



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 9 December 2024 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:30 P.M., 09 December 2024). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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**Notes:**

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

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

## ANSWERS

### BUSINESS AND TRADE

#### ■ **Childcare: Flexible Working**

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[17095\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of flexible working patterns offered to enable parents to (a) work and (b) afford the costs of childcare.

**Justin Madders:**

We know from reviews of the existing legislative framework as well as the impact assessment of the measures in the Employment Rights Bill that there is clear demand for adequate flexible working arrangements from parents, as there is with other groups in the workforce. Flexible working can help parents manage their childcare responsibilities and reduce the cost of childcare.

Through Make Work Pay the Government committed to making flexible working the default except where not reasonably feasible, making it more likely that requests are accepted. Clauses contained in the Employment Rights Bill will achieve this aim.

#### ■ **Employment Rights Bill: Construction**

**Alison Griffiths:**

[\[17997\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the Employment Rights Bill on the construction sector.

**Alison Griffiths:**

[\[17998\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the Employment Rights Bill on the (a) maritime and (b) shipbuilding sector.

**Alison Griffiths:**

[\[17999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the Employment Rights Bill on the steel sector.

**Alison Griffiths:**

[\[18000\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the Employment Rights Bill on the (a) materials and (b) critical minerals sector.

**Justin Madders:**

On Monday 21 October, the Government published a comprehensive package of analysis on the impact of the Employment Rights Bill. This is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/employment-rights-bill-impact-assessments>

The majority of employees will benefit from new protections in the Bill and our assessment finds that workers in low-paying sectors, including social care, hospitality, retail, transport, and some manufacturing sectors will benefit the most from the Bill. The assessment suggests that the construction, steel, materials, critical minerals and shipbuilding sectors are unlikely to be disproportionately impacted by the Bill.

The Bill will also deliver wider benefits for the business environment by improving wellbeing, incentivising higher productivity, and creating a more level playing field for good employers. This could have a positive knock-on impact on productivity and growth.

### ■ Employment Rights Bill: Defence and Security

**Dame Harriett Baldwin:** [\[17796\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the Employment Rights Bill on the defence and security manufacturing sector.

**Justin Madders:**

On Monday 21 October, the Government published a comprehensive package of analysis on the impact of the Employment Rights Bill  
[\[http://www.gov.uk/guidance/employment-rights-bill-impact-assessments\]](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/employment-rights-bill-impact-assessments).

The majority of employees will benefit from new protections in the Bill, however, our assessment finds that workers in the low-paying sectors including social care, hospitality, retail, and some manufacturing sectors such as the manufacture of food-items will benefit the most from the Bill.

The Bill will also deliver wider benefits for the business environment by improving wellbeing, incentivising higher productivity, and creating a more level playing field for good employers. This could have a positive knock-on impact on productivity and growth.

### ■ Employment Rights Bill: Hospitality Industry

**Andrew Griffith:** [\[17905\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment he has made of the impact of the Employment Rights Bill on the hospitality sector.

**Justin Madders:**

On Monday 21 October, the Government published a comprehensive package of analysis on the impact of the Employment Rights Bill:  
[\[http://www.gov.uk/guidance/employment-rights-bill-impact-assessments\]](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/employment-rights-bill-impact-assessments).

The majority of employees will benefit from new protections in the Bill. However, our assessment finds that workers in the low-paying sectors, including hospitality, will benefit the most from the Bill. The Bill will also deliver wider benefits for the business environment by improving wellbeing, incentivising higher productivity, and creating a



more level playing field for good employers. This could have a positive knock-on impact on productivity and growth.

### ■ **Employment Rights Bill: Public Bodies**

**Alison Griffiths:**

[\[18001\]](#)

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

**Justin Madders:**

On 21 October, the Government published a comprehensive impact assessment for the Employment Rights Bill, which included analysis on the impacts on the public sector.

Given the early stages of policy development, many reforms require further development and consultation before implementation. The Department will engage closely with the public sector and wider stakeholders as policy development continues to ensure the detail is right before changes are implemented.

Where measures require secondary legislation and codes of practice to implement, the Government will update and refine its analysis following the consultation based on additional evidence to inform policy options and impacts.

### ■ **Members: Correspondence**

**Andrew Griffith:**

[\[17906\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, when he plans to respond to the letter of 28 November 2024 from the hon. Member for Arundel and South Downs.

**Justin Madders:**

The Department aims to respond to answer correspondence within 15 working days, this response was issued on 9 December.

### ■ **Small Businesses: Women**

**Samantha Niblett:**

[\[16631\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to help support women into leadership positions in small and medium-sized businesses.

**Gareth Thomas:**

The Department for Business and Trade works with the private sector led Invest in Women, with the shared ambition to make the UK a great place to be a female business founder. On Monday 25th November, the Taskforce celebrated successfully raising over £250 million for its funding pool for women-led businesses.

The Government is determined to harness the talent and creativity of every woman in the country. The plan to 'Make Work Pay' will transform the lives of working women,

including by strengthening rights to equal pay and providing protections from maternity and menopause discrimination and sexual harassment.

## CABINET OFFICE

### ■ Civil Contingencies Act 2004

**Mark Pritchard:**

[\[17082\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to update the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 in the light of the threat from Russia.

**Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:**

The Civil Contingencies Act (CCA) 2004 and the associated Regulations deliver a single framework for civil protection in the UK. The legislation is deliberately broad ranging and sets out the requirements to consider all emergencies that threaten serious damage to human welfare in the UK; the environment of a place in the UK; or war, or terrorism, which threatens serious damage to the security of the UK.

The Government keeps this legislation under review. The Cabinet Office has a legal obligation to review the CCA every five years. The most recent review was published in March 2022 and concluded that the Act continues to achieve its stated objectives. It did set out recommendations to strengthen the system and its planning which are being considered as part of the Resilience Review.

### ■ Government: Cost Effectiveness

**Rupert Lowe:**

[\[14714\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of establishing a department for government efficiency.

**Georgia Gould:**

There are currently no plans for a Department for Government Efficiency. The Budget set out plans for an Office for Value for Money which will work alongside other reforms such as the 2% Efficiency target aimed at improving savings, efficiency and productivity for all government departments by using technology more effectively and joining up services. Together, these reforms will deliver change for working people.

### ■ Infected Blood Compensation Scheme

**Ian Sollom:**

[\[17648\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, for what reason he has maintained the cut-off dates for the Infected Blood Compensation Scheme.

**Nick Thomas-Symonds:**

The Infected Blood Compensation Scheme does not have hard cut-off dates for determining whether a person is eligible for compensation based on when their infection was acquired. However, the evidence requirements will be higher where a person was infected after the introduction of screening of blood, blood products and

tissue. The dates for the introduction of screening are November 1985 for HIV infection, September 1991 for Hepatitis C infection and December 1972 for Hepatitis B infection. Those whose infection fell outside of these date ranges would still be eligible as long as they can satisfy the Infected Blood Compensation Authority that the infected blood treatment caused the person to become infected with that infection. It is intended that the Authority's approach to applications will be to be as proactive and sympathetic as possible, and consistent with appropriate and proportionate safeguarding of the integrity of the scheme.

**Ian Sollom:**

[\[17649\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, when applications for the Infected Blood Compensation Scheme will open to those infected after the cut-off date of 1991.

**Nick Thomas-Symonds:**

The Infected Blood Compensation Scheme Regulations 2024, approved by Parliament in October, do not set out hard cut-off dates for determining whether a person is eligible for compensation based on when their infection was acquired. However, the evidence requirements will be higher where a person was infected after the introduction of screening of blood, blood products and tissue. The Infected Blood Compensation Authority opened the compensation scheme to a small number of people in October to allow the Authority to test the service, with further invitations, as part of this testing approach, to be sent between now and January. The claim service for compensation is being designed and delivered now, starting small and scaling up as quickly as possible, to make payments. Dates for the roll out of the service to larger numbers of people will be determined and communicated by the Infected Blood Compensation Authority.

## ■ **Muslim Council of Britain**

**Nick Timothy:**

[\[17300\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what discussions (a) Ministers, (b) special advisers, and (c) officials in (i) the Cabinet Office and (ii) 10 Downing Street have had with the Muslim Council of Britain since 5 July.

**Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:**

There has been no change to HMG policy on engagement with the Muslim Council of Britain.

## ■ **Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman**

**Lisa Smart:**

[\[17016\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee's report entitled Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman Scrutiny 2022–23, HC 198, published on 4 March 2024, if he will make it his policy to implement the recommendations of that report.

**Georgia Gould:**

The previous Government formally responded to the report and its recommendations on 10 May 2024 (HC 774, published on 23 May 2024).

This Government continues to promote the PHSO complaint standards and support NHS England and NHS Resolution to further encourage the use of dispute resolution methods, including mediation, by the NHS.

The Government will consider the case for ombudsman reform alongside other policy and legislative priorities.

**■ Select Committees: Parliamentary Scrutiny****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[16967\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of paragraph 29 of the First Report of Session 2023–24 of the Liaison Committee, Promoting national strategy: How select committee scrutiny can improve strategic thinking in Whitehall, HC 31, published on 29 May 2024.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[16968\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the First Report of Session 2023–24 of the Liaison Committee, Promoting national strategy: How select committee scrutiny can improve strategic thinking in Whitehall, HC 31, published on 29 May 2024, whether his Department has taken recent steps to develop a cross-Whitehall lexicon.

**Georgia Gould:**

The Government is considering the Liaison Committee's report and looks forward to discussing it with the incoming Chair once elected.

**CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT****■ Home Office: Training****Sir John Hayes:** [\[16905\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether external (a) guidance and (b) training has been contracted for discussing (i) unconscious bias, (ii) critical race theory and (iii) decolonisation with staff in her Department.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

The information requested is not centrally held.

However, Ministers believe that the application of critical race theory threatens to undermine integration and community cohesion, by exaggerating differences within local communities. Instead, we should be seeking to build and strengthen a shared local and national identity across class, colour and creed.

The Government has a plan for an Inclusive Britain which will address the causes for racial disparity, which are complex and are not always caused by discrimination or

prejudice. The central mission of our approach is to improve people's lives, and to do that we need to address the root causes of the disparities that they face.

## ■ Migrant Workers: Arts

**Mr James Frith:**

[\[16983\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for the Home Department on supporting non-UK (a) artists, (b) sponsors and (c) creative workers to work in the UK.

**Alex Sobel:**

[\[16992\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has had discussions with the Secretary of State for the Home Department on non-UK (a) artists, (b) sponsors and (c) creatives and the UK border.

**Chris Bryant:**

We have had no such recent meetings, but there are already several routes that provide opportunities for artists and creatives to come to the UK. The UK's domestic rules allow musicians, entertainers, artists, and their technical staff, from non-visa national countries (such as EU/EEA nationals) to perform in the UK for up to 6 months without requiring a visa, as long as they are not receiving payment from a UK source other than prize money or expenses. Musicians, entertainers and artists from visa-national countries are likewise able to perform in the UK via the Standard Visitor route, and/or if performing at a festival detailed on the Permit Free Festivals list.

Additionally, the Creative Worker visa allows a professional artist, model, entertainer or musician (applicable to all nationalities) to carry out activity directly relating to their profession, if they have a Sponsor who is licensed by the Home Office and has assigned a Certificate of Sponsorship to the individual.

We are committed to continuing to work closely with stakeholders to better understand their needs and challenges within the immigration system. This includes exploring ways to better streamline the processes within existing frameworks, to ensure the UK remains an attractive destination for global creative talent.

## ■ Parthenon Sculptures

**Saqib Bhatti:**

[\[17618\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions she has had with her counterparts in the Greek Government on (a) loaning and (b) donating the Elgin Marbles to Greece.

**Chris Bryant:**

I met Greece's Tourism Minister Olga Kefalogianni on 4 November for a meeting regarding tourism, when she raised the Parthenon Sculptures among many other matters.

Decisions relating to the care and management of the Parthenon Sculptures are a matter for the British Museum Trustees, acting within the law.

We have no plans to change the law that would permit a permanent move of the Parthenon Sculptures.

### ■ Youth Services: Slough

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[17007\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to help improve the provision of youth services in Slough.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

This Government fully recognises the importance of youth services to help young people live safe and healthy lives, and we are committed to giving all young people the chance to reach their full potential. Over the past three years, Slough has received funding from the Million Hours Fund and via our support for the Duke of Edinburgh Award. These funds create new opportunities for young people to access regular activities, volunteering and adventures away from home.

Our government has also recently announced the co-production of an ambitious new National Youth Strategy, which will be produced together with young people and the youth sector. This Strategy will better coordinate youth services, as well as move away from national, one-size-fits all programmes from government, bringing power back to young people and their communities and rebuilding a thriving and sustainable sector.

The Strategy will be published next year.

## DEFENCE

### ■ Aircraft Carriers: Deployment

**David Reed:**

[\[17475\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the UK's ability to form a fully operational Carrier Strike Group; and how often that Group could be deployed globally.

**Luke Pollard:**

The UK remains robust in its ability to form a fully operational Carrier Strike Group (CSG). This has been evidenced in 2024 by the UK CSG involvement in Exercise STRIKE WARRIOR and participation in the NATO Exercise STEADFAST DEFENDER. This will be further evidenced by the upcoming deployment of the CSG in 2025 to the Indo-Pacific.

One Queen Elizabeth Aircraft Carrier and all supporting units are always available at the required notice to deploy globally whenever there is an operational need. The appropriate force generation, training, integration, maintenance, assurance and currency of these units is a continuous process to ensure their availability for deployment.

## ■ Armed Forces and Ministry of Defence: Artificial Intelligence

**David Reed:**

[R] [17490]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether frontier technologies such as (a) machine learning and (b) artificial intelligence are being used within (i) the Armed Forces and (ii) his Department to help improve workforce efficiencies.

**Maria Eagle:**

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) is actively leveraging machine learning and artificial intelligence (AI) to enhance operational efficiency and effectiveness across both the Armed Forces and the Department. In the business space, MOD is exploring use of informational chatbots, machine learning applications and generative AI to automate and accelerate routine business operations and policy work. We work closely with partners across Government to identify and apply best practice and understand where these tools can support workforce efficiencies.

AI is also being considered for a range of military applications, including helping to accelerate operational tempo; strengthening the Force through greater mass, persistence, and reach; enabling us to operate in environments that would otherwise not be possible; removing our people from harm's way; and making our workforce more effective.

## ■ Armed Forces: Workplace Pensions

**Mr Mark Francois:**

[16450]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to paragraph 5.52 of the Autumn Budget 2024, HC 295, what guidance his Department issues on whether nominees of deceased Armed Forces Pension Scheme members other than spouses and civil partners will become liable for inheritance tax on death in service lump sums.

**Al Carns:**

Inheritance Tax on pensions is subject to a technical consultation which runs between 30 October 2024 and 22 January 2025. The Ministry of Defence will follow legislation as per Government proposals.

## ■ AUKUS

**Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:**

[17120]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 12 November 2024 to Question 12460 on AUKUS, whether he has received Sir Stephen Lovegrove's report on AUKUS; and when he plans to publish that report.

**Maria Eagle:**

An extension was provided to allow Sir Stephen Lovegrove to gather all the necessary information, and we are now awaiting his final report. An unclassified version of his report will be published in due course.

**■ British Indian Ocean Territory: Sovereignty**

**James Cartlidge:** [17838]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his oral Answer to the hon. Member for South Suffolk of 11 November 2024, Official Report, Column 505, whether he plans to provide information on the cost of (a) direct payments made to the government of Mauritius and (b) other aspects of the treaty with Mauritius when that treaty is debated in Parliament.

**James Cartlidge:** [17839]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the oral Answer by the Minister for the Armed Forces on 2 December 2024, Official Report, Column 27, if he will make an estimate of the cost to his Department of implementing the proposed UK-Mauritius treaty on the Chagos Islands excluding the Government-to-Government payment.

**James Cartlidge:** [17840]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the oral Answer by the Minister for the Armed Forces on 2 December 2024, Official Report, Column 27, what the estimated cost to the US will be of the Chagos settlement excluding the Government-to-Government payment.

**Luke Pollard:**

Details of the Treaty agreed between the UK and Mauritius will come before Parliament for scrutiny in the usual manner following its signature. It would be inappropriate to release further details at this stage.

**■ Defence Equipment**

**Rupert Lowe:** [16275]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what proportion of equipment purchased by his Department and in use by his Department was manufactured (a) in and (b) outside the UK.

**Maria Eagle:**

For the Financial Year 2023-24, the Ministry of Defence's (MOD) total global expenditure with industry and commerce, including Foreign Military Sales and direct payments to Foreign Governments, was £34.6 billion of which £5.5 billion (16%) related to work that took place outside of the UK. Statistics on MOD expenditure with industry are published annually on the gov.uk website at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/mod-regional-expenditure-statistics-with-industry-202324>



## ■ Defence Equipment: Procurement

**James Cartlidge:** [\[17842\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 4 December 2024 to Question 17024 on Defence Equipment and Support, whether he has instructed his Department to put a hold on new procurement in this financial year.

**Maria Eagle:**

The Department has not been told to put a hold on new procurement in this financial year.

## ■ Defence: Artificial Intelligence

**Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:** [\[16919\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Answer of 17 April 2024 to Question 21056 on Defence: Artificial Intelligence, whether the Capability Lead, AI Talent and Skills is now in post.

**Maria Eagle:**

Yes, I can confirm that there is an incumbent in post as of June 2024. The individual has made some good early progress working collaboratively with Digital Skills for Defence (DS4D), the Defence Academy Shrivenham, and other relevant stakeholders.

## ■ Defence: Cybersecurity

**David Reed:** [\[R\] \[17725\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to support the development of cyber capabilities within the defence sector through partnerships with UK (a) micro, (b) small and (c) medium-sized technology companies.

**Maria Eagle:**

The UK Ministry of Defence (MOD) is committed to working collaboratively with innovators in the technology sector to improve cyber capabilities across Defence. We recognise the valuable skills, technology, and pace of development in cyber, much of which is driven by Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs). The recently published Defence Industrial Strategy - Statement of Intent acknowledges the vital contribution SMEs can offer not just in cyber but across the spectrum of capabilities. Our priority is to create new partnerships between Government and business, and as a first step we will create the Defence Industrial Joint Council with a specific objective of broadening participation, which includes the SME community.

The MOD is further working closely with industry and external stakeholders in conducting a Strategic Defence Review 25 that will set the Defence Plan including the future intent for cyber.

**■ Defence: Iron and Steel**

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhési:** [\[16186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many and what proportion of steel companies that are classed by his Department as critical suppliers into UK defence programmes are based in the UK.

**Maria Eagle:**

The UK steel industry is an important strategic national asset, vital for our security and our economy. Our industry partners of all sizes are very much at the heart of our One Defence approach and we recognise the value that suppliers bring to the UK defence programmes.

We are bringing forward a Defence Industrial Strategy that will align our national security and economic priorities and maintaining a resilient Steel supply chain. The Government will also be bringing forward a new cross government strategy for the steel sector, which will be published in Spring 2025.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhési:** [\[16187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what data his Department holds on the proportion of steel used in defence programmes that was manufactured in the UK.

**Maria Eagle:**

The Ministry of Defence contributes to the Department for Business and Trade's annual steel in public procurement return available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/steel-public-procurement>

The Government will bring forward a new cross Government strategy for the steel sector, to be published in Spring 2025. This will examine how the Government can increase steel capacity and capability in the UK.

**■ Defence: Technology**

**David Reed:** [\[R\] \[17724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to improve engagement with UK (a) micro, (b) small and (c) medium-sized technology companies through traditional prime contractors.

**Maria Eagle:**

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) make a vital contribution to economic growth and are a valuable source of technical innovation in defence. This is recognised in the recently published Defence Industrial Strategy Statement of Intent, as well as the Department's Social Value policies. We work with our largest suppliers through a network of their SME Champions, Trade Associations and SME representatives to ensure that SMEs have fair access to opportunities in our supply chain and that our prime contractors are adopting policies, such as fair payment practices, that support small businesses working in defence.

## ■ Frigates

**David Reed:**

[R] [[17484](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many new Type (a) 45, (b) 26, (c) 31 and (d) 32 will enter service by 2030.

**Maria Eagle:**

The Type 45 is already in service with no new vessels to be built.

The Type 26 is forecast to achieve Initial Operating Capability in 2028 with ships expected to enter service between 2028 and 2035.

HMS Venturer will be the first in Class of the Type 31 and is scheduled to be In Service and ready for operations by the end of the decade. All five Type 31 ships are planned to be in service by the early 2030s.

The Type 32 frigate programme remains in the concept phrase and has not yet reached the level of maturity to allow publication of a specific timetable for design and procurement .

## ■ Frigates: Exports

**James Cartlidge:**

[[17023](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what progress he has made on increasing the number of exports of the Type (a) 26 and (b) 31 frigates.

**Maria Eagle:**

The Ministry of Defence and the Department for Business and Trade are actively supporting the promotion of the Type 26 Global Combat Ship and Type 31 Arrowhead 140 designs to other navies around the world with similar requirements.

The Type 26 has been down selected as one of four options for the Norwegian Future Frigate competition.

## ■ HMS Prince of Wales and HMS Queen Elizabeth

**David Reed:**

[R] [[17487](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his oral evidence of 21 November 2024 to the Defence Select Committee, HC 345, what steps he is taking to ensure the planned deployments of (a) HMS Queen Elizabeth and (b) HMS Prince of Wales take place as scheduled in 2025.

**Luke Pollard:**

The Ministry of Defence remains committed to deploying HMS Prince of Wales as part of the Carrier Strike Group deployment to the Indo-Pacific in 2025. It would be inappropriate to discuss other planned deployments as to do so could compromise operational security.

**David Reed:**

[R] [\[17488\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the costs of maintaining (a) HMS Queen Elizabeth and (b) HMS Prince of Wales over the next five years.

**Maria Eagle:**

The costs of maintaining both Queen Elizabeth Class aircraft carriers are factored into Departmental spend. These vary year on year according to generation cycle of each ship, changing equipment enhancement and capability insertions.

## ■ Holocaust Memorial Day

**Chris Evans:**

[\[15173\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans his Department has to mark Holocaust Memorial Day.

**Al Carns:**

Remembrance is the annual national commemoration to mark all conflicts and pay respects to all who have suffered at the hands of oppression and dictatorship and on Sunday 17 November 2024, Lord Coaker, Minister of State in the House of Lords, joined the AJEX (Armed Forces Jewish Ex Service Personnel) community who paraded at the Cenotaph in their own act of remembrance.

As the Chancellor announced in the Budget, the government will provide funding to the Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) to commemorate a variety of occasions. In addition, the Ministry of Defence will mark Holocaust Memorial Day on 27 January 2025 and recognises that 2025 will be the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of the concentration camps.

## ■ Military Aircraft: Helicopters

**James Cartlidge:**

[\[16212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department plans to change the extant New Medium Helicopter competitive tender.

**James Cartlidge:**

[\[16213\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his Oral Statement of 20 November 2024, Official Report, columns 287-289, how many platforms his Department intends to procure through the New Medium Helicopter programme, in the context of his decision to decommission 17 Puma helicopters.

**James Cartlidge:**

[\[16216\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of his decision to retire (a) Chinook heavy transporter helicopters and (b) Puma helicopters on tender scoring for the New Medium Helicopter programme.

**James Cartlidge:**

[\[16217\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what his Department's planned timetable is for announcing the award for the New Medium Helicopter contract.

**James Cartlidge:**

[\[16219\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of his timetable for reaching 2.5% GDP of expenditure on defence on the progress of the New Medium Helicopter programme.

**Maria Eagle:**

There are no plans to change the extant New Medium Helicopter competition which started on 27 February 2024 with the release of the Invitation to Negotiate to Airbus Helicopters UK, Leonardo Helicopters UK and Lockheed Martin UK.

The decision to retire the 14 oldest Chinook helicopters and remaining Puma helicopters has no impact on the New Medium Helicopter procurement process. The New Medium Helicopter competition remains sensitive, and the evaluation and approval process must complete before further details, including aircraft numbers, can be confirmed.

The Ministry of Defence is continuing with the established procurement process, managed by Defence Equipment and Support, and the proposal will be evaluated through 2025 when, subject to Government approvals, a contract award is anticipated.

The progress of the New Medium Helicopter programme is not dependent on reaching 2.5% GDP of expenditure on Defence spending.

**James Cartlidge:**

[\[16214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of extending the operational lifespan of the Lockheed Martin UH-60 Black Hawk.

**Maria Eagle:**

The Department has not assessed the potential merits of extending the operational lifespan of the Lockheed Martin UH-60 Black Hawk as the Department does not own any.

## ■ Military Bases

**Helen Maguire:**

[\[16652\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, in which constituencies are each (a) base, (b) garrison and (c) barracks located for each of the armed forces in (i) England, (ii) Wales, (iii) Scotland and (iv) Northern Ireland; and which of those bases are designated for use by (A) NATO and (B) US visiting forces.

**Luke Pollard:**

The information required to answer the hon. Member's question is not held centrally. Officials are working to produce a consolidated response. I will write to her by late December 2024, and a copy of my letter will be placed in the Library of The House.

**■ National Security: Cybersecurity****David Reed:****[R] [17491]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions his Department has had with the (a) Cabinet Office and (b) Department for Science, Innovation and Technology on the (i) development and (ii) procurement of digital capabilities for national security.

**Maria Eagle:**

The Ministry of Defence routinely works with colleagues in the National Security community, the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology and Cabinet Office on the development and procurement of digital capabilities for National Security. All of which is fully consistent and aligns with the Government's approach to transforming for a Digital Future.

**■ NATO: Navy****David Reed:****[17485]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions his Department has had with NATO allies on the potential impact of the retirement of naval assets on the UK's ability to contribute to NATO operations.

**Luke Pollard:**

NATO remains the cornerstone of UK Defence. As such, the Royal Navy continues to make and fulfil a leading contribution to NATO. The retirement of naval assets announced by the Secretary of State on 20 November has no impact on current commitments.

The Strategic Defence Review will look at enhancing the UK's contribution to NATO and sustaining a "NATO first" defence policy, while protecting vital UK sovereign requirements and strategic reach.

**■ Strategic Defence Review****Mr Mark Francois:****[17775]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he plans to publish a Command Paper on implementation of the Strategic Defence Review.

**Luke Pollard:**

The Strategic Defence Review will report in the first half of 2025. The Department is preparing for its implementation.

## ■ Thales: Contracts

**Mr Mark Francois:** [\[17770\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the Serious Fraud Office investigation into suspected bribery and corruption at Thales UK on defence procurement contracts with that company.

**Mr Mark Francois:** [\[17771\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether Thales products used by his Department are directly implicated in the Serious Fraud Office investigation into suspected bribery and corruption at that company.

**Mr Mark Francois:** [\[17772\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps whether he has made an assessment of the potential (a) legal and (b) financial implications for his Department of the Serious Fraud Office investigation into suspected bribery and corruption at Thales UK.

**Mr Mark Francois:** [\[17773\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department is involved in the Serious Fraud Office's investigation into suspected bribery and corruption at Thales UK.

**Maria Eagle:**

The Ministry of Defence expects all its suppliers to comply with all applicable legal and regulatory requirements. It would be inappropriate for me to comment on an ongoing investigation.

## ■ Type 32 Frigates

**David Reed:** [R] [\[17483\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the expected timeline is for the Type 32 frigate programme to move from the concept phase to design and procurement.

**Maria Eagle:**

The Type 32 frigate programme remains in the concept phase and has not yet reached the level of maturity to allow publication of a specific timetable for design and procurement. This is consistent with a programme of this size and complexity at this early stage in its development.

## ■ Type 45 Destroyers

**David Reed:** [R] [\[17486\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the status is of each of the Royal Navy's Type 45 destroyers.

**Maria Eagle:**

As of 2 December, two Type 45 destroyers are immediately available. The remaining four are in various stages of refit and are therefore not available for operations.

The normal operating cycle of every ship involves them entering different readiness levels depending on their programmes, periods of refit and Departmental planning requirements. This is carefully managed to ensure the Royal Navy has sufficient assets available to deliver concurrent operational outputs, both in the UK and around the globe; whilst also sustaining longer term availability to meet changing defence demands in an uncertain world.

## ■ Veterans: Lincolnshire

**Sir John Hayes:**

**[17069]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to support veterans in (a) South Holland and the Deepings constituency and (b) Lincolnshire with (i) housing and (ii) education and skills training.

**AI Carns:**

This is a Government of service that will always stand up for those who serve our country, no matter which community they are based in. I am working across Government and with civil society to ensure veterans, including those throughout South Holland and the Deepings and Lincolnshire get access to housing, employment and other support they need.

Op FORTITUDE is a single referral pathway available across the United Kingdom that provides housing guidance and assistance to veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness. As of 30 November 2024, over 2,850 referrals have been made and 822 veterans have been supported into housing.

The Prime Minister announced the continuation of funding for the cross-UK Reducing Veterans Homelessness Programme and Op FORTITUDE, ensuring that support will be there for veterans at risk of homelessness. This is in addition to his commitment earlier in the year that veterans will be exempt from local connection and residency tests when applying for social housing in England.

There is also a range of skills and education support available to veterans, including via the Career Transition Partnership, which supports those in search of new job and education opportunities.

Additional support is available to veterans and their families via a sector-based employment pathway, which offers employment and career progression support, including access to qualifications and training, at any stage in their lives after leaving service.

Armed Forces Champions are also based across the UK's JobCentre Plus network, providing tailored advice and employability support to members of the armed forces community.



**■ Watchkeeper WK450: Exports****James Cartlidge:**[\[17022\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department will continue to provide support for export campaigns for the Watchkeeper drone.

**Maria Eagle:**

Yes. The Government will continue to support the export of Watchkeeper-X. This will support UK industry, growth and jobs whilst also strengthening strategic defence relationship with partners and allies.

**EDUCATION****■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Greg Smith:**[\[901683\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she is taking steps to help deliver a new SEND school in Buckinghamshire.

**Stephen Morgan:**

This government is committed to breaking down barriers to opportunity and giving every child the best start in life. Applications to run a special free school in Buckinghamshire have closed. The department is working through next steps and will provide an update in due course.

The government is clear it wants to make sure all children with special educational needs and disabilities receive the support they need to achieve and thrive. That is why the manifesto set out a clear ambition to improve inclusivity in mainstream schools, while ensuring that special schools cater for those with the most complex needs.

As with all government investment, special free school projects will be subject to value for money consideration through their development, in line with the government's vision for the special educational needs system.

**■ Children: Epilepsy****Ian Byrne:**[\[17264\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of provision of support for children with epilepsy in schools.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

Section 100 of the Children and Families Act 2014 places a duty on maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units to make arrangements for supporting pupils with medical conditions. Some children with medical conditions may be considered to be disabled under the definition set out in the Equality Act 2010. Where this is the case, governing bodies must comply with their duties under that Act.

Governing bodies should ensure all schools develop a policy for supporting pupils with medical conditions that is reviewed regularly and is readily accessible to parents and school staff. They must ensure the arrangements they put in place are sufficient to meet their statutory responsibilities and should ensure that policies, plans, procedures and systems are properly and effectively implemented.

## ■ Financial Services: Education

**Mr Peter Bedford:**

[\[901682\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to improve financial education in schools.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

Financial education currently forms a compulsory part of the National Curriculum for mathematics (at key stages 1 to 4) and citizenship (at key stages 3 and 4). The primary mathematics curriculum includes arithmetic knowledge that supports pupils' ability to manage budgets and money, including, for example, calculations with money and percentages. In secondary mathematics, pupils are taught topics such as how to calculate compound interest, which is relevant for personal finance. In citizenship, pupils are taught the function and uses of money, how to budget and manage credit and debt, as well as concepts like insurance, savings and pensions.

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 start in life. The government's ambition is for a broad, rich and cutting-edge curriculum that equips children and young people with the essential knowledge and skills required to thrive as citizens, in work and throughout life. That is why the department has established an independent, expert-led Curriculum and Assessment Review, covering ages 5 to 18, chaired by Professor Becky Francis CBE. The review will seek to deliver an excellent foundation in the core subjects of reading, writing and mathematics, and a broader curriculum that readies young people for life and work, and reflects the diversities of our society. The review group ran a call for evidence, receiving over 7000 responses, and held events over the autumn term to gather the views of education professionals and other experts, parents, children and young people, and other stakeholders. The feedback received will help the review group to consider its next steps and recommendations. The review group will publish an interim report early in 2025 setting out their interim findings and confirming the key areas for further work and the final report with recommendations will be published in autumn 2025.

## ■ Higher Education: Graduates

**Matt Bishop:**

[\[17053\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether they are taking steps to financially support individuals who have already completed a university degree to retrain in another area at university.

**Janet Daby:**

Currently, the Equivalent or Lower Qualification (ELQ) rules prevent those studying for a second higher education course, at a level lower or equivalent to their first qualification, from receiving either tuition fee loans or maintenance loans for that course.

There are some exceptions for students who want to retrain in teaching, architecture, social work, medicine, dentistry, veterinary science and healthcare. Students on these courses may qualify for some support, even if they already have an ELQ. The support received will depend on the course studied and, in some cases, the mode of study.

However, the Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE) will launch in January 2027, giving new learners access to a loan entitlement equal to four years of full-time tuition funding. This is currently equal to £38,140 based on fee rates for the 2025/26 academic year. Returning learners who have previously received government support will have a reduced entitlement, depending on previous funding received.

Under the LLE, ELQ rules will be removed, thereby enabling more people to retrain and upskill throughout their working lives.

**■ Overseas Students: Hong Kong****Alex Sobel:**[\[17013\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what information her Department holds on how many (a) students studying at UK universities hold British National (Overseas) visas and (b) such students are from Hong Kong.

**Janet Daby:**

The department does not hold data on the number of students studying at UK universities who hold British National (Overseas) (BNO) visas, including those from Hong Kong.

The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) is responsible for collecting and publishing data on the UK higher education (HE) sector. This data is shared with the department and includes a wide range of information on students coming from overseas to study in UK HE providers. However, information on students' visa status is not collected and those that are studying in the UK and holding a BNO visa cannot be identified by the department.

Data from HESA shows that there were 17,905 students from Hong Kong studying at UK HE providers for the 2022/23 academic year.

**■ Pre-school Education: Employers' Contributions****Stuart Andrew:**[\[17088\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what financial support she plans to provide to the Early Years sector to help manage the impact of proposed changes to employer National Insurance contributions.

**Stephen Morgan:**

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

**■ Pupil Exclusions: Primary Education****Sir John Hayes:****[17068]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many pupils in primary schools in England were suspended in each of the last three academic years.

**Stephen Morgan:**

The department publishes figures from the school census on suspensions and permanent exclusions from state-funded schools in England. The most recent release is available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/suspensions-and-permanent-exclusions-in-england>.

The number of pupil enrolments in primary schools with one or more suspensions for the 2020/21 to 2022/23 academic years, which is the latest data available, can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/40b7a1f8-c523-4d20-d522-08dd12dee30d>.

For 2020/21, while suspensions and permanent exclusions were possible throughout the academic year, pandemic restrictions will have had an impact on the numbers presented, so caution should be taken when comparing across years.

**■ School Meals****Rupert Lowe:****[17365]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will take steps to ensure that Bovaer is not used within the school supply chain.

**Stephen Morgan:**

The Food Standards Agency has advised milk from cows given Bovaer, an authorised feed additive that is used to reduce methane emissions, is safe to drink. Bovaer has undergone a rigorous safety assessment and is approved for use in Great Britain.

The School Food Standards defines the foods and drinks that must be provided, those which are restricted, and those which must not be provided. Beyond this, schools are responsible for the provision of school meals and how they source their food.

**■ Schools: Academies****Laura Trott:****[17893]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made an assessment of the potential impact on schools of ending the academy conversion support grant.

**Laura Trott:**

[\[17894\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential impact on schools of ending the academy conversion support grant.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

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

Trusts have played, and continue to play, an important role in supporting collaboration between schools and spreading best practice in pursuit of high standards. Against a challenging fiscal inheritance the government has had to make difficult choices and ensure that limited funding is best targeted. On 1 November, we announced that we would be ending the academy conversion grant from 1 January 2025.

Voluntary conversion is a choice for schools. The department thinks that the benefits, including financial, of joining a strong structure are well understood in the sector and schools and trusts should continue to make these informed choices.

Additionally, latest published figures show 98% of academy trusts and 87% of local authority maintained schools are in cumulative surplus or breaking even. At the Autumn Budget 2024, the government announced an additional £2.3 billion for mainstream schools and young people with high needs for 2025/26, compared to 2024/25. This means that overall core school funding will total almost £63.9 billion next year, compared to £61.6 billion in 2024/25, after technical adjustments.

## ■ Schools: Admissions

**Daisy Cooper:**

[\[17231\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has received recent representations from Hertfordshire County Council on levels of demand for in-year state school places.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, has had no recent representations from Hertfordshire County Council on levels of demand for in-year state school places. The department has offered a routine meeting with the local authority to discuss in-year admissions, which we expect to take place in the New Year.

## ■ Special Educational Needs: Private Education

**Laura Trott:**

[\[17892\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of pupils with SEND who currently attend independent schools do not have an Education, Health and Care plan.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

The number and proportion of pupils in independent schools with special educational needs who do not have an education, health and care plan is published annually in the statistical release 'Special educational needs in England'. The release can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england>.

The information requested can be found in the section titled 'Pupils with special educational needs in schools'.

**Special Educational Needs: Training****David Taylor:****[18080]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of mandated Continuing Professional Development activities for increasing Special Educational Needs and Disability services in Hertfordshire.

**David Taylor:****[18081]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to increase uptake among schools for Universal SEND Services in Hertfordshire.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

This government's ambition is that all children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) or in alternative provision receive the right support to succeed in their education and as they move into adult life. We are committed to improving inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools, as well as ensuring special schools cater to those with the most complex needs.

All teachers are teachers of SEND, and high-quality teaching is central to ensuring that pupils with SEND are given the best possible opportunity to achieve at school.

Consideration of SEND underpins the Initial Teacher Training (ITT) Core Content Framework (CCF) and the Early Career Framework (ECF), both of which were developed with input from sector experts to outline the mandatory training for new teachers. The frameworks have been designed to support all pupils to succeed, including those pupils identified within the four areas of need set out in the SEND code of practice. Headteachers are provided the flexibility to use their professional judgement to identify any further training, including in specific specialisms.

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

The department's Universal SEND Services programme offers free SEND-specific continuing professional development for the school and further education workforce.

It is delivered by National Association for Special Educational Needs (Nasen). The department works closely with Nasen to ensure the programme supports professionals across all of England. Since the programme commenced in May 2022, school and college staff have completed over 15,500 online training modules.

### ■ **Special Educational Needs: Transport**

**Clive Jones:**

**[18002]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the oral contribution of the Minister of State for Education in response to the question from the hon. Member for Wokingham of Tuesday 3 December, Official Report, column 96WH, if she will write to provide further information.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

I am happy to write to the hon. Member for Wokingham and Wokingham Borough Council to provide an update on these schools.

The government is clear it wants to make sure all children with special educational needs and disabilities receive the support they need to achieve and thrive. That is why the government set out a clear ambition to improve inclusivity in mainstream schools, while ensuring that special schools cater for children and young people with the most complex needs.

### ■ **Turing Scheme: Disadvantaged**

**Chi Onwurah:**

**[17812]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 4 December 2024 to Question 16156 on Turing Scheme: Free School Meals, how many and what proportion of students with Turing grants are from disadvantaged backgrounds.

**Janet Daby:**

Through the Turing Scheme, in the 2024/25 academic year, education providers and other eligible organisations from across the UK and British Overseas Territories have been allocated over £105 million to send their students on more than 43,000 study and work placements across the globe. Around 23,000 (53%) of these opportunities will be for participants from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Information on the number and proportion of disadvantaged students in previous years of the Turing Scheme is available at the following links:

- 2021/22 Academic Year: <https://www.turing-scheme.org.uk/funding-opportunities/funding-results-2021-to-2022/>.
- 2022/23 Academic Year: <https://www.turing-scheme.org.uk/funding-opportunities/funding-results-2022-23/>.
- 2023/24 Academic Year: <https://www.turing-scheme.org.uk/funding-opportunities/funding-results-2023-to-2024/>.

For the 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25 academic years, the figures are subject to change following quality assurance of providers' final reports of the placements that took place. This data will be published in due course.

#### ■ University of Brighton Academies Trust

**Helena Dollimore:** [\[901684\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will take steps to help resolve the dispute between teachers, parents and the University of Brighton Academies Trust.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

Departmental officials are working closely with trustees at the University of Brighton Academies Trust on the actions they are taking to address concerns raised by staff and parents.

This includes an ongoing review into a number of organisational changes that are planned over the coming months. I will continue to monitor progress on these discussions.

I am pleased that the trust has made a number of changes already, including the appointment of new trustees to the academy trust's board, a review of the trust's financial management, and the appointment of an Executive Director of Change.

### ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

#### ■ Climate Change Convention: Azerbaijan

**Sir John Hayes:** [\[17508\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what the cost to the public purse was of the UK delegation's participation in COP29 in Baku.

**Kerry McCarthy:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Great Yarmouth (Rupert Lowe) on 26 November to question UIN [14729](#).

#### ■ Community Energy

**Dr Al Pinkerton:** [\[17430\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of cooperative energy models.

**Michael Shanks:**

The Government recognises the role community groups and cooperatives play in our efforts to tackle climate change. Great British Energy's Local Power Plan will enhance existing support Community Energy Groups to roll out renewable energy projects and develop up to 8GW of cleaner power.



The Government also supports the community energy sector through the £10 million Community Energy Fund, which enables communities across England to access grant funding to develop local renewable energy projects for investment.

The previous Government consulted on the barriers to community energy through a Call for Evidence, which closed on 30 June 2024. We will learn from the responses to this consultation to inform our future work on community energy.

### ■ Council Housing: Energy Performance Certificates

**Luke Taylor:**

[\[17037\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what funding is available to local councils to support the retrofitting of local authority homes in London to achieve an EPC grade C by 2030.

**Miatta Fahnbulleh:**

As the first step towards 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. The Government will partner with combined authorities and local councils to roll out this plan.

Alongside current energy efficiency schemes, local councils will receive support through the recently announced Wave 3 of the Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund (WH:SHF) in England, and Warm Homes: Local Grant (WH:LG), with delivery expected in 2025. The WH:LG will use an expression of interest model to allocate funding to local authorities. The application window will run from 16th October to 1st December 2024.

### ■ Drax Power Station: Timber

**Rosie Duffield:**

[\[17859\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the KPMG interim investigation of December 2022 into Drax Power Station's claims for government subsidy.

**Michael Shanks:**

Ofgem as the independent energy regulator is responsible for assuring the Government that large scale biomass generators, such as Drax, are in full compliance with sustainability requirements. Ofgem recently undertook a full investigation into Drax's compliance and found that whilst Drax complied with the standards, it failed to report data accurately. The size of Drax's redress payment in light of this, £25m, and the steps they've agreed to take to improve data accuracy, underscores the robustness of the regulatory system.

**■ Fuel Poverty: Runcorn and Helsby****Mike Amesbury:** [\[16995\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to help tackle fuel poverty in Runcorn and Helsby constituency.

**Miatta Fahnbulleh:**

There are multiple targeted schemes to deliver energy efficiency measures to low-income and fuel poor households. The Warm Home Discount schemes also provide a £150 rebate off bills to eligible low-income households across Great Britain.

The Government has kickstarted delivery of the Warm Homes Plan, including an initial £1.8 billion to support fuel poverty schemes over the next 3 years, helping over 225,000 households reduce their energy bills by over £200.

We will also consult this year on proposals for privately rented homes to achieve Energy Performance Certificate C or equivalent by 2030 and are reviewing the fuel poverty strategy.

**■ Housing: Insulation****Mike Amesbury:** [\[16996\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of establishing a national programme to encourage more people to insulate their homes.

**Miatta Fahnbulleh:**

The Government has kickstarted delivery of the Government's ambitious Warm Homes Plan, which will transform homes across the country by making them cleaner and cheaper to run, from installing new insulation to rolling out solar and heat pumps.

On 30th October, the Chancellor's Budget committed £3.4 billion over the next 3 years towards heat decarbonisation and household energy efficiency. The Government is also 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.

**■ Motor Vehicles: Recycling****Nadia Whittome:** [\[16985\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to ensure that vehicle recycling sites are established across the country; and what steps he is taking to publicise incentives to ensure participation in scrappage schemes.

**Michael Shanks:**

Under the End-of-Life Vehicles (Producer Responsibility) Regulations 2005, vehicle manufacturers and importers have a responsibility to establish free collection systems.

The regulations require that by weight, at least 85% of the materials from end-of-life vehicles must be reused or recycled. Additionally, another 10% by weight must be reused, recycled or used for energy recovery, bringing the overall target to 95%.

Vehicle manufacturers must ensure that the vehicles they place on the market are recyclable to those levels.

Currently, there are some city level scrappage schemes operating in the UK, which are administered and publicised by the relevant local authorities.

## ■ Radioactive Waste

**Sir Alec Shelbrooke:**

[\[17086\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if his Department will take steps to accelerate the (a) clearance and (b) restoration of legacy nuclear sites.

**Michael Shanks:**

The Nuclear Decommissioning Authority's (NDA) mission is to clean up the UK's legacy nuclear sites safely, securely, and cost effectively and release them for beneficial reuse. Due to the nature and scale of the mission, delivery remains subject to significant challenges and complexities.

The NDA works with stakeholders including government, regulators, and local communities to ensure that the decommissioning of their sites is safe, sustainable and publicly acceptable, and enables their beneficial reuse as early as possible.

An example of where reuse has already happened is the former Berkeley Technology Centre by South Gloucestershire Council.

## ■ Small Modular Reactors

**Esther McVey:**

[\[16931\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, when recent estimate his Department has made of when small modular reactors will be operational.

**Michael Shanks:**

The Government is committed to ensuring new nuclear power stations, such as Hinkley Point C, Sizewell C, and Small Modular Reactors (SMRs), will play an important role in helping the UK achieve energy security and clean power while securing thousands of good, skilled jobs.

Great British Nuclear (GBN), the government's expert nuclear delivery body, is running an SMR technology selection process and is negotiating with four companies. Final decisions will be taken in the spring. GBN is working to a timeline that enables a robust process underpinned by fairness and transparency, to ensure any selected technology provides best value for money. The programme seeks to select those technologies best able to facilitate operational projects by the mid-2030s.

**ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS****■ Agriculture: Subsidies**

**Tim Farron:** [\[16711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the level of funding available to farmers in the next two years.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

In the Budget announced last month, the Government committed £5 billion to the farming budget over two years, including more money than ever for sustainable food production: £1.8 billion for environmental land management schemes in 2025/26. This enables us to keep momentum on the path to a more resilient and sustainable farming sector.

We're also optimising our farming schemes, so they work efficiently for all farmers, food security and the environment, especially for those that are too often ignored such as small, grassland, upland and tenanted farms.

**■ Environmental Land Management Schemes**

**Jayne Kirkham:** [\[17705\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department plans to (a) reopen and (b) create new (i) Sustainable Farming Incentives and (ii) capital grants to replace previous ones for (A) herbal lays, (B) fencing and (C) hedgerows.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

We have not closed the Sustainable Farming Incentive schemes, in fact there are over 60,000 live applications currently open. Due to an overwhelming demand for some capital items, applications for standalone capital grants were temporarily closed to new applications on 27 November. An update will be provided in early 2025.

**■ Farmers: Northern Ireland**

**Jim Shannon:** [\[17814\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what information his Department holds on how many registered farmers there are in each constituency in Northern Ireland.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

This is a devolved matter and the responsibility of the Northern Ireland Executive.

**■ Flood Control**

**Joe Robertson:** [\[16850\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Environment Agency in managing flood defences

in the last five years; and if he will make made an assessment of the potential merits of establishing (a) a dedicated flood defence agency and (b) other models of flood management oversight.

**Joe Robertson:** [\[16851\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential (a) merits of establishing a Flood Defence Agency as a standalone arms-length body and (b) implications for (i) budget allocations and (ii) operational efficiency of such a body.

**Joe Robertson:** [\[16852\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what comparative assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of flood defence agencies in other countries; and what account his Department takes of such an assessment in consideration of a potential Flood Defence Agency.

**Emma Hardy:**

Protecting communities from flooding is a key priority for this Government. Defra has recently established a Flood Resilience Taskforce which brings together local, regional and national government and organisations including from the voluntary and insurance sectors to improve resilience and preparedness in England.

The role of the EA, Local Authorities and other flood risk management authorities in incident management is set out in the Flood & Water Management Act 2010.

Defra has not assessed the adequacy of international flood defence agencies. It is not the role of Defra to assess the effectiveness of agencies of other countries.

## ■ Flood Control: Finance

**Alex Mayer:** [\[17349\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to page 79 of the Autumn Budget 2024, HC 295, published on 30 October 2024, which regions will receive funding from the £2.4 billion allocated to the building of flood defences and flood defence maintenance for the (a) 2024-25 and (b) 2025-26 financial year; and how much funding was provided to each of region in the 2023-24 financial year.

**Emma Hardy:**

This Government is investing £2.4 billion over this year and next year to improve flood resilience by maintaining, repairing and building flood defences. The list of projects to receive government funding for 2025-26 will be consented over the coming months in the usual way through Regional Flood and Coastal Committees, with local representation.

The breakdown of government investment from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 in £ millions is published online at [Flood and coastal erosion risk management report: 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 - GOV.UK](#). The breakdown from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 will be published in due course.

## ■ Flood Control: Runcorn and Helsby

**Mike Amesbury:** [\[16785\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to prevent flooding in rural communities in Runcorn and Helsby constituency.

**Emma Hardy:**

In just five months in Government, we have introduced a series of measures to better protect Runcorn & Helsby from flooding including:

- Investing £2.4 billion over the next two years to maintain, repair and build flood defences to protect communities across the country.
- Setting up a new Floods Resilience Taskforce bringing together representatives from central and local government, Local Resilience Forums, emergency responders and the National Farmers Union, among others, to discuss how they will speed up and co-ordinate flooding preparation and resilience.
- Consultation to review the existing funding formula, ensuring the challenges facing businesses and rural and coastal communities are adequately considered.
- Invested £50 million to Internal Drainage Boards (IDBs) to better enable them to manage water levels for agriculture and environmental needs.
- Supporting farmers impacted by flooding through a £60 million Farming Recovery Fund, which provides grants of up to £25,000 to return their land to the condition it was in before storm damage.

## ■ Food: Research

**Ben Obese-Jecty:** [\[17322\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to produce a domestic research strategy for food biosecurity.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

The Government published the Biological Security Strategy which sets out a vision and plans to protect the UK from significant biological risks.

Defra published the five-year Plant Biosecurity Strategy for Great Britain and its associated Plant Health Research and Development Plan. Defra also invests in research to prevent and control risks to animal health and to support food security.

## ■ Greyhound Racing: Animal Welfare

**Ian Byrne:** [\[17263\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the impact of greyhound racing on animal welfare.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

The welfare of greyhounds in England is protected by the Animal Welfare Act 2006. The Act allows action to be taken where there is evidence of cruelty to an animal or a

failure to provide for that animal's welfare needs. This includes where greyhounds are raced or kept at trainers' kennels. Specific welfare standards at all greyhound racing tracks in England are also required by the Welfare of Racing Greyhounds Regulations 2010, including having a vet present while dogs are running (with all greyhounds inspected by the vet before being allowed to run).

The Greyhound Board of Great Britain (GBGB) has also undertaken a number of welfare reforms, including publishing a long term, national welfare strategy – 'A Good Life for Every Greyhound'. The Government is monitoring GBGB's progress in delivering the strategy and should further measures be required the Government will consider options which are targeted, effective, and proportionate.

### ■ **Recycling: Slough**

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[17204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to make recycling easier for residents in Slough.

**Mary Creagh:**

Simpler Recycling in England will reform the recycling system. Across England, people will be able to recycle the same materials, whether at home, work or school, putting an end to the confusion over what can and cannot be recycled in different parts of the country.

Local Authorities are best placed to determine the effective delivery of local services. We want to provide the framework in which they do this and ensure that there is consistency in what is collected.

UK Government remains committed to a mandatory labelling regime as part of the implementation of Extended Producer Responsibility for plastic. This will make it easier for consumers to understand how to recycle packaging correctly, and ultimately for the scheme to deliver its environmental outcomes.

## FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

### ■ **British Indian Ocean territory: Mauritius**

**Mr Mark Francois:**

[\[17769\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of (a) the participation of Mauritius in the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation and (b) sections on (i) military cooperation and (ii) other issues in the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation Beijing Action Plan for 2025-2027, published on 5 September 2024, on UK interests.

**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.

### ■ **British Indian Ocean Territory: Sovereignty**

**Priti Patel:** [\[16720\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when Jonathan Powell has had meetings with (a) him and Ministers in his Department; (b) officials; (c) the Prime Minister; (d) Philippe Sands; (e) members of the Mauritian Government; (f) members of the (i) current and (ii) incoming US Administration; (g) representatives of the Chagossians and (h) other third parties on the future sovereignty of the British Indian Ocean Territory since 5 July 2024; and what the subject of each such meeting was.

**Stephen Doughty:**

In his role as BIOT envoy, and with the goal of securing an agreement that protects UK and US security interests, Jonathan Powell has engaged a range of stakeholders, including in the US and Mauritian governments, HMG Ministers and FCDO officials.

### ■ **Colombia: Embassies**

**Kim Johnson:** [\[16986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support the British Embassy in Colombia is offering to young protestors who remain incarcerated after protests in 2021.

**Catherine West:**

The UK supports the right of Colombians to protest peacefully. We have raised concerns with the Colombian authorities since the start of the 2021 protests, urging them to investigate any excessive use of force and for those responsible to be held to account. Colombia is a UK 'Human Rights Priority Country,' and we will continue to work with the Colombian Government and UN agencies to reduce tensions and promote human rights.

### ■ **Colombia: Gender Based Violence**

**Wendy Morton:** [\[16927\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his counterparts in Colombia on tackling violence against women and girls.

**Catherine West:**

Colombia is a focus country for the UK for work to support Women, Peace and Security (WPS). Colombia launched its first WPS National Action Plan on 30



November. In support of the plan, the UK provided £270,000 to co-fund consultation workshops with women's rights organisations. FCDO and MOD officials have met the Ministry of Equality to discuss implementation of the plan. Lord Collins attended the conference of the UK-founded Preventing Sexual Violence International Alliance in Colombia on 25 November. Baroness Chapman attended the Violence Against Children Conference in Colombia on 7 November. With Colombia, we will continue championing the participation of women in the 2016 Peace Agreement, including through the UN Security Council.

## ■ **Russia: Sanctions**

**Wendy Morton:**

[\[16926\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of UK sanctions on Russia.

**Stephen Doughty:**

Working with partners, our Russia sanctions are restricting Putin's war machine - degrading his military and putting grit in the system by increasing equipment costs and delays and reducing equipment quality. Sanctions have deprived Russia of over \$400 billion since February 2022 - equivalent to four more years of funding for the invasion. The FCDO regularly reviews the effectiveness and impact of UK sanctions on Russia and remains committed to continuing to impose and enforce sanctions, alongside our partners, to constrain Russia's remaining sources of revenue.

## ■ **Sudan: Humanitarian Aid**

**Sarah Champion:**

[\[15777\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much and what proportion of the aid provided by his Department in response to the conflict in Sudan will be allocated to the UN in the 2024-25 financial year.

**Anneliese Dodds:**

The UK is continuing to respond to the catastrophic situation in Sudan and assist those most in need, largely through funding key UN partners. The UK recently announced a further £113 million of aid to support over a million people affected by the violence in Sudan, and displaced across the region including to South Sudan, Chad and Uganda. With this announcement, the UK has doubled our aid to £226.5 million. A large majority of UK funding is allocated to key UN agencies such as the World Food Programme (WFP) to provide assorted food commodities to those most in need, and UNICEF to provide life-saving food assistance particularly in hard-to-reach areas in Sudan, including nutrition and water.

**HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE****■ Acute Beds: Finance****Edward Argar:** [\[16964\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many additional inpatient beds in acute settings he has funded NHS England to commission for (a) November 2024, (b) December 2024, (c) January 2025 and (d) February 2025 above the total number available in October 2024.

**Karin Smyth:**

NHS England's 2024/25 Priorities and Operational Planning Guidance set out that, with the additional funding in 2023/24 made recurrent in 2024/25, systems should maintain General and Acute beds at the level funded and agreed through the operating plans in 2023/24 as a minimum.

The latest published data is for October 2024, and shows that there was an average of 101,325 General and Acute beds available in England. This compares to 99,067 in October 2023.

**■ Air Ambulance Services: Cornwall****Ben Maguire:** [\[16853\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department provides financial support to Cornwall Air Ambulance; and if will he will take steps to mitigate the potential impact of proposed changes to employer National Insurance Contributions on that service.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Department and NHS England do not directly fund air ambulances, which are operated by independent charities.

The Government has protected the smallest businesses and charities 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 National Insurance contributions (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.

**■ Alcoholism and Drugs: Death****Paul Davies:** [\[17439\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce death rates from (a) alcohol, (b) drugs and (c) suicide in (a) the North and (b) coastal regions.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

A vital part of delivering the Health Mission shift to prevention will be action to reduce the number of deaths due to alcohol and drug use, especially in deprived areas. In England, rates of drug poisoning and drug misuse deaths have a marked north-south divide, with the North East of England having consistently seen the highest rate of drug and alcohol deaths over the previous decade.

The Department is continuing to invest in improvements to local drug and alcohol treatment and recovery services to ensure that those in need can access high quality help and support. The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities has an action plan to reduce drug and alcohol-related deaths, which is being reviewed in light of the recent Office of National Statistics data, to ensure that it is grounded in the latest understanding of the drivers of drug and alcohol related deaths, and is responding to these. Additionally, the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities has published Commissioning quality standard: alcohol and drug services, which provides guidance for local authorities to support them in commissioning effective alcohol and drug treatment and recovery services in their areas. Further information on the guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/commissioning-quality-standard-alcohol-and-drug-services>

The Department continues to work with all local areas to address unmet need and drug and alcohol misuse deaths, and to drive improvements in the continuity of care. This includes the Unmet Need Toolkit which can be used by local areas to assess local need and the causes of mortality, in order to plan to meet it.

Earlier this year the Department published guidance for local authorities and their partnerships on how to review adult drug and alcohol-related deaths and near-fatal overdoses to prevent future deaths. This is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-drug-and-alcohol-deaths-partnership-review-process/preventing-drug-and-alcohol-deaths-partnership-review-process>

It also published guidance on incident planning and preparedness for the emerging threat of potent synthetic opioids.

As part of the NHS Long Term Plan, over £30 million of national funding has been invested between 2019 and 2025, on an ambitious programme to establish new, or optimise existing, Alcohol Care Teams (ACTs) in the 25% hospitals with the highest need, which is 47 out of 188 eligible sites in England. The ACTs identify people in hospital whose ill health is related to alcohol use, commence treatment for alcohol dependence, and refer to community alcohol treatment on discharge.

The Government has committed to tackling suicide as one the biggest killers in this country. The 8,500 new mental health workers we will recruit will be specially trained to support people at risk to reduce the lives lost to suicide. The Suicide Prevention

Strategy for England, published in September 2023, identifies a number of targeted actions at a national level. We are exploring opportunities to go further.

79 organisations have been allocated funding up to March 2025 from the £10 million Suicide Prevention Grant Fund and are delivering a broad and diverse range of activity that will prevent suicides and save lives including in the North and in coastal areas. Organisations benefitting include Lancaster Men's Hub, Stockton and District Advice and Information Service, and Cornwall Neighbourhoods for Change Ltd.

## ■ Alcoholism: Death

**Paul Davies:**

[17440]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce alcohol-specific deaths.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

A vital part of delivering the Health Mission shift to prevention will be action to reduce the health harms and resulting deaths from excess alcohol consumption. The Department is continuing to invest in improvements to local drug and alcohol treatment services. Funding for drug and alcohol treatment services is provided through the Public Health Grant. In addition to the Public Health Grant, the Department allocated local authorities £267 million in 2024/25 to improve the quality and capacity of drug and alcohol treatment and recovery. An additional £105 million from the Department of Health and Social Care, the Department for Work and Pensions, and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is improving treatment pathways and recovery, housing, and employment outcomes for people affected by drug and alcohol use.

Earlier this year the Department published guidance for local authorities and their partnerships on how to review adult drug and alcohol-related deaths and near-fatal overdoses to prevent future deaths. This is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-drug-and-alcohol-deaths-partnership-review-process/preventing-drug-and-alcohol-deaths-partnership-review-process>

Additionally, the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities has published Commissioning quality standard: alcohol and drug services, which provides guidance for local authorities to support them in commissioning effective alcohol and drug treatment and recovery services in their areas. Further information on the guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/commissioning-quality-standard-alcohol-and-drug-services>

The Department will soon publish the UK Clinical guidelines on alcohol treatment, which will include recommendations on developing effective, accessible, and inclusive services. The Department continues to work with all local areas to address unmet need and drug and alcohol misuse deaths, and to drive improvements in the

continuity of care. This includes the Unmet Need Toolkit which can be used by local areas to assess local need, and plan to meet it.

As part of the NHS Long Term Plan, over £30 million of national funding has been invested between 2019 and 2025, on an ambitious programme to establish new, or optimise existing, Alcohol Care Teams (ACTs) in the 25% hospitals with the highest need, which is 47 out of 188 eligible sites in England. The ACTs identify people in hospital whose ill health is related to alcohol use, commence treatment for alcohol dependence, and refer to community alcohol treatment on discharge.

## ■ Ambulance Services: Standards

**Nick Timothy:**

[17293]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the average recorded ambulance response time was for (a) England, (b) the East of England and (c) Suffolk in each year between 2014 and 2024.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Department does not hold the information requested. NHS England has published ambulance quality indicator official statistics monthly at a national level, and at an ambulance trust level since August 2017. This data is not published at smaller geographies below the national and ambulance trust level, such as for the Suffolk County boundary.

The attached table shows the average ambulance categories 1, 2, 3 and 4 incident response times for the East of England and England from 2017 to October 2024, displayed in hours, minutes, and seconds.

**Attachments:**

1. Ambulance Response Times Table [TABLE FOR PQ17293.docx]

## ■ Ambulance Services: West Suffolk

**Nick Timothy:**

[17294]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the location of ambulance stations by postcode (a) in West Suffolk constituency and (b) within 20 miles of that constituency.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Department does not hold this information. The location of ambulance stations is held locally by ambulance services. The East of England Ambulance Services NHS Trust publishes an up-to-date list of ambulance stations on its website, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.eastamb.nhs.uk/join-the-team/working-for-us/EEAST-station-list>

## ■ Anaesthesia Associates and Physician Associates: Regulation

**Adrian Ramsay:**

[\[17445\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether legal costs associated with the case between the General Medical Council (GMC) and Anaesthetists United, regarding regulation of Physician and Anaesthesia Associates will be paid for by the Department of Health and Social Care or any other public body.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Government is funding the General Medical Council (GMC) to undertake the work required to introduce regulations for Anaesthesia Associates (AAs) and Physician Associates (PAs), to avoid doctors paying for this through their registrant fees.

A longstanding principle underpinning the introduction of statutory regulation for new professions is that all related-costs, including legal challenges to that work, should be funded by the Government, to avoid other professions cross-subsidising the work involved.

Once regulation of AAs and PAs becomes self-funding, the Government will cease funding the GMC.

## ■ Analgesics

**Sir Julian Lewis:**

[\[17065\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his policy is on (a) doctors and (b) other qualified medical personnel administering pain-relieving drugs which may shorten lives; and whether regulations on that issue changed after the conviction of Harold Shipman.

**Karin Smyth:**

*[Holding answer 5 December 2024]:* A wide variety of medicines are used for the purpose of pain-relief, and they have differing levels of regulation. Some items can be bought off-the-shelf without a prescription, whilst others require authorisation from a medical professional. The Human Medicines Regulations 2012 set out the responsibilities which certain medical professionals may undertake regarding the supply and administration of regulated medicines. The Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 sets out the legal framework for the prevention of misuse of controlled drugs.

Decisions about what medicines to prescribe and administer are made by the doctor or other qualified medical personnel responsible for that part of the patient's care. They must always satisfy themselves that the medicines they consider appropriate for their patients can be safely prescribed and administered, and they must take account of appropriate national guidance on clinical effectiveness. Clinicians are responsible for the decisions they make regarding the administration of medicines, and they are regulated by the relevant regulatory body for their profession.

Professional regulators are responsible for setting and enforcing their own standards for the healthcare professionals that they regulate. The General Medical Council

(GMC) is the regulator of all medical doctors practising in the United Kingdom, and the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) is the regulator of nurses and midwives in the UK. Both the GMC and the NMC are independent of the Government, are directly accountable to Parliament, and are responsible for operational matters concerning the discharge of their statutory duties.

Following the Shipman Inquiry's Fourth Report, published on 14 July 2004, the Government introduced tighter controls on the procurement, storage, supply and prescribing of controlled drugs, and established national and regional monitoring by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and a network of regional NHS Controlled Drug Accountable Officers. The CQC is responsible for making sure that health and care service providers, and other regulators, maintain a safe environment for the management and use of controlled drugs in England. The CQC does this under the Controlled Drugs (Supervision of Management and Use) Regulations 2013. These regulations strengthened system governance to monitor the safe use and prescribing of controlled drugs, and require greater co-ordination between the health system and police, to investigate and take action, to protect patients and the public against the misuse and diversion of controlled drugs. Further information on these regulations is available at the following link:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2013/373/contents/made>

#### ■ **Asthma: Medical Equipment**

**Mrs Sarah Russell:**

**[17447]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of pressurised metered dose inhalers were manufactured in pharmaceutical production facilities (a) in the UK and (b) overseas in the last year for which data is available.

**Karin Smyth:**

The information requested is not held.

#### ■ **Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: Drugs**

**Mary Glendon:**

**[16750]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of supply shortages for ADHD medication on the mental health of patients.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

The Department is working closely with NHS England's attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and medicines supply teams, to help resolve the supply issues and improve information for people with ADHD and clinicians.

We are also supporting an independent cross-sector taskforce that NHS England has established to look at ADHD service provision and support across sectors, and their impact on patient experience. The taskforce is bringing together expertise from across a broad range of sectors, including the National Health Service, education, and justice, to better understand the challenges affecting people with ADHD,

including timely access to services and support. The ADHD taskforce will also work closely with the Department for Education's neurodivergence task and finish group.

## ■ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: Health Services

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

**[17863]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure (a) consistency of care and (b) availability of medication for people with an ADHD diagnosis who move to a different NHS Trust from the one in which they received their diagnosis.

**Karin Smyth:**

Prescribers should follow the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's guidelines, Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder: diagnosis and management, when prescribing medication for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). These guidelines are available at the following link:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng87>

Additional information on shared care can be found in the General Medical Council (GMC) best practice guidance, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gmc-uk.org/professional-standards/the-professional-standards/good-practice-in-prescribing-and-managing-medicines-and-devices/shared-care>

The Department has also been working hard with industry and NHS England to help resolve the supply issues with some ADHD medicines, which are affecting the United Kingdom and other countries around the world. As a result of intensive work, some issues have been resolved, and all strengths of lisdexamfetamine, atomoxetine capsules, and guanfacine prolonged-release tablets are now available.

We are continuing to work to resolve supply issues, where they remain, for methylphenidate prolonged-release tablets. We are engaging with all suppliers of methylphenidate prolonged-release tablets to assess the challenges faced and their actions to address them. We are also directing suppliers to secure additional stocks, expedite deliveries where possible, and review plans to further build capacity to support continued growth in demand for the short and long-term. We expect supply to improve in the United Kingdom throughout December 2024 and January 2025. However, we anticipate supply to be limited for some strengths, and we continue to work with all suppliers to ensure the remaining issues are resolved as soon as possible.

To minimise the impact of the shortages on patients, the Department has worked with specialist clinicians, including those within the NHS, to develop management advice for NHS clinicians to consider prescribing available alternative ADHD medicines. To support ADHD patients throughout the NHS, we would expect all ADHD service providers and specialists to follow our guidance, which includes offering rapid response to primary care teams seeking urgent advice or opinions for the



management of patients, including those known to be at a higher risk of adverse impact because of these shortages.

To aid ADHD service providers and prescribers further, we have widely disseminated our communications, and continually update a list of currently available and unavailable ADHD products on the Specialist Pharmacy Service (SPS) website, helping ensure that those involved in the prescribing and dispensing of ADHD medications can make informed decisions with patients. The SPS website also offers additional guidance from NHS England specialists to help systems and healthcare professionals manage ADHD supply disruptions.

To improve supply chain resiliency, we are also working with prospective new suppliers of methylphenidate prolonged-release tablets to expand the UK supplier base.

### ■ **Autism: Berkshire**

**Clive Jones:**

[\[16869\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce waiting times for autism assessments in (a) Wokingham and (b) Berkshire.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

It is the responsibility of integrated care boards (ICBs) to make available appropriate provision to meet the health and care needs of their local population, including autism assessments, in line with relevant National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines.

On 5 April 2023, NHS England published a national framework and operational guidance to help ICBs and the National Health Service to deliver improved outcomes for children, young people, and adults referred to an autism assessment service. In 2024/25, £4.3 million is available nationally to improve services for autistic children and young people, including autism assessment services.

The Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and West Berkshire ICB advises that it has implemented a new assessment model within its neurodevelopmental conditions service, to enable the team to carry out additional assessments. The ICB further advises that it commissions Living Well from Autism Berkshire to provide needs-led community support, which is available for people of all ages waiting for an autism diagnosis, or who have suspected autism. The ICB is also working with the three Berkshire West local authorities, including Wokingham, as well as Children's Services and Education to introduce a needs-led approach to autism, to ensure that children have their needs met sooner, before diagnosis.

### ■ **Autism: Health Services**

**Clive Jones:**

[\[16868\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an estimate of average waiting times for (a) assessment and (b) diagnosis of autism in (i) adults and (ii) children in (A) Wokingham, (B) Berkshire, and (C) England.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

The information requested is not held centrally, but may be held by individual providers or integrated care boards (ICBs). Some relevant information is available on autism assessment waiting times for England, and for the NHS Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West ICB.

In England in September 2024, the Autism Waiting Time Statistics show that there was a total of 204,876 patients with an open suspected autism referral. 126,318 of these patients were aged zero to 17 years old, and 78,638 of these patients were aged 18 years old and over. The median waiting time of all patients across England with an open suspected autism referral, where their first care contact was in the quarter, was 360 days for zero- to 17-year-olds, and 244 days for over 18-year-olds.

In the NHS Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West ICB in September 2024, the Autism Waiting Time Statistics show that there was a total of 8,825 patients with an open suspected autism referral. 7,120 of these patients were aged zero- to 17-years-old, and 1,710 of these patients were aged 18-years-old and over. The median waiting time of all patients in this ICB with an open suspected autism referral, where their first care contact was in the quarter, was 783 days for zero- to 17-year-olds, and 209 days for over 18-year-olds.

Since each metric is rounded to the nearest five in the published data, the number of adults and children do not add up to the total number of patients. Data on children and young people in this dataset is expected to be an underestimate, and caution should be used when interpreting these statistics since they are experimental rather than official statistics. The majority of children assessed for autism in the United Kingdom are seen in child development services, which are out of the scope of this dataset. This means the published figures will underestimate the volume of referrals or diagnoses, and the associated impact on health services. NHS England continues to conduct exploratory analysis into the Community Services Dataset with a view to including autism waiting times data from that dataset.

**■ Blood Cancer: Health Services****Rachel Gilmour:**[\[18293\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to implement the recommendations within the Blood Cancer UK report entitled, UK Blood Cancer Action Plan, published on 4 September 2024.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave to the Hon. Member for Poole on 11 October 2024 to Question [7389](#).

**■ Bowel Cancer: Diagnosis****Mike Amesbury:**[\[17870\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make assessment of the adequacy of diagnosis times for bowel cancer.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

Bowel cancer patients are waiting too long for diagnosis and treatment. However, we will improve survival rates and hit all National Health Service cancer waiting time targets, so no patient, including those with bowel cancer, waits longer than they should.

The NHS will maximise the pace of roll-out of additional diagnostic capacity, delivering the final year of the three-year investment plan for establishing community diagnostic centres. They will also increase the capacity to meet the demand for diagnostic services through investment in new capacity, including magnetic resonance imaging and CT scanners.

Furthermore, following the publication of the 10-Year Health Plan, we will publish a new national cancer plan, which will include further details on how we will improve outcomes for cancer patients, including bowel cancer patients.

**■ Breast Cancer: Health Professions****Clive Jones:****[R] [18283]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 11 November 2024 to Question 12587 on Breast Cancer: Nurses, whether his Department's plans to train clinical cancer staff will be included in the (a) forthcoming NHS ten-year plan and (b) national cancer plan.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The Government has set out plans to publish a ten-year plan to reform the National Health Service. The plan will be informed by Lord Darzi's report and will include further details on how we will improve cancer diagnosis, treatment, and outcomes. Including for breast cancer.

In addition, following publication of the 10-Year Health Plan, we will develop a new national cancer plan, which will include further details on how we will improve outcomes for cancer patients. We will continue to ensure that we train the staff we need to ensure patients are cared for by the right professional, when and where they need it and the cancer plan will reflect this.

We are now in discussions about what form that plan should take, and what its relationship to the 10-Year Health Plan and the Government's wider Health Mission should be and will provide updates on this in due course.

**■ Cancer: Medical Treatments****Shockat Adam:****[17341]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to (a) meet demand for radiation treatment and (b) reduce NHS waiting times for people with cancers that require urgent treatment.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The Government is committed to improving cancer care and reducing waiting times for treatment. We understand that cancer patients are waiting longer than they should for the care they need, and we are taking action to address this.

To ensure the most advanced treatment is available to patients, we are investing £70 million in new radiotherapy machines. In addition, we are committed to improving waiting times for cancer treatment across England. As a first step, we will deliver an extra 40,000 operations, scans, and appointments each week, helping to ensure earlier diagnoses and faster treatment for those who need it most.

**■ Cancer: Statistics****Mr Luke Charters:**[\[17682\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to improve the frequency of cancer statistics releases.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

Cancer waiting times data is published on a monthly basis on the NHS.UK website. There are no plans at present to change the frequency of publication.

**■ Chronic Fatigue Syndrome: Health Services****Munira Wilson:**[\[17890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to publish his Department's final delivery plan on myalgic encephalomyelitis (ME).

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The final myalgic encephalomyelitis, also known as chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS), delivery plan is a priority for the Department, and we aim to publish it in March 2025. We cannot comment on the exact content of the final delivery plan at this time, but it will be shaped by the consultation responses, along with continued close engagement with ME/CFS stakeholders, with three broad themes of attitudes and education, research, and living with ME/CFS.

**■ Coronavirus: Vaccination****Joe Robertson:**[\[17700\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential risks of omitting people with learning disabilities from the (a) 2025 and (b) spring 2026 covid-19 booster vaccination programme.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The Government is committed to protecting those most vulnerable to COVID-19 through vaccination, as guided by the independent Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI). On 13 November 2024, the JCVI published advice on the COVID-19 vaccination programme covering vaccination in 2025 and spring 2026.

This advice is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-in-2025-and-spring-2026-jcvi-advice/jcvi-statement-on-covid-19-vaccination-in-2025-and-spring-2026>

The Government is considering this advice carefully and will respond in due course.

**Calum Miller:**

[17720]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of providing free covid-19 vaccinations for carers.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The Government is committed to protecting those most vulnerable to COVID-19 through vaccination, as guided by the independent Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI). On 13 November 2024, the JCVI published advice on the COVID-19 vaccination programme covering vaccination in 2025 and spring 2026. This advice is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-in-2025-and-spring-2026-jcvi-advice/jcvi-statement-on-covid-19-vaccination-in-2025-and-spring-2026#:~:text=the%20JCVI%20webpage.-,Advice%20on%20vaccination%20in%20spring%202025,care%20home%20for%20older%20adults>

The Government is considering this advice carefully and will respond in due course.

**James McMurdock:**

[17757]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of trends in the number of (a) adverse events and (b) rare side effects reported after receiving a covid-19 vaccine.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency is responsible for monitoring all authorised medicines and vaccines in the United Kingdom, including COVID-19 vaccines, on an ongoing basis, to ensure their benefits continue to outweigh any risks. This monitoring strategy is continuous, proactive, and based on a wide range of information sources, including reports of adverse events and rare side effects. A dedicated team of assessors reviews this information on a weekly basis to look for safety issues or unexpected, rare events.

The robust safety monitoring and surveillance of any COVID-19 vaccines used in the UK includes timely communication on any updated safety advice when needed. Additionally, monthly updates of Adverse Drug Reaction data continue with the new interactive COVID-19 vaccine reports, with further information available at the following link:

<https://yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk/idaps>

**■ CPR: Training****Mike Amesbury:** [\[17220\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of making CPR training more available to members of the public.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

NHS England has partnered with St John Ambulance to co-ordinate skills development to significantly increase the use of Automated External Defibrillators by individuals in community settings. This includes a national network of Community Advocates to champion the importance of first aid, training 60,000 people that will help save up to 4,000 lives each year by 2028.

**■ Dental Services: Greater Manchester****Lisa Smart:** [\[16776\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential (a) impact of the Greater Manchester Dental Quality Access Scheme on access to NHS dental services in Greater Manchester and (b) merits of replicating that scheme in other areas.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

The Department and NHS England are aware of several local access schemes across the country and are keen to learn from all initiatives, including the Greater Manchester Dental Quality Access Scheme.

Local schemes are considered in the development of national policy. Integrated care boards are responsible for commissioning primary care services, including National Health Service dentistry, to meet the needs of the local populations, and to determine the priorities for investment.

**■ Dental Services: Hazel Grove****Lisa Smart:** [\[17306\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase the number of dentists in Hazel Grove constituency.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

The Government plans to tackle the challenges for patients trying to access National Health Service dental care with a rescue plan to provide 700,000 more urgent dental appointments, and recruit new dentists to the areas that need them most. To rebuild dentistry in the long term and increase access to NHS dental care, we will reform the dental contract, with a shift to focus on prevention and the retention of NHS dentists.

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

## ■ Dental Services: North Cornwall

**Ben Maguire:**

[\[16859\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 23 July 2024 to Question 244 on Dental Services: North Cornwall, how many dentists accept NHS patients in North Cornwall constituency; and what progress he has made on (a) providing additional dental care appointments and (b) setting up an innovative access pilot project in Cornwall.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

As of 29 November 2024, there were 11 open dentistry practices in the North Cornwall constituency, none of which were showing as accepting new adult patients. This data is sourced from the Find a Dentist website, and is matched to constituencies based on the postcode data shown on the website, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-dentist>

We are working to ensure that patients can start to access the 700,000 additional urgent dental appointments as soon as possible, targeting the areas that need them most.

The responsibility for commissioning primary care dentistry to meet the needs of the local population has been delegated to the integrated care boards (ICBs) across England. The Cornwall and Isles of Scilly ICB recently approved the Primary Care Strategy at its November meeting. This included information on work to improve dental access, such as the Lostwithiel Pilot Programme. This programme is a collaboration between the National Health Service and a Lostwithiel dental surgery, enabling children and the most vulnerable patients to access an NHS dentist. This pilot aimed to address unmet dental health needs by targeting priority groups and reducing waiting list backlogs.

## ■ Department of Health and Social Care: Military Aid

**Ben Obese-Jecty:**

[\[17315\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many taskings for Military Aid to the Civil Authorities from his Department required the use of RAF CH-47 Chinook helicopters since 2019.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The Department does not hold information on the number or type of military assets used to fulfil a Military Aid to Civil Authorities request. It is the responsibility of the Ministry of Defence to determine the appropriate military assets, and therefore the need for a CH-47 Chinook helicopter.

**■ Department of Health and Social Care: Written Questions****Edward Argar:** [\[16961\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what percentage of (a) ordinary and (b) named day written questions received a holding response from his Department in the first instance between 5 July 2024 and 22 November 2024.

**Edward Argar:** [\[16962\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what percentage of (a) ordinary and (b) named day written questions were responded to by his Department within required timescales between 5 July and 22 November 2024.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Department had a total of 2,270 written questions from the House of Commons due for answer between 5 July and 22 November 2024, the most received by any Government department in that period. These consisted of 1,761 ordinary written questions and 509 named day written questions. In the same period, the Department answered 60.0% of those named day written questions and 74.5% of those ordinary written questions within the required timescales.

It is Departmental procedure that holding answers are submitted for any named day written questions that are not answered within the required timescales; however, this is not done for ordinary written questions. In the period between 5 July and 22 November, 236 holding answers were submitted.

Named day performance has improved month-on-month since the summer recess, however we are determined to make the further improvements necessary to reach the standards expected by the Procedure Committee.

**■ Drugs: Rehabilitation****Andrew Rosindell:** [\[17519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce barriers to accessing drug treatment faced by women.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The Department is focused on supporting local areas to deliver high quality drug and alcohol treatment services, including better meeting the needs of women and vulnerable groups. Current work in relation to women and vulnerable groups includes: providing targeted support to local areas; enhancing data tools to better inform local needs assessments; supporting workforce development; and implementation of the Commissioning Quality Standard and the sharing of good practice. The quality standard provides guidance for local authorities to support them in commissioning effective alcohol and drug treatment and recovery services in their areas and includes a requirement that local authority commissioning partnerships include services that reflect their local populations and work with underrepresented groups, as identified in their local needs assessment, such as people from minority ethnic groups and



women. Further information on the Commissioning Quality Standard is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/commissioning-quality-standard-alcohol-and-drug-services>

In addition to the Public Health Grant, the Department allocated local authorities £267 million in 2024/25 to improve the quality and capacity of drug and alcohol treatment and recovery. An additional £105 million from the Department of Health and Social Care, the Department for Work and Pensions, and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is improving treatment pathways and recovery, housing, and employment outcomes for people affected by drug and alcohol use. This funding will help improve women's access to treatment, removing barriers they face and ensuring the care they receive is tailored to their needs.

**Andrew Rosindell:**

**[17520]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department will announce future funding for drug treatment services beyond 2025.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

We understand the importance of funding certainty for informing local system's operational decision making and future planning. We are engaging with commissioners and providers on this. Future funding for drug treatment services beyond 2025 will be announced very shortly. The Department of Health and Social Care will write directly to each local authority soon to set out indicative allocations for 2025/26, which will still be subject to Departmental and HM Treasury's approvals, and so final allocations could vary.

My Rt. Hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer has also made clear that the Government will conclude a multi-year Spending Review in spring 2025. In future, we anticipate that Spending Reviews will be set every two years to cover a three-year period, including a one-year overlap with the previous Spending Review, helping build in greater certainty and stability over public finances.

In addition to the Public Health Grant, the Department allocated local authorities £267 million in 2024/25 to improve the quality and capacity of drug and alcohol treatment and recovery. An additional £105 million from the Department of Health and Social Care, the Department for Work and Pensions, and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is improving treatment pathways and recovery, housing, and employment outcomes for people affected by drug and alcohol use.

## ■ Endometriosis: Health Services

**Lisa Smart:**

**[17017]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve the (a) diagnosis and (b) treatment of (i) endometriosis and (ii) adenomyosis.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Government is committed to prioritising women's health and improving the diagnosis, treatment, and ongoing care for gynaecological conditions. National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines support healthcare professionals to diagnose and treat conditions. The NICE has published a Women's and reproductive health guidelines, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/hub/indevelopment/gid-hub10001>

In April 2024, the NICE published updated recommendations on the treatment of endometriosis when fertility is a priority, and in November 2024, published updated recommendations on the diagnosis and management of endometriosis. The NICE has also published a guideline on heavy menstrual bleeding assessment and management. This guideline contains recommendations for the diagnosis of women with suspected adenomyosis. Women's health is also embedded into the Royal College of General Practitioners' curriculum for trainee general practitioners.

Tackling waiting lists is a key part of the Government's Health Mission, and we are urgently looking into waiting times for gynecological issues, including for endometriosis and adenomyosis. Funding has been confirmed to support the delivery of our commitment of an extra 40,000 National Health Service operations, scans, and appointments per week, as a first step to delivering on the 18-week standard.

**■ Essential Tremor: Ultrasonics****James Wild:****[17253]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to NHS England's commissioning guidance entitled Transcranial magnetic resonance guided focused ultrasound thalamotomy for treatment of medication-refractory essential tremor, updated 5 October 2021, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of this guidance on trends in the number of patients accessing this treatment.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The Department has made no assessment of the potential impact of NHS England's guidance on trends in the number of patients accessing transcranial magnetic resonance. Transcranial magnetic resonance guided focused ultrasound thalamotomy is recommended for the treatment of refractory essential tremor in patients who are not eligible for deep brain stimulation, within the criteria set put in NHS England's commissioning policy, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/1904-transcranial-magnetic-resonance-guided-focused-ultrasound-thalamotomy-for-treatment-of-medication-refract.pdf>

Epidemiology and needs assessment data set out in the commissioning policy estimates that there will be up to 150 patients that meet the inclusion criteria for this therapy per year in England. NHS England will review the policy should any new evidence become available.

## ■ Food: Sales Promotions

**Joe Robertson:**

[\[17414\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the guidance on meal deals 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, are due to come into force in England on 1 October 2025. Section 5 (3) of the legislation states that volume price promotions do not include relevant special offers such as meal deals.

## ■ General Practitioners: Employers' Contributions

**Mr Joshua Reynolds:**

[\[16693\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of proposed changes to employer National Insurance contributions on the number of available GP appointments.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

Primary care providers, including general practices (GPs), are valued independent contractors who provide nearly £20 billion worth of National Health Services. Every year we consult with each sector both about what services they provide, and the money providers are entitled to in return under their contract. As in previous years, the issue of National Insurance contribution changes will be dealt with as part of that process. We will shortly begin discussions on the annual GP Contract.

## ■ General Practitioners: Slough

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[17589\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of GP surgeries are rated as (a) outstanding and (b) good by the Care Quality Commission in Slough constituency.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

As of 5 December 2024, there are 14 general practice surgeries in the Slough constituency. Of these, zero, or 0%, are rated Outstanding; 12, or 85%, are rated Good; and two, or 14%, have yet to be rated.

## ■ Health Services: Dartford

**Jim Dickson:**

[\[17399\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will take steps to ensure adequate levels of funding for healthcare in Dartford.

**Karin Smyth:**

*[Holding answer 5 December 2024]:* We have taken tough decisions to fix the foundations in the public finances at the Autumn Budget, and this enabled the Spending Review settlement of a £22.6 billion increase in resource spending for the Department from 2023/24 outturn to 2025/26.

NHS Kent and Medway will in turn receive a share of this additional funding. NHS England is responsible for funding allocations to integrated care boards. This process is independent of the Government, and NHS England takes advice on the underlying formulae used to help determine allocations from the independent Advisory Committee on Resource Allocation.

The formulae are based on independent academic research and include factors statistically associated with higher or lower need per head for National Health Services. The formulae produce a target allocation, or 'fair share' for each area, based on a complex assessment of factors such as demography, morbidity, deprivation, and the unavoidable cost of providing services in different areas.

## ■ Hospices

**Dame Harriett Baldwin:**

[\[17089\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with representatives of hospices since the Autumn Budget 2024.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

*[Holding answer 5 December 2024]:* At the Autumn Budget 2024, we took necessary decisions to fix the foundations in the public finances, enabling the Spending Review settlement of a £22.6 billion increase in resource spending for the Department from 2023/24 outturn to 2025/26. These changes will be implemented in April 2025.

The Department will set out further details on the allocation of funding for hospices in England for next year in due course.

## ■ Hospitals: Strikes

**Helen Morgan:**

[\[17908\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the potential impact of hospital facilities staff strikes on patient wellbeing.

**Karin Smyth:**

No assessment has been made. This is a local issue, managed by National Health Service trusts, who work hard to mitigate the impact of any strike action on patients.

In cases where NHS trusts are considering external suppliers to deliver facilities management services, the Government expects that any such outsourced services are delivered by the trust in a way that improves quality, ensures greater stability and longer-term investment in the workforce, and delivers better value for money, as part of the broader commitments on procurement set out in the Government's Make Work Pay programme.

**Helen Morgan:**

[\[17909\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to (a) end and (b) prevent strike action by hospital facilities staff.

**Karin Smyth:**

This is a local issue that is for National Health Service trusts to manage, working in partnership with trade unions.

## ■ IVF: Advertising

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[16932\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it a legal requirement to state the (a) risks to women's health and (b) potential side effects of egg retrieval on adverts for those services.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA), the United Kingdom's fertility sector regulator, has advised that it sets out strict requirements in its Licence Conditions and Code of Practice relating to the information that must be given before egg retrievals take place in UK licensed fertility clinics, whether for the patient's own use or to donate to others. This information includes the potential immediate or longer-term health risks to themselves, or the psychological consequences of being a donor.

The HFEA Code of Practice states that advertising should be designed with regard to the sensitive issues involved in recruiting donors, and should follow the Advertising Standards Authority codes. There are no current plans to change the law on this issue.

## ■ Kidney Diseases

**Julia Buckley:**

[\[17049\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment with Cabinet colleagues of the potential impact of trends in the number of people with kidney disease on the economy.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The Government recognises that long-term sickness continues to be the most common reason for economic inactivity among the working age population. As part of the Get Britain Working plan, more disabled people and those with health conditions will be supported to enter and stay in work, by devolving more power to

local areas so they can shape a joined-up work, health, and skills offer that suits the needs of the people they serve.

There are no current plans to make an assessment with Cabinet colleagues of the potential impact of trends in the number of people with kidney disease on the economy.

## ■ Kidney Diseases: Diagnosis

**Julia Buckley:**

[17047]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase the rate of early diagnosis of chronic kidney disease for (a) people with (i) diabetes, (ii) cardiovascular disease and (iii) other associated risk conditions and (b) all people.

**Julia Buckley:**

[17048]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department plans to take to improve access to treatment to manage (a) chronic kidney disease and (b) common complications to help slow the progression of the disease.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

NHS England is working to detect people at risk of kidney disease through the NHS Health Check Programme. The programme, which is available for everyone between the ages of 40 and 74 years old who is not already on a chronic disease register, assesses people's health and risk of developing certain health problems. Using this information, patients are supported to make behavioural changes and access treatment which helps to prevent and detect kidney disease earlier.

The NHS Long Term Plan has committed to a number of key ambitions to improve care and outcomes for individuals with cardiovascular disease (CVD), including enhanced diagnostic support in the community, better personalised planning, and increasing access to cardiac rehabilitation. These ambitions will support the delivery of the aim to help prevent 150,000 heart attacks, strokes, and dementia cases by 2029. Specific priorities include the management of CVD risk factors, such as hypertension, or high blood pressure, atrial fibrillation, or an abnormal, fast irregular heartbeat, and high cholesterol, ensuring early and rapid access to diagnostic tests and treatment. NHS England is working to identify opportunities for improved integration of CVD management across clinical specialities.

The UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC) reviewed chronic kidney disease (CKD) and glomerulonephritis in 2011, concluding that a population-wide screening programme would not be recommended. Although the UK NSC has not since looked at the evidence for a targeted programme, it can be alerted to any new published peer-reviewed evidence which may suggest the case for a new screening programme. Further information is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-nsc-annual-call-submitting-a-screening-proposal/uk-nsc-annual-call-how-to-submit-a-proposal>

The National Health Service provides access to tests and therapies to diagnose, code, and treat patients with early-stage CKD. NHS England, through the Renal Services Transformation Programme and regional renal networks, is implementing initiatives to provide better, integrated care, reduce health inequalities, and focus on prevention and timely intervention for kidney disease within both primary and secondary care. Regional renal clinical networks prioritise CKD diagnosis and prevention within their transformation ambitions, facilitating earlier treatment. This includes considerations to develop a unified approach to testing populations at risk of developing CKD, and includes raising awareness of diagnostic tools like urine albumin creatinine tests, enabling CKD diagnosis at stages 1 and 2. NHS England aims to improve awareness and access to these important urine and blood tests across primary and secondary care. In addition, the transformation programme launched a renal toolkit last year for use by systems, that outlines principles to support better management of patients identified with CKD throughout their patient journey.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidance, Chronic kidney disease: Assessment and management [NG203], updated in November 2021, sets out best practice for clinicians in the diagnosis and management of CKD. The guidance covers the care and treatment of patients at risk of CKD. It includes recommendations on the monitoring of patients at risk of CKD and aims to prevent or delay the progression of the disease. The guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng203>

The management of CKD has evolved over the last two decades. Increasingly, there are drug interventions to slow the progression of kidney disease, mitigate the risk of cardiovascular events associated with CKD, and reduce the additional risk of acute kidney injury. NICE guidance continues to be updated as evidence accumulates, and NHS England, through the Renal Clinical Reference Group, supports that process through advice and horizon scanning, as therapeutic interventions are introduced. The renal clinical networks have all established work examining the management of CKD, including diagnosis and intervention.

## ■ Kidney Diseases: Health Services

**Julia Buckley:** [17042]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of healthcare inequalities in kidney disease.

**Julia Buckley:** [17043]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of healthcare inequalities in kidney disease on NHS waiting lists.

**Julia Buckley:**

**[17046]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the NHS Ten Year Plan will prioritise action to combat kidney disease to reduce healthcare inequalities.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The Government is committed to building a fairer Britain by tackling the structural inequalities that contribute to poor health, particularly for disadvantaged groups. We are dedicated to ensuring that people live well for longer and spend less time in ill health, regardless of where they are born or their financial circumstances.

Our Health Mission in England will focus on addressing the social determinants of health, with the goal of halving the gap in healthy life expectancy between the richest and poorest regions. We will work across Government to address the root causes of health inequalities, including barriers of access to health and care services. We will prioritise prevention, shift more care into the community, and intervene earlier in life to raise the healthiest generation of children in our history.

The 10-Year Health Plan will ensure a better health service for everyone, regardless of condition or service area. On 21 October 2024, we launched a national conversation on the future of the National Health Service, inviting views from across the country on how to deliver a health service fit for the future. Patients, staff, and organisations, including those with experience of, or expertise in, kidney disease, can make themselves heard by logging onto the online portal, which is available at the following link:

<http://change.nhs.uk>

No formal assessment has been made of the potential impact of healthcare inequalities in kidney disease on NHS waiting lists.

We recognise that patients have been let down for too long whilst they wait for the care they need, including for kidney disease. Currently, the overall waiting list stands at 7.64 million patient pathways, with over six million people waiting. The Government is committed to putting patients first. This means making sure that patients are seen on time and ensuring that people have the best possible experience during their care.

Today, fewer than 60% of patients are being seen within 18 weeks. We will ensure 92% of patients return to waiting no longer than 18 weeks from Referral to Treatment within our first term, a standard which has not been met consistently since September 2015.

Tackling waiting lists is a key part of our Health Mission. We will start by delivering an extra 40,000 operations, scans, and appointments each week, as the first step in our commitment to ensuring patients are treated within 18 weeks. We will also address the challenges in diagnostic waiting times, providing the number of computed tomography, magnetic resonance imaging, and other tests that are needed to reduce elective waits.

NHS England has established the Renal Services Transformation Programme (RSTP), which aims to reduce unwarranted variation in the quality and accessibility of



renal care, to improve outcomes and services for those with kidney disease. NHS England, through the RSTP and regional renal clinical networks, is implementing initiatives to provide better, integrated care, to reduce health inequalities, and to focus on prevention and timely intervention for kidney disease.

Working in collaboration with the NHS RightCare Programme and the renal community, the RSTP has developed a renal toolkit to provide integrated care boards, regional renal clinical networks, and providers with tools, case studies, and principles to support the transformation of services at a local level. The toolkit outlines principles to support better management of patients identified with chronic kidney disease (CKD) throughout their patient journey. The RSTP is working closely with NHS England's regional renal clinical networks to review this toolkit, to work with local partners to develop transformation programmes that will focus on the early identification and management of kidney disease, and which will seek to reduce the number of patients progressing through the various stages of CKD and reduce the number of patients requiring dialysis. By supporting prevention and early intervention, the need for late-stage treatments will be reduced.

**Julia Buckley:**

[\[17044\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what support his Department provides to local NHS Integrated Care Systems to tackle chronic kidney disease through delivering person-centred care.

**Julia Buckley:**

[\[17045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the implementation of NHS England's Renal Services Transformation Programme by local NHS Integrated Care Systems.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidance, Chronic kidney disease: Assessment and management [NG203], updated in November 2021, sets out best practice for clinicians in the diagnosis and management of chronic kidney disease (CKD). The guidance covers the care and treatment of patients at risk of CKD. It includes recommendations on the monitoring of patients at risk of CKD and aims to prevent or delay the progression of the disease. The guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng203>

NHS England, through the Renal Services Transformation Programme and regional renal networks, is implementing initiatives to provide better, integrated care, reduce health inequalities, and focus on the prevention and timely intervention for kidney disease. Regional renal clinical networks have already prioritised CKD diagnosis and the prevention of disease progression within their core function. This includes assessing the concordance with NICE guidance around the use of drugs to mitigate the consequences of CKD. Regional renal clinical networks also prioritise CKD diagnosis and prevention within their transformation ambitions, facilitating earlier

treatment. This includes considerations to develop a unified approach to testing populations at risk of developing CKD, and includes raising awareness of diagnostic tools like urine albumin creatinine tests, enabling CKD diagnosis at stages 1 and 2. NHS England aims to improve awareness and access to these important urine and blood tests across primary and secondary care. In addition, the transformation programme launched a renal toolkit earlier last year, for use by systems, that outlines principles to support better management of patients identified with CKD throughout their patient journey.

No assessment has been made of the adequacy of the implementation of NHS England's Renal Services Transformation Programme by local National Health Service integrated care systems.

### ■ Maternity Disparities Taskforce

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:**

[\[16980\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Maternity Disparities Taskforce is still active; how many meetings of that taskforce have taken place since it was established; and if he will publish the (a) dates and (b) durations of those meetings.

**Karin Smyth:**

*[Holding answer 4 December 2024]:* The Maternity Disparities Taskforce is not currently active, having met six times on: 8 March 2022, 16 May 2022, 18 July 2022, 18 April 2023, 5 September 2023 and 31 January 2024. The duration of these meetings were approximately an hour and a half.

It is a priority for the Government to make sure all women and babies receive the high-quality care they deserve, regardless of their background or ethnicity. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Patient Safety, Women's Health and Mental Health, Baroness Merron, is considering the immediate action needed to tackle inequalities for women and babies and racism in maternity services; including what targets are needed.

### ■ Mental Health Services: Children and Young People

**Tim Farron:**

[\[16714\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department has on the average waiting time for young people to receive a first appointment for child and adolescent mental health services in (a) South Cumbria, (b) Lancashire and (c) North Cumbria in the last six months.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

The following table shows the mean and median average waiting times between referral and first contact for children and young people aged under 18 years old, in the nearest equivalent local authority areas, for April to September 2024:

LOCAL AUTHORITY AREA	MEAN AVERAGE NUMBER OF DAYS BETWEEN REFERRAL AND FIRST CONTACT	MEDIAN AVERAGE NUMBER OF DAYS BETWEEN REFERRAL AND FIRST CONTACT
Lancashire	76.4	12
Cumberland	90.3	28
Westmorland and Furness	53.6	9

Source: Mental Health Services Dataset, NHS England.

This is based on referrals that have a contact and does not include those that are still waiting.

## ■ Mental Health Services: Rural Areas

**Samantha Niblett:**

[\[16780\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the availability of mental health services for (a) young and (b) older people in rural areas.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

*[Holding answer 5 December 2024]:* Waiting lists for those referred for support are too high, and especially so for young people. People with mental health issues are not getting the support or care they deserve or need, which is why we will fix the broken system to ensure we give mental health the same attention and focus as physical health, so that people can be confident in accessing high quality mental health support when they need it.

Nationally, we plan to recruit an additional 8,500 mental health workers across child and adult mental health services in England to reduce delays and provide faster treatment. We will also introduce access to a specialist mental health professional in every school and roll out Young Futures hubs in every community.

The Suicide Prevention Strategy for England 2023-2028, published September 2023, sets out an ambition to conduct and commission research and data linkage projects, and includes supporting the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to look at agricultural workers to understand the unique challenges in that occupational group and respond appropriately.

In addition, people of all ages who are in crisis or who are concerned about a family or loved one can now call 111, select the mental health option, and speak to a trained mental health professional. National Health Service staff can guide callers with next steps such as organising face-to-face community support or facilitating access to alternative services, like crisis cafés or safe havens, which provide a place for people to stay as an alternative to accident and emergency or a hospital admission.

## ■ Mental Health Services: Waiting Lists

**Mary Glendon:**

[\[16170\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 11 November 2024 to Question 6227 Mental Health Services: Waiting Lists, if he will make an estimate of the proportion of people who (a) completed treatment and (b) waited less than 6 weeks for their first appointment for talking therapies in (i) Newcastle upon Tyne and (ii) North Tyneside in July 2024.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

The following table shows the number of completed treatments and waiting times for a first appointment for Talking Therapies in the nearest equivalent areas, by sub integrated care board area, of NHS Newcastle Gateshead and NHS North Tyneside, in July 2024:

	NHS NEWCASTLE GATESHEAD	NHS NORTH TYNESIDE
Referrals discharged during period	1,315	430
Referrals discharged after completing at least two treatments	625	195
Percentage of referrals discharged after completing at least two treatments	47%	45%
Patient accessing their first treatment	915	400
Patients accessing their first treatment in less than six weeks	910	375
Percentage of patients accessing their first treatment in less than six weeks	99%	94%

Source: NHS Talking Therapies Monthly Statistics, NHS England.

## ■ Midwives: Northern Ireland

**Robin Swann:**

[\[17714\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of Professor Mary Renfrew's report entitled Enabling Safe Quality Midwifery Services and Care In Northern Ireland, published on 22 October 2024.

**Karin Smyth:**

*[Holding answer 6 December 2024]:* Improving maternity and neonatal care remains a priority for the Government. Whilst health is a devolved matter, there will be shared challenges and opportunities for improvement, so we are considering the report to help inform our next steps. A formal assessment of the report has not been made to date.

**Neurological Diseases: Clinics****Aphra Brandreth:**[\[16622\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support specialist neuromuscular clinics that wish to take part in the Givinostat Early Access Programme.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Government welcomes the Early Access Programme (EAP) that the company has put in place to provide early access for patients to givinostat. Access to the EAP must be through one of the 23 NorthStar Centres in the United Kingdom. However, participation in the EAP is decided at an individual National Health Service trust level and a NorthStar Centre will not be able to provide givinostat, if its local trust has not approved participation. Under the EAP, givinostat is free to both patients taking part in it and to the NHS, but the NHS trusts must still cover the cost of administering it to patients.

**NHS and Social Services: Finance****Rachel Gilmour:**[\[17691\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has had recent discussions with adult social care providers on the planned level of funding for the (a) NHS and (b) social care in the next four financial years.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

The Department holds regular meetings with adult social care stakeholders, including service providers and representative bodies, to discuss key issues and developments, such as the impact of the Budget on the sector.

**NHS Cambridgeshire and Peterborough****Ian Sollom:**[\[17650\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to meet regularly with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Integrated Care Board; and whether he plans to issue guidance to the Board on the the construction of a town hub in Northstowe.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Department currently has no plans to meet regularly with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Integrated Care Board, and is not taking any steps to issue guidance to the ICB on the construction of a town hub in Northstowe.

**■ NHS: Training****Rupert Lowe:**[\[17376\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, which external companies are contracted by the NHS to provide training for staff.

**Karin Smyth:**

This information is not held centrally by the Department or NHS England. Each National Health Service organisation, including NHS trusts and NHS foundation trusts, appoint their own suppliers for staff training purposes as required. There are several public sector framework agreements in place which offer services and suppliers for the training of staff in the NHS for a range of different purposes.

**■ Non-surgical Cosmetic Procedures: Safety****Victoria Collins:**[\[17388\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to introduce measures to improve patient safety in non-surgical cosmetic procedures.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Government is committed to taking action to address concerns about the safety of the non-surgical cosmetics sector, and will set out the details of its approach at the earliest opportunity.

**■ Parkinson's Disease: General Practitioners****Sarah Green:**[\[17278\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to promote awareness of early symptoms of Parkinson's disease amongst GPs.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

*[Holding answer 5 December 2024]:* General practitioners (GPs) are responsible for ensuring their own clinical knowledge, including of Parkinson's disease, remains up-to-date, and for identifying learning needs as part of their continuing professional development. This activity should include taking account of new research and developments in guidance, such as that produced by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, to ensure that they can continue to provide high quality care to all patients. All doctors registered in the United Kingdom are expected to meet the professional standards set out in the General Medical Council's (GMC's) Good Medical Practice. In 2012, the GMC introduced revalidation, which supports doctors in regularly reflecting on how they can develop or improve their practice, giving patients confidence that doctors are up to date with their practice, and promoting improved quality of care by driving improvements in clinical governance.

The training curricula for postgraduate trainee doctors, set by the Royal College of General Practitioners, has to meet the standards set by the GMC. Whilst curricula do not necessarily highlight specific conditions for doctors to be aware of, they do

emphasise the skills and approaches that a doctor must develop to ensure accurate and timely diagnoses and treatment plans for their patients.

## ■ Parkinson's Disease: Research

**Sarah Green:**

[\[17277\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what funding the Government provides for research into a cure for Parkinson's disease.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

*[Holding answer 5 December 2024]:* The Government's responsibility for delivering Parkinson's disease research is shared between the Department of Health and Social Care, with research delivered by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), and the Department of Science, Innovation and Technology, with research delivered via UK Research and Innovation. The Government spent a total of £79.06 million on research into Parkinson's disease between the financial years 2019/20 and 2023/24.

As well as funding research itself, the NIHR invests significantly in research expertise and capacity, specialist facilities, support services, and collaborations to support and deliver research in England. Collectively, this forms the NIHR's infrastructure. The NIHR's infrastructure enables the country's leading experts to develop and deliver high-quality translational, clinical, and applied research into Parkinson's disease. For example, in the financial year 2022/23, the NIHR Clinical Research Network enabled 114 studies related to Parkinson's disease.

## ■ Processed Food and Slaughterhouses

**Dr Neil Hudson:**

[\[17619\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on how many (a) abattoirs and (b) food processing plants in (i) England and (ii) the UK are family-owned businesses.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

This information is not held by the Food Standards Agency (FSA). There are 232 abattoirs approved by the FSA in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. The FSA is aware of which are sole traders, partnerships, and which are incorporated companies, but it does not hold any central list indicating which are family-owned. This level of detail is not required to facilitate the delivery of Official Controls.

The majority of food processing plants are overseen by local authorities, and while their trading names are published by the FSA and Food Standards Scotland, this does not give an indication of the makeup of ownership.

**■ Public Appointments and Special Advisers: Equality****Joe Robertson:**[\[16846\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 6 September 2024 to Question 2316 on Public Appointments and Special Advisers: Equality, what discussions he has had with the Minister for Women and Equalities on whether the socio-economic duty will apply to (a) NHS and (b) GP waiting lists.

**Karin Smyth:**

There have been no meetings to date between my Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, and the Minister for Women and Equalities on the socio-economic duty. The Government will enact the duty which will require public bodies, when making strategic decisions, to actively consider how their decisions might help to reduce the inequalities associated with socio-economic disadvantage.

**■ Radiology: Labour Turnover and Recruitment****Clive Jones:****[R]** [\[17684\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to invest in the recruitment and retention of radiologists in the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board.

**Karin Smyth:**

Information on local plans is not collected centrally by the Department. National Health Service organisations are responsible for their own recruitment, and for developing their own workforce plans based on service needs.

At a national level, we are committed to training the staff the NHS needs, and we will work closely with partners in education to do this. NHS England continue to lead on a range of initiatives to boost retention of existing staff and ensure the NHS remains an attractive career choice for new recruits.

**■ Shingles: Vaccination****Pippa Heylings:**[\[17008\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of shingles vaccines for all over 65s.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

From September 2023, the routine shingles vaccination programme changed from the Zostavax vaccine to the two dose Shingrix vaccine, to better protect individuals from the effects of shingles, provide better clinical outcomes, and reduce pressures on the health system. The programme was also expanded, and as a result, almost 1 million more people became eligible for the shingles vaccination.

The expansion of the shingles programme currently includes those turning 65 years old on or after 1 September 2023, as well as those aged 50 years old and over who are at increased risk of serious complications. Once everyone aged 65 to 70 years old has received the vaccine, the eligible age will be reduced to 60 years old. Phasing



the roll-out of the shingles vaccination over time to everyone aged 60 years old maximises cost effectiveness and population benefit, ensures consistent messaging over time to maximise coverage, and takes account of National Health Service capacity, all while being consistent with the approach taken by all four nations in the United Kingdom. This is a newly expanded programme, and anyone unsure if they are eligible for the shingles vaccination should check online, on the NHS.UK website, or should speak to their general practice.

In November, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation provided advice to the Department on eligibility for the shingles vaccination programme. This included advice that the Government should consider expanding the shingles vaccination offer to include older adult cohorts aged 80 years old and over. The Department will consider this advice and will update in due course.

## ■ Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme

**Esther McVey:**

[\[16921\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 18 November 2024 to Question 13773 on the Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme, how many people were (a) assessed and (b) successful in each of those financial years; and what the (i) mean, (ii) median and (iii) range of awards was.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

In the financial year (FY) 2022/23, 1,298 applications were assessed, and 72 applications were successful. In the FY 2023/24, 3,806 applications were assessed, and 99 applications were successful. In the FY 2024/25, 4,664 applications have been assessed, and 27 applications have been successful.

We are unable to disclose the specific number of applications that were successful in the 2021/22 FY, as that number is fewer than or equal to five, and could lead to individuals being identified. For the FYs 2022/23 to 2024/25, the mean average number of successful applications is 66, the median average is 72, and the range is 72. The mean average, median average, and range do not include numbers for the 2021/22 FY, as including this information could lead to individuals being identified.

The payment amount for successful claims is fixed at £120,000.

**Esther McVey:**

[\[16922\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 18 November 2024 to Question 13773 on the Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme, how many claims have waited over a year for a decision; and what support his Department provides to claimants.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

As of 1 December 2024, 1,107 claims have been waiting over a year for a resolution. All claims are managed on a case-by-case basis and there are several factors that may impact processing times. This includes time spent awaiting medical records from healthcare providers, or appropriate legal identification documentation, or awaiting consent from claimants for access to their medical records

**Esther McVey:**

[\[16923\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 18 November 2024 to Question 13773 on the Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme, how much his Department spent on legal fees defending against appeals.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

Between 1 November 2021 and 1 December 2024, the total spent by the NHS Business Services Authority on behalf of the Department on legal fees to defend against appeals within the Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme was £50,608.

## ■ Westmorland Hospital: Hospital Wards

**Tim Farron:**

[\[16465\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the closure of ward 6 at Westmorland General Hospital on (a) social care provision and (b) hospital bed availability throughout the University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust.

**Karin Smyth:**

Responsibility for decisions about the delivery, funding, and implementation of services ultimately rests with the National Health Service commissioner, and it is important that integrated care systems operate with a high degree of autonomy in making decisions in the interests of their populations.

The University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust has reviewed how beds are configured across their three main hospitals, the Furness General Hospital, the Westmorland General Hospital, and the Royal Lancaster Infirmary. This review has shown that there are opportunities to improve how beds are used within these hospitals, which would lead to:

- improved patient care and outcomes;
- improved staff and patient experience;
- streamlined clinical pathways which will allow them to ensure their patients receive the right care, at the right time, in the right unit, and reduce inpatient length of stay;
- clinical colleagues being able to spend more time with patients by reducing the need to visit various wards to see patients who should all be in the same place; and
- increased resilience over the winter period.

All the services will continue to be offered, but from different areas in the same hospital, or more appropriate settings within the community. Adult social care services within Westmorland and Furness Council have confirmed that they are currently able to offer support to appropriate patients.

**HOME OFFICE****■ Anti-social Behaviour: Staffordshire****David Williams:**[\[17052\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to tackle anti-social behaviour on the high street in (a) Tunstall, (b) Stoke-on-Trent North and (c) Kidsgrove.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

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

The Government recently announced Respect Orders, which will be introduced in the forthcoming Crime and Policing Bill. Respect Orders can be applied for by police and local councils and are issued by the courts. They will enable courts to place wide-ranging restrictions on the behaviour of the most persistent and disruptive ASB offenders. They will include a power of arrest for any suspected breach, meaning officers can take action quickly to disrupt ongoing ASB. Breach will be a criminal offence, which is heard in the criminal courts with a wide range of sentencing options, including community orders, unlimited fines and, for the most severe cases, up to two years' imprisonment.

We will also put thousands of new neighbourhood police and community support officers into local communities, so residents know who to turn to when things go wrong.

**■ Arts: Task Forces****Alex Sobel:**[\[16991\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to re-establish the Arts and Entertainment Taskforce.

**Seema Malhotra:**

The Government values the contribution from workers in the creative industries and is committed to ensuring there are immigration routes that work for them. There is an excellent immigration offer for workers within the creative industries and we continually keep our policies under review.

**■ Asylum: Bolsover****Natalie Fleet:**[\[17292\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people are waiting for their asylum claims to be processed in Bolsover constituency.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

The Home Office publishes data on asylum in the '[Immigration System Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'. Data on asylum seekers awaiting an initial decision is published

in table Asy\_D03 of the '[Asylum applications, initial decisions and resettlement detailed datasets](#)'. This table is not broken down by local authority or constituency.

Data on asylum seekers on support by local authority is published in table Asy\_D11 of the '[Asylum applications, initial decisions and resettlement detailed datasets](#)'.

Please note that not all asylum seekers awaiting a decision will be on support.

Information on how to use the datasets can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbooks.

## ■ Asylum: Hotels

**Mike Tapp:** [\[17039\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what was the maximum daily spend on hotel accommodation for asylum-seekers between July (a) 2021 and (b) 2024; and in which (i) month and (ii) year that maximum spend was reached.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

The Home Office does not publish data on daily numbers or cost of hotels in use as costs are subject to change depending on numbers being accommodated within the asylum system. However, the total expenditure on asylum is published in the Home Office Annual Report and Accounts, available at [Home Office annual reports and accounts - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

## ■ Asylum: Sri Lanka

**Nick Timothy:** [\[17914\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many of the Sri Lankan asylum seekers on Diego Garcia have been transferred to the UK.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

55 migrants have been relocated to the UK.

**Nick Timothy:** [\[17915\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether any of the Sri Lankan asylum seekers on Diego Garcia have been excluded from travel to the UK on the grounds of (a) their criminal convictions and (b) ongoing criminal investigations.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

Migrants with criminal convictions, charges, or subject to ongoing investigations were not in scope for the recent transfer. We do not comment on individual cases.

**Nick Timothy:** [\[17916\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has provided information to UK police forces on the Sri Lankan asylum seekers in Diego Garcia transferred to the UK.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

The local UK police force in the area where the migrants have been located have been informed of their arrival in the UK.

**Nick Timothy:** [\[17917\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 11 November 2024 to Question 12545 on Asylum: Sri Lanka, what the serious welfare and safeguarding concerns for (a) children and (b) other people were on Diego Garcia.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

Diego Garcia has never been a suitable location for migrants, including children and their families, given the logistical challenges of providing care in such a remote place without housing, medical care or other significant civilian infrastructure.

**Nick Timothy:** [\[17918\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 11 November 2024 to Question 12545 on Asylum: Sri Lanka, whether her Department sought information from the Sri Lankan government on the criminal records of Sri Lankan nationals in Diego Garcia before they were transferred to the UK.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

All migrants who have arrived in the UK have undergone the required security checks in line with the appropriate immigration rules.

## ■ Domestic Abuse: Finance

**Neil Duncan-Jordan:** [\[17751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much funding her Department plans to provide to help prevent (a) domestic abuse and (b) sexist and misogynistic attitudes that underpin domestic violence in the next financial year.

**Jess Phillips:**

This Government has committed to halving violence against women and girls, including domestic abuse, in a decade.

Addressing the attitudes and root causes of domestic abuse is fundamental to our approach. It is essential we have a comprehensive approach to prevention, from education to early intervention and targeting the most prolific and repeat offenders.

Following the spending review announcements in October, the Home Office is now deciding how the total funding settlement is allocated across the department to deliver the Government's priorities. The Government has identified several priority areas for reform, which it will build on in Phase Two of the Spending Review. Phase Two will be mission-led, ensuring Departments work together to develop a shared strategy for delivering the Government's priorities.

## ■ Fraud

**David Pinto-Duschinsky:** [\[17754\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to reduce (a) the prevalence of money mules and (b) other financial exploitation.

**Jess Phillips:**

The Government is committed to working with law enforcement, regulators, and the financial and third sectors to address and prevent the harms associated with money mule networks and related financial exploitation.

The Home Office published the Money Mules Action Plan in March, which is a first of its kind, cross-sector action plan. The Plan balances deterrents and safeguarding measures to disrupt money muling while protecting the public from related harms. It brings together cross-sector innovations, including public awareness materials on the risks of money muling, initiatives from the financial sector to identify mule networks, and law enforcement work to target criminals.

The Government also recognises the devastating impact financial and economic abuse can have on victims. Economic abuse more widely is recognised in law as part of the statutory definition of domestic abuse included in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. The government continues to promote awareness of economic abuse to improve the public and private sector's response, particularly working with the specialist charity Surviving Economic Abuse to strengthen financial systems and support victims.

**■ Immigration Controls: Arts****Mr James Frith:**[\[16984\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment with Cabinet colleagues of the potential (a) economic and (b) cultural impact of UK border controls on (i) non-UK artists, (ii) sponsors and (iii) creative workers.

**Seema Malhotra:**

The Government is committed to ensuring workers in the creative industries have immigration routes that work for them. The United Kingdom has an excellent immigration offer for workers within the creative industries and we continually keep our policies under review.

**Alex Sobel:**[\[16989\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if her Department will take steps to improve (a) training and (b) guidance for Border Force officers on temporary admission procedures for entry into the UK for creative workers.

**Alex Sobel:**[\[16990\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department plans to review training provisions for UK Border Force officers for entry into the UK for non-UK (a) artists, (b) sponsors and (c) creatives.

**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.

Throughout that training, officers are continually tested to ensure they have the required skills and knowledge to carry out their role.

Training in relation to collective workers is thoroughly addressed within existing BF Foundation training given to all officers, and delivered across multiple sessions. This includes relevant policies, including the period of access, the Certificate of Sponsorship, and processing procedures associated with creative workers.

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

- have a valid Temporary Work - Creative Worker certificate of sponsorship (CoS)
- are coming to work in the UK for 3 months or less.
- do not normally need 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: [Creative Worker visa \(Temporary Work\): Creative Worker visa concession - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/creative-worker-visa).

## ■ Immigration: Statistics

**Sir John Hayes:**

**[16916]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will hold discussions with the Office for National Statistics on the reliability of its immigration statistics.

**Seema Malhotra:**

The development of the long-term international migration statistics are a matter for the independent Office for National Statistics (ONS). The UK Statistics Authority oversees the quality and reliability of national statistics. The ONS' migration statistics are 'Official Statistics in Development', meaning they are tested with a wide range of users, in line with the standards of trustworthiness, quality, and value in the Code of Practice for Statistics.

## ■ Immigration: Windrush Generation

**Natasha Irons:**

**[17040]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the Windrush commissioner will consider the reimbursement of legal costs for the victims of the Windrush scandal.

**Seema Malhotra:**

We are establishing a Windrush Commissioner to act as an independent advocate for all those affected. This role will oversee the implementation of the Windrush Lessons Learned Review and act as a trusted voice for communities, driving improvements and promoting lasting change.

On appointment, the Commissioner will engage with Windrush stakeholders and communities to understand what they need and how the Commissioner can drive delivery of that change.

To ensure claimants are supported, we are also allocating £1.5million in government grant funding, which will be used to increase advocacy support for victims applying for the Windrush Compensation Scheme.

## ■ Migrants: Women

**Apsana Begum:** [\[17604\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of no recourse to public funds rules on migrant survivors of violence against women and girls.

**Seema Malhotra:**

Migrant survivors of violence against women and girls who qualify under the Migrant Victim of Domestic Abuse Concession (MVDAC) are granted permission to stay with recourse to public funds.

Those eligible under Appendix Victims of Domestic Abuse are granted settlement (Indefinite Leave to Remain) which similarly enables recourse to public funds. These policies mean migrant survivors of violence have status and financial independence from their abuser where such statuses would otherwise depend on their partner in the UK.

## ■ Oppression

**Alex Sobel:** [\[17026\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of implementing a reporting system for transnational repression.

**Dan Jarvis:**

Where individuals have concerns for their safety, they are advised to contact their local police in the first instance. In the event that a person believes they are subject to an imminent threat, they should call 999.

The National Security Act 2023 strengthens our legal powers to counter foreign interference, and provides the security services and law enforcement agencies with the tools they need to deter, detect, and disrupt modern-day state threats. The police are raising awareness and capabilities of frontline officers and staff across the UK, including their understanding of the threats that foreign powers present and how to respond appropriately to reports from members of the public.

## ■ Public Places: Hendon

**David Pinto-Duschinsky:** [\[17753\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to make public spaces safer for women and girls in Hendon constituency.

**Jess Phillips:**

This Government has set out an unprecedented ambition to halve violence against women and girls (VAWG) in a decade, and we are determined to use every lever available to us to deliver on that aim. That means working across Government departments to tackle threats to women's safety in all areas of their lives, including in public spaces.



The Safer Streets Mission is the vehicle to drive delivery across Government to halve VAWG, halve knife crime, and restore confidence in the policing and justice system to record levels. We will spearhead a cross-government approach to VAWG and girls through the Safer Streets Mission Board.

## HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### ■ Business Rates and Employers' Contributions

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

[\[16933\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to paragraph 4.63 of the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 October, HC 295, whether the £1.3 billion new grant funding includes central government funding for (a) freezing of the small business rate relief multiplier, (b) retail, hospitality and leisure relief and (c) compensation for changes to employer National Insurance contributions for public bodies in 2025-26.

**Jim McMahon:**

On 28 November we published a policy statement setting out details on the Local Government Finance Settlement for the next year for councils across England, as well as the government's wider intentions to fix the foundations of local government over the course of this Parliament.

The £1.3 billion of new grant funding, does not include grant compensation that will be paid to local government for the decisions to freeze the small business rates multiplier, and to award relief to eligible retail, hospitality and leisure businesses in 2025-26. Compensation for these tax policy measures will be paid to local authorities during through the normal business rates retention system processes.

Additional to the £1.3 billion of new grant funding, the Government has committed to provide support for public sector employers for changes to employer National Insurance Contribution costs. This applies to those directly employed by the public sector, including local government. We will set out further details at the provisional Settlement in December.

### ■ Business Rates: Tax Allowances

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

[\[16943\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, which types of hereditament are eligible for the retail, hospitality and leisure business rate relief by Valuation Office Agency special category code.

**Jim McMahon:**

The eligibility criteria for the 2024-25 retail, hospitality and leisure business rate relief are set out in guidance published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. Guidance for the 2025-26 scheme will be published in due course. The

criteria for this scheme do not reference Valuation Office Agency special category codes, which are used principally for the purposes of valuation.

### ■ Care Homes: Derbyshire

**Natalie Fleet:** [\[17290\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many care homes were referred to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman in (a) Bolsover constituency and (b) Derbyshire in each of the last five years; and how many were (i) privately-owned and (ii) local authority-owned.

**Jim McMahon:**

The Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) records complaints by the individual local authority or care provider, and not by geographical area. The LGSCO received 18 complaints about Derbyshire County Council's adult social care services in the 2019-20 financial year, 19 in 2020-21, 22 in 2021-22, 29 in 2022-23 and 29 in 2023-24.

### ■ Chinese Embassy: Planning Permission

**Paul Holmes:** [\[16572\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 27 November 2024 to Question 14996 on Chinese Embassy: Planning Permission, if she will publish the planning representations made by the (a) Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs and (b) Head of Cyber-Physical and Digital Twins, Innovate UK.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

*[Holding answer 2 December 2024]:* We do not routinely publish planning representations seeking call in of applications.

### ■ Council Tax

**Kevin Hollinrake:** [\[16940\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many dwellings were liable for council tax in (a) England and (b) Wales in (i) 2009-10 and (ii) the most recent financial year for which figures are available.

**Jim McMahon:**

Council tax is a devolved matter. You will appreciate therefore it would only be appropriate for me to comment on council tax data for England. Data on the number of dwelling liable for council tax in 2009 is available [here](#). Data for 2024 is available [here](#).

## ■ Council Tax: Exemptions

**Alison Bennett:**

[\[17425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of a time limit for claiming Council Tax exemption under Class F.

**Jim McMahon:**

This exemption will apply until probate is granted (or letters of administration are signed) and while the dwelling remains unoccupied. A further 6-month exemption may apply following probate, so long as the dwelling remains unoccupied and has not been sold or transferred. The government does not have any plans to change this exemption.

## ■ Devolution: Essex

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

[\[16934\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what progress she has made on a devolution deal for Essex; and whether she plans to amend the date of the local elections scheduled for May 2025.

**Jim McMahon:**

In July, the Deputy Prime Minister invited places without devolution agreements, such as Essex, to come forward with proposals for their areas. This process closed in September and we are engaging closely with local leaders and stakeholders to review proposals.

The Government will shortly publish a white paper setting out an ambitious new framework for English devolution.

No plans have been made to amend the date of the local elections scheduled for May 2025.

## ■ Flags: Planning Permission

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

[\[16949\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 14 October 2024 to Question 6385 on Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Flags, if she will publish guidance on whether the flying of a flag which does not have deemed consent and is flown from the ground but visible from a public highway requires planning permission.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

The relevant government guidance, [Flying flags: a plain English guide](#), sets out the planning rules for the display of flags.

## ■ Homelessness

**Mike Amesbury:** [\[16998\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will publish the (a) minutes and (b) list of attendees for the first inter-ministerial group for ending homelessness.

**Rushanara Ali:**

The Inter-Ministerial Group, chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister, includes ministers from across government and is focused on developing a long-term strategy to get us back on track to ending homelessness. This includes ministers from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Home Office, Department for Education, Department for Work and Pensions, Department for Health and Social Care, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Justice, Cabinet Office, and His Majesty's Treasury.

In line with the practice of successive administrations, detailed minutes of ministerial meetings - even those that are declared publicly - are not normally disclosed.

**Mr Joshua Reynolds:** [\[17054\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking help tackle homelessness.

**Helen Maguire:** [\[17057\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will take steps to ensure that youth homelessness is included in the cross-government strategy to end homelessness.

**Rushanara Ali:**

The Government recognises that homelessness levels are far too high and this can have a devastating impact on those affected, including young people. We will consider youth homelessness as we develop our long-term cross-government strategy, working with mayors and councils across the country, to get us back on track to ending homelessness.

We are already taking the first steps to get back on track to ending homelessness. As announced at the Budget, funding for homelessness services is increasing next year by £233 million compared to this year (2024/25). This increased spending will help to prevent rises in the number of families in temporary accommodation and help to prevent rough sleeping. This brings total spend to nearly £1 billion in 2025/26.

## ■ Leasehold

**Luke Taylor:** [\[17035\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of abolishing residential leaseholds.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

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

■ **Leasehold: Safety****Margaret Mullane:****[18022]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department is taking to ensure (a) landlords and (b) management companies are held accountable for safety defects in leasehold properties.

**Alex Norris:**

Regulators – local authorities, fire and rescue authorities and the Building Safety Regulator – have powers to compel landlords and other responsible persons to remediate their unsafe buildings. Where necessary, regulators have powers to prosecute those who are failing to fulfil their duties.

The Remediation Acceleration Plan (RAP) published this week (2 December) sets out key measures to fix buildings faster, identify remaining buildings still at risk and ensure that residents are supported through the remediation process. We are increasing funding to ensure that local regulators have the capacity to drive remediation where responsible parties fail to undertake the work quickly. A further £30 million investment in 25/26 will provide capacity for regulators to tackle hundreds of enforcement cases a year, targeting those failing to remediate their buildings.

The Government has published [new guidance](#) for regulators on the enforcement of remediation work. The guidance establishes key principles for remediation enforcement, such as the designation of a lead regulator at each building. This reduces ambiguity and allows regulators to work together and drive remediation effectively.

For landlords, the message is clear: time is running out to do the right thing. Those who fail to fix their buildings can expect swift and robust enforcement action from regulators with the full support of government behind them.

■ **Local Government Services: Costs****Kevin Hollinrake:****[16953]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of proposed changes to employer National Insurance contributions on the cost of outsourced local government services.

**Jim McMahon:**

I refer the Hon Member to the answer to Question UIN [11851](#) on 8 November 2024.

**Local Government: Procurement**

**Kevin Hollinrake:** [\[16951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an estimate of the cost of outsourced (a) goods and (b) services in local government in the last 12 months.

**Kevin Hollinrake:** [\[16952\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate her Department has made of the total value of local government procurement of (a) goods and (b) services in the most recent year for which figures are available.

**Jim McMahon:**

MHCLG does not collect data on the procurement activities of individual local authorities. They are independent contracting authorities and accountable to their own electorates.

**Local Government: Public Private Partnerships**

**Kevin Hollinrake:** [\[16950\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Answer of 6 June 2016 to Question 38442 on Local Government: Public Private Partnerships, what steps her Department has taken to assess compliance with the Local Government Transparency Code since 2016.

**Jim McMahon:**

The purpose of the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 (the Code) is to make it easier for the public to directly hold their councils to account, not as a means for central government to check up on local authorities. Therefore, the government does not monitor compliance with the Code.

If there were concerns about a local authority's compliance with the Code, a complaint could be made to the authority's Monitoring Officer, or via their complaints procedure. It is possible to make a complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman where the usual complaints procedures have been exhausted, or to make a Freedom of Information request if local authorities continue to fail in fulfilling their duties under the Code.

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

**Paul Holmes:** [\[15005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, for what reasons her Department plans to close its offices in (a) Birmingham, (b) Exeter, (c) Truro, (d) Sheffield, (e) Warrington and (f) Newcastle; what estimate her Department has made of the cost of closing each office; and what plans her Department has for the existing staff in each location.

**Alex Norris:**

The department has made the decision to close these six offices over the next two years, as existing leases end, in order to create a more coherent estate across the UK with strong office communities. The department will continue to have an office in every English region, and in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. We will also continue to have a wider office footprint than similarly staffed departments.

The department plans to invest more in some locations and that work is ongoing, we expect to provide net benefits in the long term as a result of these changes. All staff in the six offices which will close will be able to continue in their roles and there will be no compulsory redundancies.

**■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Policy****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[16814\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how their Department defines strategy.

**Alex Norris:**

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

**■ Social Rented Housing: Standards****Jayne Kirkham:**[\[18023\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will issue guidance to registered social housing providers which confirms that if a floor covering exists in a property when the tenancy changes over that the default will be to keep it as part of the Decent Homes Standard.

**Jayne Kirkham:**[\[18024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will update the Decent Homes Standard to include floor coverings in social rented properties.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

There is currently no legislation that requires social housing landlords to provide floor coverings and landlords are not required to remove floor coverings when a home is let to new tenants.

The government will consult on a new Decent Homes Standard next year.

**■ Social Rented Housing: Sub-letting****Vikki Slade:**[\[18047\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to (a) assess and (b) prevent unauthorised sub-letting of social housing for holiday lets.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

The Government is committed to supporting landlords to tackle the small minority of social tenants who, by cheating the system, deprive those in need of a social home.

Under existing legislation, it is a criminal offence to sub-let social housing without the landlord's permission. The courts are also able to award the social landlord the profit the tenant has made from their unlawful sub-letting.

Social landlords are encouraged to take a proactive approach to tackling fraud in their stock. If the tenant no longer occupies the property as their only or principal home, they also risk losing their secure or assured status as a tenant and their home.

**University of Surrey: Solar Power****Zöe Franklin:**[\[18045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when her Department plans to make a decision on the planning application for a solar facility at the University of Surrey.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

The application in question is currently being considered by Guildford Borough Council.

Following requests to call in the application, a holding Direction restricting the grant of permission was issued by MHCLG, to allow those requests to be considered.

A decision on whether to call in the application will be made in due course.

The Hon Member should note that the issuing of a holding Direction should not be taken as an indication as to whether an application will be called in or not.

**JUSTICE****Coroners: Standards****Lisa Smart:**[\[17307\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if her Department will take steps to (a) improve communication practices, (b) ensure greater sensitivity in interactions, (c) better manage families' expectations to prevent (i) delays and (ii) unnecessary distress and (d) otherwise reform the coroner services to put bereaved families at the centre of operations.

**Alex Davies-Jones:**

It is important that the inquest process is as swift, efficient and sensitive as possible and that bereaved families are put at the heart of the process in order to avoid additional distress at such a difficult time in their lives.

Whilst the Ministry of Justice is responsible for coroner law and policy, this Department does not have operational responsibility for coroner services which are administered and funded by individual local authorities according to local priorities and need.



These issues were raised by the Justice Committee in their recent follow-up inquiry into the coroner service. The Government is carefully considering the Committee's findings, including on guidance and what additional support for bereaved people may be needed and will respond on the steps it intends to take to further support the coroner service in due course.

We will continue to work with the Chief Coroner to consider and address any issues of consistency and to share best practice across coroner areas.

## ■ **Coroners: Suicide**

**Munira Wilson:**

[\[17242\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what discussions her Department has had with the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology on coroners' reports of deaths associated with online suicide forums.

**Alex Davies-Jones:**

The Ministry of Justice has worked closely with the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology on measures to support coroners when investigating child deaths, including those by suicide.

Measures in the Online Safety Act 2023 give OFCOM the power to require regulated online platforms to provide them with information on a child's use of their platform, when a coroner gives notice that such information is required for an investigation into the death of a child.

The Data (Use and Access) Bill, which is currently before Parliament, contains provisions to enable coroners to require relevant online services to retain data relating to a child's online activity, where the coroner considers this may be relevant to an investigation into a child's death. This is facilitated through the coroner giving notice to OFCOM, enabling them to direct the relevant services to secure the data so that it will be available upon request, should the coroner later require it as part of their investigation.

## ■ **Courts: Translation Services**

**Abtisam Mohamed:**

[\[15888\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether she has had discussions with stakeholders on the potential merits of in-sourcing court language services.

**Sarah Sackman:**

Through the language services stakeholder forum, the Ministry of Justice has regular conversations with stakeholders and was made aware of their view of outsourcing from these conversations. This view was used to clarify the options explored within the delivery model assessment and resulted in the consideration of insourcing, and hybrid options of insource and outsource.

## ■ Offenders: Employment

**Dr Allison Gardner:**

[\[18064\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps she is taking to support those with criminal records to reintegrate back into appropriate work.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

We know that employment reduces the chance of reoffending significantly, by up to nine percentage points for offenders released from custody. That is why we have committed to break the cycle of reoffending by better supporting prisons to link up with employers and the voluntary sector to get more people with convictions into work.

For those leaving custody, there are Employment Hubs in all resettlement prisons where prisoners can access job vacancies and support with applications. Prison Employment Leads support prisoners to get work ready and match them to jobs on release. The proportion of prison leavers in employment six months post-release more than doubled across the past three performance years, from 14% in 2020/21 to 31% in 2023/24.

Those on community sentences or under probation supervision on licence can access Jobcentre Plus support, and we are working with the Department of Work and Pensions to ensure that work coaches are equipped to give the right support to people with convictions, as set out in the Get Britain Working White Paper. HMPPS' Creating Future Opportunities programme also works with those furthest from the labour market in the community to improve their employability and move into work. It has supported over 1,000 prison leavers into work in the year to March 2024.

For all people with convictions, including those not under probation supervision, the criminal records disclosure regime strikes a balance between rehabilitation and safeguarding the public. Where a conviction has become spent, it is right that the individual is treated as rehabilitated and can move on with their life by not needing to declare the conviction when applying for most jobs or insurance.

## ■ Prison Accommodation

**Fred Thomas:**

[\[17679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prison places have been added to the estate since 5 July 2024.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

475 places have been delivered as part of the 20,000 place prison programmes since this Government took office on 5 July 2024. We will be publishing a 10 year capacity strategy by the end of the year.

## ■ Prison Accommodation: Costs

**Fred Thomas:**

[\[17678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the forecasted cost to the public purse was of adding 20,000 places to the prison estate (a) in total and (b) per place in October 2021.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

The Department's estimate of the total cost of completing the additional 20,000 places to the prison estate at the point of the SR21 settlement was c.£5.2bn and this in turn equated to an average of c.£257k per place.

## ■ Prison Estate Transformation Programme: Expenditure

**Fred Thomas:**

[\[17677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the (a) total cost and (b) cost for each new prison place was for the Prison Estate Transformation Programme between 2016 and 2019.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

The total cost of the prison places delivered by the Prison Estate Transformation Programme (PETP) was c.£37.4m. The cost per place was c.£182k. This includes some places delivered in 2020 where they relate to the phased delivery of a single project.

## ■ Prisoners: Wales

**Tonia Antoniazzi:**

[\[17582\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether her Department holds data on the number of Welsh people in the prison system.

**Tonia Antoniazzi:**

[\[17583\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether her Department holds data on Welsh prisoners by (a) sex, (b) ethnicity, (c) socio-economic background, (d) offence type, (e) sentence type and (f) local authority.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) cannot identify Welsh prisoners because English, Welsh, Scottish and Northern Irish nationalities are not captured separately on the central data system. UK nationals are all recorded as British.

HMPPS can provide data on prisoners with an address in Wales, broken down by sex, ethnicity, offence type, sentence type and local authority. We do not hold data on offenders' socio-economic background.

Around 97% of prisoners have addresses that are recorded on the central data system. If no address is given, an offender's committal court address is used as a proxy for residence. Prisoners with no recorded origin are typically foreign nationals, or those recently received into custody where no address has yet been assigned.

It is important to note that someone with an address, for example in London, may consider themselves to be Welsh, while someone with an address in Wales may not. It is not possible to infer from an address in Wales that an individual considers themselves to be Welsh.

### ■ Prisons: Research

**Mr Gregory Campbell:** [\[17767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Answer of 10 January 2024 to Question 7797 on Prisons: Research, what (a) conclusions she has drawn and (b) changes she has made as a result of the Ipsos MORI research project on the retributive benefit of prison.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

Ministry of Justice officials received research findings from Ipsos MORI in November this year and are currently considering the implications of the work. Officials will advise Ministers soon.

Therefore, no conclusions have yet been drawn from these findings and we have not made any changes on the basis of the research project.

### ■ Reoffenders

**Fred Thomas:** [\[17680\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the recall rate was for offenders released under the End of Custody Supervised License scheme between October 2023 and June 2024.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

The recall rate for people released under the End of Custody Supervised Licence (ECSL) scheme that have been recalled in the most recent period for which data is available could only be obtained at a disproportionate cost.

9,782 number of recalls took place between April 2024 and June 2024, which coincides with the highest level of quarterly ECSL releases under the previous Government.

## SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

### ■ Government Departments: Microsoft

**Chi Onwurah:** [\[17803\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to the Strategic Partnership Arrangement 2024 between Microsoft and the Crown Commercial Service, what guidance is available to civil servants on securing official documents held online.

**Feryal Clark:**

Everyone who works with government has a duty of confidentiality and a responsibility to safeguard any government information or data that they access or share, and all government departments are required to meet a range of mandatory security standards. The 'Government Security Classifications Policy' and 'Guidance 1.1: Working at OFFICIAL' set a range of baseline security behaviours and controls for all civil servants to follow on how to process OFFICIAL information securely, wherever it is collected, stored, processed or shared across HMG (electronically, in hardcopy or verbally) and with the wider public sector and external partners. Government departments and other public sector organisations are responsible for ensuring civil servants understand their duties and responsibilities.

Departments have Knowledge and Information Management professionals, and Digital and Data professionals, to help configure access permissions and other protections within their cloud based systems, such as within Microsoft 365.

Microsoft has produced various pieces of [guidance](#) for the UK government, in partnership with the Central Digital and Data Office (CDDO), Government Security Group and the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC). These have been created to support government organisations that use Microsoft 365. They outline how to configure the Microsoft 365 platform to enable a secure and interoperable experience for civil servants operating at the OFFICIAL tier.

**■ Innovation: Business****Chi Onwurah:**[\[17805\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, which Minister is responsible for the interface between innovation and business to drive growth.

**Feryal Clark:**

The Minister of State for Science, Research and Innovation is responsible for Innovation across the Missions, including the Growth Mission. However, a wide range of DSIT's policy areas support businesses and contribute to innovation-led growth, and therefore all Ministers will have an interest. A full list of Ministerial responsibilities is at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-ministers-and-responsibilities>.

**TRANSPORT****■ A30****Ben Maguire:**[\[18324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of a graded junction at the A30 Plusha junction.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

The Department is aware of the safety issues at the junction between the A30 and B3257 at Plusha. National Highways is investigating a number of possible early-delivery modest safety improvements for this stretch of the A30. This is part of its A30 Kennards House to Five Lanes Safety Study. A wholly new graded junction would need to be considered for delivery beyond 2030 as part of a future road investment strategy period.

**Abellio Greater Anglia: Nationalisation****Dr Luke Evans:**[\[17897\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate her Department has made of the cost to the public purse of nationalising Greater Anglia.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The exact costs associated with the transfer of a train operator's services cannot be determined with any certainty at this stage. Each operator will have their own circumstances that need to be addressed to enable a successful transfer.

The process to transfer Greater Anglia will involve some mobilisation and due diligence costs, and the transfer programme as a whole will also incur costs, for example, to increase DfT Operator Ltd capacity. However, these costs are expected to be a fraction of the £110-150 million per year in fees to private operators that will no longer have to be funded by the taxpayer once all franchised services are back in public ownership.

**Bus Services: Disability****Chi Onwurah:**[\[17810\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to help improve the accessibility of information at bus stops for disabled people.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The government wants everyone to have access to public transport and is committed to improving services so they are more inclusive and enable disabled people to travel safely, confidently and with dignity. On October 1st, the first phase of the Public Service Vehicles (Accessible Information) Regulations 2023 came into force, meaning that newer vehicles providing local services must provide audible and visible information on stops, destinations and diversions. The majority of services will need to comply by October 2026.

Local authorities are responsible for the bus stops and shelters in their area, however the government will work with the sector to help drive improvements to real time information at bus stops as part of the government's wider plans to deliver better bus services for passengers.

## ■ **Bus Services: Fares**

**Gregory Stafford:**

[\[17495\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of raising the bus cap to £3 on pensioners.

**Simon Lightwood:**

Those of state pension age, currently sixty-six, have access to free off-peak bus travel under the terms of the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme.

## ■ **Bus Services: Homelessness**

**Mike Amesbury:**

[\[17867\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of offering free bus travel for homeless (a) children and (b) adults living in temporary accommodation.

**Simon Lightwood:**

Local authorities have responsibility for support for homeless people in their areas and are best placed to assess the needs of their communities.

At the Budget, the government confirmed over £1 billion in funding to improve services, protect vital routes and keep fares down. On 17 November, we confirmed how we are distributing £955 million of that funding, with £712 million for local councils to deliver bus service improvement plans (BSIP) and through the Bus Service Operators Grant. Funding allocated to local authorities to deliver BSIPs can be used in whichever way they wish to improve services for all passengers, including introducing targeted local fares initiatives.

## ■ **Bus Services: South Suffolk**

**James Cartlidge:**

[\[17027\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of bus services in South Suffolk constituency.

**Simon Lightwood:**

Good local bus services are an essential part of prosperous and sustainable communities. As announced in the King's Speech, the government will introduce the Buses Bill to put the power over local bus services back in the hands of local leaders right across England, to ensure networks can meet the needs to the communities who rely on them, including in South Suffolk.

In addition, the government has confirmed £955 million for the 2025 to 2026 financial year to support and improve bus services in England outside London. This includes £243 million for bus operators and £712 million allocated to local authorities across the country. Local authorities can use this funding to introduce new bus routes, make services more frequent and protect crucial bus routes for local communities. Suffolk County Council has been allocated £8.7 million.

## ■ Bus Services: Special Educational Needs

**Shivani Raja:**

[\[17922\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her Department has made an estimate of the number of SEND pupils in (a) Leicester East constituency and (b) England impacted by changes to the bus fare cap.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The Department for Education is the lead government department with responsibility for policy on home to school transport, including provision for pupils with special educational needs.

With regard to the national bus fare cap, this will be designed to be as equitable as possible in terms of its support for passengers across England. One of the key principles of the scheme will be to include 'open' services which allows any member of public to board. 'Closed' school services, defined as a service which would not allow a member of the general public to board, and school services which operate in term-time only will not be eligible for inclusion.

Services from participating operators that serve schools, are open to members of the public and run all year round will be eligible for inclusion in the scheme. This is the same approach as that taken under the current fare cap.

## ■ Bus Services: Timetables

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[17809\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to help improve the provision of real time information at bus stops.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The government knows how important it is that passengers have better access to information about bus services. In 2020, the Public Service Vehicles (Open Data) (England) Regulations were passed which utilised the powers from the Bus Services Act to require bus operators in England outside of London to share high-quality, accurate and up-to-date timetables, fares and location data. To facilitate this, the Bus Open Data Service (BODS) was subsequently launched in 2020.

Local authorities are responsible for the bus stops and shelters in their area, however the government will work with the sector to help drive improvements to real time information at bus stops as part of the government's wider plans to deliver better bus services for passengers.

## ■ C2C: Nationalisation

**Dr Luke Evans:**

[\[17896\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate her Department has made of the cost to the public purse of nationalising C2C.



**Simon Lightwood:**

The exact costs associated with the transfer of a train operator's services cannot be determined with any certainty at this stage. Each operator will have their own circumstances that need to be addressed to enable a successful transfer.

The process to transfer c2c will involve some mobilisation and due diligence costs, and the transfer programme as a whole will also incur costs, for example, to increase DfT Operator Ltd capacity. However, these costs are expected to be a fraction of the £110-150 million per year in fees to private operators that will no longer have to be funded by the taxpayer once all franchised services are back in public ownership.

**Cars: Sales****Andrew Griffith:**[\[17904\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what information her Department holds on G20 states that have set a target to end the sale of new (a) solely internal combustion engine powered vehicles and (b) hybrid vehicles powered in part by internal combustion engines.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

The UK Government's commitment to phase out new cars that rely solely on internal combustion engines from 2030 and then to phase out all new non-zero emission cars and vans from 2035 correspond to a range of national and sub-national targets globally through a variety of different measures. In the G20, Canada has targets of 60% and 100% zero emission in 2030 and 2035 respectively, France, Germany, and Italy follow the EU targets that will require a 35% reduction in car CO2 emissions in 2030 and a 100% reduction in 2035, and 17 US states and the District of Columbia have committed to 100% zero emission cars from 2035.

**Community Railways Initiative: Finance****Alex Mayer:**[\[17344\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what her Department's policy is on funding for Community Rail Partnerships, in the context of the Passenger Railway Services (Public Ownership) Act 2024.

**Simon Lightwood:**

My Department is committed to supporting the community rail movement. Currently, Community Rail Partnerships are funded by their Train Operating Company, with funding amounts agreed as part of the annual business planning process. The process for the next financial year is currently underway.

**Community Transport: Bolsover****Natalie Fleet:**[\[17291\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of (a) the level of transport related social exclusion and (b) cuts to community transport by Derbyshire County Council on people in Bolsover constituency.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The government understands that a modern transport network is vital to kickstarting economic growth, providing access to services and preventing isolation. Good local transport services are an essential part of prosperous and sustainable communities, connecting people and enabling access to employment, education and essential services.

The Government confirmed almost £1bn to support bus funding across England. Derbyshire County Council, which is now part of East Midland Combined Authority (EMCA), will benefit from a total bus funding of more than £40m which will be allocated to the EMCA to support, improve and protect bus services and keep fares down. The Bus Service Improvement Plan for Derbyshire County Council can be found [here](#).

We encourage local transport authorities to engage with community transport operators when preparing their Bus Service Improvement Plans, which are vital in setting out long-term plans for bus services and how they will be improved.

**■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points****Carla Denyer:**[\[17936\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer on 2 December 2024 to Question 15939 on Electric Vehicles: Charging Points, whether she is taking steps to analyse pricing data to compare the cost of using (a) public and (b) home electric vehicle charging points.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

As set out in the Manifesto, the Government is committed to delivering an equitable transition to zero emission vehicles which works for all drivers. The Government regularly monitors the cost of public and home electric vehicle charging.

**■ Gatwick Airport****Mike Martin:**[\[18006\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 3 December 2024 to Question 15980 on Gatwick Airport, whether the previous Secretary of State for Transport met with groups opposing Gatwick Airport expansion.

**Mike Kane:**

The previous Secretary of State for Transport did not meet with groups opposing Gatwick Airport expansion.

**■ Motor Insurance: Young People****Mike Amesbury:**[\[17876\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to reduce the cost of motor insurance premiums for young drivers in (a) Runcorn postcodes and (b) England.

**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.

**Public Transport: Costs****Alex Mayer:**[\[17348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make a comparative estimate of the cost per mile of new (a) busways, (b) ultra light rail and (c) conventional train systems.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The estimated costs per mile for new local transportation infrastructure in England can vary significantly based on numerous factors, including specific project conditions and requirements, geography, urban density, and land values.

Responsibility for local transport is largely devolved in England, where each local authority is responsible for the operations and financial sustainability of its network. This includes for upgrades and any potential extensions to existing busways and light rail systems.

Local authorities are best place to identify possible opportunities and the potential benefits of local transport schemes. The Department encourages local authorities to take a mode neutral approach to local transport, and works alongside them to ensure the development of proportionate solutions to local transport issues.

Rail project costs also vary significantly from project to project based on type of project, scale of intervention, geography and supply chain status.

**Railway Network: Snow and Ice****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhési:**[\[17005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions she has had with Network Rail on steps to prepare the rail network for adverse winter weather.

**Simon Lightwood:**

Network Rail owns and is responsible for maintaining railway infrastructure to ensure passenger and freight services operate safely. Officials hold regular discussions with Network Rail and industry to ensure winter preparedness plans are in place with clear mitigations to reduce the impacts of winter weather on punctuality and reliability. Network Rail Routes liaise closely with train operators to ensure comprehensive winter checklists are in place and to align customer messaging. Additionally, in Control Period 7 between 2024-2029, Network Rail plans to invest c.£2.8bn to help it better cope with extreme weather and climate change, ultimately safeguarding a more reliable railway.

**■ Railway Stations: Lincolnshire****Sir John Hayes:**[\[16914\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of potential impact of reopening Littleworth Railway station at Deeping St Nicholas on the local economy.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The Government believes that local transport authorities and local leaders are best placed to prioritise and take forward transport projects which are most appropriate for the areas they serve.

Reopening Littleworth railway station is currently not a government priority and our focus remains on improving the reliability of the existing network.

**■ Railway Stations: Runcorn and Helsby****Mike Amesbury:**[\[16994\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment she has made of adequacy of the support provided for people with mobility issues to access train stations in Runcorn and Helsby constituency.

**Simon Lightwood:**

This government is committed to improving the accessibility of Britain's railway and recognise the social and economic benefits this brings to communities. Since its launch in 2006, the Access for All programme has delivered step free access at more than 250 stations across Britain.

Ministers are carefully considering the best approach to the Access for All programme. We are unable to comment on next steps regarding specific stations, including stations in the Runcorn and Helsby constituency. Once we can confirm our approach to Access for All programme, we will ensure MPs and stakeholders are informed.

**■ Railways: Bridges****Jacob Collier:**[\[16987\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what data her Department holds on the maintenance schedule for Branston Bridge in Staffordshire.

**Simon Lightwood:**

Asset management and safety, including information on maintenance schedules, is the responsibility of the owner of the infrastructure in question, which for this bridge is Staffordshire County Council.

**■ Railways: Freight****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[17006\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 6 November 2024 to Question 12929 on Railways: Freight, who will set the target for growing rail freight.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The Secretary of State will be responsible for setting clear and meaningful targets for growing rail freight, working with Shadow Great British Railways to identify the best way in which they should be expressed. Growth targets will provide confidence and certainty to the sector's customers and investors and will demonstrate the Government's commitment to this area.

**■ Railways: Greater London****Luke Taylor:**[\[17031\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her Department plans to re-instate late night services at Worcester Park station.

**Simon Lightwood:**

When adding or reinstating services, the Department needs to assess business cases and balance demand with value for the taxpayer in its considerations. There are currently no plans to reinstate a later train between Sunday and Thursday. However, a later Friday and Saturday service was reinstated from December 2020 departing from Waterloo at twenty-five minutes past midnight.

**■ Railways: Lincolnshire****Sir John Hayes:**[\[16904\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the potential economic merits of existing East Midlands rail services stopping at (a) Deeping St Nicholas and (b) Donington.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The Department has no current plans for an economic assessment into the re-opening of stations at Deeping St Nicholas (Littleworth) or Donington (Donington Road).

**Sir John Hayes:**

[\[16908\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to increase the level of funding for railways in Lincolnshire.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The Budget and first phase of the Spending Review reaffirmed our commitment to funding for rail and confirmed our commitments to transformative major projects. This builds on the regulatory settlement for the current 5-year period, which ensures continued funding for the railway. We will be looking in detail at how we can improve the railway further as part of the second phase of the Spending Review, and through the DfT Capital Review which ensures continued funding for the operations, maintenance and renewal of the railway infrastructure.

### ■ Railways: Nationalisation

**Luke Taylor:**

[\[17033\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking through her policy of public ownership of the railways to (a) tackle last-minute train cancellations and (b) improve service reliability.

**Simon Lightwood:**

Ministers have been clear that rail services have been failing passengers. Bringing train operations into public ownership is the first step in the Government's plan to improve the railways for passengers and taxpayers. Great British Railways, when established, will take a whole rail system view, ensuring that all parts of the sector are working together, to deliver against Ministers' priorities and improve reliability for passengers.

### ■ Railways: Standards

**Paula Barker:**

[\[16557\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the performance of rail operators over weekend periods in the last six months.

**Simon Lightwood:**

*[Holding answer 4 December 2024]:* The Department is aware that short notice weekend changes have been occurring, with a shortage of traincrew causing a high proportion of these short notice changes. The Department is working with train operators urgently on this issue, as the level of service in some parts of the country on weekends is unacceptable.

## ■ Roads: Safety

**Ben Maguire:**

[\[18325\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the oral contribution of 21 November 2024 by the then Secretary of State for Transport, Official Report column 369, when the road safety strategy will be implemented.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

Since the general election, the Department has begun work on a new Road Safety Strategy, the first in over a decade. The Department will share more details in due course.

**Ben Maguire:**

[\[18327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of allowing hon. Members to propose locations for funding from the Road Safety Strategy.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

The Department has not made an assessment. The Department has begun work on a new Road Safety Strategy, the first in over a decade. The Department will share more details in due course.

Local authorities are responsible for the management of local roads, within the rules set by Government. It is for the local authority to decide what measures may be appropriate in their local areas.

## ■ Rolling Stock

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[17004\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 15 November 2024 to Question 12766 on Rolling Stock, if she will make an assessment of introducing a rolling programme for the new build and refurbishment of rolling stock.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The rolling stock strategy that is currently being developed will support British manufacturing and innovation. 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.

## ■ South Western Rail Franchise: Nationalisation

**Luke Taylor:**

[\[17032\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate her Department has made of the cost to the public purse of bringing South Western Railway into public ownership.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The costs associated with the transfer of a train operating company into public ownership cannot be determined until engagement with the train operator has commenced.

Each train operator will have their own circumstances that need to be addressed to enable a successful transfer. These are identified during the due diligence phase and then the costs for addressing them can be agreed.

As an example, previously, the Department has paid fees to South Western Railway of £8.2 million between September 2020 to March 2021. These can be found in the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dft-payments-to-passenger-rail-operators-under-emergency-agreements#full-publication-update-history>

Overall, transferring service operations to the public sector will result in a saving of fixed and performance-based management fees currently paid to private sector train operators. This saving is estimated to be £110 million to £150 million per annum once all franchised contracts had expired, with a proportion of these savings achieved each year in the interim as individual services transfer. Please see the following link:

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/59-01/0133/en/240133en.pdf>

Whilst all services will transfer as their existing contracts end, there are costs associated with the transfer from a private sector operator to a public sector company (mobilisation and due diligence costs) estimated at £1 million to £1.5 million per transaction. This is consistent with costs associated with transition following any competed franchise award as shown in the following link:

<https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/56108/documents/5037>.

## ■ South Western Railway

**Helen Maguire:**

**[17059]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions she has had with South Western Railway on the accessibility of their fleet.

**Simon Lightwood:**

Department officials have regular conversations with the operator seeking to improve accessibility across South Western Railway's fleet. Improvements include the new fleet of Class 701s with fully accessible toilets replacing the Class 455s which do not have toilets, an App with Artificial Intelligence generated British Sign Language and a planned rollout of improved Passenger Information Screens on services between Waterloo and Exeter. South Western Railway also has guards on all of its fleet providing assistance for all passengers who require it.

## ■ South Western Railway: Nationalisation

**Dr Luke Evans:**

**[17895]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate she has made of the cost of nationalising South Western Railway.



**Simon Lightwood:**

The exact costs associated with the transfer of a train operator's services cannot be determined with any certainty at this stage. Each operator will have their own circumstances that need to be addressed to enable a successful transfer.

The process to transfer South Western Railways will involve some mobilisation and due diligence costs, and the transfer programme as a whole will also incur costs, for example, to increase DfT Operator Ltd capacity. However, these costs are expected to be a fraction of the £110-150 million per year in fees to private operators that will no longer have to be funded by the taxpayer once all franchised services are back in public ownership.

**■ South Western Railway: Standards****Luke Taylor:**[\[17339\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to help improve the quality of the service provided to passengers on South Western Railway.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The Secretary of State is committed to improving operational performance across the industry including at South Western Railway. The Government is also committed to bringing Operators into Public Ownership to deliver a better performing railway with South Western Railway announced as the first Operator into Public Ownership from 26th May 2025.

A significant development for South Western Railway will see the current rolling stock on all Suburban routes being replaced by brand new Class 701s which will help to improve the passenger experience.

**■ Southeastern Trains****Peter Fortune:**[\[16438\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans her Department has for Southeastern.

**Simon Lightwood:**

Southeastern's service level will be increasing with the introduction of an additional 44 services per day when the timetable is updated in December. We will continue to work with Southeastern, as we do with all train operators, to drive further improvements in performance and passenger experience while at the same time ensuring we maximise value for money for the taxpayer.

**■ Thameslink Line: Bedford****Blake Stephenson:**[\[17328\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions she has had with Thameslink on the performance of services on the Bedford Line.

**Simon Lightwood:**

Recent levels of disruption experienced on Thameslink due to delays and cancellations are clearly not acceptable and passengers deserve better.

Ministers are meeting with the Managing Directors of all Train Operating Companies and their Network Rail counterparts to address poor performance and what is being done to improve it. Department officials also continually monitor the Train Operators' performance and meet with them and Network Rail to ensure they deliver improvements to services.

■ **Transport: Tees Valley****Matt Vickers:**[\[17902\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether it remains Government policy to provide £978 million funding for transport projects in Tees Valley.

**Simon Lightwood:**

Investment in the North's transport infrastructure is of great importance and City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements (CRSTS) has a key role to play in continuing to transform local transport across the region. The Government recently committed a further £200m towards CRSTS in 2025/26 at the Budget, and we will confirm allocations for all CRSTS places, including Tees Valley, in the coming weeks. The previous Government made several funding commitments beyond 2025/26, which we are currently examining through a Spending Review, expected in spring 2025.

**TREASURY**■ **Business Rates****Kevin Hollinrake:**[\[16939\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will publish the (a) address, (b) local authority, (c) special category code and (d) rateable value of each hereditament on the business rates valuation list.

**James Murray:**

The VOA makes the Non-Domestic Rating (NDR) lists publicly available. This is to allow a person "access to information to enable them to establish the state of the list" and is set out under paragraph 8(1) of [schedule 9 of the Local Government Finance Act \(LGFA\) 1988](#).

To fulfil this statutory function the VOA publishes the lists at: [www.gov.uk/find-business-rates](http://www.gov.uk/find-business-rates)

The address, local authority, special category code and rateable value of each property is included within this list.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

[16944]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the methodological basis was for setting the proposed business rate multiplier surcharge for hereditaments above £500,000 rateable value at a level of up to 10 pence in the pound.

**James Murray:**

To deliver our manifesto pledge, from 2026-27, the Government intends to protect the high street by introducing permanently lower tax rates for retail, hospitality, and leisure (RHL) properties with Rateable Values below £500,000. This permanent tax cut will ensure that RHL properties benefit from much-needed certainty and support.

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

The rates for any new multipliers will be set at Budget 2025 and implemented in 2026-27.

The higher tax rate, when introduced, will not be set higher than 10p above the non-domestic rating multiplier. The Government is clear that this is the maximum, and it does not represent the changes that we intend to implement. It is a guardrail that offer sensible limits with proportionate flexibility, ensuring the Government can respond to future revaluations as well as the changing economic and fiscal context.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

[16945]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate she has made of how much business rates receipts in England will raise gross in 2025-26.

**James Murray:**

The Office for Budget's Responsibility's (OBR) October 2024 Economic and Fiscal Outlook includes forecasts for UK business rates receipts. This is available online: [https://obr.uk/docs/dlm\\_uploads/OBR\\_Economic\\_and\\_fiscal\\_outlook\\_Oct\\_2024.pdf](https://obr.uk/docs/dlm_uploads/OBR_Economic_and_fiscal_outlook_Oct_2024.pdf).

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

[16946]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate she has made of the gross increase in business rate receipts from the 2026-27 business rate multiplier surcharge on hereditaments above £500,000 Rateable Value.

**James Murray:**

To deliver our manifesto pledge, from 2026-27, the Government intends to protect the high street by introducing permanently lower tax rates for retail, hospitality, and leisure (RHL) properties with Rateable Values below £500,000. This permanent tax cut will ensure that RHL properties benefit from much-needed certainty and support.

This tax cut must be sustainably funded, and so the Government intends to introduce a higher rate on the most valuable properties on 2026-27 - those with Rateable Values of £500,000 and above. These represent less than one per cent of all

properties, but capture the majority of large distribution warehouses, including those used by online giants.

The exact rates for any new business rate multipliers will be set at Budget 2025 so that the Government can take into account the revaluation outcomes as well as the economic and fiscal context.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

[\[16947\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Government's non-school business rate changes announced at Autumn Budget 2024, whether she has made a (a) regulatory impact assessment or (b) tax information and impact note on (i) the changes to retail, hospitality and leisure rate relief in 2025-26 and (ii) the new multiplier regime in 2026-27.

**James Murray:**

At Autumn Budget 24, the Government announced its intention to introduce permanently lower tax rates for retail, hospitality, and leisure (RHL) properties with Rateable Values below £500,000 from 2026-27. This permanent tax cut will ensure that they benefit from much-needed certainty and support. The Government intends to fund this by introducing a higher multiplier on all properties with a rateable value (RV) of £500,000 and above.

Tax policy and legislation is not subject to the Better Regulation Framework Guidance which requires an Impact Assessment to accompany policy decisions. Nevertheless, when the new multipliers are set at Budget 2025, the Treasury intends to publish analysis of the effects of the new multiplier arrangements.

The Government will confirm the rates for the new multipliers at Budget 2025, taking account of the outcomes of the 2026 revaluation as well as the broader economic and fiscal context. At this point, the Government will publish analysis of the effects of the new multiplier arrangements.

## ■ Business Rates: Tax Allowances

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

[\[16937\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 25 November 2024 to Question 14625 on Business Rate: Tax Allowances and with reference to line 18 of Table 5.1 of the Autumn Statement 2023, CP 977, for what reason the forecasts differ.

**James Murray:**

Autumn Statement 2023 (AS23) announced 75 per cent relief to Retail, Hospitality and Leisure (RHL) properties up to a cash cap of £110,000 per business.

Based on local authorities' Non-Domestic Rates form (NNDR1) returns, the static cost of RHL relief is forecast to be £2.4 billion in 2024/25. The costings contained in Table 5.1 of the 'Policy Decisions' chapter of AS23 account for the static cost being adjusted to reflect that business rates are deductible for Corporation Tax for companies and Income Tax for the self-employed, and that business rates are

devolved. It also accounts for new burdens funding that English Local Authorities receive for the administrative and IT costs associated with the delivery of the relief.

Therefore, the final cost is estimated to be £2.65 billion in 2024/25. Further information can be found in AS23 Policy Costings on page 23:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6560c3ef3d77410012420197/Autumn\\_Statement\\_2023\\_Policy\\_Costings\\_-\\_Final.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6560c3ef3d77410012420197/Autumn_Statement_2023_Policy_Costings_-_Final.pdf)

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) will, in due course, publish outturn figures, based on data collected by local authorities, which will set out the final amount of business rate relief provided to businesses in 2024/25.

## ■ Charities: Employers' Contributions

**Sir Julian Lewis:**

[17761]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment she has made of the potential impact of increasing National Insurance contributions at the Autumn Budget 2024 on the ability of (a) Citizens Advice services and (b) other community-centred charities to maintain their (i) staffing levels and (ii) contribution to society.

**James Murray:**

In order 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.

HMRC recently published on 13 November a Tax Information and Impact Note that covers the impact of employer NICs changes.

The Government has protected the smallest businesses and charities 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

More broadly, within the tax system, we provide support to charities through a range of reliefs and exemptions, including reliefs for charitable giving, with more than £6 billion in charitable reliefs provided to charities, CASCs and their donors in 2023 to 2024.

**Bradley Thomas:**

[17994]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she made of the potential impact of increases in employer National Insurance contributions on charities prior the the announcement of the Autumn Budget 2024.

**James Murray:**

In order 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.

HMRC has published a Tax Information and Impact Note that covers the impact of employer NICs changes.

The Government has protected the smallest businesses and charities 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.

More broadly, within the tax system, we provide support to charities through a range of reliefs and exemptions, including reliefs for charitable giving, with more than £6 billion in charitable reliefs provided to charities, CASCs and their donors in 2023 to 2024.

### ■ Council Tax: Wales

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

[16941]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 16 October 2024 to Question 7830 on Council Tax: Wales, what each of the property attributes are under the headings dwelling type to bathroom count.

**James Murray:**

Descriptions of most of the property attributes can be found on GOV.UK here: [www.gov.uk/guidance/property-attribute-data-pad#the-data-we-hold](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/property-attribute-data-pad#the-data-we-hold).

Subsidised Housing Indicator - this indicates if a property has been purpose-built by a Local Authority, Housing Association or other public body.

Parking Facilities – this is the type of parking at a property. For example, a garage or open parking space.

### ■ Employers' Contributions: Civil Society

**Wendy Morton:**

[16917]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment has she made of the potential impact of changes to Employer's National Insurance Contributions announced in the Autumn Budget 2024 on charities and community organisations in (a) the West Midlands and (b) Aldridge-Brownhills constituency.

**James Murray:**

In order to repair the public finances and raise the revenue required to fund our public services, the government has taken the difficult decision to increase employer National Insurance which has included the charity sector.

HMRC has published a Tax Information and Impact Note that covers the employer NICs changes, which 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 and charities 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.

More broadly, within the tax system, we provide support to charities through a range of reliefs and exemptions, including reliefs for charitable giving, with more than £6 billion in charitable reliefs provided to charities, CASCs and their donors in 2023 to 2024.

### ■ **Employers' Contributions: Public Sector**

**Priti Patel:**

[\[16918\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 11 November 2024 to Question 12263 on Employers' Contributions: Public Sector, what estimate she has made of the number of public sector employees covered by the provisions of line 26 of Table 5.1 of the Autumn Budget 2024 for compensating public sector organisations for proposed changes to employer National Insurance contributions.

**James Murray:**

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.

### ■ **Payment Methods: Bank Cards**

**Steve Darling:**

[\[17304\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps her Department plans to take to ensure that touch screen card payment devices are made accessible for people with visual impairments.

**Tulip Siddiq:**

The government is committed to ensuring high standards of financial inclusion across the financial services sector.

The Treasury has been engaging with UK Finance, the Financial Conduct Authority, the Royal National Institute of Blind People, and other Government departments on the issue of accessibility of card payment terminals.

UK Finance, the leading trade association for the banking sector, maintains voluntary standards to help ensure point-of-sale technology remains accessible for those who are visually impaired. UK Finance will soon be assessing potential initiatives to drive improvements and adoption. The Government is closely monitoring progress in this important area.

## ■ Public Houses: Business Rates

**Kevin Hollinrake:** [\[16942\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what information the Valuation Office Agency holds on the average proportionate reduction in rateable value for special category code 226 (pubs) in the 2023 business rates revaluation.

**James Murray:**

Statistics on the change in rateable value of non-domestic properties as a result of the 2023 Revaluation are published here:

[Non-domestic rating: change in rateable value of rating lists, England and Wales, 2023 Revaluation \(compiled list\) - GOV.UK](#)

Table 4.0 of the 'non-domestic rating: change in rateable value of rating lists, England and Wales, Revaluation 2023 compiled list' shows the mean rateable value for the 2017 and 2023 rating lists by SCAT code including 226: public houses/pub restaurants. This also shows the change and percentage change in rateable value between the two lists.

## ■ Sportsgrounds: Business Rates

**Kevin Hollinrake:** [\[16938\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether (a) football, (b) rugby and (c) cricket stadiums or clubs with a Rateable Value over £500,000 will be liable to pay the business rates Rateable Value multiplier surcharge from 2026-27.

**James Murray:**

At Autumn Budget 2024, the Government announced its intention to introduce permanently lower tax rates for retail, hospitality and leisure (RHL) properties with Rateable Values below £500,000 from 2026-27. This permanent tax cut will ensure that high street RHL properties benefit from much-needed certainty and support. The Government intends to fund this by introducing a higher multiplier on all properties that have a rateable value (RV) of £500,000 and above.

The multiplier rates will be confirmed at Autumn Budget 2025.

## ■ Treasury: Staff

**Mr Peter Bedford:** [\[18059\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many employee settlement agreements there were in her Department in each year since 2020; and what the total value of such agreements is.



**James Murray:**

In each year since 2020, HM Treasury signed zero settlement agreements.

**WORK AND PENSIONS**■ **Child Benefit: Slough****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[17591\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many families in Slough constituency have been affected by the two-child benefit cap in each year since 2017.

**Sir Stephen Timms:**

The number of Universal Credit households affected by the two-child limit in the Slough parliamentary constituency in each year since 2019 is as follows.

MONTH/YEAR	HOUSEHOLDS AFFECTED BY THE TWO-CHILD POLICY
April 2019	50
April 2020	290
April 2021	560
April 2022	780
April 2023	1,000
April 2024	1,400

## Notes:

1. This data includes all households with a third or subsequent child born on or after 6 April 2017. This includes households with children with exceptions, so it does not match published figures for the number of households not receiving an amount of child element due to the policy.
2. Data is not available for earlier years. Figures are rounded as appropriate.
3. Because the figures are from the latest available data, these figures may not be fully consistent with published statistics.
4. These figures do not include Child Tax Credit (CTC) and households may have been affected while receiving CTC.

■ **Child Maintenance Service****Dan Carden:**[\[17210\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential implications for her Department's policies of the report entitled Fix the CMS:

key findings from our research on child maintenance, published by Gingerbread in November 2024.

**Rachel Gilmour:**

[\[17412\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the report by Gingerbread entitled Fix the CMS, published on 25 November 2024, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of (a) assigning (i) dedicated and (ii) named caseworkers for all Child Maintenance Service (CMS) cases, (b) implementing a digital contact platform for communicating with the CMS, (c) closing loopholes on the enforcement of CMS decisions, (d) training CMS staff in domestic abuse and (e) implementing the other recommendations of that report.

**Andrew Western:**

The Child Maintenance Service (CMS) continues to engage regularly with stakeholders as we consider CMS reform. We are currently considering the recommendations and our response to the Gingerbread report 'Fix the CMS'.

The CMS Service Modernisation Programme has delivered improvements to the customer experience enabling parents to access their on-line My Child Maintenance Case, ensuring parents can report changes of circumstances and access their digital communications at any time of the day. In addition, caseworker training to support vulnerable customers has been updated following invaluable engagement with stakeholders.

The CMS has recently consulted on significant reforms and are analysing the responses. This included removing the Direct Pay service and managing all CMS cases in one service to allow the CMS to tackle non-compliance faster. The consultation also sought views on how victims and survivors of domestic abuse can be better supported to use CMS and whether removing Direct Pay completely would benefit victims and survivors of domestic abuse. The Government will publish a response in due course.

## ■ Children: Maintenance

**Bobby Dean:**

[\[17931\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when she plans to publish the feedback from the consultation on the Child Maintenance System.

**Andrew Western:**

A consultation on proposed reforms to the Child Maintenance System (CMS) was published by the previous Government on 8 May 2024. These proposed reforms included removing Direct Pay and managing all CMS cases in one service to allow the CMS to tackle non-compliance faster, as well as exploring how victims and survivors of domestic abuse can be better supported. This consultation followed the Child Support Collection (Domestic Abuse) Act which received royal assent in July 2023.

The consultation was extended by this Government at the end of July and ran until 30 September 2024. We are currently analysing the responses we have received, and the Government will publish a response in due course.

### ■ Department for Work and Pensions: Training

**Alex Sobel:** [\[17213\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what training her Department requires call handlers to complete.

**Andrew Western:**

All directorates within DWP receive Telephony learning. This begins with new joiners receiving induction and mandatory learning which covers topics such as communicating effectively, delivering excellent customer service, keeping safe, and how to support those with additional or complex needs.

On completion of the induction learning delegates will complete their technical learning covering the skills and knowledge required for their specific role.

### ■ Pension Credit: Telford

**Shaun Davies:** [\[17630\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many households in Telford consistency claimed pension credit in November (a) 2022, (b) 2023 and (c) 2024.

**Emma Reynolds:**

In November 2022, 2,541 households in the Telford constituency received Pension Credit.

In November 2023, 2,509 households in the Telford constituency received Pension Credit.

Data is not yet available for November 2024. The latest available data is for May 2024, in which 2,450 households in the Telford constituency received Pension Credit.

This data is available on Stat-Xplore at <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk> in the 'Pension Credit - Data from May 2018' dataset. More information on the data included in the 'Pension Credit' dataset can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/dwp-statistical-summaries>. Guidance on how to use Stat-Xplore can be found here: <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/index.html>. An account is not required to use Stat-Xplore, the 'Guest Login' feature gives instant access to the main functions.

### ■ Pension Funds: Environment Protection

**Clive Lewis:** [\[17570\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of whether the divestment of pension funds from insurance companies that are not compliant with the UK's climate commitments is a part of fiduciary duty.

**Emma Reynolds:**

Trustees have a fiduciary duty to make investment decisions in members' best interests. Climate-related risk and opportunity is one of the major categories of financial factors of which trustees need to take account, in line with their fiduciary duty.

The Department introduced new requirements for schemes in 2021, based on the recommendations of the Taskforce on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD). The legislation requires trustees of occupational pension schemes, with assets above £1 billion, to manage climate-related risks and explain how they have done so in an annual TCFD report. The Pensions Regulator is responsible for monitoring compliance with the requirements and reviewed a sample of reports in 2024. The findings are available here: [Review of climate-related disclosures by occupational pension schemes: Year 2 | The Pensions Regulator](#).

It is up to individual schemes, in line with their fiduciary duty, to choose whether to divest from companies that are not compliant with the UK's climate commitments. In 2025, Government will consult on proposals for financial institutions, including insurance companies, to develop Paris Aligned Transition Plans which set out steps for reaching net zero. Pension schemes can utilise their stewardship approaches, namely voting and engagement, to nudge companies towards greener practices. There is no single approach to managing climate-related risk, but trustees typically use a combination of investment strategies and stewardship approaches to deliver the best outcomes for members.

**■ Personal Independence Payment****Sarah Gibson:****[18009]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the timeframe for PIP award reviews; whether she has made an assessment of the potential impact of waiting times for appeal on PIP applicants; and what steps she is taking to tackle PIP appeal backlogs.

**Sir Stephen Timms:**

We are committed to ensuring people can access financial support through Personal Independence Payment (PIP) in a timely manner. Reducing customer journey times for PIP claimants is a priority for the Department and we are working constantly to make improvements to our service, including through using a blend of phone, video and face-to-face assessments where an assessment is required and by increasing case manager and assessment provider health professional resource.

Where an existing award of PIP is subject to an award review, we aim to make a decision on that as quickly as possible, taking into account the need to review all available evidence, including that from the claimant. Where we can do so, we are also making decisions without referral to the Assessment Providers to speed up the process.

The Department understands the potential effect of waiting for a tribunal hearing, which is why our aim is to make the right decision as early as possible in the claim journey so that people can get the support they are entitled to, without the need for an appeal.

Appeals are lodged with, and administered by, HM Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS). A variety of factors can affect the number of cases cleared by the Tribunal including the complexity of the issue in dispute; the availability of panel members assigned to a particular venue; and if an appeal is adjourned (which may be directed by the judge for a variety of reasons, such as to seek further medical evidence). Any increase to the live load is monitored, and investigated, locally.

## ■ Poverty

**Richard Burgon:**

[\[17836\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to help tackle poverty for people on low incomes; and if she will bring forward legislative proposals to introduce a statutory duty to progressively reduce levels of poverty for those people.

**Alison McGovern:**

I refer the Rt. Hon. Member to the answer I gave on 6 December to [PQ17569](#) in relation to poverty and living standards.

## ■ Social Security Benefits: English Language

**Neil O'Brien:**

[\[17603\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of new claimants of (a) Universal Credit, (b) Employment Support Allowance, (c) Personal Independence Payment, (d) Jobseeker's Allowance and (e) income support had (i) Level 1 and (ii) Level 2 English Language proficiency in each year since 2010.

**Sir Stephen Timms:**

The requested information is not held by the Department for Work and Pensions. Information relating to claimant qualifications is not routinely captured by the Department for Work and Pensions.

## ■ Social Security Benefits: Fraud

**Alex Sobel:**

[\[17211\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many decision makers in her Department are working on cases of benefits fraud.

**Andrew Western:**

As of the 31<sup>st</sup> October 2024, Counter Fraud, Compliance and Debt (CFCD) Directorate has the following Full Time Equivalent (FTE) assigned to decision making:

## CFCD INTERNAL DECISION MAKERS

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ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER	EXECUTIVE OFFICER	TOTAL
181.2	148.6	329.8

*\*This covers both Administrative Officer (AO) and Executive Officer (EO) grades who conduct this work as part of CFCD's Enhanced Review Team (ERT), Interventions, Investigations, Economic and Serious Organised Crime, and Compliance functions.*

In addition, CFCD also refers some of the cases it reviews to decision makers within Universal Credit (UC). As of the 28<sup>th</sup> October 2024, this function has the following FTE assigned to decision making for CFCD cases:

### UC Decision Makers Assigned to CFCD Cases

#### TOTAL

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110.03

#### Alex Sobel:

[\[17212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of implementing a service standard timeframe for criminal investigations by her Department into fraud.

#### Andrew Western:

There is no Service Level Agreement for criminal fraud investigations. Each case presents unique complexities, depending on the offence type and individual circumstances. Cases are often operationally challenging due to the complexity of the work required, involving information gathering from external organisations to obtain supporting evidence. Timelines are also affected by the frequent need to capture witness statements and the reliance on customer participation.

### ■ State Retirement Pensions: Women

#### Kirsty Blackman:

[\[15753\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an estimate of the number of women born in the 1950s affected by State Pension age changes in each constituency in (a) Scotland and (b) Northern Ireland.

#### Emma Reynolds:

In Scotland, as of the 2022 census there were the following numbers of 1950s-born women in each Scottish constituency:

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CONSTITUENCY	FEMALES AGED 63 TO 72 IN 2022
East Renfrewshire	6,086
Na h-Eileanan an Iar	1,914
Midlothian	5,569
North Ayrshire and Arran	6,866
Orkney and Shetland	2,901
Aberdeen North	6,079
Aberdeen South	5,144
Aberdeenshire North and Moray East	6,279
Airdrie and Shotts	5,342
Alloa and Grangemouth	5,716
Angus and Perthshire Glens	7,146
Arbroath and Broughty Ferry	6,507
Argyll, Bute and South Lochaber	7,029
Bathgate and Linlithgow	5,286
Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross	6,977
Coatbridge and Bellshill	5,540
Cowdenbeath and Kirkcaldy	5,976
Cumbernauld and Kirkintilloch	5,585
Dumfries and Galloway	7,212
Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale	6,432
Dundee Central	5,094
Dunfermline and Dollar	5,543
East Kilbride and Strathaven	5,921
Edinburgh East and Musselburgh	4,895
Edinburgh North and Leith	4,363
Edinburgh South	5,203

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CONSTITUENCY	FEMALES AGED 63 TO 72 IN 2022
Edinburgh South West	4,699
Edinburgh West	5,847
Falkirk	5,732
Glasgow East	4,516
Glasgow North	3,995
Glasgow North East	4,823
Glasgow South	4,754
Glasgow South West	4,648
Glasgow West	4,880
Glenrothes and Mid Fife	5,958
Gordon and Buchan	5,696
Hamilton and Clyde Valley	5,982
Inverclyde and Renfrewshire West	6,209
Inverness, Skye and West Ross-shire	6,686
Livingston	5,600
Lothian East	6,023
Mid Dunbartonshire	6,639
Moray West, Nairn and Strathspey	6,736
Motherwell, Wishaw and Carluke	5,589
North East Fife	6,248
Paisley and Renfrewshire North	5,749
Paisley and Renfrewshire South	5,439
Perth and Kinross-shire	6,664
Rutherglen	6,004
Stirling and Strathallan	5,965
West Dunbartonshire	5,905



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CONSTITUENCY	FEMALES AGED 63 TO 72 IN 2022
Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock	6,619
Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk	7,240
Central Ayrshire	6,245
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	6,100
West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine	6,004

The relevant Scottish census data is available here in table UV102a, broken down by United Kingdom Parliamentary Constituency 2024: [SuperWEB2\(tm\) - Table View](#).

In Northern Ireland, as of the 2021 census there were the following numbers of 1950s-born women in each Northern Irish constituency:

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CONSTITUENCY	FEMALES AGED 62 TO 71 IN 2021
Belfast East	4,825
Belfast North	5,116
Belfast South and Mid Down	5,343
Belfast West	5,081
East Antrim	5,633
East Londonderry	5,771
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	5,701
Foyle	5,087
Lagan Valley	5,528
Mid Ulster	4,845
Newry and Armagh	5,439
North Antrim	5,656
North Down	6,181
South Antrim	5,286
South Down	5,441
Strangford	5,917

CONSTITUENCY	FEMALES AGED 62 TO 71 IN 2021
Upper Bann	5,796
West Tyrone	5,234

The relevant Northern Irish census data is available in this table: [Get data for Single year of age and sex \(MS-A09\) | NISRA Flexible Table Builder](#)

### ■ Universal Credit: Reviews

**Danny Kruger:** [\[17267\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the terms of reference will be for her Department's review of universal credit.

**Sir Stephen Timms:**

The Department is committed to reviewing Universal Credit to make sure it is doing the job we want it to and meeting our objectives of making work pay and tackling poverty. We have already begun this work with the introduction of the new fair repayment rate announced in the Budget. We will continue to work closely with stakeholders as the review progresses to seek views on proposed areas of focus and untapped opportunities in UC. Parliament will be updated on progress and future changes accordingly.

### ■ Work Capability Assessment

**Helen Whately:** [\[17193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has had discussions with the Office for Budget Responsibility on the timing of the implementation of changes to the Work Capability Assessment on their projections.

**Sir Stephen Timms:**

The Work Capability Assessment is not working and needs to be reformed or replaced. This needs to come alongside a proper plan to support disabled people into work. We will continue to deliver the savings set out by the previous government but will set out our approach and timescale in the coming months. If changes to this policy - or any other policy - are made in future, this will be accounted for at a subsequent fiscal event.

The department does not routinely engage the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) on policy details such as this outside of fiscal events. It is also the case that this engagement would be carried out by officials on behalf of the department, not the ministerial team. Therefore, there have not been discussions between the Secretary of State and the OBR.

■ **Work Capability Assessment: Northern Ireland**

**Claire Hanna:**

[\[16993\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people in Northern Ireland will be impacted by changes proposed to the Work Capacity Assessment.

**Sir Stephen Timms:**

Social security is transferred (devolved) to the Northern Ireland Executive where it is administered by the Department for Communities.

## MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

### FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

#### ■ Kosovo: Inland Waterways

**Alicia Kearns:**

[R] [17612]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had discussions with his Kosovan counterpart on the attack on the Iber Lepenci water canal on 28 November 2024.

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 6 December 2024. The correct answer should have been:**

**Stephen Doughty:**

The Foreign Secretary messaged Kosovo's President Osmani on 30 ~~November~~ November, **and on 1 December I spoke to Kosovo's Prime Minister Kurti**, following the attack on critical infrastructure in northern Kosovo the previous day. ~~He~~**We** expressed ~~his~~**our** shock and welcomed the swift work of emergency engineers to contain the damage. ~~He~~**We** underlined the importance of a full, evidence-based investigation and set out the UK's staunch support for Kosovo as it works to bring the perpetrators to account ~~and to prevent further attacks~~ **and**, in coordination with the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) and the Kosovo Force **(KFOR), works to prevent further attacks.** ~~(KFOR).~~

## WRITTEN STATEMENTS

### BUSINESS AND TRADE

#### ■ Business Growth Service

**Secretary of State for Business and Trade (Jonathan Reynolds):** [\[HCWS287\]](#)

Small businesses are the beating heart of our high streets and our communities and are essential to our economic success. There are 5.5 million small businesses in the UK (99.8% of all businesses), accounting for 16.6 million jobs and £2.8 trillion annual turnover. Small businesses exported £107.9 billion of goods in 2023. They are also fundamental to regional development and our ability to secure growth and good jobs.

That is why I am delighted to announce that my department will launch the Business Growth Service in 2025. The Business Growth Service will make it simpler for businesses across the UK to get the help they need to grow and thrive in today's economy and into the future.

Inspired by successful international examples, the Business Growth Service will simplify a fragmented array of SME support under a single, trusted banner to give firms an easy path to the help they need.

This government was elected on a promise to restore economic stability and deliver the change people need in their local communities. Working in partnership with local and devolved governments across the UK, and partners such as the Growth Hubs network, Innovate UK, and the British Business Bank, the Business Growth Service will provide direct support and introduce SMEs to other relevant services and providers they need to grow.

The Business Growth Service will work with the Government's international network to support and advise companies on how to grow overseas.

My aim is for the service to be up and running in the first half of 2025.

There is a wide range of support available for businesses across the UK, but all too often Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) are faced with barriers when they try to access it. The Business Growth Service will remove these barriers, providing businesses with the help and support they need to unlock their potential for future growth.

In the coming months, my department will be consulting widely with businesses, representative bodies, experts, the devolved governments and local government in the design, development and implementation of the Business Growth Service.

I will update Parliament on progress again in due course.

**ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO****■ Bringing forward Hydrogen to Power – to support a clean and secure power system****Minister of State (Minister for Industry) (Sarah Jones):****[\[HCWS288\]](#)**

I am tabling this statement to inform members of the publication of the Hydrogen to Power - market intervention Consultation Response on 9th December 2024. This response commits to delivering a Hydrogen to Power Business Model to support the accelerated deployment of Hydrogen to Power as low carbon long duration flexible electricity generating capacity.

Making Britain a clean energy superpower by 2030 is one of the Prime Minister's five missions. Unabated gas currently provides the majority of flexibility in Great Britain and so the deployment of Hydrogen to Power – the conversion of low carbon hydrogen to produce low carbon electricity – will play an important part in displacing unabated gas generation from the power system, to support the Clean Power Mission, and the government's legally binding target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050.

Low carbon hydrogen can make our energy system more flexible, resilient, and independent. When connected with large-scale storage, hydrogen to power can provide electricity to cover longer periods of lower renewable output, whilst also creating a decarbonisation pathway for unabated gas power plants. The Hydrogen to Power Business Model will de-risk investment in Hydrogen to Power by mitigating the deployment barriers we identified, through a Dispatchable Power Agreement --style business model, helping to support the unlocking of investment in Hydrogen to Power and improving the pipeline of projects.

The response document commits to:

- Delivering a Hydrogen to Power Business Model based on a Dispatchable Power Agreement -style mechanism to support the deployment of Hydrogen to Power.
- Publishing a Hydrogen to Power Business Model market engagement document in 2025 outlining further detail on the proposed design of the Hydrogen to Power Business Model and plans for launching the first allocation round.
- Establishing a Hydrogen to Power industry expert working group. This will provide a key forum for Hydrogen to Power Business Model design and strategic policy considerations.
- Enabling Hydrogen to Power to participate in the Capacity Market as soon as practical.

This publication is an important step towards supporting the deployment of Hydrogen to Power, a key low carbon flexible technology, and therefore facilitating a clean power system. It will build on the positive stakeholder feedback received through the consultation and provide industry with clarity on government's position on the technology and the next steps for implementing the market intervention.

**ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS****■ Avian Influenza Outbreak Response**

**Minister for Food Security and Rural Affairs (Daniel Zeichner):** [\[HCWS289\]](#)

My Noble Friend, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Baroness Hayman of Ullock), has made the following Written Statement today.

Avian influenza ('bird flu') is once again threatening both wild and kept birds across Great Britain with two strains of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) (H5N1 and H5N5) now circulating in our wild bird population.

Defra recognises the unprecedented outbreaks of avian influenza in recent years have been an incredibly difficult time for bird keepers who are on the frontline of this terrible disease and in particular that the poultry and egg sectors have been under serious pressure. Practising good biosecurity at all times remains vital to protect flocks across the country from avian influenza and all bird keepers are being urged to remain vigilant and take action to protect their birds.

In response to the cases of HPAI this winter Defra and the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) have stood up their well-established outbreak structures to control and eradicate disease, restore normal trade, and assist local communities' recovery. Defra and APHA's approach to avian influenza considers the latest scientific and ornithological evidence and veterinary advice, and is set out in the [Notifiable Avian Disease Control Strategy for Great Britain](#) supported by the [Mitigation Strategy for Avian Influenza in Wild Birds in England and Wales](#). Current policy reflects our experience of responding to past outbreaks of exotic animal disease and is in line with international standards of best practice for disease control.

Government action on animal disease control is led by APHA, who carry out routine surveillance of disease risks in the UK and globally, to help the Government anticipate future threats to animal health. To support this work, in Great Britain members of the public are encouraged to report findings of dead wild birds using the [online reporting service](#) or by calling the Defra helpline (03459 335577).

The latest cases of HPAI have followed recent detections through APHA wild bird surveillance programme of HPAI H5N1 and HPAI H5N5 in wild birds in the area surrounding the infected premises. Reporting dead wild birds helps Defra and APHA understand the risk of avian influenza and other diseases to different species groups of wild birds, the risk posed to poultry and other captive birds, and the risk of overspill into mammals. The risk of incursion of HPAI H5 in wild birds in Great Britain is currently assessed as high (event occurs very often). The risk of poultry exposure has also increased and is now assessed as low (event is rare but does occur) where good biosecurity is consistently applied at all times, but medium (event occurs regularly) where there is suboptimal or poor biosecurity.

Upholding high biosecurity standards is paramount to food production and food safety, for human and animal health, protecting biodiversity and to support our economy and trade.

The UK has robust disease control measures in place to prevent disease outbreaks spreading, and a strong track record of controlling and eliminating outbreaks. Animal disease outbreaks cause animals to suffer, damage businesses and cost the UK taxpayer significant sums of money. Together the Government and animal keepers must do everything we can to keep disease out and protect animal health and welfare.

Supporting bird keepers, the public and conservation bodies to prepare and respond to the threat of avian influenza continues to be one of Defra's priorities. Government is clear that all farmers, producers and animal keepers should implement strong biosecurity measures and report suspected disease immediately. Defra and APHA will continue to work closely with industry to ensure good flock management and husbandry practices are implemented on all farms regardless of size or scale. Whilst also working closely with the UK Health Security Agency and the Health and Safety Executive with regard to the protection of human health from this zoonotic pathogen.

Whilst there have been no cases of HPAI confirmed in Wales or Scotland during this outbreak, following the case in poultry in England, in line with WOH rules, Great Britain is no longer free from HPAI. There have been no cases of avian influenza in Northern Ireland, and Northern Ireland retain their self-declared zonal freedom from HPAI. However, there are some restrictions on exports of affected commodities to third countries from the UK. To facilitate trade, it remains Defra's objective to achieve WOH HPAI freedom across the UK at the earliest opportunity.

In addition, while vaccination of poultry and other captive birds against avian influenza, excluding those in licensed zoos in England, is not currently permitted and will not be a viable option for the 2024/2025 season, Defra continue to invest in avian influenza research and the UK is committed to exploring opportunities for preventive vaccination for poultry and other captive birds.

With regard to vaccination to protect public health, whilst avian influenza is primarily a disease of birds, the UK Government has agreed a contract for more than five million doses of human H5 influenza vaccine to boost the country's resilience in the event of a possible H5 influenza pandemic. This purchase has been made as part of long-established plans to boost the UK's access to vaccines for a wider range of pathogens of pandemic potential. However, it is only if an avian influenza virus were to start spreading among humans, of which there is no evidence at this stage, that the human H5 influenza vaccine would be used. This procurement will strengthen the UK's preparedness for a H5 influenza originated pandemic by ensuring that vaccines are immediately available, while a pandemic specific vaccine is made ready. The UK Government already has an advance purchase agreement for pandemic vaccines if or when they are needed, that would be tailored to combat the specific pandemic influenza strain identified at the time.

Avian influenza risk levels are regularly reviewed and our response adapted accordingly. We publish our risk assessments online and share the evolving picture directly with our expert stakeholder groups. It is too early to predict the outlook for future seasons and risk levels may increase further this winter, associated with the migratory pattern of waterfowl and environmental conditions becoming more favourable for virus survival. Practicing good biosecurity at all times protects the health and welfare of kept birds and for



commercial keepers will help protect their business from HPAI and other diseases. The need for Avian Influenza Prevention Zones (AIPZ) mandating enhanced biosecurity will be kept under review.

All bird keepers must register their poultry and other captive birds, even if only kept as pets (with the exception of certain psittacines and passerines). Registered keepers will receive regular updates and guidance to help protect their birds from avian influenza. Having a good register also saves taxpayer resources when infection is found, because we already know where birds are kept. In addition, anyone can subscribe to APHA's free animal disease alerts service for the latest information on updated risk levels, guidance and new cases in Great Britain regardless of whether they keep birds. Further information on the latest situation and what can be done prevent avian influenza and stop it spreading and how to spot and report suspicion in kept or wild birds or mammals can be found in Defra's guidance at [gov.uk/birdflu](https://gov.uk/birdflu).

## HOME OFFICE

### ■ International Anti-Corruption Day

**The Minister of State for Security (Dan Jarvis):**

[\[HCWS290\]](#)

My hon Friends, the Minister of State for Europe, North America and Overseas Territories (Stephen Doughty), the Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Tulip Siddiq) and I, are today pleased to announce the appointment of Baroness Hodge of Barking as the Prime Minister's new Anti-Corruption Champion.

Corruption and the illicit finance that stems from it undermine this Government's objectives at every turn, both domestically and across the world. Corruption weakens the rule of law and undermines economic growth. It fuels crime on British streets by enabling drug dealers and smuggling gangs. It inflates UK property prices. Today's appointment is another way in which this Government is proving its commitment to tackling these pernicious harms.

As Champion Baroness Hodge will have three core responsibilities:

1. Helping the Government to drive development of a new Anti-Corruption Strategy and provide a challenge function for its delivery, once agreed.
2. Acting as a Government entry point on anti-corruption issues for Parliamentarians, private sector representatives and civil society.
3. Where required, engaging internationally to help drive progress on UK priorities.

We believe that the appointment of a Champion will be beneficial in driving forwards and supporting the anti-corruption agenda and recognise that has been a long-awaited announcement since the previous Champion stood down from his role. Baroness Hodge brings experience as a leading Parliamentary and public campaigner on anti-corruption, strong relationships with key stakeholders and background in public service to this role. We look forward to working together to deliver an ambitious government-wide agenda to

tackle the devastating impacts of corruption and the illicit finance that stems from it, both at home and overseas.