6395 MHCLG: departmental responsibilities, what work the Deputy Prime Minister's Policy and Strategy Unit does for her remit as Deputy Prime Minister.

Alex Norris:

The Deputy Prime Minister's Policy and Strategy Unit supports delivery of priorities across both her remit as Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, and Deputy Prime Minister. The policy and strategy unit performs a similar role to equivalent units established under previous administrations.

The Policy and Strategy Unit is comprised of two Deputy Directors, supported by policy advisors (at grade HEO/SEO) and senior policy advisors (at grade 7/6). The approach to recruitment and staffing levels is in line with the approach taken for these central functions under the previous administration.

■ Offices: Change of Use**David Simmonds:** [\[16541\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what her (a) housing and (b) planning policy is on encouraging councils to turn (i) empty and (ii) redundant office space into residential accommodation.

Matthew Pennycook:

The National Planning Policy Framework makes clear that substantial weight should be given to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements, including the development of under-utilised land and buildings to meet the need for homes and other uses.

As part of our recent consultation on proposed reforms to the Framework, we set out proposals to broaden the existing definition of brownfield land, set a strengthened expectation that applications on brownfield land will be approved, and make clear that plans should promote an uplift in density in urban areas.

On 22 September we published a 'brownfield passport' policy paper inviting views on how we might further prioritise and fast-track building on previously used urban land.

■ Permitted Development Rights: Public Consultation

David Simmonds:

[\[16547\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 14 October 2024 to Question 6190 on Permitted Development Rights, whether her Department has made an assessment of the extent to which that consultation met the Cabinet Office's consultation principles guidance.

Matthew Pennycook:

While we cannot comment on the actions of the previous government, the consultation document sets out how it was planned to adhere to the consultation principles issued by the Cabinet Office.

■ Planning Permission

Kevin Hollinrake:

[\[16948\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what guidance her Department provides on the processes to be followed by other Government departments making representations on the potential call-in or recovery of a planning application or appeal.

Matthew Pennycook:

There is no separate guidance provided to other government departments regarding making representations on the potential call-in or recovery of a planning application or appeal. Processes are laid out in the House of Commons Library research briefing '[Call-in of planning applications \(England\)](#)' (2024). Advice on these matters may also be requested from this department's Planning Casework Unit.

■ Planning Permission: Carbon Emissions

David Simmonds:

[\[16543\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department has issued guidance on whether the embodied carbon of an existing building is a material consideration in the planning process.

Matthew Pennycook:

The government's Planning Practice Guidance on Climate Change, National Design Guide and National Model Design Code provide general guidance on how carbon impacts can be taken into account in the planning process.

In our recent consultation on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system, we sought views on whether carbon can be accurately measured and accounted for in plan-making and planning decisions. The consultation closed on 24 September and officials in my department are currently analysing responses with a view to publishing a government response before the end of the year.

■ Private Rented Housing

Kevin Hollinrake: [\[16188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to commission further rounds of the (a) Build to Rent fund and (b) Private Rented Sector Guarantee scheme.

Matthew Pennycook:

The government provides development finance for Build to Rent schemes alongside institutional investors through our Levelling Up Home Building Fund, delivered by Homes England.

Building on the announcement in the last Budget, we will be reopening the Private Rented Sector Guarantee Scheme (PRSGS) for another three years to new applicants, and just under £2 billion of guarantee capacity will be available to Build-to-Rent developers to support housebuilding.

We have also modernised the scheme rules to reflect the current state of the market, meaning that more housebuilders will be able to access lending.

■ Regional Planning and Development

David Simmonds: [\[16768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to page 23 of the King's Speech Background Briefing Notes, published by the Prime Minister's Office on 17 July 2024, whether strategic planning will operate at the combined authority level.

Matthew Pennycook:

Yes. The Government is proposing that all combined authorities will oversee the development and agreement of strategic plans for their areas. This will be formalised in legislation.

■ Rented Housing: Pets

Sam Carling: [\[16843\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what progress her Department has made on improving access to pet friendly properties in the (a) social and (b) private rented sectors.

Matthew Pennycook:

The government wants to ensure more tenants can experience the benefits of pet ownership – including the benefits to mental and physical health. Many social landlords set out their pet policies in their tenancy agreements and will allow tenants to keep pets where it is appropriate to do so. Consideration is given to whether the pets can be well looked after and any adverse effects on the lives of neighbours and those living nearby. We encourage all social landlords to adopt similar policies. The circumstances in which pets may be kept is, however, for social landlords to determine locally, taking account of the views of their tenants.

The Renters' Rights Bill will give private tenants the right to request a pet and ensure that landlords cannot unreasonably withhold consent. Landlords will be required to respond to any requests by a tenant to keep a pet within 28 days, instead of the 42 that had been proposed by the previous Government. Tenants will also be able to challenge unfair decisions by either going to the courts or the new Private Rented Sector Ombudsman.

■ Right to Buy Scheme

Kevin Hollinrake:

[16195]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how much funding has been provided to local authorities from Right to Buy receipts to fund new housing in each year since 2009-10.

Matthew Pennycook:

Since 2012, councils have been able to retain a portion of the capital receipts generated from Right to Buy sales to use towards new affordable housing.

Prior to 2012, around 75% of receipts were returned to the Treasury and the remaining 25% was retained by the council for any capital purpose.

Since 2012, councils have retained on average £446.8 million per year for replacement social housing.

Between 2012-13 and 2021-22 councils were required to return a portion of the capital receipt to HMT representing approximately £183 million per annum.

As announced at Budget, the government is allowing councils to retain the share of the receipts that was previously returned to HMT so support the delivery of replacement homes.

■ Right to Buy Scheme: Reform

Peter Fortune:

[16896]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of the accessibility of the consultation entitled Reforming the Right to Buy, published on 20 November 2024.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government published the 'Reforming the Right to Buy' consultation via www.gov.uk on 20 November 2024, and is content that it meets the expected accessibility standards to allow all interested parties to contribute their views. As prescribed in the Government's Publishing Accessible Documents [guidance](#), the consultation is published in HTML format to make it easier to read and to find.

It provides a variety of ways to respond to meet the range of accessibility needs; an online response option, a direct email address and a postal address for those unable to respond online. Anyone having any difficulty responding can get in touch using the contact details available to request assistance or an alternative way to respond.

■ Social Rented Housing: Construction

Mike Amesbury:

[\[16220\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will take additional fiscal steps after the Autumn Budget 2024 to help deliver more homes for social rent before the end of this Parliament.

Matthew Pennycook:

At the multi-year Spending Review next year, the government will set out details of new investment to succeed the 2021-26 Affordable Homes Programme.

Kevin Hollinrake:

[\[16489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 14 October 2024 to Question 6386 on Affordable Housing, whether the social rent homes target in the 2021-26 Affordable Housing Programme has increased since 9 September 2024.

Matthew Pennycook:

As set out in the Deputy Prime Minister's statement made on 30 July 2024 ([HCSW48](#)), we have asked Homes England and the Greater London Authority to maximise the number of Social Rent homes in allocating the remaining Affordable Homes Programme funding. The programme targets for the 2021-26 Affordable Homes Programme remain as set out in our update on 30 July.

At the Budget the Chancellor announced an immediate injection of £500 million into this Programme. This will support delivery of up to 5,000 additional homes and bidding is already open to local authorities and other social landlords. I have asked Homes England and the GLA to prioritise social rent homes in assessing those bids and allocating this funding.

■ Solar Power: Land Use

Sir Alec Shelbrooke:

[\[16719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 22 November 2024 to Question 12061 on Agriculture: Land Use and with reference to the approval of the solar farm development at Honiley Road solar farm by the Minister of State, dated 23 July 2024, what the evidential basis is for the report that that solar farm has delivered 135% Biodiversity Net Increase.

Matthew Pennycook:

The full reasons for the decision to grant the permission in question are set out in the published decision letter and Inspector's Report. The Inspector's Report provides a complete list of the evidence which was before the Inquiry. Having issued this decision, the Secretary of State has no further jurisdiction in the matter, and it would not be appropriate to comment further.

■ Voting Rights: Young People

Kevin Hollinrake:

[\[16494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 11 October 2014 to Question 5416 on Civil Dignitaries and Members: Age, for what reason the Government deems 16 and 17 year olds to be old enough to vote in (a) local and (b) Parliamentary elections but not stand in those elections.

Rushanara Ali:

Pursuant to the Answer of 11 October 2024, to Question [5416](#), the introduction of Votes at 16 is about building long lasting engagement with our democracy among young people. By engaging voters early, when they are young, we will build the foundations for their long-term participation in our electoral processes.

That is why this government is rightly focused on delivering on the manifesto which it was elected on and the commitment to lower the voting age for all UK elections. As set out in the previous answer, the government has no plans to change the eligibility criteria of candidacy age for local and parliamentary elections.

JUSTICE

■ Crown Prosecution Service

Dame Caroline Dinéage:

[\[16135\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what oversight her Department has over (a) the CPS and (b) the speed of prosecutions.

Sarah Sackman:

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) is responsible for making charging decisions and is independent of both the police and the government. Therefore, the Ministry of Justice does not have oversight over the CPS.

However, whilst the listing of cases is a matter for the independent judiciary, the Ministry of Justice and HMCTS have a degree of oversight of how quickly cases move through the criminal courts once received. The Crown Court has shown improvements in timeliness more recently. The latest public data shows that the number of days from a case arriving at the Crown Court to completion reduced by 25% throughout 2023, from 167 days in Q1 to 125 in Q4.

Across all jurisdictions, we are working closely with partners across the justice system to improve readiness of cases for hearing at court. We have introduced Case Coordinators into ten Crown Courts 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 principles.

The Ministry of Justice publishes the CJS Delivery Data Dashboard, which includes timeliness metrics for the criminal justice system, including the average time from the police referring a case to the CPS to the CPS authorising a charge and the average time that a case takes to complete at court.

■ Dartmoor Prison: Radon Gas

Ben Maguire: [\[16861\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what her Department's estimated timescale is for HMP Dartmoor returning to full operational capacity; and whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of radon levels on the health of (a) prisoners and (b) prison staff.

Ben Maguire: [\[16862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what plans her Department has for readmitting prisoners to HMP Dartmoor prison; what the estimated timescale for readmission is; and if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of increasing the capacity of the prison.

Ben Maguire: [\[16863\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what impact the reduction in operational capacity of HMP Dartmoor has had on the number of (a) staff redundancies, (b) staff retiring before state pension age and (c) contract length of contracted staff at the prison; and what proportion of affected personnel have been redeployed within the prison service.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The health and safety of prisoners and staff continues to be a top priority for His Majesty's Prison & Probation Service. Following the temporary closure of HMP Dartmoor in August, we have been working with specialist radon experts to investigate and assess options to reduce levels of radon sufficiently to allow us to reopen the prison safely. While this process is ongoing, we are unable to provide an estimated timeline to return Dartmoor to its full operational capacity of around 680 places. We continue to work with Health and Safety experts to further our understanding of the impact that exposure levels could have on prisoners and staff.

If it is concluded that it is feasible and cost effective to return the prison to use, we will complete a full options assessment for the site, including the possibility of increasing the capacity of the prison from that at which it closed. In the meantime, we continue to work with HMP Dartmoor and the trade unions to manage the impact of the closure on staff. No staff have been made redundant.

We are in the process of redeploying staff, which for most will be to the neighbouring establishments HMP Exeter and HMP Channings Wood. We are ensuring they have access to the Department's Employee Assistance Programme and are supported through the transition by their line managers.

■ **Legal Aid: Undocumented Migrants**

Rupert Lowe:

[\[16290\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how much legal aid was provided to (a) irregular migrants and (b) asylum seekers in each of the last five years.

Sarah Sackman:

Expenditure data for irregular migrants and asylum seekers across all legal aid schemes is not held centrally.

The Legal Aid Agency publishes information about case volumes and expenditure data for the immigration and asylum category as part of its [official statistics](#).

■ **Parole**

Kim Johnson:

[\[17260\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 29 November 2024 to Question 15952 on Prisoners, how many and what proportion of Parole Board recommendations were rejected by the Government in each of the last 12 months.

Kim Johnson:

[\[17261\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 29 November 2024 to Question 15952, on Prisoners, how many and what proportion of Parole Board recommendations on releasing (a) prisoners serving an Imprisonment for Public Protection sentence and (b) other prisoners were rejected by the Government in each of the last 12 months.

Kim Johnson:

[\[17262\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of Parole Board recommendations on moving (a) prisoners serving an Imprisonment for Public Protection sentence and (b) other prisoners to open conditions were rejected by the Government in each of the last 12 months.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

In the response to PQ 15952, it was explained that the transfer of an indeterminate sentence prisoner to open conditions is a decision for the Secretary of State. It was also explained that there is no current power for the Government to overrule a Parole Board release decision.

In making a decision concerning the transfer of an indeterminate sentence prisoner to open conditions, the Secretary of State will take account of any recommendation made by the Parole Board. However, the Secretary of State may either reject or

accept that recommendation. In the table below, the breakdown of data requested is provided.

MONTH	SENTENCE TYPE	ACCEPTED	NOT ACCEPTED	TOTAL	% NOT ACCEPTED
January	Not IPP	*	8	8	
	IPP	*	11	11	
February	Not IPP	3	19	22	86%
	IPP	*	10	10	
March	Not IPP	5	15	20	75%
	IPP	*	12	12	
April	Not IPP	*	7	7	
	IPP	*	9	9	
May	Not IPP	*	17	17	
	IPP	8	14	22	64%
June	Not IPP	12	17	29	59%
	IPP	7	18	25	72%
July	Not IPP	21	8	29	28%
	IPP	7	12	19	63%
August	Not IPP	32	17	49	35%
	IPP	10	19	29	66%
September	Not IPP	26	5	31	16%
	IPP	14	3	17	18%
October	Not IPP	30	5	35	14%
	IPP	13	5	18	28%
November	Not IPP	25	10	35	29%
	IPP	12	9	21	43%
December	Not IPP	16	3	19	16%
	IPP	8	6	14	43%

Note: The period used in this table is consistent with the period used in the answer provided to PQ 15952.

■ Prisoners' Release: Curfews

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[16973\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people released on home detention curfew were recalled to prison in (a) Wales and (b) England in each of the last 20 years.

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[16976\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people were released on home detention curfew in (a) Wales and (b) England in each of the last 20 years.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

We have provided the requested information in the Tables 1 and 2 below.

Data on total HDC recalls from 2015 onwards can be found in Table 1. A further breakdown of HDC recalls prior to 2015 could only be supplied at disproportionate cost.

Table 1: Recalls from Home Detention Curfew to prisons in England and prisons in Wales, 2015 to 2023

YEAR	ENGLAND	WALES
2015	551	19
2016	523	13
2017	582	40
2018	1,575	93
2019	2,296	142
2020	2,040	154
2021	1,503	117
2022	1,284	92
2023	1,304	65

Data sources and quality The figures in this table have been drawn from administrative IT systems which, as with any large scale recording system, are subject to possible errors with data entry and processing. **Methodological note** Recall data presented here are calculated on the basis of those who were recalled (and subsequently returned to custody) in this period, how many were on HDC. This is different to the method used in Offender Management Statistics Quarterly which

looks at the number released to HDC who were later recalled. Numbers will therefore not be comparable.

Source: Prison NOMIS

Table 2: HDC releases from prisons in England and prisons in Wales, 2004 to 2023

YEAR	ENGLAND	WALES
2004	18,514	781
2005	16,586	710
2006	13,157	509
2007	11,063	365
2008	11,403	318
2009	11,144	390
2010	11,915	335
2011	12,364	363
2012	12,330	473
2013	9,958	461
2014	8,228	386
2015	8,236	375
2016	8,613	429
2017	8,773	547
2018	13,699	1,070
2019	11,854	978
2020	9,884	905
2021	8,575	818
2022	7,950	781
2023	7,213	707

Data sources and quality The figures in this table have been drawn from administrative IT systems which, as with any large scale recording system, are subject to possible errors with data entry and processing.

Source: Prison NOMIS**■ Probation Service: Welsh Language****Liz Saville Roberts:**[\[17190\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what training is available through the medium of Welsh for probation officers in Wales.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Currently, whilst we do not offer national training for Probation Officers in Welsh we can provide learning materials and effective practice briefings in Welsh upon request.

We are dedicated to fostering a workplace environment that encourages and embraces the use of the Welsh language in daily work practices. This commitment includes a staff Welsh language forum, and we will soon be launching a Welsh Language Skills Policy focused on supporting our staff.

■ Reoffenders: Foreign Nationals**Rupert Lowe:**[\[16095\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 11 November 2024 to Question 13567 on Reoffenders: Foreign Nationals, how many reoffences were committed by foreign national offenders expressed as (a) one to five offences, (b) six to nine offences and (c) each total of reoffences at 10 and above.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Data on the number of adult foreign national reoffenders who have committed 1-5 reoffences, 6-9 reoffences and 10+ reoffences can be found in the attached table.

We refer all foreign national offenders in receipt of custodial sentences to the Home Office. Those sentenced to 12 months, or more are automatically considered for deportation.

Foreign national offenders who commit crime should be in no doubt that the law will be enforced and, where appropriate, we will work with the Home Office to pursue their deportation. This will help to manage prison pressures, keep the public safe and reduce crime. We are currently on track to remove more foreign national offenders this year than at any time in recent years and we are working across government to explore the ways we accelerate this work further.

Attachments:

1. 16095 Table [2024-12-03 PQ 16095 table.xlsx]

■ Reoffenders: Sherwood Forest**Michelle Welsh:**[\[16866\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps her Department is taking to reduce reoffending rates in Sherwood Forest constituency.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

This Government is committed to reducing reoffending by giving people the tools they need to turn their backs on crime. To do that, we will increase prisoners' access to purposeful activity, including education and employment, which we know can reduce reoffending by up to 9 percentage points.

For example, we have recruited specialist education and employment roles in prisons to support and prepare prisoners for work on release. This includes Prison Employment Leads who match prisoners to jobs, and Neurodiversity Support Managers to help neurodiverse offenders to access education, skills and work opportunities. Both roles are currently in place at HMP Nottingham and HMP Ranby, two prisons close to Sherwood Forest constituency.

We are determined to help ensure our hard-working probation staff can continue to deliver high-quality supervision and focus their time on those cases which need most attention including for offenders who reside in the Sherwood Forrest constituency. Operationally, we are focusing probation officer time and energy on the higher risk individuals they have to supervise outside of prison to ensure that the public continue to be protected. We have also committed to bring in at least 1,000 new trainee probation officers across the 2024/25 financial year, allowing for greater oversight and management of offenders once they leave prisons.

■ Sentencing**Liz Saville Roberts:**[\[16971\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many (a) community sentences, (b) deferred sentences, (c) conditional discharges and (d) custodial sentences have been given in (i) Wales and (ii) England in each of the last 20 years.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The Ministry of Justice publishes data on sentences given at criminal courts in England and Wales between January 2010 and June 2024 in the Outcomes by Offences data tool, that can be downloaded from the Criminal Justice Statistics landing page here: [Criminal Justice Statistics](#).

The attached table provides the requested breakdown of sentences for England (Tab 1) and Wales (Tab 2) for the requested time period 2004 to 2009.

Attachments:

1. Table [2024-12-04 PQ 16971 Table.xlsx]

■ Spiking: Northern Ireland**Colum Eastwood:**[\[17266\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether she has had discussions with the Minister for Justice in Northern Ireland on creating a criminal offence of drink spiking.

Alex Davies-Jones:

Spiking is already an offence in England and Wales and Northern Ireland. We are, however, currently working across Government on a proposed new offence covering spiking, which has included discussions, at official level, with the Department of Justice (Northern Ireland). These discussions are ongoing.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY**■ Animal Experiments****Munira Wilson:**[\[16564\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, pursuant to the Answer of 12 November 2024 to Question 12521 on Dogs: Animal Experiments, when he plans to publish further details on plans to accelerate the development, validation and uptake of alternatives to animal testing.

Feryal Clark:

The Labour Manifesto includes a commitment to “partner with scientists, industry, and civil society as we work towards the phasing out of animal testing”. Our approach has been to support the development and application of approaches that replace, reduce and refine the use of animals in research (the 3Rs).

We recognise that any work to phase out animal testing and accelerate the development, validation and uptake of alternatives to animal testing must be in lock step with partners, and so we are meeting with stakeholders to pursue this work. We will make any announcements on our plans in due course.

■ Artificial Intelligence: Cybersecurity**Jim Shannon:**[\[16161\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of cyber safety laws on the use of AI.

Feryal Clark:

Artificial Intelligence is a vital technology and is at the heart of the government’s economic growth plans. AI safety has been a vital part of the government’s work since the AI Safety Summit.

DSIT is working to address cyber risks to AI and recently consulted on a Code of Practice setting baseline security requirements for AI systems. This will be the basis of a global standard. DSIT will respond in 2025.

Government has also published a cyber security risk assessment on AI and other related research.

■ Broadband and Mobile Phones: Montgomeryshire and Glyndŵr**Steve Witherden:** [\[16692\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he is taking to help improve (a) mobile signal and (b) broadband for areas that have no access to fibre internet in Montgomeryshire and Glyndŵr constituency.

Chris Bryant:

As part of the Shared Rural Network, we have recently upgraded and activated two government-funded masts in the Montgomeryshire and Glyndwr constituency, delivering a 4G coverage boost to local businesses and community organisations, with more to come.

Through Project Gigabit, around 70,000 homes and businesses across Wales, including thousands in the Montgomeryshire and Glyndwr constituency, are currently set to benefit from a contract being delivered by Openreach that will deliver gigabit-capable broadband to premises that would otherwise miss out.

■ Broadband: Runcorn and Helsby**Mike Amesbury:** [\[16530\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps his Department is taking to help support rural households to receive broadband connections in Runcorn and Helsby constituency.

Chris Bryant:

According to the independent website ThinkBroadband.com, over 98% of premises in the Runcorn and Helsby constituency have access to superfast broadband speeds (≥ 30 Mbps) and over 92% can access a gigabit-capable (>1000 Mbps) connection.

To extend gigabit-capable coverage further, Freedom Fibre is delivering a £43 million contract under Project Gigabit to bring fast, reliable broadband to premises across Cheshire, including in Runcorn and Helsby, that would otherwise miss out.

■ Food: Research**Dr Ben Spencer:** [\[16567\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what discussions he has had with ARIA on support for research into food biosecurity since July 2024.

Feryal Clark:

The Government recognises the importance of food biosecurity. It is critical in helping prevent the spread of disease-causing agents and protecting the safety of food, animals, and humans.

The Advanced Research & Invention Agency's (ARIA) Synthetic Plants programme, backed by £62.4 million, will investigate research challenges related to sustainable food supply.

Dr Ben Spencer: [\[16568\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what discussions he has had with the Arts and Humanities Research Council on research into food biosecurity since July 2024.

Dr Ben Spencer: [\[16569\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what discussions he has had with the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council on research into food biosecurity since July 2024.

Dr Ben Spencer: [\[16570\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what discussions he has had with the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council on research into food biosecurity since July 2024.

Dr Ben Spencer: [\[16571\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what discussions he has had with the Economic and Social Research Council on research into food biosecurity since July 2024.

Feryal Clark:

The Government recognises the importance of food biosecurity. It is critical in helping prevent the spread of disease-causing agents and protecting the safety of food, animals, and humans.

The Department engages regularly with UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), and its constituent Councils, on research and innovation priorities. UKRI's Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) also works closely with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Food Standards Agency and other stakeholders to coordinate and fund a range of cross-sectoral research activities in this area.

The BBSRC and [Food Standards Agency](#) fund the [UK Food Safety Research Network](#), which connects the food industry, food and health policymakers and academia to collaboratively pursue shared research priorities that will protect the UK from foodborne hazards.

■ **Government Digital Service: Contracts**

Mr Richard Holden: [\[16337\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether the One Login project is on (a) budget and (b) schedule.

Feryal Clark:

The GOV.UK One Login programme is on budget and on schedule. It operates under the controls outlined in its Full Business Case, including Cabinet Office and HM Treasury spend controls, and independent assurance reviews conducted by the Infrastructure and Projects Authority (IPA). The IPA's most recent review concluded

that the programme is delivering effectively despite operating in an inherently complex environment, and remains on schedule.

■ **Innovate UK: Finance**

Mr Richard Holden: [\[16517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how much funding he plans to allocate to Innovate UK in each of the next three years.

Feryal Clark:

Earlier this year, the Chancellor launched a multi-year Spending Review, the first phase of which was completed and announced at this year's Autumn Budget. This set DSIT's overall R&D budget for 2025/26 at £13.9bn. Further details of how this funding will be allocated, including for UK Research and Innovation, of which Innovate UK is a part, will be announced in due course, and before the start of the financial year.

The Budget did not set departmental R&D budgets beyond 2025/26. The second phase of the Spending Review, which will conclude in late Spring 2025, will set out the government's spending plans for R&D in years beyond 2025/26.

■ **Special Educational Needs: Internet**

Jo Platt: [\[16535\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps his Department is taking to tackle online risks faced by children with special educational needs and disabilities.

Feryal Clark:

The government is focused on implementing the Online Safety Act as quickly as possible, so children benefit from its wide-ranging protections. The Act will ensure that companies take steps to protect their child users from harm on their platforms, including protecting children with special educational needs and disabilities.

Ofcom has consulted on its draft codes of practice for protecting children which set out the steps companies must take to protect children on their platforms under the Online Safety Act. We expect the child safety codes will be finalised and in effect by summer 2025.

■ **Technology: Women**

Samantha Niblett: [\[16778\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he has plans to (a) identify and (b) support female-led spin-out tech start-ups in UK Universities.

Samantha Niblett: [\[16779\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he has had discussions with Cabinet colleagues on support for female-led spin-out tech start-ups at UK Universities.

Feryal Clark:

Innovate UK are currently running an all-women cohort of their Innovation to commercialisation of university research (ICURe) programme, which will identify and support women researchers to explore commercialisation pathways that can lead to spinouts.

Supporting female tech founders and spin-out companies from our universities are important issues that I and colleagues across government are working on.

I am pleased that over time there are more female-led spin-outs, with 32% of spin-outs in 2022 having a female founder, up from 25% in 2017. However, with 68% still having all-male founders, there is still room for improvement.

TRANSPORT■ **Aviation: Crew****Esther McVey:**[\[16485\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 11 November 2024 to Question 12927 on Coronavirus: Vaccination, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the hazard ratios for heart-related conditions reported in Pfizer study abstract entitled Non-Interventional Study Interim Study Report 5 Abstract C4591021, dated 12 March 2024, on the Civil Aviation Authority's regime of aeromedicals which are designed to reduce the risk of sudden incapacitation of pilots during flight.

Mike Kane:

The data in the Pfizer report does not support the assertion that vaccination causes a clinically significant increase in the risk of any conditions that could prevent a safety-critical worker from undertaking their work.

Pilots continue to undergo regular medical examination with cardiovascular examination and with periodic resting electrocardiograms (ECGs). Any anomalies recorded on an ECG are reviewed by a cardiologist and further investigations undertaken if appropriate. In this way, any cardiac conditions, are screened for among those applying to hold a pilot medical certificate, including those that might arise in relation to COVID infection and management.

■ **Blue Badge Scheme****Mike Martin:**[\[17398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if her Department will take steps to help local authorities speed-up the processing of blue badges.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Department for Transport sets the legislation that governs the Blue Badge scheme and provides guidance for local authorities who are solely responsible for administering the scheme, including issuing the badges.

There are no timescales set for administering applications other than a suggested guideline that issuing authorities should aim to complete end to end applications within 12 weeks.

80% of citizens apply for a badge from their local authority using the Blue Badge Digital Service (BBDS) operated by the Department for Transport. The Department has a programme of continuous improvement of the digital service with the aim of making online badge applications quicker and easier for applicants and local authorities.

■ **Cycling: Clothing**

Lisa Smart:

[\[17015\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will take steps to launch a public awareness campaign to promote pedestrian and cyclist visibility on roads by encouraging the use of light or reflective clothing.

Lilian Greenwood:

THINK!, the Government's flagship road safety campaign, aims to reduce those killed and seriously injured on the roads in England and Wales by driving awareness of key road safety issues and encouraging attitude and behaviour change among high-risk road users.

We encourage the use of bright or reflective clothing for pedestrians and cyclists through our THINK! social channels, including at key moments such as around school term times, when the clocks change and darker mornings and evenings in the winter.

This advice is also shared via THINK! education resources, which are used widely by schools and other teaching intermediaries to support road safety education for children, and the THINK! campaign works closely with road safety charities and partners to share road safety advice and resources.

The primary audience for THINK! paid campaign activity is young men aged 17-24, who are four times more likely to be killed or seriously injured on the road than drivers aged 25 and over. To maximise the impact of our paid campaigns, these focus on the road safety issues which contribute to the highest numbers of deaths and serious injuries on our roads, such as speeding and drink driving.

■ **Driving Licences: Medical Examinations**

Jonathan Davies:

[\[16686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to reduce waiting times for the return of medically suspended driving licences.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) aims to make a licensing decision within 90 working days in 90% of cases where a medical condition(s) must be

investigated before a licence can be issued. During this financial year the average time to make a licensing decision in such cases is 44 working days.

The DVLA's online services are the quickest way to apply for a driving licence and drivers with diabetes, epilepsy, Parkinson's disease, visual impairments, sleep conditions, or heart conditions can apply online. However, the DVLA is very often reliant on receiving information from third parties, including doctors, other healthcare professionals or the applicant themselves, before a decision can be made on whether to issue a driving licence. To help with this, the DVLA has introduced a simplified licence renewal process for drivers with glaucoma and some mental health conditions. This has significantly reduced the need for the DVLA to seek further information from medical professionals and enabled more licensing decisions to be made based on the information provided by the driver. The DVLA will consider including more medical conditions in this simplified process, as well as adding more medical conditions to its online channels.

■ Driving Tests

Dr Al Pinkerton:

[\[17429\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will take steps to (a) tackle the use of (i) bots and (ii) third-party resellers on the DVSA booking system and (b) ensure equitable access to driving tests.

Lilian Greenwood:

To ensure fairness for everyone wanting to book a practical driving test, the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) continues to work hard to combat the unscrupulous practice of reselling tests, very often at significant profit.

DVSA deploys enhanced bot protection on its public facing booking system to stop automated systems from buying up tests unfairly. These applications, however, are constantly evolving and changing and DVSA continues to take steps to block cancellation services from accessing the booking system.

DVSA operates an online booking service (OBS) for Approved Driving Instructors (ADIs) and trainers so that they can book and manage driving and riding tests for their pupils. DVSA has made changes to the OBS by stopping automatic online registrations to use the service, ensuring each company that registers employs an ADI and removing access for any companies not linked to driving instructors.

In January 2023, DVSA changed its booking service terms and conditions to help prevent anyone from selling tests at profit. Since then, the DVSA has issued 327 warnings, 779 suspensions, and closed 727 business accounts for misuse of its booking service.

■ Driving Tests: Gosport

Dame Caroline Dinéage:

[\[17087\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to increase the availability of practical driving tests in Gosport constituency.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency's (DVSA's) main priority is to reduce car practical driving test waiting times, whilst upholding road safety standards.

Measures in place to reduce waiting times for customers at all driving test centres (DTC), include the recruitment of new driving examiners (DE), conducting tests outside regular hours, including at weekends and on public holidays, and buying back annual leave from DEs. DVSA also continues to deploy DEs from areas with lower waiting times into those where waiting times are longer.

As part of recent recruitment at DTCs that serve the Gosport constituency, DVSA has had two new examiners successfully complete training, with another potential new examiner currently in training. A further seven potential applicants are in the application process and if successful, will be offered training courses in the new year.

■ Driving Tests: Prices**Mr Joshua Reynolds:**[\[17056\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to stop driving tests being bulk booked and re-sold at a higher cost.

Lilian Greenwood:

To ensure fairness for everyone wanting to book a practical driving test, the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) continues to work hard to combat the unscrupulous practice of reselling tests, very often at significant profit.

It is not possible to block book car practical driving tests. A driving licence number can be assigned to only one car practical driving test at a time. A DVSA survey suggests only 10% of learner drivers use third parties to book their tests. Most either book appointments themselves or through their approved driving instructor.

DVSA deploys enhanced bot protection on its public facing booking system to stop automated systems from buying up tests unfairly. These applications, however, are constantly evolving and changing and DVSA continues to take steps to block cancellation services from accessing the booking system.

■ Driving Tests: Slough**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[17585\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to increase the availability of driving tests in Slough constituency.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency's (DVSA) main priority is upholding road safety standards while it works hard to reduce car practical driving test waiting times.

Measures in place to reduce waiting times for customers at all driving test centres (DTC), include the recruitment of new driving examiners (DE), conducting tests outside regular hours, including at weekends and on public holidays, and buying back

annual leave from DEs. DVSA also continues to deploy DEs from areas with lower waiting times into those where waiting times are longer.

As part of a recent recruitment exercise, DVSA hopes to offer training courses to two potential new DEs at Slough DTC in the new year. In future recruitment campaigns, DVSA will continue to look to fill additional examiner roles at Slough DTC.

■ Driving: Health

Dr Al Pinkerton:

[\[17055\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to ensure that medically unfit drivers are (a) identified and (b) reported effectively.

Lilian Greenwood:

The law requires all driving licence holders to notify the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) of any medical condition that could affect their fitness to drive and failure to do so is an offence.

When a driver declares a medical condition to the DVLA, or a third party (for example a doctor, police officer, family, friends or neighbours) raises concerns, the DVLA will carry out an investigation and a driving licence will only be issued or retained if the individual can meet the appropriate health standards. These medical investigations can range from the consideration of information provided by the driver or applicant to a more detailed investigation. This can include information provided by medical professionals, reports, examinations, eyesight tests or driving assessments.

All drivers are encouraged to discuss any concerns about their fitness to drive with their own healthcare professionals. Healthcare professionals, doctors and opticians play an important role in the driver licensing process. They advise their patients of the implications of their condition on driving and the effect of any treatment or medication and they advise when a patient should notify the DVLA. If a patient is unwilling or unable to notify the DVLA, the General Medical Council offers clear guidance of when doctors should report any concerns and the DVLA treats such notifications as a high priority. Similar guidance is available to opticians.

■ Electric Vehicles

Andrew Griffith:

[\[17273\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make it her policy to not include hybrid cars in the 2030 phase-out of vehicles with internal combustion engines.

Lilian Greenwood:

The commitment to restore the 2030 phase-out date for new cars with internal combustion engines has always meant that some hybrids will be allowed until 2035, when all new cars will be required to be zero emission. Further details will be set out in the upcoming consultation.

■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points**Neil Duncan-Jordan:** [\[17496\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of ensuring future housing developments provide electronic vehicle charging facilities for residents.

Lilian Greenwood:

Since June 2022, Part S of Schedule 1 to the Building Regulations 2010 requires new residential properties with associated parking to have access to electric vehicle chargepoints.

■ Electric Vehicles: Grants**Kevin Hollinrake:** [\[17125\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much funding from the Spring Budget 2022 for the purchase of new electric vans via the plug-in vehicle grant remains available.

Lilian Greenwood:

Over the last two financial years since Spring 2022, the Plug in Van Grant has supported the purchase over 30,000 zero emission vans.

The Government continues to recognise the importance of grants, providing £120 million for next financial year to incentivise the uptake of zero emission vans and wheelchair accessible electric vehicles. All grants remain under review to ensure best value for money for the taxpayer.

■ Gatwick Airport: Noise**Mike Martin:** [\[17396\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 28 November 2024 to Question 15348 on Gatwick Airport: Noise, what measures the Aviation Night Noise Effects study will use to investigate the potential impact of flight noise on children's (a) sleep quality and (b) health and development.

Mike Kane:

The Aviation Night Noise Effects study has been developed to examine the relationship between exposure to night-time aviation noise and sleep disturbance and annoyance in adults and has not been designed to investigate effects on children.

■ Motor Insurance: Fees and Charges**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhési:** [\[17200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has made an assessment of the adequacy of the affordability of insurance for (a) young and (b) all drivers.

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.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[17201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has had discussions with representatives of the insurance industry on (a) increases in car insurance costs and (b) steps being taken by (i) the Government and (ii) insurers to reduce those costs.

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.

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■ **Motor Vehicles: Carbon Emissions**

Alex Mayer:

[\[17343\]](#)

What discussions she has had with car manufacturers on progress towards achieving the zero emission vehicle mandate for cars by 2030.

Lilian Greenwood:

My Ministerial colleagues across Government and I meet regularly with vehicle manufacturers to discuss a wide range of issues including the transition to zero emission vehicles. We are working closely with the sector to ensure that British industry benefits from the opportunities of net zero, and a consultation on the

Government's proposals for restoring the phase out dates for new cars that rely purely on internal combustion engines will be published in due course.

■ Motor Vehicles: Theft

Andrew Griffith: [\[17269\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many thefts of motor vehicle from Network Rail owned car parks there were in each of the last five years; and how many of these resulted in a criminal prosecution.

Simon Lightwood:

According to British Transport Police (BTP) data, there have been 68 thefts of motor vehicles at the 20 Network Rail managed stations between January 2020 and up to and including the 2nd December 2024. Of these, 5 have resulted in criminal prosecution.

YEAR	BTP RECORDED NUMBER OF THEFT OF MOTOR VEHICLE OFFENCES	RECORDED CRIME THAT LED TO PROSECUTION AT COURT (CORRECT AS OF 03/12/2024)
2020	7	1
2021	7	1
2022	20	2
2023	17	0
2024 (up to 02/12/2024 only)	17	1

During 2020 and 2021 passenger numbers were reduced due to the Covid-19 pandemic, so train station car parks were also likely less occupied during this time.

■ Motorways: ICT

Mr Gregory Campbell: [\[17077\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of stopped vehicle detection technology on motorways.

Lilian Greenwood:

We recognise the importance of technology working to support our road users and that is why the Department commissioned the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) to undertake an independent review of the effectiveness of technology on smart motorways, including stopped vehicle detection (SVD) technology.

In 2023 the ORR confirmed that SVD is meeting performance requirements for detection rate, detection time, and false detection. The ORR will continue to monitor stopped vehicle detection performance closely and will report next in Spring 2025.

■ Railways: East of England

Charlotte Cane: [\[16661\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when she plans to decide whether her Department will provide funding for the Ely area capacity enhancement scheme.

Simon Lightwood:

This government is committed to delivering economic growth, and projects such as the Ely Area Capacity Enhancement have the potential to contribute to this. While the previous government made public statements of support for the project, no funding was provided to allow it to progress.

The Chancellor has been clear about the state of the nation's finances and has launched a multi-year Spending Review. Decisions and timescales about individual projects will be informed by the review process and confirmed in due course.

■ Railways: North of England

Sarah Hall: [\[16697\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to deliver Northern Powerhouse Rail; and what her planned timetable is to announce further information.

Lilian Greenwood:

Transport is an essential part of our mission to rebuild Britain, and the Government is committed to improving rail connectivity across the North. As announced in the Budget, the Government is progressing planning and design works to support future delivery of our plans for rail connectivity in the North and will set out further details in due course.

■ Roads: Repairs and Maintenance

Rachel Gilmour: [\[17404\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to paragraph 3.19 of the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 October, if she will allocate funding to rebuild the B3191 between Watchet and Blue Anchor.

Lilian Greenwood:

At the Budget on 30 October, the Chancellor announced £1.6 billion of capital funding for English local highway authorities for highway maintenance for the 2025/26 financial year, an increase of £500 million or nearly 50% compared to the current financial year.

Funding allocations for individual local highway authorities for 2025/26, including Somerset Council, will be confirmed in due course. It is entirely a matter for Somerset Council how it spends this highway maintenance funding based on local needs, priorities, and circumstances.

■ Roads: Safety**Luke Taylor:**[\[17036\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to improve road safety for people (a) walking, (b) wheeling and (c) cycling.

Lilian Greenwood:

The safety of our roads is an absolute priority for this Government.

The Highway Code was updated in 2022 to improve road safety for cyclists and pedestrians, by strengthening pedestrian priority on pavements and at crossings and introducing the Hierarchy of Road Users, which places those road users most at risk in the event of a collision, at the top of the hierarchy.

The Highway Code makes it clear that those in charge of vehicles that can cause the greatest harm in the event of a collision bear the greatest responsibility to reduce the danger they pose to others and highlights the need to take care and be particularly aware of young cyclists and pedestrians.

Dr Al Pinkerton:[\[17051\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of measures to (a) educate drivers on sharing roads with cyclists and (b) foster a safe environment for all road users.

Lilian Greenwood:

In January 2022, The Highway Code was updated to improve road safety for people walking, cycling and riding horses. The changes aim to initiate a positive shift in road user behaviour by making road users aware of their responsibility to use roads safely and reduce the danger they may pose to others. The changes included the introduction of a "Hierarchy of Road Users", which places those road users most at risk in the event of a collision at the top of the hierarchy.

Communications to raise awareness of the changes were launched via a factual awareness raising campaign in 2022, alerting road users to the changes as they came into effect. This was followed by broader behaviour change campaigns in the summers of 2022 and 2023, to help embed the changes and encourage understanding and uptake of the guidance. Over £2.4million has been spent on media across the campaign, utilising channels such as radio, digital audio, video on demand and social media advertising.

Campaign outcomes include 86% of road users having heard of the changes by September 2023, and 81% of drivers claiming to leave a gap of 1.5m when passing a cyclist all or most of the time.

We will continue to promote The Highway Code changes on THINK! and DfT social media channels and via our partner organisations.

■ Rolling Stock

Grahame Morris: [16508]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to Answer of 11 November 2024 to Question12278 on Rolling Stock, whether a rolling stock strategy will be published before the establishment of Great British Railways.

Simon Lightwood:

The Department for Transport is developing a Rolling Stock Strategy. This will align with the wider objectives of the industry in ending the current variability in production rates and ensuring a stable pipeline of work for the rolling stock supply chain.

Once established, Great British Railways will take the strategy forward providing a long-term approach to future rolling stock needs and helping to secure better value from the private rolling stock market.

■ Thameslink Line: Bedford

Blake Stephenson: [17331]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what information her Department holds on the number of delayed services on the Bedford Line in (a) Q3 and (b) Q4 2024.

Simon Lightwood:

Information relating to the number of delayed services on the Bedford line is not held by the department. The Office of Rail and Road (ORR) publishes quarterly statistics on punctuality and reliability for passenger trains in Great Britain at:

<https://dataportal.orr.gov.uk/statistics/performance/passenger-rail-performance/>.

Table 3133 shows Train punctuality at recorded station stops by operator in Great Britain, quarterly from April 2014 to June 2024. The operators servicing the Bedford line are Govia Thameslink Railway and the East Midlands Railway.

Ministers have been clear that rail services have been failing passengers.

Cancellations are at a ten-year high and punctuality is inconsistent across the network. We need to improve services for passengers and deliver better value for money for the taxpayer.

Ministers continue to meet with the Managing Directors of the worst performing TOCs and their Network Rail counterparts, to address poor performance and demand immediate action to raise standards.

TREASURY

■ Agriculture: Inheritance Tax

Wendy Morton: [16504]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to Qs 258-259 of the oral evidence given by the Chancellor of the Exchequer to the Treasury Select Committee on Wednesday 6 November 2024, whether the figures quoted in her answers related only to

Agricultural Property Relief and did not include Business property Relief claimed by farmers for the same period.

Wendy Morton:

[16505]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to Qs 258-259 of the oral evidence given by the Chancellor of the Exchequer to the Treasury Select Committee on Wednesday 6 November 2024, what value of Business Property Relief was claimed on farmer's estates for financial year 2021-22.

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. This includes information on claims at death in 2021 to 2022 referenced by the Chancellor at the Treasury Select Committee on 6 November 2024.

The Chancellor wrote to the Treasury Select Committee on 15 November 2024, detailing the distribution of claims at death for agricultural property relief with values of business property relief claims added, where an estate has also claimed business property relief. This letter has been published at

<https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/45691/documents/226235/default/>.

Charlie Dewhirst:

[16833]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of mitigations from proposed changes to (a) Agricultural Property Relief and (b) Business Property Relief for farmers over 70 years old.

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 in 2026-27 by the changes to APR and BPR, with around half of those being claims that involve AIM shares. Almost three-quarters of estates claiming agricultural property relief (or those claiming agricultural property relief and business property relief together) are expected to be unaffected by these reforms.

■ Arden Strategies

Charlie Dewhirst:

[16606]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will list each of the business attendees who accompanied Arden Strategies at her Department's roundtable on 17 September 2024.

James Murray:

The Government engaged with a number of different businesses and trade bodies in the run up to the International Investment Summit to help coordinate meetings with key investors as part of the usual course of business. It also has an ongoing business engagement programme run by officials. All external meetings between senior officials at Permanent Secretary and Director General are published on gov.uk in the usual way as part of the department's quarterly transparency return.

■ **Bicycles: VAT****Dr Al Pinkerton:**[\[16648\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact on bicycle sales of the removal of VAT on (a) pedal and (b) electric bicycle.

James Murray:

VAT is a broad-based tax on consumption, and the 20 per cent standard rate applies to most goods and services. Tax breaks reduce the revenue available for vital public services and must represent value for money for the taxpayer.

One of the key considerations when assessing a new VAT relief is whether the cost saving is likely to be passed on to consumers. Evidence suggests that businesses only partially pass on any savings from lower VAT rates. The Government has no current plans to zero-rate VAT on pedal and electric bicycles, but keeps all taxes under review.

■ **Discretionary Trusts: Inheritance Tax****Mr Richard Holden:**[\[16520\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of changes made to agricultural property relief and business property relief at the Autumn Budget 2024 on discretionary trusts.

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 in 2026-27 by the changes to APR and BPR, with around half of those being claims that involve AIM shares. Almost three-quarters of estates claiming agricultural property relief (or those claiming agricultural property relief and business property relief together) 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.

■ Domicil: Taxation

Charlie Dewhirst:

[16832]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the policy paper entitled Tax changes for non-UK domiciled individuals, published on 30 October 2024, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of changes to the non-domiciled tax regime on the UK's global competitiveness as a financial hub.

James Murray:

The Government is committed to improving the UK's competitiveness internationally and securing economic growth. This reform has been specifically designed to make the UK competitive with a modern, simple tax regime that is also fair. It establishes a tax regime for new residents, which is more attractive to new arrivals than the current rules.

The Government published a Tax Information and Impact Note for this policy on 30 October. This can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tax-changes-for-non-uk-domiciled-individuals/reforming-the-taxation-of-non-uk-domiciled-individuals>.

■ Employers' Contributions

Helen Whately:

[16740]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of the increase in employers' National Insurance contributions announced the Autumn Budget 2024 on jobs.

James Murray:

The Office for Budget Responsibility's October 2024 Economic and Fiscal Outlook expects that the Employer National Insurance Contributions package will lead to a reduction in the participation rate by 0.1 per cent from 2025-26 onwards. Overall, once the impact of all the Budget measures are taken into consideration, the OBR expect the employment level to increase from 33.1 million in 2024 to 34.3 million in 2029.

■ Employers' Contributions: Public Sector

Charlie Dewhirst:

[16601]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 18 November 2024 to Question 13512 on Employers' Contributions: Public Sector, if she will publish a list of each public body within the public sector boundary for the purpose of compensation for the National Insurance rise in the Autumn Budget 2024.

Darren Jones:

The Government will provide support for departments and other public sector employers for additional Employer National Insurance Contributions costs only. This funding will be allocated to departments, with the Barnett formula applying in the usual way.

This is in line with the approach taken under the previous Government's Health and Social Care Levy.

The Government plans to update Parliament on allocations by department in the usual way as soon as possible.

■ **Employers' Contributions: Voluntary Organisations**

Dan Carden:

[\[16788\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of proposed changes to employer National Insurance contributions on the voluntary drug and alcohol treatment sector.

James Murray:

A Tax Information and Impact Note that covers the employer NICs changes was published by HMRC on 13 November and can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/changes-to-the-class-1-national-insurance-contributions-secondary-threshold-the-secondary-class-1-national-insurance-contributions-rate-and-the-empl/changes-to-the-class-1-national-insurance-contributions-secondary-threshold-the-secondary-class-1-national-insurance-contributions-rate-and-the-empl> .

The Government has protected the smallest businesses from the impact of the increase to Employer National Insurance by increasing the Employment Allowance from £5,000 to £10,500, which means that 865,000 employers will pay no NICs at all next year, more than half of employers will see no change or will gain overall from this package, and all eligible employers will be able to employ up to four full-time workers on the National Living Wage and pay no employer NICs.

■ **Employment**

Helen Whately:

[\[16739\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of the Autumn Budget 2024 on jobs.

James Murray:

The Office for Budget Responsibility's October 2024 forecast, which takes into account impacts from policy measures announced in the Budget, expects the employment level to increase from 33.1 million in 2024 to 34.3 million in 2029.

■ **Fire and Rescue Services: Employers' Contributions**

Sir Julian Lewis:

[\[17064\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for what reason the Fire and Rescue Service is not receiving the exemption from the rise in National Insurance contributions as the other Emergency Services.

James Murray:

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

The Government will provide support for public sector employers, including fire and rescue authorities, for the additional costs of Employer National Insurance Contributions. This is in line with the approach taken under the previous government's Health and Social Care Levy. Further details will be set out in due course.

■ **Ian Corfield****Charlie Dewhirst:**[\[16603\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether Ian Corfield has left his role at her Department following the International Investment Summit in October 2024.

James Murray:

Ian Corfield was appointed on a short-term basis to carry out urgent work in support of the government's International Investment Summit on 14 October. He has now left the department, as planned.

■ **Inheritance Tax: Tax Avoidance****Mr Richard Holden:**[\[17257\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of changes in liability for inheritance tax on levels of tax avoidance.

James Murray:

At Autumn Budget 2024, the Government took a number of difficult but necessary decisions on tax, welfare, and spending to restore economic stability, fix the public finances, and support public services. These were tough decisions given the situation we inherited from the previous administration, but the Government has done so in a way that makes the tax system fairer and more sustainable.

These decisions included reforming the inheritance tax rules on pensions, agricultural property relief, and business property relief.

The Government published a technical consultation on the changes to inheritance tax rules for pension funds and death benefits at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/inheritance-tax-on-pensions-liability-reporting-and-payment>.

The Government also 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.

In accordance with standard practice, a tax information and impact note will be published alongside the draft legislation before the relevant Finance Bill.

■ Kamella Hudson**Charlie Dewhirst:** [\[16602\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many meetings Kamella Hudson attended with her Department since 5 July 2024.

James Murray:

All meetings held by Ministers are published on a quarterly basis on gov.uk. Any meetings held between July and September will be published in late December here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmt-ministers-meetings-hospitality-gifts-and-overseas-travel>

■ Private Education: Business Rates**Kevin Hollinrake:** [\[16747\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 9 September 2024 to Question 2820 on Private Education: Business Rates, whether a (a) sports playing field and (b) playground is a positive material consideration by the Valuation Office Agency when calculating the rateable value of an independent school for business rates.

James Murray:

All intrinsic physical characteristics of the school are taken into consideration, and both sports playing fields and playgrounds are material considerations which positively impact the calculated rateable value.

■ Public Houses: Business Rates and Employers' Contributions**Kevin Hollinrake:** [\[16486\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of proposed changes to (a) employer National Insurance contributions and (b) business rate relief on community pubs.

James Murray:

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 employers which is why we have more than doubled the Employment Allowance to £10,500, meaning more than half of businesses with NICs liabilities either gain or see no change next year.

A Tax Information and Impact Note that covers the employer NICs changes was published by HMRC on 13 November and can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/changes-to-the-class-1-national-insurance-contributions-secondary-threshold-the-secondary-class-1-national-insurance-contributions-rate-and-the-empl/changes-to-the-class-1-national-insurance-contributions-secondary-threshold-the-secondary-class-1-national-insurance-contributions-rate-and-the-empl>

Without any Government intervention, Retail, Hospitality and Leisure (RHL) business rates relief would have ended entirely in April 2025, creating a cliff-edge for businesses. Instead, the Government has decided to offer a 40 per cent discount to RHL properties up to a cash cap of £110,0000 per business in 2025-26 and frozen the small business multiplier.

By tapering RHL relief to 40%, rather than removing it entirely, the Government has saved the average pub, with a rateable value (RV) of £16,800, over £3,300 in 2025.

The Chancellor also announced a duty cut on qualifying draught products – approximately 60% of the alcoholic drinks sold in pubs. This represents an overall reduction in duty bills of over £85m a year and is equivalent to a 1p duty reduction on a typical pint. This reduction increased the relief available on draught products to 13.9%.

■ Rachel Reeves: Members' Staff

Charlie Dewhirst:

[\[16605\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Register Of Interests Of Members' Secretaries And Research Assistants, published on 11 October 2024, whether Nicholas Garland (a) attends meetings in her Department and (b) has provided policy advice in relation to her Ministerial responsibilities.

James Murray:

Nicholas Garland is not a Special Adviser to the Chancellor or a Civil Servant and therefore does not attend meetings or provide policy advice to the Chancellor in this capacity.

■ Self-assessment: Fines

Sarah Hall:

[\[16694\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many penalties were issued for non-submission of self-assessment tax returns in each of the last five years.

James Murray:

Late filing penalties are issued when a taxpayer fails to file an Income Tax Self Assessment (ITSA) return on or before the filing date (October 31 for paper, January 31 online). HMRC requires the information provided in a tax return to establish tax liability and to effectively administer the tax system. If a return is filed late, HMRC will issue a penalty. Penalties encourage taxpayers to file on time and support the collection of tax.

Currently, late filing penalties for self assessment are:

- a fixed penalty if the initial filing deadline is missed
- daily penalties (issued to a 90 day maximum) once three months has passed following the filing deadline

- a fixed or tax geared penalty (whichever is higher) six months following the filing deadline
- a fixed or tax geared penalty (whichever is higher) twelve months following the filing deadline

Below is the late filing penalty data for tax years 2018/19-2022/23, for all of the late filing penalties listed above.

VOLUME OF ALL ITSA LATE FILING PENALTIES RAISED

Tax year*	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23***
Number of Late Filing Penalties raised**	2,200,000	3,100,000	3,300,000	3,000,000	2,400,000

* penalties issued in respect of this tax year e.g. penalties for the 2022/23 tax year are issued after the January 2024 filing deadline ** total number of penalties issued, rounded to the nearest 100,000. Some customers may receive multiple late filing penalties in a year the longer their return is outstanding. *** complete data is not yet available for penalties issued in respect of the 2022/23 tax year

This data includes penalties for returns that have been submitted late to HMRC, as well as returns which have not yet been submitted to HMRC. It also reflects changes in the size or makeup of the Self-Assessment population from year to year.

■ Small Businesses: Employment

Dame Harriett Baldwin:

[\[17091\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the Autumn Budget 2024 on the (a) number of family businesses and (b) employment levels within those businesses.

James Murray:

The Government inherited a difficult fiscal situation and so we are asking businesses to contribute to fixing the foundations and our public services. As part of the decisions made at Budget, the Government assessed the impact of measures introduced on businesses, including by size of business.

The Government has protected the smallest businesses from the impact of the increase to Employer National Insurance by increasing the Employment Allowance from £5,000 to £10,500.

The Government also announced changes to inheritance tax, including reforms to business property relief (BPR). The Government has protected smaller family businesses from BPR changes, providing a very significant level of relief with the first £1 million of business assets continuing to receive 100% relief and then 50%

thereafter. In 2021-22, the median value of assets qualifying for business property relief was £200,000, and 87 per cent of estates claimed for business property below £1 million.

The Office for Budget Responsibility's October 2024 forecast, which takes into account impacts from policy measures announced in the Budget, expects the employment level to increase from 33.1 million in 2024 to 34.3 million in 2029.

■ Treasury: Impact Assessments

Charlie Dewhirst:

[16600]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will place in the House of Commons Library a copy of each (a) equality assessment and (b) environmental principles assessment released by her Department under the (i) Freedom of Information Act 2000 and (ii) Environmental Information Regulations since 4 July 2024, redacting the name of individual applicants.

James Murray:

Since 4 July 2024, HM Treasury has released two impact assessments in response to Freedom of Information requests.

The first, on targeting the Winter Fuel Allowance is available publicly on GOV.UK at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/responses-to-freedom-of-information-requests-on-equality-impact-assessments-produced-for-targeting-winter-fuel-payment>.

The second, on removing the temporary £20-per-week uplift for Universal Credit during the Covid-19 pandemic March 2020 has been provided to the House of Lords library.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ Race Equality Unit: Staff

Sir John Hayes:

[16915]

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, how many full time equivalent staff are employed by the Race Equality Unit.

Anneliese Dodds:

There is currently a total of 7 full time equivalent staff within the Race Equality Unit.

■ Sexual Harassment: Surveys

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[17209]

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, whether she plans to publish a sexual harassment survey.

Anneliese Dodds:

The Office for Equality and Opportunity plans to strengthen protections against workplace sexual harassment through the Employment Rights Bill. These measures intend to amend the Equality Act 2010 to: • require employers to take “all reasonable steps” to prevent sexual harassment of their employees; • introduce an obligation on employers not to permit the harassment of their employees by third parties, and; • enable regulations to specify steps that are to be regarded as “reasonable”, to determine whether an employer has taken all reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment.

Prevalence across a range of Violence Against Women and Girls offences, including sexual harassment, is currently measured through the Crime Survey for England and Wales which is run continuously throughout each financial year by the Office for National Statistics, with data published quarterly.

The Government is continuing its work to halve Violence Against Women and Girls in a decade.

WORK AND PENSIONS**■ Autism Employment Review****Helen Whately:**[\[16743\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the implications for her Department’s policies of the recommendations in the Buckland Review of Autism Employment.

Alison McGovern:

We welcome the independent Buckland Review focused specifically on autism and employment. We intend to build on this to meet our commitment to promoting awareness of all forms of neurodiversity in the workplace. We are gathering expert evidence on how best to improve employment for all neurodivergent people, including considering the Buckland Review’s findings.

Our assessment will also be informed by the independent employer review announced in the Get Britain Working White Paper. The review will consider what more can be done to enable employers to promote healthy and inclusive workplaces, recruit and retain disabled employees or employees with a health condition, and support people to stay in or return to work from periods of absence.

■ Connect to Work**Helen Whately:**[\[17192\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, for what reason the Connect to Work programme will be implemented in 2025, in the context of its predecessor programme being planned for 2024; and if she will make an estimate of the potential

impact of the timing of this rollout on the number of people who will be supported into work by the end of 2025.

Alison McGovern:

As announced in the [Get Britain Working White Paper - GOV.UK](#) published 26 November 2024, the new voluntary, locally led, supported employment programme Connect to Work will be the first programme under the Government's new Get Britain Working Strategy. Whilst Connect to Work will use the funding that was initially reserved for the Universal Support Programme, Connect to Work has been co-designed with Local Authorities and has flexibility to meet local needs at its core.

The Connect to Work grant guidance, also published on Gov.uk on 26 November [Connect to Work - GOV.UK](#), invites areas to develop a delivery plan which sets out the design of their own local Connect to Work programmes, working within the national guidance. We do not know what volumes will be delivered by local areas until Delivery Plans are received. With a phased rollout led by Local Authorities' own timetables. When the General Election was called, there were no plans in place to support delivery in 2024. We have extended the funding for Individual Placement and Support in Primary Care to sustain delivery of this locally led programme while areas develop their Connect to Work plans.

■ **Department for Work and Pensions: Aviation**

Rupert Lowe:

[\[16881\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many international (a) air miles and (b) flights have been completed by (i) Ministers and (ii) officials in their Department since 5 July 2024.

Andrew Western:

Data on minister's overseas travel and on senior civil servant's business expenses is published on a quarterly basis. This can be found here: [DWP ministerial gifts, hospitality, travel and meetings - GOV.UK](#) and here: [DWP senior officials' business expenses, hospitality and meetings - GOV.UK](#)

■ **Department for Work and Pensions: Freedom of Information**

Rupert Lowe:

[\[16633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will publish her Department's response to FOI2024/88818.

Andrew Western:

As the Freedom of Information (FOI) request, FOI2024/88818, was submitted via WhatDoTheyKnow.com (WDTK), the FOI is already publicly available for anyone to access.

The FOI can be accessed on WDTK via the following link:

[Universal Credit access. Refugees \(2023\) - a Freedom of Information request to Department for Work and Pensions - WhatDoTheyKnow](#)

■ **Department for Work and Pensions: Software**

Helen Whately:

[\[17012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Get Britain Working White Paper, published on 26 November 2024, what differences there are between DWP ASK and the A-cubed tool.

Andrew Western:

A-cubed was a proof-of-concept project built to test the feasibility of utilising generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) to assist DWP Work Coaches in finding Universal Credit guidance.

After the successful completion of the proof-of-concept project, the Department created a tool to test the capability further, and to roll it out following completion of successful testing. DWP Ask is the tool that has been developed, incorporating lessons from A-cubed. The A-cubed prototype has been discontinued, which is standard practice for proof-of-concepts.

■ **Department for Work and Pensions: Staff**

Rupert Lowe:

[\[17378\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many of her Department's staff have transferred from Work Coach roles to roles assisting irregular migrants with benefits claims.

Andrew Western:

Irregular migrants cannot access public funds benefits. To access public funds benefits, individuals are required to hold an immigration status which does not prevent them from accessing public funds, which irregular migrants will not hold.

Since irregular migrants do not have access to benefits, DWP staff are unable to support irregular migrants with benefit claims.

■ **Employment Rights Bill**

Helen Whately:

[\[16742\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has had discussions with the Secretary of State for Business and Trade on the potential impact of the Employment Rights Bill on the labour market.

Alison McGovern:

The Secretary of State, and ministers, regularly meet with Cabinet and ministerial colleagues, regarding a range of matters.

Our ambitions are to reverse the trend of inactivity, and to raise both productivity and living standards whilst improving the quality of work. To help achieve this, we have set a long-term ambition to achieve an 80% employment rate, demonstrating our

commitment to bringing those furthest away from the labour market into it, increasing local labour supply.

Achieving our ambitions requires a cross-government approach, which is why the Employment Rights Bill will make work more secure, boost wages, and help people thrive by supporting them into and to get on in work.

■ Employment Schemes: Finance

Helen Whately:

[\[17010\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what new funding has been provided for the Get Britain Working Fund.

Alison McGovern:

To help us deliver and build on labour market reforms to Get Britain Working, £240 million was announced in the recent budget. Measures will include:

- £45m for Youth Guarantee Trailblazers so that all young people in England, aged 18-21, can access quality training and education opportunities or help to find work.
- £55m for the development of the new public employment and careers service, which will be open to everyone, transforming our ability to support people into and on at work.
- £125m for Trailblazers to tackle economic inactivity through increased engagement and tailored approaches in England and Wales.
- And £15m to support local areas in England to go further, developing their own Get Britain Working Plans.

■ Employment Schemes: Public Consultation

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[16823\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department plans to consult organisations led by disabled people on the reforms set out in the Get Britain Working White Paper.

Alison McGovern:

The Government is committed to working in partnership with disabled people and the organisations that represent them.

Following on from the publication of the Get Britain Working White Paper, we will establish a disability panel to ensure that disabled people's views and voices are at the heart of the design and delivery of our employment reforms. We will carry out in-depth consultations to seek input and expertise from a wide range of stakeholders including disabled people, community groups and employers.

■ Employment: Devolution

Helen Whately:

[\[17011\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to ensure that funding for supported employment provision in integrated settlements for devolved authorities is spent in line with the delivery plans for that funding.

Alison McGovern:

Government has committed to give areas the tools and powers they need to deliver growth, which includes offering integrated settlements. Integrated settlements will give Mayoral Combined Authorities who have shown exemplary management of public money the ability to plan long-term and make the strategic policy decisions necessary to deliver growth. The integrated settlement will be monitored and governed using a single accountability framework and a single outcomes framework to ensure funding included in the settlement can be accounted for. Delivery will be monitored via a programme board which will track outcomes negotiated between Authorities and the Government.

Local outcome delivery will be the responsibility of the MCAs. The oversight of the approach to securing value for money and upholding governance structures is the responsibility of the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government. The Department for Work and Pensions are responsible for signing off on the outcomes and targets for Connect to Work funding, as well as signing off mitigations where performance expectations are not met.

■ Pension Credit

Steve Darling:

[\[16975\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of pension credit applicants were waiting for their application to be processed in the period between (a) 29 July 2024 and 17 November 2024, (b) 1 April 2024 and 28 July 2024 and (c) 1 August 2023 and 19 November 2023.

Emma Reynolds:

We have provided outstanding Pension Credit claims at the date nearest to the date requested.

(a) Outstanding PC claims as at end of w/c 11th November 2024 was 91,200 (including Unregistered and Advanced claims)

(b) Outstanding PC claims as at end of w/c 22nd July 2024 was 34,600 (including Unregistered and Advanced claims)

(c) Outstanding PC claims as at end of w/c 13th November 2023 was 25,000 (including Unregistered and Advanced claims)

We are deploying around 500 additional staff to manage the increase in volumes.

Please note, the claims outstanding figures do not include Advanced claims. This data is sourced from the Pension Credit system and for internal departmental use

only. As such, they have not been quality assured to the same extent as Official Statistics.

Steve Darling: [16977]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people her Department estimates are eligible for but not claiming pension credit in each constituency.

Emma Reynolds:

Estimates for pensioner households who are eligible for but not receiving Pension Credit in 2022/23 can be found at: [Income-related benefits: estimates of take-up: financial year ending 2023 - GOV.UK](#).

We do not hold the information requested at constituency level.

Steve Darling: [16978]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of claims to pension credit have been rejected by constituency since 29 July 2024.

Emma Reynolds:

On 28 November 2024 we published national statistics for claims that were not awarded/rejected, up to 17 November 2024. [Pension Credit applications and awards: November 2024 - GOV.UK](#)

We do not hold the information requested at a constituency level.

Steve Darling: [16979]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will publish a breakdown of reasons why pension credit applications have been rejected (a) nationally and (b) by constituency.

Emma Reynolds:

We do not hold information in our data sources why Pension Credit applications are not awarded, either nationally or by constituency.

■ Pension Credit: Social Security Benefits

Mr Gregory Campbell: [17079]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what benefits would a successful applicant for Pension Credit potentially be eligible for in addition to the Winter Fuel Payment.

Emma Reynolds:

In addition to the Winter Fuel Payment, Pension Credit provides access to a number of other benefits and support including:

- o help with rent via Housing Benefit;
- o a Council Tax reduction;
- o Cold Weather Payments and other help from the Social Fund including help with funeral costs;

- o help with NHS dental treatment, glasses and transport costs;
- o help with heating costs through the Warm Home Discount Scheme; and
- o a free TV licence for those over 75.

We are urging pensioners to apply for Pension Credit by 21 December 2024, which is the latest date for making a successful backdated claim for Pension Credit in order to receive a Winter Fuel Payment (or the Pension Age Winter Heating Payment in Scotland).

Pension Credit in Northern Ireland is the responsibility of the Department for Communities who are undertaking their own take-up activities targeting pensioners.

■ Self-employed: Adoption

Lisa Smart: [\[17014\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make it her policy to (a) extend Statutory Adoption Pay to self-employed individuals and (b) introduce an equivalent benefit that provides guaranteed financial support to self-employed individuals.

Andrew Western:

Government very much values people who come forward to take on the challenging but rewarding role of being an adoptive parent. That is why there is provision for Local Authorities to make discretionary payments, equivalent to Maternity Allowance, to self-employed adopters who do not qualify for Statutory Adoption Pay, where they satisfy the relevant criteria. This payment is means-tested and ensures that resources are targeted at those adopters who need it most, as part of a package of post-adoption support.

Prospective adopters and the child or children that they intend to adopt are also entitled to an assessment of their family's needs. This includes a whole host of support including discretionary means-tested financial support, advice, information and counselling, and support services.

Depending on individual circumstances, additional financial support, such as Universal Credit and Child Benefit, as well as the Sure Start Maternity Grant (a lump sum payment of £500) may also be available to new parents.

■ Social Security Benefits

James McMurdock: [\[16613\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of the Fraud, Error and Debt Bill on the (a) mental health and (b) wellbeing of (i) benefit claimants with (A) disabilities and (B) long-term illnesses and (ii) other benefit claimants.

Andrew Western:

Safeguarding vulnerable claimants is always a priority. All the powers included in the Fraud, Error and Debt Bill will include strong safeguards to ensure they are only used

appropriately and proportionately – including new independent oversight and reporting mechanisms. The Bill will be clearly defined in its scope and there will be clear limitations for the use of all the powers we are introducing. DWP staff will receive training on the use of any new powers. We will rely on Codes of Practice where they already exist and, where they do not, we will consult on and produce new Codes of Practice to provide further reassurance on the safe use of the powers.

■ Social Security Benefits: Bank Services

James McMurdock: [\[16610\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department plans to take to ensure that her proposed policy of accessing benefit claimants' bank accounts does not disproportionately impact (a) people with disabilities and (b) other vulnerable groups.

Andrew Western:

The Eligibility Verification measure will not give DWP access to any bank accounts, nor any information on how claimants spend their money. The proposed new power instead helps verify benefit eligibility, using very limited information from banks and other financial institutions.

DWP has existing safeguards in place to support our most vulnerable claimants and under the Public Sector Equality Duty, the impacts of this policy will continue to be monitored to mitigate any potential unintended, negative consequences.

■ Social Security Benefits: Fraud

Rupert Lowe: [\[16681\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what proportion of reported (a) error and (b) fraud has not been investigated for each of the last five years.

Andrew Western:

The Department does not hold the data requested.

■ Social Security Benefits: Veterans

Alex Easton: [\[16635\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she will make an assessment of the potential impact of classifying military compensation as income in means tested benefits assessments on veterans; and if she will take steps to ensure that military compensation is exempt from means testing in line with the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant.

Shivani Raja: [\[16657\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of exempting Armed Forces personnel in receipt of Government compensation from means-tested benefits.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The receipt of War Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS) awards is already fully ignored when calculating eligibility for Universal Credit.

The first £10 per week of a War Pension or AFCS award is disregarded in: income-related Employment and Support allowance; income-based Jobseeker's Allowance; and Income Support. Armed Forces Independence Payments are fully disregarded in these benefits and can also allow the recipient to qualify for an additional disability amount. This contrasts with a benefit like Industrial Injuries Disablement benefit where there is no weekly disregard. Furthermore, these are legacy benefits, in the process of being replaced by Universal Credit, in which War Pensions and AFCS are ignored.

By default, the first £10 per week of a War Pension or Armed Forces Compensation Scheme is disregarded in Housing Benefit. Furthermore, a discretionary scheme allows local authorities to fully disregard them.

In relation to Pension Credit, the first £10 of any War Pension payments or AFCS award made due to injury or disablement is disregarded. Four additions to the War Disablement Pension are completely disregarded: Constant Attendance Allowance; Mobility Supplement; Severe Disablement Occupational Allowance; and dependency increases for anyone other than the applicant or her/his partner.

War Pensions and AFCS awards are a qualifying income for the Savings Credit element of Pension Credit, which is available to those who reached State Pension age before April 2016. Armed Forces Independence Payments are fully disregarded in Pension Credit and can also allow the recipient to qualify for an additional disability amount. There are no plans to change the ways in which War Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS) awards interact with means tested benefits.

Social security in Northern Ireland is a transferred matter. The Department for Communities is responsible for how compensation payments are treated in means-tested benefits in Northern Ireland.

■ State Retirement Pensions: Women**Ruth Jones:**[\[17227\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman's report on women's State Pension age changes, published on 21 March 2024, if she will publish the related departmental submissions to the Ombudsman.

Emma Reynolds:

We will not publish the Departmental submissions to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman.

The Parliamentary and Health Ombudsman's investigations are conducted in private as set out in section 7(2) of the Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1967.

Ruth Jones:

[\[17228\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman's report on women's State Pension age changes, published on 21 March 2024, if she will publish related (a) impact assessments and (b) financial modelling for a compensation scheme.

Emma Reynolds:

We will consider what to publish when we announce our decision on the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman's report.

■ WorkWell

Helen Whately:

[\[16745\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she plans to expand the WorkWell pilot.

Alison McGovern:

WorkWell is a pilot that went live from October and will run in 15 areas across England, providing low intensity holistic support for health-related barriers to employment, and a single joined up gateway to existing local work and health service provision.

Pilots will run until March 2026 and will generate evidence to support future policy making. Decisions about the future direction of the work, health and skills agenda will be set out at the multi-year spending review in 2025, building on the ambitions set out in the Get Britain Working white paper.

Helen Whately:

[\[16969\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to her Department's press releases entitled (a) Good work is good for health, published on 6 November 2024 and (b) New £64 million plan to help people stay in work, published on 7 May 2024, for what reason there is a difference in the number of people supported through WorkWell pilots in each release.

Alison McGovern:

The original WorkWell funding settlement supported *up to* 59k participants based on unit cost. As part of our grant competition, and as outlined in our Prospectus, local systems were required to bid for the volume of participants they expected to support, based on population need and what was deliverable within the pilot's timeframe.

The total volumes from our 15 successful bids was closer to 56k participants. We will continue to monitor the delivery of local areas throughout the pilot.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Holiday Accommodation: Registration

Rachel Blake:

[\[15319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 18 November 2024 to Question 13348 on Private Rented Housing: Rents, what her planned timetable is for introducing a registration scheme for short-term lets; and whether planning permission and licensing will have to have been secured for properties to be listed on the scheme.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 29 November 2024. The correct answer should have been:

Chris Bryant:

Parliament legislated for a registration scheme for short-term lets in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023, and we are committed to introducing such a scheme as soon as possible. ~~We will be consulting on this shortly,~~ **We will soon publish the government's response to the 2023 consultation** including on the specific requirements for registration. The government is also considering what additional powers might be given to local authorities to enable them to respond to the pressures that can be created by short-term lets.

Steve Darling:

[\[15387\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, when her Department plans to introduce a short-term let registration scheme.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 29 November 2024. The correct answer should have been:

Chris Bryant:

Parliament legislated for a registration scheme for short-term lets in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023, and we are committed to introducing such a scheme as soon as possible.

~~We will soon be consulting~~ **We will soon publish the government's response to the 2023 consultation** on how the scheme will work and on the legislative process that will bring the scheme to life.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ Shellfish: Transport****Alex Mayer:****[8710]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will publish best practice guidance for the transport of live decapod crustaceans.

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

Daniel Zeichner:

The Government is committed to an evidence-based approach to improve welfare standards for decapod crustaceans and cephalopod molluscs. My department is continuing to engage with stakeholders and seeking to address evidence gaps to inform future policy decisions in this area.

Animal welfare legislation protects all animals from being transported in a way likely to cause injury or suffering. Live decapod crustaceans are protected from injury or unnecessary suffering during transportation by a general duty of care provision in Article 4 of The Welfare of Animals (Transport) (England) Order 2006 (WATEO) and equivalent national legislation in ~~Scotland and~~ Wales.

There are no plans to publish best practice guidance for the transport of live decapod crustaceans.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Continuing Care: Waiting Lists****Max Wilkinson:****[13791]**

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

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 20 November 2024. The correct answer should have been:

Stephen Kinnock:

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

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

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Empty Property

Jodie Gosling:

[6686]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of allowing local authorities to (a) buy unoccupied housing in longstanding disrepair at a reduced rate and (b) raise council tax on long-term unoccupied housing to ensure properties are kept in the market in a suitable condition.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 14 October 2024. The correct answer should have been:

Matthew Pennycook:

Local authorities have strong powers and incentives to tackle empty homes. They have the discretionary powers to charge additional council tax on properties which have been left unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for one or more years. The maximum premium that a council can apply increases, depending on the length of time that the property has been empty for, with a premium of up to 300% on homes left empty for over ten years.

Local authorities can also use powers to take over the management of long-term empty homes to bring them back into use in the private rented sector. ~~Since April 2024,~~ Local authorities can apply for an Empty Dwelling Management Order (EDMO) when a property has been empty for more than two years, subject to the production of evidence that the property has been causing a nuisance to the community and evidence of community support for their proposal. More information can be found [here](#).

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

CABINET OFFICE

■ House of Lords (Appointments)

Minister of State for the Cabinet Office (Nick Thomas-Symonds): [\[HCWS284\]](#)

From today, political parties will be required to provide citations when making nominations for appointment to the House of Lords, summarising why an individual has been put forward.

It is for party leaders to consider who is best placed to represent their party in the House of Lords when nominating individuals for appointment to the upper House. From today political parties will need to provide a citation for each of their nominees, which will be published on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) on successful appointment.

The House of Lords Appointments Commission will collate these citations, and will maintain its existing role in vetting all nominations for appointment as life peers, including those nominated by the political parties, to ensure the highest standards of propriety.

The Government will keep the appointments system under review as we progress wider reforms to the House of Lords.

PRIME MINISTER

■ Plan for Change: Milestones for mission-led government

Prime Minister (Sir Keir Starmer): [\[HCWS285\]](#)

This Government was elected to deliver change. To strengthen our country, in an increasingly volatile world, with a decade of national renewal.

This begins with the strong foundations of economic stability, secure borders and national security. In dangerous times, strengthening these foundations is ever more vital to the daily task of securing the national interest. The Government has begun this work, with a Budget that stabilised the economy, the creation of a new Border Security Command and increased investment in defence.

Building on these foundations, the Government has five national missions to deliver a decade of national renewal. These missions are our mandate, the priorities of working people:

1. Kickstart economic growth.
2. Build an NHS fit for the future.
3. Safer streets.
4. Break down the barriers to opportunity.
5. Make Britain a clean energy superpower.

To deliver change requires relentless focus and prioritisation, as well as tough decisions. This Government has already made such decisions to restore economic stability, including reforming agricultural property relief and means-testing the winter fuel allowance.

But, change has begun. Even while we have inherited the unprecedented twin challenges of crumbling public services and crippled public finances. We have made headway on our first steps: establishing Border Security Command; setting up Great British Energy, cracking down on anti-social behaviour; and beginning the work of recruiting 6,500 teachers in key subjects, paid for by ending tax breaks for private schools.

Our missions represent a long-term plan for the country, an end to the sticking-plaster policies of the past. They capture the basic hope that Britain can get better. This Government has also been clear that it will do things differently. That includes being open and honest about what we will deliver.

That is why, today, I am pleased to lay in this House, our *Plan for Change*.

Guided by our missions, this *Plan for Change* shows the path towards a decade of national renewal. To drive us forward in this Parliament, it sets clear milestones to track our progress and allow the British people to hold us to account. These are our milestones for change:

- Raising living standards in every part of the United Kingdom, so working people have more money in their pocket as we aim to deliver the highest sustained growth in the G7.
- Rebuilding Britain with 1.5 million homes in England and fast-tracking planning decisions on at least 150 major economic infrastructure projects.
- Ending hospital backlogs to meet the NHS standard of 92% of patients in England waiting no longer than 18 weeks for elective treatment.
- Putting police back on the beat with a named officer for every neighbourhood, and 13,000 additional officers, PCSOs and special constables in neighbourhood roles in England and Wales. Today, the Government has also announced £100 million funding in 2025/26 to support the initial delivery of 13,000 additional police officers, PCSOs and special constables into neighbourhood policing roles.
- Giving children the best start in life, with a record 75% of five-year-olds in England ready to learn when they start school.
- Securing home-grown energy, protecting billpayers, and putting us on track to at least 95% Clean Power by 2030, while accelerating the UK to net zero.

These milestones for change are ambitious. Indeed, given the appalling economic situation and state of public services we inherited, meeting these milestones in this Parliament represents a huge challenge. Together, they represent the most ambitious and honest programme for government in a generation. But they are achievable. And for the next five years, they will give our country the stabilising certainty of a clear destination.

The *Plan for Change* is not just about government: these are milestones for the entire country - a partnership between public and private sectors, national and local government, business and unions, alongside the whole of civil society.

And so I am pleased today, with the publication of our *Plan for Change*, to invite Parliament, and the people of the United Kingdom, to join us in this mission of national renewal.