



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 10 December 2024 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:34 P.M., 10 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

■ **British Steel: Nationalisation**

Llinos Medi:

[\[18248\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether his Department has assessed the potential merits of nationalising the British Steel plant in Scunthorpe during its negotiations on that matter.

Llinos Medi:

[\[18249\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he has made an estimate of the cost of nationalising the British Steel plant in Scunthorpe.

Sarah Jones:

As part of the Government's responsible approach to policy and decision-making, we have considered the merits of nationalising British Steel and made an estimate of the cost. That estimate is confidential for commercial reasons. However, the Government has no plans to nationalise British Steel.

We are developing a steel strategy, working in partnership with trade unions and industry to grow the steel sector in the UK. This government has identified up to £2.5bn (on top of the £500mn secured for Port Talbot) to support the steel industry.

■ **Business: Rural Areas**

Stuart Anderson:

[\[16988\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps he is taking to support (a) start ups and (b) SMEs in rural areas.

Gareth Thomas:

All businesses can access support through their local Growth Hubs, providing advice and support, shaping the offer around unique needs, whether town or country.

The Secretary of State recently announced the Business Growth Service ensuring businesses across the UK get support and advice from government.

Rural areas offer significant potential for growth and are central to our economy. DBT works with other departments such as Defra, helping people living and working in rural areas to realise the full potential of rural businesses and communities placing them at the heart of our policymaking.

■ **Department for Business and Trade: Equality**

Greg Smith:

[\[18184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether his Department has a gender action plan.

Justin Madders:

This Government is committed to closing the gender pay gap.

The Department for Business and Trade has recently finalised a Gender Pay Gap Action Plan in response to the 2024 gender pay gap findings which will be published as part of the Department's annual report in December 2024. The Gender Pay Gap Action Plan aligns with the strategic objectives set out in the Department's Diversity and Inclusion Framework (2024-28) which was introduced in May 2024.

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

Andrew Griffith:[\[17907\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how many computer monitors his Department has provided to (a) Ministers and (b) officials for home working since 5 July 2024; and what the cost to public purse was.

Justin Madders:

Expenditure on computer monitors purchased under the Department's Home Working Equipment Policy between 01 January – 30 November 2024 is as follows:

MONTH	NUMBER OF MONITORS	
	PURCHASED	COST
January	27	£4,783.19
February	20	£3,392.00
March	30	£5,177.60
April	30	£5,173.60
May	22	£3,561.93
June	25	£4,362.10
July	24	£3,996.40
August	27	£4,498.02
September	39	£6,569.56
October	64	£9,709.52
November	45	£7,125.42
Grand Total	353	£58,349.34

No computer monitors have been purchased for Ministers under this policy.

■ Employment: Discrimination

Greg Smith:

[\[18186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to stop third party discrimination.

Justin Madders:

DBT is committed to creating a safe, supportive and inclusive work environment for its employees and does not tolerate any form of unacceptable behaviour or abuse, by any party, towards an employee.

DBT's HR policies provide guidance on how to report third party harassment and the actions managers can take to respond when it occurs.

Mandatory training is provided for all employees on bullying, harassment and discrimination.

■ Employment: Sexual Harassment

Greg Smith:

[\[18185\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to tackle sexual harassment in the workplace.

Justin Madders:

We are strengthening protections against workplace sexual harassment. The Employment

Rights Bill will amend the Equality Act 2010 to :

- require employers to take "all reasonable steps" to prevent sexual harassment of their employees;
- introduce an obligation on employers not to permit the harassment of their employees by third parties;
- enable regulations to specify steps that are to be regarded as "reasonable", to determine whether an employer has taken all reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment, and;
- strengthen protections for whistleblowers, by making it explicit that sexual harassment can be the basis for a protected disclosure.

■ Post Offices: Closures

Dan Tomlinson:

[\[17423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to help prevent the closure of Post Office branches in (a) Chipping Barnet constituency and (b) the UK.

Gareth Thomas:

The Post Office interim Chair, Nigel Railton, recently-announced a transformation plan, which aims to put the Post Office on a more stable financial footing for the

future, including by reducing costs, and to increase Postmaster remuneration. The detail of Nigel Railton's transformation plan is being examined by my department, and the plan is subject to Government funding and the outcome of the upcoming spending review. The Post Office will continue to deliver on the 11,500 minimum branch requirement and geographical access criteria set by Government.

No decisions regarding Directly Managed Branches, including those in Chipping Barnet, have been taken. The Post Office has been clear however that it's their ambition to operate the network on a fully franchised basis in time as this is a more sustainable model.

Martin Wrigley: [\[17653\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will take steps to ensure post offices cannot be closed without seeking the views of local residents.

Gareth Thomas:

Post Office is committed to engaging and supporting its customers and their representatives when it makes changes to the Post Office network. When proposing any branch change in the network, Post Office invites comment on access. Feedback is reviewed before Post Office makes a decision on whether to proceed with the original proposal or if mitigations are needed to any address concerns raised.

■ Rural Areas: Government Assistance

Edward Morello: [\[17450\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to support rural business (a) innovation (b) and investment in (i) West Dorset constituency and (ii) similar areas.

Gareth Thomas:

The Department for Business and Trade (DBT) promotes and supports investment opportunities across all of the UK. In Dorset, DBT has a strong relationship with Dorset Council and proactively promotes the county's sector strengths, particularly in areas such as AgriTech, Advanced Manufacturing and Defence.

The Government confirmed in the Autumn Budget that it will continue to fund Growth Hubs, including the Dorset Growth Hub, in 2025/26. This will provide key support for local businesses, including those in West Dorset. The forthcoming Industrial Strategy will also help guide investment in areas across the UK based on unique economic opportunities and advantages.

■ Trade Agreements: Agriculture

Edward Morello: [\[17449\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will take steps to ensure that trade agreements have a positive impact on the agricultural sector in West Dorset constituency.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

We want more trade opportunities for British farmers to grow their businesses, including for the more than 1,000 commercial farm holdings in West Dorset. Our FTAs will help open new long term potential export markets. For example, we are pressing ahead with our accession to the CPTPP which enters into force on 15 December. This will facilitate easier market access for agriculture products for which Dorset is celebrated, such as by reducing tariffs on UK dairy in countries such as Chile and Japan.

CABINET OFFICE■ **Cabinet Office: Internet****Alex Burghart:**[\[13764\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, for what reason his Department's About Us web page lists the Government's priorities for 2021-22.

Georgia Gould:

This page has been amended and will be updated further in due course.

■ **Cabinet Office: Pay****Charlie Dewhirst:**[\[16595\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the mean full-time equivalent salary is of staff in the (a) Office for Equality and Opportunity, (b) Women's Equality Unit, (c) Race Disparity Unit and (d) Disability Unit in the most recent period for which data is available.

Georgia Gould:

Salaries ranges for each civil servant grade are set by the Cabinet Office and are not at the discretion of the individual business units such as the Office for Equality and Opportunity. The mean full time equivalent salary of staff in the Office for Equality and Opportunity (which includes the sub-units of Women's Equality Unit, Race Disparity Unit and Disability Unit) is £54,400, rounded to the nearest £100.

■ **Civil Servants: Pay****Nick Timothy:**[\[17301\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the average salary was of each civil service grade in each Department in each year since 2010.

Georgia Gould:

The Cabinet Office publishes data annually on civil servants' median pay by department and grade. The relevant data for the years between 2010 and 2024 are available via the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/civil-service-statistics>

■ Clubs: Fees and Charges

Mr Richard Holden: [\[17256\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether club memberships are paid for from the public purse for (a) staff, (b) contractors and (c) other employees.

Georgia Gould:

The Cabinet Office does not pay for staff membership fees for any clubs.

■ Emergencies: Planning

Paul Davies: [\[17437\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps his Department is taking to help tackle regional inequalities in community resilience in the national resilience review.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster committed to undertaking a review of UK national resilience in his statement to the House of Commons on 19 July, in response to the Covid-19 Inquiry's Module 1 report. The review is expected to conclude in Spring 2025. It will be informed by the voices of local leaders, the Four Nations, businesses, voluntary and community sector representatives and academics. It will also consider recommendations from public inquiries into Covid-19 and the Grenfell Tower tragedy.

As part of this review I recently met with representatives of those disproportionately impacted during crises, faith groups, businesses and charities who support a range of communities, and earlier in the year convened a roundtable of 11 Northern Local Resilience Forum representatives during a recent visit to the North East.

Paul Davies: [\[17438\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will take steps to use evidence-based measures of community resilience for funding decisions.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

The UK's long standing resilience architecture is based upon the concept of subsidiarity, where local responders are best placed to identify the risks in their areas, understand the needs of their communities and to put appropriate plans and capability in place to respond to those risks.

The Government has commenced a review of resilience, which includes considering how we can help Local Resilience Forums strengthen resilience throughout their communities. Treasury guidance already sets out requirements for policymakers to consider the appraisal and evaluation of policies and programmes.

■ Immigration and Population: Forecasts

Mr Richard Holden: [\[16514\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what estimate the Office for National Statistics has made of the size of (a) the UK population and (b) net immigration in each year to 2046.

Georgia Gould:

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

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

Attachments:

1. Letter from the National Statistician [PQ16514.pdf]

■ Immigration: Statistics

Rupert Lowe: [\[17367\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, in how many years the ONS estimates on immigration to the UK been revised upwards in each of the last 20 years.

Georgia Gould:

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

A response to the Hon. Gentleman's Parliamentary Question of 2 December is attached.

Attachments:

1. Letter from the National Statistician [PQ17367.pdf]

■ Infected Blood Compensation Scheme

Ian Sollom: [\[17934\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to his Department's press release entitled Establishing the Infected Blood Compensation Scheme in Regulations, published on 23 August 2024, what his planned timetable is to publish the second set of regulations to provide for the payment of compensation to affected persons; and whether a target date has been set for when compensation payments will begin.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

Subject to Parliamentary approval, the Government is aiming for the second set of Regulations to be in place by 31 March 2025 to support our intention that people who are affected can start receiving payment next year.

■ Local Government: Construction

Mike Amesbury: [\[17593\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he plans to issue guidance to local authorities on awarding contracts to companies responsible for the 2017 Grenfell fire.

Georgia Gould:

The Cabinet Office is undertaking a review of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry's findings for evidence of supplier failures, and is identifying if organisations involved in the tragedy are still in government supply chains as subcontractors. The government will support action on these findings, which could include issuing guidance on exclusions to the public sector where appropriate.

■ **Louise Haigh****Mr Richard Holden:**[\[18208\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, when the Prime Minister became aware of the previous fraud conviction of the former Transport Secretary, the Rt Hon. Member for Sheffield Heeley.

Georgia Gould:

I refer the Rt Hon Member to the statements the Prime Minister has already made about the former Transport Secretary's resignation at Prime Minister's questions on 4 December.

■ **Ministers: Conferences****Mike Wood:**[\[17122\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Government records the details of meetings Ministers have at party conferences.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

Ministers' meetings with external organisations at party conferences will generally be in a political capacity so there is no need to normally declare these, unless a senior media figure was also present. Annex D of the Ministerial Transparency Guidance, which is published on GOV.UK, states that ministers' meetings with external organisations at party conferences will generally be in a political capacity so there is no need to normally declare these, unless a senior media figure was also present. However, if ministers exceptionally hold meetings in the margins of Party conferences in an official ministerial capacity, then these should be recorded and published in the normal way.

■ **Public Appointments****Mike Wood:**[\[14969\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 21 October 2024 to Question 6077 on Public Appointments, if the Prime Minister will list each individual Direct Ministerial Appointment which was signed off by 10 Downing Street according to records held by the No. 10 public appointments team since 5 July 2024.

Georgia Gould:

I refer the Hon Member to my answer of 14 October 2024, Official Report, PQ 6091.

■ Public Bodies

Andrew Griffith: [\[16966\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to his Department's Corporate report entitled Public Bodies 2020, published on 15 July 2021, if he will update the data on non-departmental public bodies, executive agencies and non-ministerial departments.

Georgia Gould:

The last public bodies landscape, a publication showing spend and headcount data of arms length bodies, was last published for 2019/20. An updated version of this publication, covering data from 2022-23, will be published on gov.uk in due course.

■ UK Resilience Academy

David Reed: [\[18319\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what priorities on what timelines he has issued to the National Resilience Academy.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

The UK Resilience Academy (UKRA) will be established in April 2025 to ensure that all those who work on resilience have the capability, knowledge and skills they need to play their part in making resilience a 'whole of society' endeavour.

In his statement to the House of Commons on 19 July 2024, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster confirmed that the UK Resilience Academy is being established to increase and improve the training of ministers, MPs, civil servants and all those in civil society who respond to crises.

In the same statement, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster also committed to undertaking a review of long-term resilience. The review seeks to identify what should be kept, changed or improved from previous resilience commitments, to ensure we are best prepared now and into the future. Evidence from the review will inform decisions on future priorities for the UKRA.

■ Zero Hours Contracts: High Peak

Jon Pearce: [\[17656\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what estimate his Department has made of the number of people on zero-hours contracts in High Peak constituency.

Georgia Gould:

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

A response to the Hon Gentleman's Parliamentary Question of 3rd December is attached.

Attachments:

1. Letter from the National Statistician [PQ17656 (1).pdf]

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Football: Pay and Prize money****Mike Amesbury:**[\[17221\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of the disparities in (a) pay and (b) prize money on the future development of (i) men's and (ii) women's football.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Government is fully committed to supporting and growing women's sport and ensuring that women's sport is on an equal footing with men's sport.

The ambition of equal prize money where possible across sport is absolutely the right one. The FA took steps last season to increase the total prize fund for the Women's FA Cup, however we recognise there is more to do. We will continue to keep this under review.

In 2023, Karen Carney OBE published a Review of Women's Football which set out a route to raise minimum standards and deliver bold and sustainable growth at elite and grassroots level. The review made a series of recommendations for key stakeholders to take forward. I recently convened stakeholders to discuss updates on progress and will convene further meetings in 2025 to drive action.

■ Gambling: Taxation**Wendy Morton:**[\[17539\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has made an assessment of the potential impact on charity lotteries of introducing a statutory levy on gambling operators.

Stephanie Peacock:

As set out in the Government's [response](#) to the consultation on the statutory levy, we will introduce a statutory levy charged to all licensed gambling operators. Society lotteries will be charged the levy at the lowest rate of 0.1%, in recognition of the low rates of harm associated with participation in society lotteries and the important benefits they bring to good cause fundraising. The Gambling Act 2005 is clear that all licensees are in scope of the levy, but to minimise disruption this 0.1% will be charged as a proportion of proceeds retained after good causes. We will also conduct a formal review of the statutory levy system within five years where the structure and health of the levy system, including levy rates, will be assessed and any necessary adjustments made to ensure we are achieving our objectives and impacts are proportionate.

■ Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme

Sir John Whittingdale:

[\[17063\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, how much funding her Department plans to provide for the Listed Places of Worship Grant scheme in the 2025-26 financial year.

Chris Bryant:

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

Edward Morello:

[\[17454\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions she has had with religious organisations on the potential impact of the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme on religious buildings.

Edward Morello:

[\[17461\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what representations has she received from religious organisations about extending the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme beyond March 2025.

Chris Bryant:

My officials and I have met with a range of heritage bodies since July and this has included discussions on the future of the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme.

The Department has received correspondence from religious organisations regarding the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme and the views of their congregations and communities as a result of funding. A couple of Church of England bishops have also approached me at events and mentioned the scheme.

■ Parthenon Sculptures

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[18206\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions the Prime Minister has had with (a) representatives of the British Museum and (b) the Greek government on the Elgin Marbles.

Chris Bryant:

The Prime Minister met the Greek Prime Minister on 3rd December. I would refer the Rt Hon Member to the read-out of their meeting. Decisions relating to the care and management of the Parthenon Sculptures are a matter for the British Museum Trustees.

DEFENCE**■ Armed Forces**

James Cartlidge: [\[17182\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the size of the (a) Regular Army, (b) RAF, (c) Royal Navy, (d) Royal Marines (e) Army Reserve, (f) RAF Reserve, (g) Royal Navy Reserve and (h) Royal Marines Reserve in 2029.

Luke Pollard:

The Government is taking decisive action to tackle the long-term decline in Armed Forces numbers and renew the nation's contract with those who serve, having inherited a recruitment and retention crisis - with targets missed every year for the past fourteen years.

The purpose of the SDR is three-fold. We will establish the roles, capabilities and reforms required by UK Defence to meet the challenges, threats, and opportunities of the twenty-first century. The Reviewers will consider all aspects of Defence, including the approach to recruiting, educating, training and retaining the people needed for One Defence, including Regular, Reserve, Civil Service and industry. This is to include how Service life can be improved for those who commit to serve their country in uniform.

■ Armed Forces: Helicopters

James Cartlidge: [\[17161\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the cost of providing a (a) commercial and (b) military solution to alternative jungle training helicopter capability in Brunei.

Maria Eagle:

The department will not comment on alternative options for jungle training due to operational sensitivity.

James Cartlidge: [\[17163\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the potential operational implications are of providing a military solution to alternative jungle training helicopter capability in Brunei.

James Cartlidge: [\[17165\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the Pumas in use in Brunei (a) only provide a support to jungle training function and (b) are used for (i) search and rescue and (ii) other operational purposes.

Luke Pollard:

The primary role of the Puma aircraft in Brunei is to provide search and rescue cover in support of operational training. Defence has taken measures to ensure continued output of operational training in the interim period before Puma's replacement, H145, enters service from 2026. Key Defence tasks will continue to be fulfilled.

■ Armed Forces: Private Education

James Cartlidge: [\[17145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he plans to announce financial details of the increase to Continuity of Educational Allowance.

AI Carns:

The MOD has now concluded its re-rating exercise for Continuity of Education Allowance.

The next iteration of Joint Service Publication 752 (Tri-Service Regulations for Expenses and Allowances), to be released on 1 January 2025, will contain the new rates and is available via the gov.uk portal.

James Cartlidge: [\[17179\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he plans to support armed forces personnel who do not receive Continuity of Educational Allowance with the increase in the cost of private school fees arising from the introduction of VAT on such fees.

AI Carns:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) provides Continuity of Education Allowance to Service Personnel to minimise the disruption to their children's education caused by Service commitments involving frequent moves of the family home. Their circumstances must fit within specific regulations as laid out in Joint Service Publication (JSP) 752, Chapter 14, especially around accompanied Service and family mobility. Where a Service Person does not meet the eligibility criteria as laid out in JSP 752 and has made a personal choice to use a private school for their child's education, the MOD is not involved.

■ Army: Incentives

James Cartlidge: [\[17181\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his statement of 20 November 2024 on Defence Programmes Developments, Official Report columns 287 to 289, which Army ranks will qualify for the £8,000 retention payment.

AI Carns:

All qualifying Substantive Regular UK Trained Army Personnel (TAP) soldiers ranking from OR2 (Private) to OR3 (Lance Corporal), entering their third year of service, will receive an Army Retention payment of £8,000.

■ Chinook Helicopters

James Cartlidge: [\[17157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the potential operational implications are of retiring 14 Chinook helicopters early.

James Cartlidge: [\[17158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the retirement of 14 Chinook helicopters on the capability of the armed forces.

James Cartlidge: [\[17159\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the potential operational implications are of retiring 14 Chinook helicopters early for (a) 16 Air Assault Brigade Combat Team, (b) the Air Manoeuvre Task Force, (c) Joint Helicopter Command, (d) the Global Response Force, (e) the Army and (f) the RAF.

James Cartlidge: [\[17160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the potential implications of retiring 14 Chinook helicopters early are on the ability of (a) Joint Helicopter Command, (b) the Chief of Joint Operations, (c) 16 Air Assault Brigade Combat Team, (d) 16 Air Manoeuvre Task Force, (e) the Global Response Force, (f) the Army and (g) the RAF to deliver defence outputs.

James Cartlidge: [\[17162\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of a reduction in the number of Chinook helicopters on air assault operations.

Luke Pollard:

The phased retirement of the 14 oldest Chinook helicopters will not negatively impact the delivery of current Defence operational outputs, as these retirements will be synchronised with the delivery of replacement state-of-the-art Chinook H-47 (Extended Range) from 2027 onwards, maintaining our fleet number. A phased transition will see the old aircraft retired from service at the point they are due to enter into costly maintenance packages; ensure that we retain the necessary aircraft to cover operational commitments; and that engineers and pilots are available to transition onto the new H-47(ER) aircraft. H-47(ER) is a modern capability that will allow us to operate even closer with partner nations, including the US. This decision will allow greater efficiency within the maintenance cycles and better enable the transition process to the new aircraft.

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[17323\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many CH-47 Chinook helicopters have been deployed in Operations overseas in 2024.

Luke Pollard:

I hope the hon. Gentleman will understand that we do not routinely disclose details relating to the deployment of the Chinook helicopter in the interests of security and operational effectiveness.

■ Cyprus: Fire and Rescue Services

James Cartlidge: [\[17176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the cost of providing a (a) commercial and (b) military solution to provide an alternative firefighting helicopter capability in Cyprus.

James Cartlidge: [\[17180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the cost of a military solution of providing an alternative firefighting helicopter capability in Cyprus.

Maria Eagle:

The MOD is working at pace through various options to fulfil some short-term capability gaps on Cyprus before the introduction of H-145 from 2026. Capability options will be assessed to ensure that the MOD delivers value for money for the taxpayer.

■ Cyprus: Puma Helicopters

James Cartlidge: [\[17183\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the Pumas in use in Cyprus (a) only provide a firefighting function and (b) are used for (i) search and rescue and (ii) other operational purposes.

Luke Pollard:

The Puma helicopters based in the Sovereign Base Areas (SBA) on Cyprus are used for a range of activities, including aerial firefighting across the island.

■ Defence

James Cartlidge: [\[17168\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his statement of 20 November 2024 on Defence Programmes Developments, Official Report columns 287 to 289, whether he had discussions on military capability retirements with his US counterpart before that statement.

Luke Pollard:

The UK and US enjoy a close relationship across a range of Defence matters, and our senior officials and military keep one another informed on important developments and decisions in a timely manner, which occurred ahead of this statement as a matter of course.

■ Defence Equipment: Decommissioning

James Cartlidge: [\[17175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his oral statement on Defence Programmes Developments of 20 November 2024, Official Report, column 287, whether he had discussions with (a) Lord Robertson and (b) other members of the

Strategic Defence Review expert team on the decommissioning of capabilities before 20 November 2024.

Luke Pollard:

As the Secretary of State for Defence explained in his oral statement these decisions were "all backed by the Chiefs and taken in consultation with the SDR Reviewers."

■ **Defence Equipment: Procurement**

James Cartlidge:

[\[18152\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what his planned timetable is for publishing the next Equipment Plan.

Maria Eagle:

In light of the Strategic Defence Review and Spending Review we will not be publishing our Equipment Plan publication this year - and the NAO will not be producing their report either.

This Government is committed to improving transparency, including around affordability and financial management, and this will guide our plans for future reporting.

■ **Defence: Expenditure**

James Cartlidge:

[\[17177\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his statement of 20 November 2024 on Defence Programmes Developments, Official Report columns 287 to 289, what capabilities he plans to prioritise for the reinvestment of the forecast £150m of savings.

Maria Eagle:

As the Secretary of State outlined in his statement of 20 November, we inherited significant financial pressures in the defence budget from the last government. The capability retirements announced will deliver better value for money and ensure we are in a better position to modernise and strengthen UK defence. Future capability decisions will be subject to the findings of the Strategic Defence Review.

James Cartlidge:

[\[17178\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his statement of 20 November 2024 on Defence Programmes Developments, Official Report columns 287 to 289, if he will publish a tabulated breakdown of the forecast £500m of savings.

Maria Eagle:

The information requested is commercially sensitive and cannot be disclosed at this time.

James Cartlidge:

[\[18151\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the RAF budget is for autonomous collaborative platforms in (a) 2024-25, (b) 2025-26, (c) 2026-27, (d) 2027-28, (e) 2028-

2029 and (f) 2029-30 broken down by (i) R&D, (ii) procurement of platforms, (iii) support for platforms and (iv) other expenditure.

Maria Eagle:

I am withholding the allocated budget for the autonomous collaborative platforms RAF capability portfolio, as it would harm our commercial negotiating position with potential defence suppliers.

■ **Defence: Procurement**

James Cartlidge:

[18149]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) requests for quotation and (b) requests for proposal were issued by his Department for new capabilities for the armed forces since July 2024 that were not (i) initiated by the previous Government and (ii) related to procurements in progress before the general election.

Maria Eagle:

The Department is not able to distinguish how many requests for quotation and requests for proposal that has been issued for the Armed Forces. The Department cannot define whether it was initiated by the previous Government.

The Department can provide the Invitation to Tender (ITT) information. The Invitation to Tender sets out the requirements that tenderers must meet to submit a valid tender. It also contains the draft contract, further related documents and forms and sets out the Authority's position with respect to the competition.

There have been 419 Invitations to Tender (ITT) recorded by the Defence Sourcing Portal (DSP) system since the 04 July 2024 that have been both created and published since 04 July 2024.

There have been 25 Invitations to Tender (ITT) recorded by the Ministry of Defence DSP system created before 04 July 2024 that have been published since 04 July 2024.

■ **Electronic Warfare: Training**

David Reed:

[R] [17489]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to help train military personnel cyber warfare skills.

Luke Pollard:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) has invested significantly in developing its specialist cyber workforce by training cyber operators and planners at the Defence Cyber Academy augmented by single-Service environmentally specific training, to undertake cyber operations and increase Defence resilience. MOD has developed a Cyber Individual Training Environment (CITE) platform to allow personnel to access capability specific training, on-line training resources and a practical training environment. Cyber warfare is an integrated component of Defence exercises, recognising that cyber power is the ability to protect national interests through

cyberspace that underpins our success on operations in all environments and domains.

■ Global Combat Air Programme

James Cartlidge: [\[18153\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 29 November to Question 16232 on Global Combat Air Programme, whether his Department plans to separately ring-fence global combat air programme expenditure for (a) the core platform and (b) associated uncrewed platforms including directly related technology and software development.

Maria Eagle:

The UK is committed to the Global Combat Air Programme (GCAP), as the Prime Minister has stated. There are no plans to ringfence GCAP or associated systems, which will be managed in line with the Department's other non-ringfenced programmes.

■ HMS Northumberland

James Cartlidge: [\[17146\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the potential operational implications are of retiring HMS Northumberland in March 2025.

Luke Pollard:

The retiring of HMS NORTHUMBERLAND in March 2025 will have no impact on current operations. During her planned refit period, significant structural damage was discovered. This would have taken a major amount of time and financial resource to rectify and offered very limited operational return upon completion. As a result, her refit was judged to be uneconomical. HMS NORTHUMBERLAND and her sister Type 23 frigates will be succeeded by eight Type 26 Anti-Submarine Warfare and five Type 31 General Purpose Frigates. These are already in build and the first will be in service before the end of the decade.

James Cartlidge: [\[17147\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the retirement of HMS Northumberland on the capability of the armed forces prior to delivery of the first Type 26.

Luke Pollard:

Current and planned force levels are continually assessed to ensure that they are optimised to deliver the tasks His Majesty's Government asks of it, now and in the future.

The Royal Navy is carefully managing a Surface Fleet Transition Plan to ensure our highest priority outputs are maintained through the 2020s and into the next decade, as we replace ageing Type 23s with eight of the world's most advanced anti-submarine warfare ships, the Type 26 frigates. They will be bolstered by five general

purpose Type 31 frigates, providing opportunity to project power, support NATO operations and influence globally.

James Cartlidge: [\[17169\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans he has for HMS Northumberland after she leaves service.

Maria Eagle:

As yet, no further decisions have been made regarding future disposal plans for HMS NORTHUMBERLAND. As with all decommissioned ships, a full suite of options is being assessed to ensure that the disposal achieves value for money and is policy compliant (safety, environmental and security).

James Cartlidge: [\[17171\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the cost of fixing the structural issues with HMS Northumberland.

Maria Eagle:

The estimated costs for the repair of HMS Northumberland were at least £120 million, with the work anticipated to take over four years.

David Reed: [\[17473\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the (a) cost of repairing and (b) savings from the early decommissioning of HMS Northumberland.

Maria Eagle:

The cost of potential repairs for HMS Northumberland was estimated to be at least £120 million. The decision taken by the Secretary of State to decommission the ship early has avoided most of this cost, saving the taxpayer in the region of £105 million.

■ Military Aircraft: Helicopters

James Cartlidge: [\[17166\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether it is his policy that the Airbus H-145 will enter service to replace the Puma by 2026.

Maria Eagle:

The out of service date for Puma was originally scheduled for 21 Mar 22; however, the platform was extended to fulfil some capabilities in Brunei and Cyprus until March 2025. In 2023, the Department agreed to procure the H-145 aircraft to fulfil these capabilities and the aircraft are expected to be in service in those locations from 2026.

James Cartlidge: [\[18150\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 3 December 2024 to Question 15458 on Military Aircraft: Helicopters, what capability gaps will exist in the interim period.

Maria Eagle:

The Puma can conduct a wide range of tasks including aerial firefighting, movement of troops, search and rescue response to disaster relief and humanitarian operations. The MOD is looking to ensure that capability gaps on Cyprus and in Brunei are either fulfilled by another platform or mitigated by other means.

■ National Space Council

Dr Neil Shastri-Hurst: [\[17386\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when the next meeting is of the Space Council.

Luke Pollard:

Along with colleagues from the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology and others across Government, the Ministry of Defence is developing plans for space activities to be coordinated and led across relevant Departments. These efforts will align with the Strategic Defence Review.

I am happy to meet with the hon. Member to discuss the issue.

■ RFA Wave Knight and RFA Wave Ruler

James Cartlidge: [\[17151\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the potential operational implications are of retiring RFA (a) Wave Knight and (b) Wave Ruler in March 2025.

Luke Pollard:

RFA Wave Knight and RFA Wave Ruler were placed into extended readiness by the previous Government, and have not been available for operations since 2022 and 2017 respectively. Therefore, the retirements will have no operational implications.

David Reed: [\[R\] \[17480\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of retiring (a) RFA Wave Knight and (b) RFA Wave Ruler on the Royal Navy's ability to support concurrent operations involving multiple carrier strike groups.

Luke Pollard:

RFA Wave Knight and RFA Wave Ruler were placed into extended readiness by the previous Government, and have not been available for operations since 2022 and 2017 respectively. As such, the retirements will have no impact on available capabilities. The Royal Navy remains able to support concurrent operations involving multiple carrier strike groups using its four Tide Class tankers.

■ Tankers and Warships: Decommissioning

James Cartlidge: [\[17172\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans he has for (a) HMS Albion, (b) HMS Bulwark, (c) RFA Wave Knight and (d) RFA Wave Ruler after they leave service.

Maria Eagle:

As yet, no further decisions have been made regarding disposal plans for HMS Albion, HMS Bulwark, RFA Wave Knight, and RFA Wave Ruler. As with all decommissioned ships, a full suite of options is being assessed to ensure that the disposal achieves value for money and is policy compliant (safety, environmental and security).

■ UK Space Command: Finance

Dr Neil Shastri-Hurst: [\[17387\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will take steps to ensure that the Strategic Defence Review contains adequate funding for UK Space Command to deliver (a) on procurement and (b) operationally.

Luke Pollard:

The Strategic Defence Review is considering all aspects of Defence, including the major features of the force structure needed to create the necessary multi-domain integrated Defence capability of the future, of which space is a key part. Space is recognised as a critical enabler for defence, which forms part of the reviewers' considerations around the opportunities for modernisation and transformation.

■ Ukraine: Military Aid

James Cartlidge: [\[17174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his oral statement on Defence Programmes Developments of 20 November 2024, Official Report, column 287, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of gifting the (a) 14 Chinook and (b) Puma helicopters to Ukraine.

Luke Pollard:

Further decisions on Puma and Chinook will be made in due course and be communicated in the usual way. We continue to assess the feasibility and utility of Granting-in-Kind different capabilities to Ukraine.

■ Undocumented Migrants: English Channel

Rupert Lowe: [\[17372\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of deploying naval assets to the English Channel to help tackle small boats crossing.

Luke Pollard:

The Home Office is the lead Government Department responsible for border security and migration.

It has recently established the Border Security Command to strengthen global partnerships and enhance the UK's efforts to investigate, arrest, and prosecute

people smugglers profiting from the dangerous movement of people across the channel.

Defence assets are procured for Defence tasks and are therefore not optimised for the issue the hon. Member raises. These assets play a critical part in preserving UK maritime security through shadowing and monitoring warships transiting the UK Exclusive Economic Zone or territorial waters. In 2024 alone, Royal Navy assets have responded to over 25 such transits.

■ Veterans: LGBT+ People

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhese:

[\[17202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 28 November 2024 to Question 15113 on Veterans: LGBT+ People, which recommendations have not been implemented.

AI Carns:

To date, the Government has implemented 38 of Lord Etherton's 49 recommendations. Of those that remain, six are for Defence: recommendation 3 – the restoration of rank lost due to the Ban; recommendation 17 – a memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum; recommendation 26 – the qualification of administrative discharge; recommendations 28 and 29 – financial recognition, and recommendation 44 – improving women veterans' access to support, welfare and other Services. The remaining five recommendations are for the National Health Service England: recommendations 31, 35, 36, 38 and 42.

The Government has accepted the intent behind all of Lord Etherton's recommendations and remains committed to implementing them in a timely manner. This Government will also provide full Parliamentary scrutiny on the Government's response to the Review.

■ War Pensions

Dr Andrew Murrison:

[\[17081\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 26 November 2024 to Question 14931 on War Widows Pension Scheme, how many (a) spouses and (b) civil partners have claimed compensation via the War Widows Pension Scheme.

AI Carns:

The number of widows' or widowers' claims under the War Pension Scheme (WPS) claims relating to Camp Lejeune is not centrally held.

War Pensions Scheme statistics, including for the War Widows Pension Scheme, are published on gov.uk at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/war-pensions-scheme-statistics-2024>

■ Watchkeeper WK450

James Cartlidge: [\[17152\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the potential operational implications are of retiring Watchkeeper Mk 1 in March 2025.

James Cartlidge: [\[17153\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the removal of Watchkeeper Mk 1 on the 47th Regiment Royal Artillery.

James Cartlidge: [\[17154\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the retirement of Watchkeeper Mk 1 on the capability of the armed forces.

James Cartlidge: [\[17155\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of retiring Watchkeeper Mk 1 on the personnel of 47th Regiment Royal Artillery.

James Cartlidge: [\[17156\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he plans to gift (a) cannibalised parts of and (b) complete Watchkeeper Mk 1 platforms to allies.

Luke Pollard:

The Army will procure a modern Land Tactical Deep Find (LTDF) capability to replace the 14 years old Watchkeeper Mk 1 capability following its retirement from March 2025. This procurement will leverage lessons from Ukraine and emerging technologies to deliver a capability direct to NATO's front line. Plans currently identify that 47 Regiment Royal Artillery will continue to deliver the Army's Deep Find capability by turning their skills and experience from Watchkeeper Mk 1 to lead on fielding the new Deep Find capability. Plans for the Watchkeeper capability following its phased withdrawal from service are in development.

EDUCATION

■ Academies: Finance

Laura Trott: [\[18187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many trusts submitted grant applications for the Trust Capacity Fund in the most recent funding window.

Catherine McKinnell:

The most recent application window for the Trust Capacity Fund opened on 1 March 2024 and closed on 25 June 2024. A total of 190 applications were received from 174 establishments, mainly trusts.

■ Department for Education: Aviation**Rupert Lowe:** [\[16877\]](#)

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

Janet Daby:

Data on Ministers' overseas travel and on senior civil servants' business expenses is published on a quarterly basis. This can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/dfе-business-expenses-and-hospitality-for-senior-officials>.

■ Families: Advisory Services**Uma Kumaran:** [\[17418\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department plans to extend funding for independent, non-profit, specialist advice for families involved with the (a) child welfare and (b) family justice systems beyond March 2025.

Janet Daby:

The department is currently undertaking business planning to consider spending plans for the 2025/26 fiscal year following the Budget on 30 October. National Helpline services will form part of those considerations.

■ Further Education: Finance**Fabian Hamilton:** [\[17076\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans she has to spend the £300 million allocated to her Department for further education in the Autumn Budget 2024.

Janet Daby:

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

■ Mathematics: Higher Education**Ian Sollom:** [\[17646\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of maths provision in universities as part of the plan to recruit 6,500 new teachers.

Ian Sollom:

[\[17647\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the potential implications for (a) her policies and (b) the labour market of changes in the level of the provision of maths in universities.

Janet Daby:

English universities are independent, autonomous institutions and are therefore free to choose which courses they run. Quality is assessed by the Office for Students, the regulator of higher education (HE) providers in England.

The factor that makes the biggest difference to a young person's education in schools and colleges is high quality teaching, but there are shortages of qualified teachers across the country. This is why the department is committed to recruiting an additional 6,500 expert teachers across schools, both mainstream and specialist, and colleges, over the course of this parliament.

Our measures will include getting more teachers into key subjects, such as mathematics, supporting areas that face recruitment challenges or shortages of qualified teachers, and tackling retention issues.

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

The department is also supporting the retention of teachers within the profession, alongside additional recruitment. As of 14 October, eligible early career teachers in priority science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and technical subjects can claim targeted retention incentive payments worth up to £6,000 after tax, with payments made available to college teachers in key STEM and technical subjects for the first time.

The government recognises that our universities make a vital contribution to our economy, society and to industry and innovation. We recognise the need to put our world-leading HE sector on a secure footing to ensure that all students have confidence that they will receive the world-class HE experience they deserve.

■ Music: Education

Anna Sabine:

[\[17427\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what her policy is on the policy paper entitled The Power of Music to Change Lives: A National Plan for Music Education, published by her Department on 25 June 2022.

Catherine McKinnell:

As part of our Opportunity Mission, this government is committed to ensuring that every child has a rich and broad education, including access to arts and music, which sets them up to achieve and thrive throughout life.

The national plan for music education published in 2022 set out expectations on schools to put in place music development plans as well as a restructure of the Music Hub programme. The programme is being evaluated by the National Centre for Social Research to assess the impact of these changes. Any future steps will be informed by this evaluation.

The government's independent Curriculum and Assessment Review aims to deliver a curriculum which is rich and broad, with a firm foundation in reading, writing and mathematics alongside ensuring that every pupil has access to creative opportunities including music. The government has also committed to launch a new National Music Education Network, to help families, children and schools access broader opportunities and support.

Schools: Per Capita Costs**Damian Hinds:**[\[17084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate she has made of the increase in school funding in the 2025-26 academic year (a) per pupil, (b) in real terms per pupil based on the GDP deflator and (c) in real terms per pupil based on Retail Price Index inflation, excluding the existing teacher pay award.

Catherine McKinnell:

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

This provides a cash increase per pupil of 3.9% and an increase in real terms per pupil of 1.5%, as measured by the GDP deflator. The GDP deflator is the standard measure of inflation for public spending and is appropriate for considering school costs. The department does not produce estimates using the Retail Prices Index.

Sixth Form Colleges**Mr Calvin Bailey:**[\[901686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to support sixth-form colleges.

Janet Daby:

This government is committed to driving economic growth and supporting opportunity for all, and further education (FE) is central to this.

My right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced £300 million in 2025/26 for FE at the Autumn Budget 2024. We will set out how the additional funding will be distributed in due course.

■ **Special Educational Needs: Autism**

Alex Sobel:

[\[17218\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of supporting schools to train staff to support (a) autistic students and (b) students with pathological demand avoidance.

Paul Davies:

[\[17436\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she plans to take to ensure (a) teachers and (b) school staff have adequate (i) knowledge of and (ii) confidence in teaching autistic children.

Catherine McKinnell:

This government's ambition is that all children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) or in alternative provision receive the right support to succeed in their education and as they move into adult life. The department is 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 Early Career Framework (ECF). These frameworks were produced with the support of sector experts and have been designed to support all pupils to succeed, including those identified within the four areas of need set out in the SEND Code of Practice.

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

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

■ Teachers: Pensions**Gareth Snell:**[\[17195\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions her Department has had with the Teachers Pension Scheme on delays in providing Remediable Service Statements to retired teachers.

Catherine McKinnell:

Delays have been encountered with the approach to calculating the remediable service statement (RSS) values for retired members of the Teachers' Pension Scheme whilst cross-scheme issues were resolved.

130,000 retired teachers require a rectification RSS. The scheme administrator estimates that approximately 100,000 will be issued by 31 March 2025.

Whilst the delays have been out of the scheme administrator's control, the department continues to have daily discussions about reducing the timescales for the RSSs that will not have been issued by then, focusing on operations, resources, processes and IT. Progress is also discussed with the administrator, Teachers' Pensions, at dedicated weekly and monthly meetings.

Whilst the department is working to ensure that all RSSs are issued as soon as practically possible, the department would like to reassure that any adjustment to pension that is in payment as a result of the member's choice will be inclusive of interest.

■ Teachers: Recruitment**Anna Sabine:**[\[17426\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of reduced funding for (a) Now Teach and (b) other charities on the recruitment of teachers.

Catherine McKinnell:

Now Teach currently deliver a national Career Changers Programme. The previous government confirmed to Now Teach in April 2024 that the programme is not being reprocurd and will come to a natural end in August 2026 when the current cohort completes the programme.

The department continues to support all potential teachers, including career changers, through their journey to apply for teacher training and during the critical early years of teaching. This includes the 'Get Into Teaching' service, which offers one-to-one support and advice to all candidates, including career changers.

The department has contracts with many organisations, including charities, in support of teacher recruitment and training, and continues to fund and support those organisations in line with the terms of the agreed contracts.

Neil Duncan-Jordan:

[\[17497\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to restore funding to the Career Change Programme.

Catherine McKinnell:

Career changers make a valuable contribution to the teaching profession and the department remains committed to recruiting and supporting them into initial teacher training. The department's wider offer to all potential teachers, including career changers, supports them through their journey to apply for teacher training and during the critical early years of teaching. This includes the 'Get Into Teaching' service which offers one-to-one support and advice to all candidates, including career changers.

The current contract for the Career Changers Programme will come to an end in autumn 2026.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

■ Carbon Capture and Storage

James MacCleary:

[\[17415\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of (a) the potential effectiveness of carbon capture technologies in reducing emissions and (b) whether investment in such technologies is the most (i) efficient and (ii) cost-effective way to meet the climate targets.

Sarah Jones:

Carbon Capture, Usage and Storage (CCUS) technology has been proven in many countries across the world, and the Climate Change Committee have described it as a "necessity not an option" for reaching Net Zero. As a part of the initial assessment for choosing the first CCUS clusters, projects were assessed against five criteria including deliverability, under which technical viability was considered. It enables the lowest cost pathway to Net Zero and is a tried and tested technology that has been deployed across industry and power generation at scale. Geological carbon storage is a proven technology that has been in operation globally for decades.

■ Energy Performance Certificates

Rachel Gilmour:

[\[17408\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential impact of the Energy Performance Certificate on the ability of households to manage heating bills.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

Currently, Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) produce an energy efficiency rating (EER) based on the estimated running costs of the property. Basing the rating and recommendations of the EPC on cost is done with the aim of generating improvement which will lead to a reduction in energy costs.

Last week, the Government published the consultation on EPC Reform, developed through close collaboration between DESNZ and MHCLG. The Government proposes using four key metrics for domestic EPCs: "fabric performance," "heating system," "smart readiness," and "energy cost." The Government is reviewing the methodology underpinning EPCs to make it fit for purpose to support net zero. The department is also reviewing consultation responses for the new building physics model, the Home Energy Model.

■ Environment Protection: Taxation

Claire Coutinho: [\[18202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what estimate he has made of carbon prices in 2030.

Sarah Jones:

The price of carbon allowances in the UK Emissions Trading Scheme is set by the market and not the Government. A market-determined price of carbon is the most efficient way to decarbonise the traded sector.

It is the role of the UK ETS Authority to set the scheme's cap, which sets a limit on the volume of greenhouse gases participants captured by the scheme can emit. This ensures the covered sectors will reduce their emissions in line with net zero and establishes a long-term investment signal.

■ Heat Pumps

Rachel Gilmour: [\[17407\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if his Department will make an assessment of the effectiveness of the use of heat pumps in (a) uninsulated and (b) improperly insulated homes.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

Evidence shows that heat pumps are suitable for a diverse range of housing archetypes in the UK and the clear majority of properties.

Modern heat pumps, capable of running efficiently at similar temperatures to an existing boiler, can increasingly be used in homes previously considered unsuitable for electrification. Other low-carbon heating solutions are available for properties that are not suited to a heat pump, and the government will continue to assess and support the options for all properties to decarbonise and reduce their energy use.

■ Wind Power: Expenditure

Sir John Hayes: [\[17505\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what the total cost to the public purse of curtailment of onshore wind turbines in England was in the last three years.

Michael Shanks:

The Department does not hold this information. A summary of constraint costs is publicly available at <https://www.neso.energy/data-portal/constraint-breakdown>, and network constraint costs for 2023 were £1.4bn. The National Energy System Operator is responsible for managing constraints, which are a natural part of operating an efficient electricity system. These costs are not funded by the public purse, but instead by suppliers via Balancing Services Use of System charges. As part of Clean Power 2030, the Government is working to develop the necessary grid infrastructure and manage the level of constraints to create a cheaper and secure energy system for Britain.

■ **Wind Power: Noise****David Chadwick:**[\[17706\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he plans to review the noise limits for onshore wind turbines defined in the ETSU-R-97 guidance, in the context of (a) advancements in onshore wind turbine technology and (b) evidence of the potential impact of wind turbine noise.

Michael Shanks:

The Government is committed to ensuring that decision makers have access to the best guidance, enabling onshore wind to be built whilst also balancing potential impacts.

The Government has concluded that the ETSU-R-97 guidance should be updated to bring it into line with the most up to date evidence and policy. We aim to publish the updated ETSU-R-97 guidance in Spring 2025. In the meantime, the current ETSU guidance should continue to be applied when assessing wind turbine noise.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS■ **Agricultural Products: Prices****Stuart Anderson:**[\[18181\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department is taking steps to help support farmers to receive higher prices for their produce.

Daniel Zeichner:

Farmers should always receive a fair price for their products and the Government is committed to tackling unfairness in the supply chain wherever it exists. Using the 'Fair Dealings' powers in the Agriculture Act 2020 we can introduce regulations, applying to businesses who purchase agricultural products from farmers, which increase transparency and protect farmers from unfair practices.

More broadly, the Government will focus on enabling a more resilient and sustainable farming sector, supporting profitability for farmers. In the Budget announced in

October, the Government committed £5 billion to the farming budget over two years, including more money than ever for sustainable food production.

Furthermore, our new deal for farmers includes using the Government's own purchasing power to back British produce and seeking a new veterinary agreement with the European Union to cut red tape at our borders.

■ Agriculture: Subsidies

Rachel Gilmour: [\[17696\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending the Fruit and Vegetables Aid scheme beyond 31 December 2025.

Rachel Gilmour: [\[17697\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what his Department's timetable is for making a decision on whether to extend the Fruit and Vegetable Aid Scheme beyond 31 December 2025.

Rachel Gilmour: [\[17698\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has had discussions with producer organisations on (a) the closure of the Fruit and Vegetable Aid Scheme and (b) replacing that scheme (i) in part or (ii) in full.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Government appreciates and values the vital work of our fruit and vegetable growers and recognises their important role in maintaining a secure supply of home – produced fresh produce.

The Fruit and Vegetable Aid Scheme is an EU legacy scheme and legislation in place to close it on the 31 of December 2025. As part of our mission-driven government, the Department is now considering how we can achieve our ambitious, measurable and long-term goals for all our farming sectors.

Defra meets regularly with growers to discuss a range of issues. These discussions help inform future policy development and help us understand what support the sector needs to help it thrive.

■ Domestic Waste: Waste Disposal

Mr Andrew Snowden: [\[17637\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 3 December 2024 to Question 16313 on Domestic Waste: Waste Disposal, what steps he is taking to raise public awareness of the role of householders in forthcoming food waste disposal requirements.

Mary Creagh:

It is our intention to provide transitional resource funding for the 2024/25 financial year as soon as possible. Subject to agreement, Defra plans to fund communications to support participation by householders in new food waste collections.

Mr Andrew Snowden:[\[17638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 3 December 2024 to Question 16313 on Domestic Waste: Waste Disposal, what support is available to borough councils to meet their obligation to provide food waste disposal.

Mary Creagh:

In February of this year, we provided £258m of capital funding to waste collection authorities to help with the purchasing of bins and vehicles. It is our intention to provide transitional resource funding for the 2024/25 early in the new year and funding for 2025/26 early in the financial year. Subject to agreement, we plan to fund LAs for reasonable costs of procurement, project management, communications and container delivery. Funding for ongoing resource funding from 1 April 2026 is subject to agreement through a spending review.

We are aware that some local authorities may find the introduction of the reforms more challenging than others. We want to work with local authorities to support them in overcoming any difficulties they might face in relation to compliance within the legislative timeframes.

We are also working with sector specialists WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme) to provide guidance on best practice and scope additional areas of support.

■ Farmers: Government Assistance**Ben Maguire:**[\[17493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of (a) extending the Future Farm Resilience Fund and (b) introducing any new schemes of monetary support for farms.

Daniel Zeichner:

1. The Farming Resilience Fund (FRF) was developed to help farmers through the early years of the Agricultural Transition, specifically to assist farm businesses to adapt to the initial reductions in the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) by providing specialist business advice. To date, over 25,000 farmers have received 1-2-1 support. The FRF will conclude March 2025. Farmers yet to receive any support are therefore encouraged to contact the organisations listed on GOV.UK before the end of December 2024. Defra has received feedback suggesting many participants have recognised the value of the advice provided and it is our hope that many of the relationships and connections built through the FRF will continue beyond the scheme's official end date.

1. In the Budget announced in October, the Government committed £5 billion to the farming budget over two years. This Government has committed to environmental land management schemes. The budget included £1.8 billion for these schemes in 2025/26, the largest ever budget directed at sustainable food production and nature's recovery in our country's history. This will deliver improvements to food security, biodiversity, carbon emissions, water quality, air quality and flood resilience. We will work with the sector to continue to roll out, improve and evolve these schemes, to make them work for farming and nature.

■ Fisheries: Monitoring

Barry Gardiner:

[\[17501\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many vessels are taking part in the early adopter phase of the remote electronic monitoring rollout by having cameras installed; and what steps he is taking to increase the number of vessels taking part.

Daniel Zeichner:

There is one early adopter vessel volunteering to take part in the first fishery, over-24 metre pelagic trawlers in all English waters. Further vessels will be recruited for implementation in other fisheries.

■ Fisheries: Quotas

Barry Gardiner:

[\[17504\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the effectiveness of the distribution of quota between (a) foreign and (b) domestic-owned trawlers under ten metres in the UK inshore fleet.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Secretary of State determination of fishing opportunities for British fishing boats sets UK fishing quotas. This quota is only allocated to British-registered and licensed vessels. These vessels must comply with the economic link licence condition. This requires a certain amount of fish to be landed into the UK or requires the employment of UK crew or other measures which ensure that the UK benefits economically from the quota.

In recent years, quota available to the under 10 metre fleet in England has significantly increased but remains underutilised. To boost catches by the non-sector, quota licence caps have temporarily been removed, and trials exploring different quota allocation methods have been introduced.

■ Flood Control

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[17203\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of establishing a National Flood Resilience Centre for

the purposes of (a) flood research and (b) training emergency services across the UK to respond to flood events.

Emma Hardy:

The Government is committed to reducing the impact of flooding on vulnerable communities and has established a Floods Resilience Taskforce to help achieve this. The Government is aware of the University of Hull and Humberside Fire and Rescue Service proposal for a National Flood Resilience Centre. The Government recognises the importance of both research and training and will consider the proposal for a National Flood Resilience Centre through the work of the Taskforce.

Defra and the Environment Agency (EA) are actively engaged in partnership working with local resilience partners, including the emergency services, local authorities, specialist military units and other supporting organisations to provide resilience flooding in England. Defra and the EA carry out joint exercising and share learning to with partner organisations through the resilience forums, whilst also attending joint emergency service training for the response to all types of environmental emergencies, not just flooding.

■ **Fly Tipping and Litter: Fines**

Kevin Hollinrake:

[\[17558\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will (a) take steps to allow local authorities to set unlimited fines for littering and fly-tipping offences and (b) make an assessment of the financial resources local authority refuse departments have available to collect fly-tipping.

Mary Creagh:

The Government is currently not considering further increases to the maximum levels of fixed penalty notices that can be issued by local authorities. At present these stand at £500 for littering and £1000 for fly-tipping. Local authorities must spend this income on enforcement or clean up. Local authorities also have powers to prosecute anyone suspected of littering or fly-tipping. This can lead to potentially higher fines, criminal records or, for fly-tipping, a community sentence or even imprisonment

The Government is not planning to make an assessment of local authority resources to collect fly-tipping. We recognise the challenges that local authorities are facing as demand increases for critical services. The Government have listened to voices across the sector, and we prioritised local government at the Budget, where we announced over £4 billion in additional funding for local government services, including £1.3 billion which will go through the Settlement.

■ **Food: Labelling**

Sarah Champion:

[\[17537\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending food labelling legislation so that sourcing information of ingredients is required on pre-packed food and drink products.

Daniel Zeichner:

The UK maintains high standards on the information that is provided on food labels so that consumers can have confidence in the food that they buy. The fundamental principle of food labelling rules is that information provided to the consumer must not mislead and must enable consumers to make informed decisions.

Country of origin information is required for fresh and frozen meat of beef cattle, sheep, goat, pigs and poultry, as well as uncut fresh fruit and vegetables, honey, olive oil, wine and some fish products. It is also required for all prepacked food where its omission would be misleading to consumers.

Additional labelling rules apply for foods with primary ingredients. For processed food, where the origin of the primary ingredient is different to that of the food itself and the origin of the food is given, an indication that the origin of the primary ingredient is different must also be provided, for example 'British cheese made with milk from Ireland.'

In any case, where an origin or provenance is given or indicated including when provided voluntarily this must always be accurate.

Dan Norris:[\[17762\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what his planned timetable is for publishing a response to the Fairer Food Labelling consultation, which closed in May 2024.

Daniel Zeichner:

A public consultation on fairer food labelling was undertaken between March and May 2024 by the previous Government. This sought views on proposals to improve and extend current mandatory method of production labelling. The consultation also sought views on whether new rules should be introduced on country-of-origin labelling. We are now carefully considering all responses before deciding on next steps and will respond to this consultation in due course.

Food: Public Sector**Amanda Hack:**[\[17957\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent steps his Department has taken to ensure that at least 50% of all food purchased by the public sector is (a) locally produced and (b) sustainable.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Government has an ambition to be able to supply half of all food into the public sector from British producers or certified to higher environmental standards, whilst being in line with World Trade Organisation and domestic procurement obligations. Officials are developing a range of proposals to develop public sector food and catering procurement policy, to set the tone for Government ambition, as well as driving net zero, public health and animal welfare outcomes. In the meantime, the Procurement Act 2023 allow contracts below certain spending thresholds to be

reserved for smaller UK suppliers which presents a real opportunity for small and medium sized enterprises and public procurement.

■ Landfill: Methane

Perran Moon: [\[17685\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the report entitled REview24, published by the Association for Renewable Energy and Clean Technology on 14 November 2024, what steps he plans to take to tackle the potential increase in methane emissions from landfill sites.

Mary Creagh:

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

Defra is aware of the issue raised in the REview24 report. We are actively engaging with the Association for Renewable Energy and Clean Technology (REA) and the landfill gas industry to establish the scale of the potential impact of the ending of the Renewable Obligations Scheme from 2027.

The Government is committed to tackling methane emissions from landfill. We will achieve this by developing and delivering policies to support diverting waste from landfill, carrying out ground-breaking research in measuring and managing methane emissions in the waste sector, and exploring how to support and enable additional ways of managing legacy emissions such as passive capture.

Methane emissions from organic waste was a priority at COP29 and the Government was pleased to endorse the Declaration on Reducing Methane from Organic Waste, building on our Global Methane Pledge commitments.

■ Litter: Fines

Sir John Hayes: [\[17066\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many fixed penalty notices have been handed out for littering in (a) Lincolnshire and (a) England in each of the last five years.

Sir John Hayes: [\[17067\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many fixed penalty notices have been handed out for spitting in (a) Lincolnshire and (b) England in each of the last five years.

Mary Creagh:

Defra does not hold data on the number of fixed penalty notices issued for littering or spitting.

■ Marine Protected Areas: Fisheries

Barry Gardiner:

[17500]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to publish measures for the remaining offshore Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) under stage (a) 3 and (b) 4 of the Marine Management Organisation's offshore MPA process.

Emma Hardy:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Rotherham, on 16 September 2024, PQ 4529: It is essential to manage bottom trawling in our Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) appropriately due to the significant damage it can have on protected seabed habitats. The department is considering next steps in the context of our domestic and international nature conservation obligations and how we support the fishing sector.

The Department is considering next steps for both stages 3 and 4 of the process.

■ Metals: Recycling

Ruth Jones:

[17759]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of recycling precious metals found in (a) smartphones, (b) laptops and (c) other devices on the economy.

Mary Creagh:

Defra has not made the assessment requested. However, the industry group Material Focus, a not-for-profit organisation funded through industry compliance fee monies raised under the UK Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Regulations has undertaken two related studies. [Contributing towards a circular economy utilising Critical Raw Materials from waste electricals](#) and [Copper Crunch Report – Future challenges of copper consumption](#).

The Secretary of State has convened a Small Ministerial Group on Circular Economy and asked his Department to work with experts from industry, academia, civil society, and the civil service to develop a Circular Economy Strategy for England and a series of roadmaps detailing the interventions that the Government will make on a sector-by-sector basis. We will consider the evidence for action right across the economy and evaluate what further interventions may be needed in the electricals sector as we develop the Circular Economy Strategy.

■ Pets: Insecticides

Rachel Gilmour:

[17694]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if his Department will make an assessment of the current adequacy of (a) regulation of fipronil and imidacloprid products, (b) (i) methods and (ii) scale of publication and promotion of Health and Safety regulations for handling fipronil products, with specific relevance to their visibility to pet owner and (c) regulations around remedies for pets in respect of their

requirements to have a full Environmental Impact Assessment under the relevant legislation.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) authorises veterinary medicinal products under the Veterinary Medicines Regulations 2013 (as amended) to protect public health, animal health, the environment, and promote animal welfare. This involves ensuring medicines are approved only when their benefits outweigh any potential risks.

For pet owner safety, all veterinary medicines undergo a comprehensive User Risk Assessment before market authorisation. Clear safety warnings are included in product literature to minimise risks during proper use. These risks are also considered against the consequences of not using such medicines, such as the spread of flea- and tick-borne diseases, which can impact both pets in terms of parasitic disease and humans because of the public health issues of disease transference (zoonotic disease).

Environmental safety is also considered during authorisation. While current international guidelines assume minimal environmental exposure from companion animal medicines, the VMD now believes there is sufficient evidence to support a review of these guidelines, despite existing data gaps. The VMD have established the cross-government Pharmaceuticals in the Environment (PiE) Group, whose aim is to provide advice on possible policy options to help reduce pharmaceutical pollution in the UK, including disposal. An immediate priority for the PiE Group is to develop a strategy to reduce the levels of fipronil and imidacloprid being detected in UK surface water.

■ **Recycling**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[17205\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to make recycling (a) easier and (b) cheaper for local authorities.

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.

We recognise that local circumstances differ across the country, and so we are making sure that councils and other waste collectors have flexibility where appropriate to make the best local choices. On 29 November we confirmed that local authorities and other waste collectors will not be required to collect waste in seven separate streams and will be able to co-collect some streams by default.

Local authorities currently fund the collection and management of household packaging waste through locally raised revenues and funding from central government. Under packaging extended producer responsibility (pEPR), the efficient

costs of managing and recycling packaging waste will transfer to businesses who make and use packaging.

We have already provided £258 million of capital funding and will also be covering transitional resource costs and ongoing service costs.

■ Total Allowable Catches

Barry Gardiner: [\[17502\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will publish the opening positions for each Total Allowable Catch in the (a) EU/UK bilateral and (b) EU/UK/Norway trilateral negotiations.

Daniel Zeichner:

Due to the nature of the negotiations, it is not appropriate to publicly disclose negotiating documents detailing the UK's opening positions. Our bilateral negotiations with the EU and our trilateral negotiations with the EU and Norway have both concluded. The written record of the bilateral and agreed record of the trilateral negotiations, including final total allowable catch limits are available on GOV.UK.

■ Tree Planting

Neil Duncan-Jordan: [\[17740\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to encourage local authorities to plant more trees.

Mary Creagh:

Local authorities have an important role in contributing to England's tree planting targets and maximising the benefits of these trees, for example through planting urban and street trees, which are often the closest green infrastructure to people's homes. Defra supports local authorities' tree planting activity through access to several of the Nature for Climate Fund grant schemes, as well as through support for the Community Forests.

■ Veterinary Services: UK Trade with EU

Irene Campbell: [\[17662\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure that veterinary agreement concluded with the European Union reflects existing animal welfare protections.

Daniel Zeichner:

This Government is committed to resetting relations between the United Kingdom (UK) and the European Union (EU). As part of this, the Government is seeking to negotiate a veterinary/ sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) agreement to boost trade and deliver benefits to businesses and consumers on both sides. The UK and EU are like-minded partners with similarly high standards.

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

■ Waste: Crime

Sir Alec Shelbrooke:

[\[17085\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to help tackle (a) illegal landfill sites and (b) waste crime.

Mary Creagh:

The Environment Agency (EA) has a range of powers to tackle waste crime and take enforcement action. These powers, coupled with those of their partners ensure that it can confront criminals. Over the last 3 years the EA has stopped more than 1500 illegal waste sites and is now implementing powers from the Environment Act 2021 to increase funding available for enforcement work against waste crime.

This Government is committed to tackling waste crime. We are considering how to continue to increase the pressure on illegal waste operators.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Afghanistan: Women's Rights

Samantha Niblett:

[\[16782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of the human rights situation of women in Afghanistan; what his policy is on the concept of gender apartheid in that country; and what representations he has made to Afghanistan's geographical neighbours on gender inequality in the region.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

We have repeatedly condemned Taliban restrictions on women and girls' rights, including through UN Security Council and Human Rights Council resolutions. As the Foreign Secretary has said, exclusion of women from all aspects of public life is another tragic setback for Afghanistan. We engage with regional and international partners on human rights and security among other priority issues.

The FCDO is aware of calls for the inclusion of 'gender apartheid' as a new crime against humanity. We are actively considering the complex legal and policy questions raised by this proposal.

■ Alaa Abd El-Fattah

John McDonnell:

[\[15718\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 21 November 2024 to Question 14622 on Alaa Abd El-Fattah,

whether the Prime Minister made representations to his Egyptian counterpart on the case of Alaa Abd El-Fattah at the G20 summit in November 2024.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK Government remains committed to securing the release of Alaa Abd El-Fattah. We continue to raise Mr El-Fattah's case at the highest levels with the Egyptian Government. The Prime Minister did not raise the case with President Sisi at the G20 summit. The Prime Minister last raised Mr El-Fattah's case with President Sisi on 8 August 2024. Most recently, the Foreign Secretary raised Mr El-Fattah's case with Egyptian Foreign Minister Abdelatty on 25 November.

■ **Balochistan: Human Rights**

Mike Martin:

[\[17397\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps his Department is taking to help protect human rights in the Balochistan region of Pakistan.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK is deeply concerned about reports of human rights abuses and violations in Pakistan, including in Balochistan province. The British High Commission regularly raises these issues with the Government of Pakistan at a senior level, including the need to address allegations of enforced disappearances and extra-judicial killings. I discussed our human rights concerns with Pakistan's Human Rights Minister, Azam Tarar, on 4 September and 19 November. The UK will continue to urge the Government of Pakistan to guarantee individuals' rights as laid down in Pakistan's Constitution and in accordance with international standards.

■ **Bangladesh: Religious Freedom**

Shivani Raja:

[\[17920\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent diplomatic steps he has taken to help ensure the protection of (a) Hindu communities and (b) other religious minorities in Bangladesh.

Catherine West:

The UK has a long-standing commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights, including Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB). Following the student-led protests in July and August, we have been closely monitoring the situation for minorities in Bangladesh. In November, I visited Bangladesh and discussed the importance of the protection of religious minorities, including the Hindu community, with Chief Adviser Yunus. We are providing up to £27 million under the Bangladesh Collaborative, Accountable and Peaceful Politics programme for protecting civic and political space, fostering collaboration, reducing corruption, and mitigating tensions that lead to violence. We will continue to engage with the Interim Government of Bangladesh on the importance of FoRB.

■ Development Aid: Research

Chi Onwurah:

[\[17801\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 4 November 2024 to Question 11881 on Research Finance, what proportion of the £335m allocated to his Department for spend on research and development in 2025-26 will be classified as official development assistance.

Anneliese Dodds:

Following the spending review phase one settlement letters from HM Treasury (to which PQ 11881 refers), the FCDO is running an internal process to be agreed with Ministers, to decide on internal allocations for 2025-26. This will include allocations of Official Development Assistance.

■ Development Aid: Sexual Offences

Wendy Morton:

[\[16928\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help support international action to tackle conflict-related sexual violence.

Anneliese Dodds:

This Government's commitment to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) is resolute. To drive international action, Lord Collins has been appointed as the Prime Minister's Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict (PSVI). He visited Colombia on 25 - 26 November for a meeting of the International Alliance on PSVI, as vice chair, where he outlined the UK's commitment to prevent CRSV, end impunity, and put survivors at the centre of everything we do. Through PSVI, the UK has supported thousands of survivors of CRSV and contributed to vital legislative changes in Bosnia Herzegovina, Kosovo and Colombia.

■ Europe: Religious Freedom

Jim Shannon:

[\[17101\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of changes in the level of anti-Christian (a) discrimination and (b) hate crimes in Europe.

Anneliese Dodds:

There is no space for religious intolerance in pluralistic, modern societies. This Government is committed to using the strength of our global network to protect and promote Freedom of Religion or Belief for all. This work is mutually reinforcing of our wider human rights efforts, underpinning our belief that human rights are universal, and without prejudice. We lit up the FCDO estate on 20 November to mark Red Wednesday in solidarity with Christians and others facing persecution. We will continue to recognise the issue of persecution of Christians globally on account of their faith, alongside the persecution of other groups.

■ **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Policy**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[16817\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how their Department defines strategy.

Anneliese Dodds:

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

■ **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Staff**

Mr Peter Bedford: [\[18058\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many employee settlement agreements there were in his Department in each year since 2020; and what the total value of such agreements is.

Catherine West:

Since 2020 the FCDO has agreed 26 employee settlements totalling circa £1.921 million.

YEAR	NUMBER OF SETTLEMENTS
2020	4
2021	5
2022	6
2023	6
2024	5
Total	26

All settlements are made with robust legal advice and following a value for money assessment.

■ **Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance: Finance**

Wendy Morton: [\[16959\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing funding to Gavi, The Vaccine Alliance's replenishment campaign for the 2026-2030 strategic period.

Anneliese Dodds:

The UK is a longstanding proud donor to Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, committing £1.65 billion from 2021-2025 which is helping save up to 8 million lives from vaccine preventable diseases. In 2026-2030, Gavi aims to immunise up to 500 million more children, saving an additional 8-9 million lives. The UK remains committed to

supporting Gavi and is working with international partners to ensure sustainable resources for upcoming global health replenishments. These are being considered together to ensure we are best placed to address the global health challenges ahead. Funding decisions will be taken following the conclusion of the Spending Review in 2025.

■ **Gaza: Gangs**

Jim Shannon:

[\[15730\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of reports of criminal gangs taking over the streets in Gaza.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The breakdown of law and order in Gaza is hugely concerning. The humanitarian situation in Gaza is catastrophic and completely unacceptable. The fighting must stop now. A ceasefire would help protect civilians in Gaza and pave the way for much-needed stability. The international community will need to support long-term reconstruction, governance and security in Gaza, including through reforming and empowering the Palestinian Authority so it is fit to govern and provide security for the civilians living in Gaza.

■ **Gaza: Humanitarian Aid**

Abtisam Mohamed:

[\[15957\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department is providing targeted funding to help ensure that children with disabilities in Gaza are included in UK-funded humanitarian responses in Gaza.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The plight of disabled children in Gaza is deeply distressing. They are particularly vulnerable to exploitation, and their access to healthcare is disproportionately affected in times of conflict. The UK continues to provide significant funding to partners to support those most in need, including £5.5m in additional funding for UK-Med to run field hospitals in Gaza, and an additional £6m for UNICEF to provide lifesaving aid to vulnerable families in Gaza. We are also the second largest donor to the 'Education Cannot Wait' fund which supports 5,000 children affected by the crisis, including those with disabilities. On 16 October, I announced £1 million of UK assistance to the World Health Organisation to support medically evacuated Palestinians in Egypt. These funds will provide vital supplies and medications, including rehabilitative equipment. We continue urgently to press Israel to ensure sufficient aid, including vital medical treatment, reaches civilians in Gaza. The Foreign Secretary reiterated this in his 14 November call with Israeli Foreign Minister Sa'ar.

Wendy Morton:

[\[16171\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the (a) effectiveness and (b) reliability of routes for humanitarian aid delivery into Gaza.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK is clear that Israel can and must do more to ensure that humanitarian assistance can move freely and safely into and within Gaza. October saw the lowest number of humanitarian aid trucks entering Gaza since the crisis began, and the hugely concerning breakdown of law and order in Gaza is further restricting efforts to move aid within the territory. At a UK-chaired meeting of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) on 18 November, the Foreign Secretary underlined that there is no excuse for Israel's ongoing restrictions on humanitarian aid. Israel must end its aid restrictions and ensure that the UN and humanitarian partners can work safely and effectively. The Foreign Secretary also emphasised this in his 14 November call with Israeli Foreign Minister Sa'ar. And at a 12 November UNSC meeting, Lord Collins reiterated the UK's condemnation of Israel's ongoing aid restrictions. We continue to work alongside partners to press for an immediate ceasefire, the release of the hostages and a significant increase in aid to Gaza.

Wendy Morton:

[\[16172\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to increase the UK's contribution of humanitarian aid into Gaza.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The humanitarian situation in Gaza is intolerable. The UK continues to play a leading role in alleviating the suffering in Gaza: in July we announced £5.5m in additional funding for UK-Med to run field hospitals in Gaza, and in August an additional £6m for UNICEF to provide lifesaving aid to vulnerable families in Gaza. During my visit to Egypt in October, I pledged £1 million of UK assistance to the Egyptian Ministry of Health to support medically evacuated civilians from Gaza who are receiving care in Egypt. At a humanitarian conference in Cairo on 2 December, the Minister of State for Development announced £19 million of funding for Gaza, including £12 million in funding to the United Nations' Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and World Food Programme (WFP). We continue to provide significant funding to partners to support those most in need, including by announcing on 17 October that the Government will match up to £10 million of public donations to the Disasters Emergency Committee's Middle East humanitarian appeal.

Alison Taylor:

[\[16644\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of (a) the adequacy of infrastructure in Gaza and (b) its capacity to support access to essential services for children.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The September 2024 UN Satellite Centre (UNOSAT) damage assessment shows two-thirds of all buildings in Gaza have been damaged or destroyed since October 2023. Schools, warehouses and offices run by UN agencies have been severely affected along with much of the civilian infrastructure in the Gaza Strip, hindering efforts to preserve access to basic services - safe drinking water, shelter and healthcare. We are deeply alarmed by the disproportionate impact of the conflict on children in Gaza. Tailored approaches will be required for early recovery and reconstruction efforts in Gaza to integrate the needs of children. The Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary continue to press Israeli leaders to take all steps to avoid civilian casualties, and to emphasise the importance of upholding International Humanitarian Law. The Foreign Secretary stated that he was appalled by the tragic loss of life as a result of the Israeli military strike on the al-Tabeen school. The UK supports humanitarian agencies such as the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, to provide education services to civilians in Gaza, including through UK funding to Education Cannot Wait, which delivers education to children in crisis.

■ Gaza: Israel**Richard Burgon:**[\[16737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 27 November 2024 to Question 14977 on Gaza: Israel, whether he has had recent discussions with his international counterparts on the duty under Article 1 to prevent genocide.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

It is the UK's long-standing policy that any determination as to whether genocide has occurred is a matter for a competent national or international court, and not for governments or non-judicial bodies. This approach ensures that any determination is above politics, lobbying, and individual or national interest. The UK Government is clear in our commitment to international law. This includes our obligations under the Genocide Convention and the Arms Trade Treaty. This Government is profoundly concerned about the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza. The Foreign Secretary has raised our grave concerns with Israeli Minister Dermer and Minister Katz in his recent bilateral meetings. At a multilateral level, the UK is using its presidency of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to call for an immediate ceasefire, the immediate release of all hostages held since 7 October 2023 and urgent action to address the humanitarian crisis. On 2 September 2024, the Foreign Secretary announced the decision to suspend export licences for items that could be used in military operations in Gaza, exempting the F-35 components.

■ Human Rights

Fabian Hamilton:

[\[16910\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to pages 21-23 of the Peace Brigades International UK report entitled, The Case For Change: Why human rights defenders need a UK law on mandatory due diligence, published in November 2024, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of that report's findings; and if he will bring forward legislative proposals to introduce requirements on companies operating internationally to demonstrate (a) human rights and (b) environmental due diligence.

Anneliese Dodds:

The UK recognises the essential role that human rights defenders and civil society organisations play in promoting and protecting human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. The UK supports voluntary due diligence approaches taken by UK businesses to respect human rights and the environment across their operations and supply relationships, in line with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises. Going forward, the Government will assess the best way to prevent environmental harms and human rights and labour rights abuses in both private and public sector supply chains.

■ Israel Defense Forces

Jon Trickett:

[\[15722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what information his Department holds on whether the Israeli Defence Force has committed a breach of international law in Gaza.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The FCDO's International Humanitarian Law (IHL) Cell undertakes regular assessments of Israel's commitment and capability to comply with International Humanitarian Law, as well as aspects of its record of compliance in order to meet our legal obligations under the Strategic Export Licensing Criteria (SELC). Our assessments have raised concerns about possible breaches of IHL in the areas of humanitarian access and the treatment of detainees. The UK's robust export licensing criteria state that the Government will not issue export licences if there is a clear risk that the items might be used to commit or facilitate serious violations of IHL. Given our conclusions on 2 September, we suspended relevant export licences to Israel for use in military operations in the Gaza.

■ Israel: Arrest Warrants

Chris Law:

[\[15437\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the decision by the International Criminal Court of 21 November 2024 to issue arrest warrants for (a) Benjamin Netanyahu and (b) Yoav Gallant, if the

Government will (i) impose sanctions on (A) Benjamin Netanyahu, (B) Yoav Gallant and (C) other senior Israeli officials, (ii) end arms transfers to Israel and (iii) suspend the trade deal with Israel.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

We respect the independence of the International Criminal Court (ICC) which is the primary international institution for investigating and prosecuting the most serious crimes of international concern. We will comply with our legal obligations. This government has been clear that Israel has a right to defend itself, in accordance with international law. There is no moral equivalence between Israel, a democracy, and Hamas and Lebanese Hizballah, which are terrorist organisations.

Since February 2024, the UK has announced three packages of settler violence-related sanctions, targeting those responsible for inciting and perpetrating human rights abuses against Palestinian communities in the West Bank under our Global Human Rights Sanctions regime. The UK Government does not speculate about future sanctions designations as to do so could reduce their impact. The UK considers targets guided by the objectives of the relevant sanctions regime and the evidence.

We continue to review export licences to Israel and assess, following the 2 September decision to suspend export licences for items for military operations in Gaza, that there are no extant licences that might be used to commit or facilitate a serious violation of International Humanitarian Law. This is subject to the specific measures set out before Parliament excluding exports to the global F-35 programme from the scope of the suspension. Israel is an important trading and bilateral partner for the UK and remains part of our trade negotiation programme. In parallel, the UK Government continues to use our range of diplomatic tools and bilateral dialogues with Israel to discuss issues of concern, including in relation to the Israel/Gaza conflict. The UK will maintain its long-standing foreign policy positions throughout the FTA negotiations, including with respect to settlements.

■ **Kenya: Human Rights**

Alex Sobel:

[\[17214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had recent (a) meetings or (b) other discussions with human rights NGOs on reports of human rights abuses in Kenya following protests in that country.

Anneliese Dodds:

The British High Commission Nairobi regularly engages with human rights organisations in Kenya. In November 2024, the High Commissioner attended the 2024 UN Human Rights Defenders Awards alongside the National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders Kenya and other groups. The previous month, the Deputy High Commissioner hosted human rights experts to discuss the prevailing context for political and other rights in Kenya. The UK will continue to engage with human rights

defenders and the Kenyan government to help hold the authorities to account including through its upcoming membership of the Human Rights Council.

■ Kenya: Judiciary

Alex Sobel: [\[17215\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had (a) meetings and (b) other discussions with (i) The Good Law Project and (ii) other campaigning groups on judicial independence and the rule of law in Kenya.

Anneliese Dodds:

Whilst we have not held discussions with the Good Law Project, the FCDO has engaged with various groups to discuss judicial independence and the rule of law in Kenya. As part of this the British High Commission Nairobi has had regular engagements with the Law Society of Kenya. The High Commissioner has also engaged regularly with the Chief Justice to discuss judicial issues. In addition, the FCDO's Rule of Law Expertise programme provides legal expertise and partnerships to support the strengthening of judicial independence and the rule in law in Kenya.

■ Kenya: Politics and Government

Alex Sobel: [\[17217\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made representations on allegations of (a) corruption, (b) police killings, (c) disappearances, (d) torture and (e) attempts to suppress the right to protest in Kenya with his Kenyan counterpart; and if he will make such representations in future (i) bi-lateral and (ii) multi-lateral talks.

Anneliese Dodds:

The Foreign Secretary engages the Kenya Government on the importance of tackling corruption. At the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in October 2024, the Foreign Secretary and Kenya's Prime Cabinet Secretary discussed the Open Government Partnership and the importance of transparency. The British High Commission Nairobi also raised allegations of abductions at the highest levels of the Kenyan Government and released a joint statement following the protests emphasising the need for Kenya to fulfil its democratic principles. The UK's development funding supports police reform, focusing on human rights compliant policing and accountability. We will continue to engage the Kenya Government on human rights compliance issues.

■ Middle East: Armed Conflict

Wendy Morton: [\[16173\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the role of Qatar in mediating between the parties to the conflict in the Middle East.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

Qatar has played a vital role in negotiating a ceasefire deal to secure the release of all those being held hostage by Hamas and bring the conflict in Gaza to an end. We thank Qatar, Egypt, the US and all international partners for their coordinating efforts. Securing an immediate ceasefire and the release of hostages remains the UK's top priority and will pave the way for wider de-escalation, bringing greater stability to the Middle East. The Foreign Secretary has been urging the parties to return to the negotiating table to engage in meaningful dialogue and show the flexibility needed to reach an agreement. Negotiations remain the best chance to get hostages home to their loved ones.

■ Pakistan: Politics and Government**Sarah Owen:**[\[17243\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential risk of transnational repression for British Pakistani critics of the Pakistan government.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK Government continually assesses potential threats and takes the protection of individuals' rights, freedoms, and safety very seriously, including in relation to Pakistan. Any attempt by any foreign power to intimidate, harass or harm individuals or communities in the UK will not be tolerated. Wherever we identify such threats, we will use all measures, including through our world-class police and intelligence services, to mitigate risk to individuals.

Sarah Owen:[\[17244\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help protect British Pakistanis critical of the Pakistan government from transnational repression.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK Government continually assesses potential threats and takes the protection of individuals' rights, freedoms, and safety very seriously, including in relation to Pakistan. Any attempt by any foreign power to intimidate, harass or harm individuals or communities in the UK will not be tolerated. Wherever we identify such threats, we will use all measures, including through our world-class police and intelligence services, to mitigate risk to individuals.

Sarah Owen:[\[17245\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with the Pakistan government on (a) freedom of protest and (b) the (i) safety and (ii) rights of protestors.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK strongly supports individuals' rights to expression without censorship, intimidation or unnecessary restriction, and we will continue to urge the Government

of Pakistan to guarantee the rights of all people as laid down in Pakistan's Constitution and in accordance with international standards. I raised the importance of upholding civil and political rights with senior Ministers, including the Minister for Human Rights and Interior Minister, on my visit to Pakistan last month. The British High Commission also regularly raises these issues with the Pakistani authorities at a senior level.

■ **Palestinians: Medical Treatments**

Abtisam Mohamed:

[\[15955\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department is taking steps to work with (a) the Palestinian authority and (b) Egypt to identify (i) adults and (ii) children with disabilities in order to evacuate them for treatment in the UK.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK government is closely monitoring the impact of the conflict in Gaza on access to medical facilities and healthcare, including for disabled people. Through our support to UK-Med, we are helping to run field hospitals in Gaza. On 16 October, I announced £1 million of UK assistance to support medically evacuated Palestinians in Egypt. Through the World Health Organisation, the funds will provide vital supplies and medications, including rehabilitative equipment, and will strengthen capacity to care for patients with chronic diseases. UK funding to UNICEF is also providing lifesaving healthcare and specialist treatment to families in Gaza. We continue to press Israeli leaders on aid access including medical supplies: on 18 October the Prime Minister underlined that the dire humanitarian situation cannot continue. Israel can and must do more to ensure aid reaches civilians in Gaza.

Abtisam Mohamed:

[\[15956\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to evacuate (a) children and (b) adults from Gaza, including those now in Egypt, for medical treatment that is not available in either place.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The plight of sick and injured people in Gaza is deeply distressing. We urge Israel to open safe, regular routes for those requiring medical evacuation. There are provisions that allow Palestinians to come to the UK for Private Medical Treatment under the Immigration Rules. Where a relevant application is made consideration will be given to exceptional circumstances, compelling or compassionate grounds. The UK is supporting the provision of essential healthcare to civilians in Gaza, including support to UK-MED for operating their field hospitals. We also recently announced £1m for the Egyptian Ministry of Health and Population, delivered through WHO Egypt, to support medically evacuated Palestinians from Gaza.

■ Romania: Elections

Wendy Morton: [\[16957\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps he is taking to support the work of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe in ensuring free and fair elections in Romania.

Stephen Doughty:

The UK is a strong supporter of the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). While ODIHR did not send an election observation mission to Romania on this occasion, the UK will continue to work closely with the OSCE to support democratic values in the region.

On 6 December the Romanian Constitutional Court annulled the results of the first round of the Presidential election. On 7 December the Foreign Secretary set out UK concerns following reports from the Romanian authorities of Russian interference in their Presidential elections and reiterated the importance of elections being decided by the Romanian people, freely and fairly, he further stated that the UK remains a resolute Ally to Romania and is confident in its democracy.

On 4 December the Foreign Secretary met Romanian FM Odobescu in the margins of NATO Foreign Ministers, and on 12 November I hosted FM Odobescu in London. In both of these meetings we reaffirmed our commitment to strengthening our bilateral relationship and our shared concerns regarding Russian hybrid threats in the region.

■ Russia: Diplomatic Service

Wendy Morton: [\[16958\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to support the work of UK diplomatic staff based in Russia.

Stephen Doughty:

The Kremlin shows a persistent pattern of unacceptable and unjustified behaviour against UK diplomats in Russia, who undertake vital work in extremely challenging circumstances. Following specific incidents of concern, the Russian Ambassador has been summoned and reminded of Russia's obligations under the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. Formal complaints have also been lodged with the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Moscow. Intimidation will not deter our staff from promoting international stability and UK interests around the world. We remain in close contact with HMA Moscow and his team to ensure the safety and security of our hardworking diplomats.

■ Special Envoy on Freedom of Religion or Belief

Dave Doogan: [\[17229\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans the Government has to appoint a Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief.

Anneliese Dodds:

As the Deputy Prime Minister said in Parliament on 20 November, envoy appointments are under Ministerial consideration and will be decided upon in due course. We continue to use the strength of our global diplomatic network, including dedicated staff within the FCDO, to promote and protect Freedom of Religion or Belief around the world.

■ Sub-Saharan Africa: Development Aid**Alex Sobel:**[\[17216\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to (a) help ensure and (b) verify that funding provided to governments in (i) Uganda, (ii) Kenya and (iii) other countries in sub-Saharan Africa is used for its intended purpose.

Anneliese Dodds:

The FCDO has a zero-tolerance approach towards corruption, fraud, and misuse of UK development funding. We continually assess the impact of our ODA programming to ensure that it is delivered in a transparent manner with funding used for its intended purposes. The UK's development partners, including governments across Africa, understand our zero-tolerance approach and their obligations in delivering support funded by the UK taxpayer.

■ Tropical Diseases: Health Education**Christine Jardine:**[\[17196\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to help (a) raise awareness of neglected tropical diseases and (b) tackle neglected tropical diseases.

Anneliese Dodds:

The UK's new Eliminating Lymphatic Filariasis in Africa programme (ELFA), that will receive £15 million of funding from 2024-25 to 2026-27, supports the broader Reaching the Last Mile Fund initiative to eliminate the neglected tropical diseases lymphatic filariasis and river blindness from Africa by 2030. Part of the programme supports work to raise awareness and change behaviours in order to reduce the impact of lymphatic filariasis. The FCDO is also in the process of renewing funding for research and development through Product Development Partnerships including for neglected tropical diseases.

■ Zimbabwe: Commonwealth**Daisy Cooper:**[\[17234\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what his policy is on Zimbabwe's application to re-join the Commonwealth.

Anneliese Dodds:

The criteria for membership include commitment to the Commonwealth values and principles as set out in the Commonwealth Charter. The UK has always been clear that we would like to see Zimbabwe return to the Commonwealth. Whilst we recognise there has been progress, we believe further steps are needed on democracy, governance and human rights before Zimbabwe makes a formal application to re-join the Commonwealth. We note some of the findings in the Commonwealth Election Observation Report and support the recommendations. We would encourage a further Commonwealth assessment mission to Zimbabwe in 2025 to follow up on these areas. The UK strongly values our partnership with Zimbabwe and stands ready to support further reforms in this regard, through the Commonwealth and other fora.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**Ambulance Services: Finance****Sir Oliver Dowden:**[\[17550\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much of the NHS funding announced in the Autumn Budget 2024, HC 295, will be allocated to ambulance services.

Karin Smyth:

The information requested is not held by the Department. The future allocation of National Health Service funding announced in the Autumn Budget will be decided by NHS England.

Ambulance Services: Scotland**Andrew Bowie:**[\[17858\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on the number and proportion of 999 calls that were made in Scotland and handled by an Ambulance Service in England and Wales since 2020.

Karin Smyth:

The information requested is not held by the Department.

Autism: Training**Alex Sobel:**[\[17219\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what training the NHS offers on pathological demand avoidance.

Stephen Kinnock:

Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA) is most often understood as a characteristic experienced by or observed, or both, in some autistic people, but professional consensus on its status is still required. PDA is not a recognised and stand-alone

diagnosis within the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders or the International Classification of Disease.

There is a variety of training available for staff providing care to autistic people, although not specifically for PDA. The Health and Care Act 2022 requires that, from 1 July 2022, Care Quality Commission registered providers must ensure staff receive specific training on learning disability and autism, appropriate to their role. Individual employers are responsible for ensuring their staff are trained and competent to carry out their role.

The standard of training for health care professionals is the responsibility of the respective independent statutory regulatory bodies, who set the outcome standards expected at undergraduate level and approve courses. It is the responsibility of higher education institutions to write and teach the curricula content that enables their students to meet the regulators' outcome standards.

Whilst not all curricula may necessarily highlight a specific condition, they all emphasise the skills and approaches a healthcare practitioner must develop in order to ensure accurate and timely diagnoses and treatment plans for their patients.

■ **Autism: York Outer**

Mr Luke Charters:

[17029]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to (a) raise awareness of and (b) support adults with autism in York Outer constituency.

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 support services for autistic people, in line with National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines. The NICE guideline, Autism spectrum disorder in adults: diagnosis and management, aims to improve access and engagement with interventions and services, and the experience of care, for autistic adults.

On 5 April 2023, NHS England published a national framework and operational guidance to improve outcomes in all-age autism assessment pathways. This guidance will help ICBs and the National Health Service to improve outcomes for children, young people, and adults referred to an autism assessment service. The guidance sets out what support should be available before an assessment, and what support should follow a recent diagnosis of autism based on the available evidence. This includes setting out specific considerations for developing post-diagnostic support.

■ Brain: Injuries

Andy McDonald:

[\[17116\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance is available for healthcare professionals in prisons for dealing with people entering custody found to have a previously acquired brain injury.

Stephen Kinnock:

A range of evidence-based neurodevelopmental support and interventions are offered and delivered to people entering custody, according to individual needs. This includes, but is not limited to, interventions for traumatic brain injury.

Headway's Justice Programme delivers a range of projects and initiatives to raise awareness of the significant number of people in the criminal justice system with an acquired brain injury and their resultant needs, to advocate for change in policy and practice. Through its Justice Programme, Headway is delivering training in identifying the signs of brain injury to thousands of professionals working within the criminal justice system. It has developed Understanding Acquired Brain Injury guides for prison and probation staff.

BrainKind provides bespoke training for professionals who support people experiencing homelessness, people in prison, and ex-offenders to raise awareness of the problems individuals can face if suffering from a brain injury, and the tools to support them. The aim of the training is to increase understanding of the impact a brain injury can have on people, to recognise the effects on behaviour, emotions, and social interaction, and to prepare front line service staff working directly with service users within the homelessness or criminal justice system to work with brain-injured individuals.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence published guidance in May 2023 on the assessment and early management of head injury. Whilst this guidance is not specific to the prison population, it can be used by healthcare professionals working in prisons.

Andy McDonald:

[\[17118\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what data his Department collects on the health outcomes of people in prison who are screened as having a previously acquired brain injury.

Andy McDonald:

[\[17119\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what data his Department collects on the safety outcomes of people in prison who are screened as having a previously acquired brain injury.

Stephen Kinnock:

The data requested is not held centrally.

■ Cancer and General Practitioners: Yorkshire and the Humber**Abtisam Mohamed:**[\[17947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to help improve (a) access to GP appointments and (b) rates of early-stage cancer diagnosis in areas of socio-economic deprivation in Yorkshire.

Stephen Kinnock:

We know that patients are struggling to access general practices (GPs), and that these struggles can be particularly acute for patients living in deprived areas. We will support equitable access to GP services, and we have already committed to recruiting over 1,000 newly qualified GPs through an £82 million boost to the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme, as part of an initiative to address GP access. In order to ensure that all patients have multiple routes of access, we have committed to introducing a modern booking system, to end the 8:00am scramble.

The chances of surviving cancer are higher if diagnosed at an early stage. Therefore, early diagnosis is a key priority for the Government. We will improve cancer survival rates and hit all National Health Service cancer waiting time targets, so no patient waits longer than they should, including in Yorkshire.

■ Cancer: Thames Valley**Clive Jones:**[\[R\] \[18280\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that young people with cancer have equity of access to age-appropriate, specialist psychological support in the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Berkshire West Integrated Care Board area.

Karin Smyth:

The Department is dedicated to ensuring all children and young people with cancer have access to psychological support to help them through their diagnosis and treatment.

NHS England has published service specifications that set out the service standards required of all providers of children and young people cancer services, including those in the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Berkshire West Integrated Care Board (ICB) area. The requirements include ensuring that every patient has access to specialist care and reducing physical, emotional and psychological morbidity arising from treatment for childhood cancer. More information on the specifications is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/commissioning/spec-services/npc-crg/group-b/b05/>

Children and young people's cancer care is managed by principal treatment centres (PTCs) who ensure quality care. Within the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Berkshire West ICB area, this would be Oxford Children's Hospital as part of the Oxford University Hospitals NHS Trust. Each PTC has a multi-disciplinary team which meets at least weekly and includes a specific focus on the psychosocial needs of patient.

The multi-disciplinary team ensures that each service user is assessed for psychological needs and can access any psychosocial support that is required.

■ Cannabis: Medical Treatments

Chris Kane: [\[17970\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS prescriptions for cannabis based products there have been in each year since 2018.

Karin Smyth:

The following table shows the total number of National Health Service prescriptions for licensed cannabis-based medicines, namely Nabilone, Sativex, and Epidyolex, dispensed in the community in England against an NHS prescription between January 2018 to September 2024:

TIME PERIOD	ITEMS
2018	2,591
2019	2,636
2020	2,674
2021	2,973
2022	4,003
2023	5,192
2024	4,326
Total	24,395

Source: NHS Business Services Authority

Note: data for 2024 is from January to September.

Data on unlicensed cannabis-based medicines is withheld in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulations, due to the number of items attributed being to fewer than five patients, and an enhanced risk of the release of patient identifiable information.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Rupert Lowe: [\[15549\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the total cost was for the covid-19 vaccine roll-out in each year since 2021.

Karin Smyth:

The total cost for the COVID-19 vaccine roll-out, each year since 2021, is as follows:

- £2.1 billion in 2020/21;

- £5.6 billion in 2021/22;
- £2.8 billion in 2022/23; and
- the audited accounts for 2023/24 have not yet been published, and so finalised figures will be unavailable until they have been published.

These figures cover the costs incurred by the Department's group of the procurement of the vaccines and subsequent costs of administration.

■ Dementia: Health Services

Claire Young: [\[17061\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps his Department has taken to help support (a) people with dementia and (b) their carers.

Stephen Kinnock:

NHS England has recently refreshed the RightCare Dementia Scenario. This sets out best practice for supporting people with dementia. NHS England has also funded an evidence-based improvement project to fund two trusts in each region, 14 sites in total, to pilot the Diagnosing Advanced Dementia Mandate tool to improve the diagnosis of dementia and the provision of support in care homes. All pilots completed at the end of May 2024, and it is anticipated that learning will be shared in early 2025. The Government is investing in dementia research across all areas, from causes, diagnosis, and prevention, to treatment, and care and support, including for carers.

The Government is committed to ensuring that both the person with dementia and their family have the support that they need. In April 2025, the Government will increase the Carer's Allowance weekly earnings limit from £151 a week to £196, the equivalent of 16 hours at the National Living Wage. This represents the largest increase in the earnings limit since Carer's Allowance was introduced in 1976. It means carers can earn up to £10,000 a year whilst still retaining Carer's Allowance, which is approximately an additional £2,000 a year.

On 28 November 2024, the Government also announced that the Accelerating Reform Fund's (ARF) second tranche of funding worth £22.6 million will shortly be released for 2024/25. More than half of the ARF projects, and at least one in each integrated care system area, are focussed on identifying, recognising, and supporting unpaid carers.

■ Dental Services

Nick Timothy: [\[17295\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) dentists and (b) dental surgeries there were per capita in (a) England, (b) the East of England and (c) Suffolk in each year between 2014 and 2024.

Stephen Kinnock:

We do not hold data on how many dental surgeries there were per capita in England, in the East of England, or in Suffolk, each year between 2014 and 2024. However, the following table shows the number of National Health Service dentists per 100,000 population each year in England, in the East of England, and in the Suffolk and Northeast Essex Integrated Care Board (ICB), each year from 2014/15 to 2023/24:

YEAR	SUFFOLK AND NORTHEAST ESSEX ICB	EAST OF ENGLAND	NATIONAL
2014/15	53.3	49.1	54.2
2015/16	52.9	48.1	54.7
2016/17	51.3	47.1	54
2017/18	53.8	47.8	54.8
2018/19	53.5	48.4	55
2019/20	51	47.9	52.9
2020/21	47.2	45.4	48.6
2021/22	46.5	45.9	51
2022/23	45.2	45.1	50.3
2023/24	44.2	44.5	49.5

Source: the figures for 2019 to 2024 are published by the NHS Business Services Authority, and the figures prior to 2019 were published by NHS Digital, and both are available, respectively, at the following two links:

<https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/statistical-collections/dental-england/dental-statistics-england-202324> <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/nhs-dental-statistics>

Note: the figures from the two different data sources are not directly comparable, and caution should be taken when comparing pre and post 2019 figures.

■ Dental Services: Private Sector

Lee Anderson:**[17882]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of (a) reimbursement schemes and (b) financial assistance programmes for patients seeking private dental care because of NHS delays.

Stephen Kinnock:

The National Health Service contracts with independent dental providers to deliver NHS dental treatment. Dentists must make clear which treatments can be provided

on the NHS and which can only be provided on a private basis, and the costs associated for each. If a patient decides to choose alternative private options, this should be included in their treatment plan.

■ Dental Services: Rural Areas

Edward Morello: [\[17458\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing additional incentives for NHS dentists to operate in (a) rural and (b) remote areas.

Edward Morello: [\[17459\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to address shortages in NHS dentists in rural areas; and what his timeline is for tackling such gaps.

Stephen Kinnock:

We are aware of the challenges faced in accessing a dentist, particularly in more rural and coastal areas. 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.

Integrated care boards have started to advertise posts through the Golden Hello scheme. This recruitment incentive will see up to 240 dentists receiving payments of £20,000 to work in those areas that need them most, for three years. As of 7 November 2024, 629 Expressions of Interest have been received, 308 of which have been approved for participation in the Dental Recruitment Incentive Scheme. 64 posts have been advertised, with five dentists commenced in post.

Edward Morello: [\[17460\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the impact of recent NHS contract reforms on access to NHS dentistry in (a) West Dorset constituency and (b) other rural areas.

Stephen Kinnock:

In July 2022, the first substantial changes to the National Health Service dental contract, since the 2006 Dental System Reforms, were made. These allowed the best performing practices to see more patients, specifically up to an extra 10% more activity, where commissioners have given agreement, and enabled commissioners to better manage consistently underperforming contracts. The changes provided increased remuneration for dentists treating patients with high needs and supported the use of increased skill mix in practices.

We will further reform the NHS contract to rebuild dentistry in the long term and increase access to NHS dental care, with a shift to focus on prevention and the retention of NHS dentists.

There are no perfect payment models and careful consideration needs to be given to any potential changes to the complex dental system so that we deliver genuine improvements for patients and the profession.

■ **Dental Services: Stratford-on-Avon**

Manuela Perteghella:

[17657]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase the number of (a) NHS dentists and (b) NHS dental appointments in Stratford-on-Avon 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 the integrated care boards (ICBs) across England. For the Stratford-on-Avon constituency, this is the NHS Coventry and Warwickshire ICB.

■ **Dental Services: Suffolk**

Nick Timothy:

[17296]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the location of dental surgeries in Suffolk by postcode.

Stephen Kinnock:

National Health Service dentists are required to keep their NHS.UK website profiles up to date, so that patients can find a dentist more easily. This includes information on whether they are accepting new patients, and can be searched using postcodes. Further information is available at the following link:

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

■ **Department of Health and Social Care and NHS England: Consultants**

Joe Robertson:

[16848]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many contracts with management consultants have been awarded by (a) his Department and (b) NHS England since 4 July 2024.

Karin Smyth:

The Department categorises its contracts based on the products and/or services supplied, not the type of supplier. Since 4 July 2024, the Department has awarded two contracts for 'management consultancy' services, providing expert advice in the areas of Medical Technology and Medicine Pricing. NHS England has not awarded any similar contracts since 4 July 2024.

Department of Health and Social Care: Publications**Joe Robertson:**[\[17699\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will have discussions with representatives of (a) NHS England and (b) other departmental bodies on the use of the term global majority in departmental (i) publications and (ii) internal documents.

Karin Smyth:

This is not a term the Department, NHS England, or other departmental bodies would use officially.

Drugs: Labelling**Edward Morello:**[\[17453\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals on requiring drugs manufacturers to include additional labelling on the front of boxes of medications containing a potentially addictive substance.

Karin Smyth:

The legislative requirements for the labelling of medicines are set out in Schedules 24 and 25 of the Human Medicines Regulations 2012. The regulations are continually under review and updated as and when a need is identified. It should be noted that the current legislative framework already provides for the presentation of 'any special warning applicable to the product' on the outer carton of a medicine, which would enable product-specific safety information to be presented on the pack if considered necessary.

Endometriosis: Diagnosis**Mike Amesbury:**[\[17597\]](#)

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

Karin Smyth:

The Government is committed to prioritising women's health and improving the diagnosis, treatment, and ongoing care for gynaecological conditions, including endometriosis.

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines support healthcare professionals to diagnose and treat conditions. In November 2024, the

NICE published updated recommendations on the diagnosis and management of endometriosis. This will help women to receive a diagnosis more quickly.

Tackling waiting lists is a key part of the Government's Health Mission and we are urgently looking into waiting times for gynaecological issues, including for endometriosis. We are committed to achieving the NHS Constitutional standard that 92% of patients should wait no longer than 18 weeks from Referral to Treatment within our first term, and this includes those waiting for endometriosis diagnosis. To achieve this, we will deliver an additional 2 million operations, scans, and appointments during our first year in Government, which is the equivalent to 40,000 per week, as a first step. With over 115,000 women referred onto the waiting list each month since the start of the year, this urgent work will help the nearly 600,000 women on gynaecology waiting lists get the medical care they need.

■ Endometriosis: Health Education

Mike Amesbury:

[\[17595\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of having an awareness raising campaign for NHS clinicians on endometriosis.

Karin Smyth:

The Government is committed to prioritising women's health and improving the diagnosis, treatment, and ongoing care for gynaecological conditions, including endometriosis. A number of measures are in place to raise awareness of endometriosis among clinicians, and to support diagnosis and care for endometriosis.

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines support healthcare professionals to diagnose and treat conditions. In November 2024, the NICE published updated recommendations on the diagnosis and management of endometriosis. This will help women to receive a diagnosis more quickly.

Endometriosis is included in the core curriculum for general practitioners, and for obstetricians and gynaecologists. The General Medical Council is introducing the Medical Licensing Assessment for the majority of incoming doctors, including all medical students graduating from academic year 2024/25 and onwards. Within this assessment are a number of topics relating to women's health, including endometriosis. This will encourage a better understanding of endometriosis among doctors as they start their careers in the United Kingdom.

We will continue to keep opportunities for further awareness raising about endometriosis under review.

Mike Amesbury:

[\[17596\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of having an awareness raising campaign on endometriosis.

Karin Smyth:

Endometriosis is a common gynaecological condition, estimated to affect one in 10 women of reproductive age. Endometriosis can significantly impact women and girls' physical and mental health, and anyone with symptoms of endometriosis should contact their general practice. To raise awareness of endometriosis, the Department has worked with NHS England to improve information on the National Health Service website and YouTube channel. Information on endometriosis symptoms and treatments can be found on the NHS.UK website, and by viewing the video series on endometriosis on the NHS YouTube channel, with further information on both available, respectively, at the following two links:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/endometriosis/>

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLnhASgDTToTkvwBSC71PbetUe7Wnp_uE2L

We will continue to keep opportunities for further awareness raising about endometriosis under review.

■ Epilepsy and Parkinson's Disease: Drugs**Dr Ben Spencer:****[17898]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure consistency of the supply of medication for (a) epilepsy and b) Parkinson's disease patients.

Karin Smyth:

The Department is working hard with industry to help resolve intermittent supply issues with some epilepsy medications. As a result of ongoing activity and intensive work, including directing suppliers to expedite deliveries, some issues, including with some carbamazepine and oxcarbazepine presentations, have been resolved.

There was a supply issue with all strengths of lamotrigine tablets, used to manage epilepsy, due to manufacturing issues. The supply issue has recently resolved, and supply is expected to return to normal levels through early December 2024.

We are aware of an ongoing supply issue with all strengths of topiramate tablets, with the resupply date to be confirmed. Other manufacturers of topiramate tablets can meet the increased demand during this time.

The Department is aware of supply constraints with one supplier of amantadine 100 milligram capsules, used in the management of Parkinson's disease, however stocks remain available from alternative suppliers to cover this demand.

The Department continues to work closely with industry, the National Health Service, and others to help ensure patients continue to have access to an alternative treatment until their usual product is back in stock.

■ Epilepsy: Medical Treatments

Chris Kane:

[\[17969\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress he has has been made on ensuring appropriate treatment for people suffering from epilepsy; and what steps he has taken to implement the 2018 review by Dame Sally Davies on the therapeutic and medicinal benefits of cannabis based products.

Karin Smyth:

There are a range of anti-seizure medications that can be prescribed for the treatment of epilepsy that have been shown to be effective at reducing the number of seizures a person experiences. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidance on epilepsies in children, young people, and adults, provides clinicians with evidence-based advice around starting a patient on anti-seizure medication. It outlines that clinicians should develop an individualised anti-seizure medication treatment strategy with their patient, taking safety considerations into account, and regularly monitoring and reviewing their patient's medications. The NICE guidance also includes recommendations on non-pharmacological treatments for epilepsy, such as adhering to a ketogenic diet.

In June 2018, Professor Dame Sally Davies, the former Chief Medical Officer for England and Chief Medical Advisor to the Government, published a review to explore the therapeutic benefits of cannabis-based products for medicinal use. Professor Davies recommended 'that the whole class of cannabis-based medicinal products be moved out of Schedule 1 of the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 2001'. Following advice from the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs, the Government accepted the recommendation and amended the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 2001 (the 2001 Regulations) and Misuse of Drugs (Designation) Order 2015. This introduced a legal route for cannabis-based products for medicinal use to be prescribed by doctors on the General Medical Council specialist register, in the strictly controlled circumstances required by the 2001 Regulations, without the requirement for a Home Office licence

There are no outstanding actions from the review.

■ GP Surgeries: Repairs and Maintenance

Dr Becky Cooper:

[\[13312\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to paragraph 2.71 of the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 October, what support his Department plans to give to GP practices unable to access the fund for GP surgery upgrades.

Stephen Kinnock:

There is no additional national funding for those not prioritised by their local systems to access the capital fund of £102m for GP upgrades allocated in the 2024 Autumn Budget.

This capital fund is in addition to annual capital allocations to Integrated Care Boards (ICBs). Since 2022/23, the Department includes a substantial proportion of primary care business as usual estates and GP IT capital in ICB capital funding envelopes. This allows ICBs to take a more cohesive approach to capital investment decisions across all organisations within that system. In addition, ICBs are responsible for commissioning - planning, securing, and monitoring – GP services within their health systems through delegated responsibility from NHS England.

■ Health Services: Winter Fuel Allowance

Mr Richard Holden:

[17259]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of changes to the eligibility criteria for the Winter Fuel Payment on (a) primary care, (b) hospitals and (c) Pharmacy First.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 5 December 2024]: We know that patients are struggling to access their general practice (GP), especially throughout the winter period when demand is higher. We committed to restoring the front door of the National Health Service by shifting the focus of the NHS out of hospitals into the community. We know that when patients are not able to get a GP appointment, they end up in accident and emergency, which is worse for the patient, and more expensive for the taxpayer. That is why it is key that we increase the capacity of GP appointments. We have already committed to recruiting over 1,000 newly qualified GPs from October 2024 through an £82 million boost to the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme, which will increase the number of GP appointments delivered.

In line with the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty, the Department for Work and Pensions produced an equality analysis as part of the ministerial decision-making process. This was published on 13 September 2024, and is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/responses-to-freedom-of-information-requests-on-equality-impact-assessments-produced-for-targeting-winter-fuel-payment/dwp-freedom-of-information-response>

The Department for Work and Pensions will continue to monitor and review the impact of the policy, using this to inform any future decisions.

■ Hospices: Employers' Contributions

Mike Amesbury:

[17871]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the potential impact of the changes to employers National Insurance contributions on the financial situation of hospices.

Joe Robertson:

[\[18295\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of changes to employer National Insurance contributions at the Autumn Budget 2024 on children's hospices.

Stephen Kinnock:

We have taken necessary decisions to fix the foundations in the public finances at the Autumn Budget, which enabled the Spending Review settlement of a £22.6 billion increase in resource spending for the Department from 2023/24 outturn to 2025/26. The rise in employer National Insurance contributions (ENICs) will be implemented in April 2025, and the Department will set out further details on the allocation of funding for next year in due course.

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

■ Hospices: Expenditure

Helen Morgan:

[\[17279\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many hospices there were in England in each year since 2015; and how many of those received Government funding in each of those years.

Helen Morgan:

[\[17280\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much Government funding has been provided to hospices in each year since 2015.

Helen Morgan:

[\[17281\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the mean payment to each Government funded hospice was in each year since 2015.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 5 December 2024]: Palliative care services are included in the list of services an integrated care board (ICB) must commission. This promotes a more consistent national approach and supports commissioners in prioritising palliative and end of life care. To support ICBs in this duty, NHS England has published statutory guidance and service specifications.

Whilst the majority of palliative and end of life care is provided by National Health Service staff and services, we recognise the vital part that voluntary sector organisations, including hospices, also play in providing support to people at end of life, and their loved ones.

The Department does not hold specific data regarding hospice funding for each year. Individual ICBs oversee and maintain records of these transactions.

Additionally, the amount of funding each charitable hospice receives varies both within and between ICB areas. This will vary depending on the demand in that ICB area, but will also be dependent on the totality and type of palliative and end of life care provision from both NHS and non-NHS services, including charitable hospices, within each ICB area.

■ Hospiscare: Finance

Rachel Gilmour:

[17695]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will make an assessment of the adequacy of public funding for Devon Hospiscare in Exeter.

Stephen Kinnock:

Palliative care services are included in the list of services that the integrated care boards (ICBs) in England, including the NHS Devon ICB, under which Devon Hospiscare falls, must commission. This promotes a more consistent national approach and supports commissioners in prioritising palliative and end of life care. To support ICBs in this duty, NHS England has published statutory guidance and service specifications.

Whilst the majority of palliative and end of life care is provided by National Health Service staff and services, we recognise the vital part that voluntary sector organisations, including hospices like Devon Hospiscare, also play in providing support to people at end of life, and their loved ones.

We do understand that, financially, times are difficult for many voluntary and charitable organisations, including hospices, due to a range of concurrent cost pressures. We will consider next steps on palliative and end of life care, including funding, in the coming months.

■ Hospitals: Construction

Freddie van Mierlo:

[18030]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the New Hospital Programme review, when the (a) options and (b) recommendations for the Royal Berkshire Hospital, Reading will be published; and when he plans to announce which hospitals will be prioritised.

Karin Smyth:

The new hospital scheme for the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust at the Royal Berkshire Hospital is in the scope of the review into the New Hospital Programme.

We are finalising the outcome of the review so we can be honest and upfront with everyone on when we expect the new hospitals to be delivered.

My Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care will set out further details on the outcome of the review, which will include a new and realistic delivery schedule for the programme, at the earliest opportunity.

■ IVF: Donors

Jim Shannon:

[\[17096\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of a ban on advertisements for egg donors.

Karin Smyth:

There are no plans to make an assessment on banning advertisements for egg donors. The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA) Code of Practice states that advertising should be designed with regard to the sensitive issues involved in recruiting donors, and that advertising or publicity aimed at recruiting gamete or embryo donors, or encouraging donation, should not refer to the possibility of financial gain or similar advantage, although it may refer to compensation permitted under relevant HFEA Directions.

There are no plans to raise the minimum age of egg donation to 25 years old. The HFEA has advised that their published data shows that egg donors had a consistent average age of 31 to 32 years old from 1991 to 2020. The HFEA Code of Practice states that gametes for the treatment of others should not be taken from anyone under the age of 18 years old. This reflects the latest professional body guidance that all donors must be aged 18 years old or above.

The compensation rate for egg and sperm donation is set by the HFEA, rather than the Department, as provided for in the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990. The increase in donor compensation in October 2024 reflected the rise in inflation and cost of living since the last change from 2011. The Department has not undertaken an impact assessment, however, academic research in the United Kingdom has consistently found that donating eggs and sperm is driven by altruism, and the HFEA published data shows that egg and sperm donors in England from 2011 to 2020 lived in similar or more affluent socio-economic areas than the general population.

The following table shows the number of egg donors living in each of the multiple deprivation deciles in England at time of registration, between 2011 and 2020:

MULTIPLE DEPRIVATION DECILE	NUMBER OF EGG DONORS
1	1,117
2	1,488
3	1,542
4	1,360

MULTIPLE DEPRIVATION DECILE	NUMBER OF EGG DONORS
5	1,310
6	1,214
7	1,114
8	1,097
9	1,050
10	860

Source: the HFEA report, Trends in egg, sperm and embryo donation 2020.

Notes:

1. this data includes donors with a postcode in England only;
2. multiple deprivation deciles were calculated using 2015 data from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, and post code information from the HFEA register; and
3. data provided is from a live register and may not match data published elsewhere.

Jim Shannon: [\[17097\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of a minimum age of 25 for egg donation.

Jim Shannon: [\[17098\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what impact assessment his Department made of the increase in the amount paid to egg donors on 1 October 2024.

Jim Shannon: [\[17099\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many women from the three lowest multiple deprivation deciles donated eggs between 2011 and 2020.

Karin Smyth:

There are no plans to make an assessment on banning advertisements for egg donors. The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA) Code of Practice states that advertising should be designed with regard to the sensitive issues involved in recruiting donors, and that advertising or publicity aimed at recruiting gamete or embryo donors, or encouraging donation, should not refer to the possibility of financial gain or similar advantage, although it may refer to compensation permitted under relevant HFEA Directions.

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states that gametes for the treatment of others should not be taken from anyone under the age of 18 years old. This reflects the latest professional body guidance that all donors must be aged 18 years old or above.

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3. data provided is from a live register and may not match data published elsewhere.

■ IVF: Research**Jim Shannon:** [\[17533\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has commissioned research into the potential long-term health impact on young women's bodies of egg retrieval.

Jim Shannon: [\[17534\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason (a) women are paid of £985 per cycle for their eggs and (b) men are paid £45 per donation for their sperm.

Karin Smyth:

The Department has not commissioned research into the potential long-term health impact on young women's bodies of egg retrieval. However, the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA) set out strict requirements in its Licence Conditions and Code of Practice relating to the information that must be given before egg retrieval takes place in United Kingdom licensed fertility clinics, whether for the patient's own use or to donate to others. This includes information about the potential immediate or longer-term health risks and the psychological consequences of being a donor, as well as offering counselling to everyone involved.

The compensation rate for egg and sperm donation is set by the HFEA, as provided for in the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990. The HFEA has advised that the donor compensation levels originally set in 2011 followed a thorough ethical review, which identified a set of principles that ensured altruism remained at the heart of donation and that there weren't any unjustifiable barriers to donation. The difference in compensation reflects the different levels of disruption, pain, and risk in the respective processes of egg and sperm donation. The increase in donor compensation from 1 October 2024 reflects the rise in the cost of living over this time. Academic research in the UK has consistently found that donating eggs and sperm is driven by altruism, and HFEA published data shows that egg and sperm donors in England from 2011 to 2020 lived in similar or more affluent socio-economic areas than the general population.

■ Learning Disability: Health Services**Joe Robertson:** [\[17701\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish a learning disability strategy that includes measures on (a) health, (b) housing, (c) social care and (d) employment.

Stephen Kinnock:

The 10-Year Health Plan will set the vision for what good joined-up care looks like for people with a combination of complex health and care needs, such as people with a learning disability. It will set out how to support and enable health and social care services, and wider services, to work together better to provide joined-up care.

Everyone should have the support they need to live an independent, dignified life. We want people with a learning disability to have fair access to locally delivered services, that start at home, to support them to live independently for as long as possible, with the dignity and respect they deserve. Over the next decade, the Government is committed to building consensus on the long-term reform needed to create a National Care Service based on consistent national standards, including engaging cross-party, and with people with lived experience of care and unpaid carers.

■ Maternity Services: Leicestershire

Dr Jeevun Sandher:

[\[17702\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve maternity services in Leicestershire.

Karin Smyth:

Following Care Quality Commission inspections in January 2024, the trust has strong improvement plans in place for maternity services at the Leicester Royal Infirmary and Leicester General Hospital (LGH). Many actions from both the 2023 and 2024 inspections are already complete or well underway, with key achievements including a targeted improvement programme for Induction of Labour, and implementing a new Telephone Triage system to reduce delays and improve experience.

In September and November, the University Hospitals of Leicester (UHL) respectively opened a new maternity theatre and a new day assessment unit at the LGH, meaning that planned and emergency caesareans can take place in separate areas, further improving access to non-urgent appointments. The UHL have also welcomed 40 midwives, with 28 more due to start before the end of 2024. The trust has also recruited three new consultant obstetricians, alongside nine speciality doctors. The UHL have over 230 student midwives in training, and the trust is also seeing a higher proportion of permanent employees, with the turnover rate reducing to just over 7%, as of April 2024, versus 10% the previous year.

■ Mental Health Services: Children and Young People

Dan Tomlinson:

[\[17424\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help support Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (a) to reduce waiting times, (b) limit the rejection of referrals and (c) improve trust in services by both (i) parents and (ii) children.

Stephen Kinnoch:

[Holding answer 6 December 2024]: It is unacceptable that too many children and young people are not receiving the mental health care they need, and we know that waits for mental health services are too long. We are determined to change that, which is why we will recruit 8,500 additional mental health workers across child and adult mental health services, to reduce delays and provide faster treatment.

Better prevention is key to reducing the demand for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, which is why we will also provide access to a specialist mental health professional in every school, so that mental health conditions, such as anxiety and depression, can be identified early on and prevented from developing into more serious conditions in later life. We will also roll out Young Futures hubs in every community.

We expect that these measures will help to limit the rejection of referrals to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, and improve trust in services for both parents and children.

■ Mental Health Services: Expenditure

Dr Danny Chambers:

[\[17709\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of NHS funding has been allocated to mental health services in each year since 2015; and whether this funding met the NHS mental health investment standard.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 6 December 2024]: The following table shows the recurrent National Health Service baseline, the total forecast mental health spend, and the proportion of NHS funding forecasted to be allocated to mental health services, which is only available in the format required under section 3(2) of the Health and Care Act 2022 from 2022/23 to 2024/25:

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Recurrent NHS baseline	£142,400,000,000	£154,700,000,000	£164,000,000,000
Total forecast mental health spend	£12,600,000,000	£13,900,000,000	£14,800,000,000
Mental health share of recurrent baseline	8.87%	9%	9.01%

Source: Department of Health and Social Care Written Ministerial Statements.

The forecast figures for mental health spend are different from those in the NHS Mental Health Dashboard, which also includes spend on learning disabilities and dementia. The dashboard also compares integrated care board (ICB) mental health spend to ICB allocations, whereas the figures above compare projected total mental health spend to the recurrent NHS Mandate, which includes spending across ICBs, service development funding, and specialised commissioning.

The following table shows the number of Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), now integrated care boards (ICBs), meeting the Mental Health Investment Standard (MHIS), each year from 2016/17 to 2023/24:

YEAR	NUMBER OF CCGs, NOW ICBs, MEETING THE MHIS
2016/17	177 out of 209 CCGs
2017/18	186 out of 207 CCGs
2018/19	179 out of 195 CCGs
2019/20	181 out of 191 CCGs
2020/21	135 out of 135 CCGs
2021/22	106 out of 106 CCGs
2022/23	41 out of 42 ICBs
2023/24	42 out of 42 ICBs

Source: NHS Mental Health Dashboard, NHS England

Note: between 2020/21 and 2021/22, there was a methodology change in how CCG base allocation was calculated.

Calculation of the MHIS does not include spend on learning disabilities, autism, dementia, and specialised commissioning.

■ Mental Health Services: Schools

Damian Hinds:

[\[17083\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 29 Nov 2024 to Question 15640 on Mental Health Services: Schools, whether the plan to introduce access to a specialist mental health professional in every school differs from the plan to introduce Mental Health Support Teams.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Department of Health and Social Care is working with the Department for Education to consider how to deliver our commitment of providing access to a specialist mental health professional in every school. We need to ensure that any support meets the needs of young people, teachers, parents, and carers. This includes considering the role of existing programmes of support with evidence of a positive impact, such as the Mental Health Support Teams in schools and colleges.

■ NHS: Digital Technology

Caroline Voaden:

[\[17687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help ensure equality of access to NHS services in the context of increases in digital patient-facing systems.

Karin Smyth:

We are striving for digital services to improve access, experience, and outcomes for the widest range of people, based on their preferences, as any digital healthcare benefits will be limited if people remain digitally excluded. Mitigating against the risk of digital exclusion is one of five key priorities that NHS England has asked the integrated care systems to address in their drive to reduce healthcare inequalities. Digital health tools should be part of a wider offering that includes face-to-face support, with appropriate help for people who struggle to access digital services.

Patients are able to access National Health Services, such as requesting general practice appointments and managing secondary care appointments, through local online tools and the NHS App, which can also be accessed through a web browser. The NHS App is designed to meet international accessibility standards, and the services are routinely tested with a range of people with accessibility issues. User reviews and research show the NHS App and website to be highly usable and simple to use. Local online tools must also meet minimum accessibility standards.

■ NHS: London Allowance**Sir Oliver Dowden:**[\[17549\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending NHS Outer London Weighting to (a) Hertsmere and (b) Watford.

Karin Smyth:

It is for the Pay Review Bodies to make recommendations on the future geographic coverage of high-cost area supplements, and on the value of such supplements. As this is reflected in terms and conditions of service, any changes would need to be collectively agreed between employers and trade unions.

Alternatively, National Health Service employers or staff organisations in a specified geographic area can propose an increase in the level of high-cost area supplement for staff in that area.

In areas where no supplement exists, NHS employers can introduce a supplement where they feel there is evidence to support its introduction.

■ Ophthalmic Services: Learning Disability**Steve Darling:**[\[17303\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to address eye care inequalities for adults with learning disabilities.

Stephen Kinnock:

Alongside the duty placed upon integrated care boards to reduce inequalities, regulations were laid on 28 November to support the roll out of sight testing services in special educational settings across England, which has the potential to reach approximately 165,000 children and young people with learning disabilities or autism, or both.

We are also working with NHS England to better integrate primary and secondary care services, and improve the referral, triage, and access to appropriate care for all patients. As part of this work, NHS England has conducted research to understand the experience of adults with learning disabilities in accessing eye care services, the intelligence from which will be used to inform future policy design.

■ Ophthalmic Services: Special Educational Needs

Steve Darling:

[\[17305\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to ensure that the fee paid to deliver the Special Schools Eye Care Service is not reduced so that (a) children with Special Educational Needs can receive free eye care in schools and (b) eye care professionals can afford to provide the service.

Stephen Kinnock:

To address the access challenges that children and young people with learning disabilities or autism, or both, face in accessing high street sight testing services, regulations were laid on 28 November to support the roll out of sight testing in special educational setting across England.

NHS England has committed to invest up to £12.7 million annually from 2024/25 on the provision of sight tests and associated optical vouchers in special educational settings. This represents an approximate 87% increase compared to previous levels of spending. This additional investment has the potential to increase coverage from 4% of special educational settings to 100%.

NHS England has held a number of recent engagement events with potential providers across the country, and there has been healthy interest so far. NHS England will continue to engage with key stakeholders, including the ophthalmic and voluntary sector, and provide support to local integrated care boards, in the roll out of the service.

■ Social Services: Budget October 2024

Abtisam Mohamed:

[\[17946\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will have discussions with social care providers on the potential impact of Autumn Budget 2024 on the social care sector.

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. The Government will make available up to £3.5 billion of additional funding for social care authorities in 2025/26. We will set out further details at the Local Government Finance Settlement.

■ Social Services: Regulation**Rachel Gilmour:** [\[17403\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of further regulating social care micro-providers.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) is the independent regulator of health and social care in England. The CQC has powers under the Health and Care Act 2008 to regulate adult social care services, to make sure they provide safe, effective, compassionate, and high-quality care. Where concerns on quality or safety are identified, the CQC uses the regulatory and enforcement powers it has available, and will take action to ensure the safety of people drawing on care and support.

Providers of any size are required to be registered with, and therefore regulated by, the CQC, when they carry out personal care for people who are unable to provide it for themselves because of old age, illness, or disability, as defined in Regulation 2 (Interpretation) of the Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014).

Any amendments to the Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014 would be subject to the usual Parliamentary process, which would include a public consultation, and thus an opportunity to consider the merits of further regulation of social care providers.

■ Suicide: Internet**Munira Wilson:** [\[17235\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the number of deaths associated with online suicide forums in each of the last five years.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Department does not hold this information centrally.

Munira Wilson: [\[17237\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the number of UK deaths associated with suicide forums in 2025.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Department does not hold this information centrally.

■ Urgent Treatment Centres: Birmingham**Paulette Hamilton:** [\[17625\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the emergency relocation of the North Birmingham Urgent Treatment Centre to Good Hope Hospital on patient access to urgent treatment services in Birmingham Erdington constituency.

Paulette Hamilton: [\[17626\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to take steps to help mitigate the impact of increased travel requirements for patients following the relocation of the North Birmingham Urgent Treatment Centre to Good Hope Hospital.

Paulette Hamilton: [\[17627\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to help establish alternative urgent care facilities in Birmingham Erdington constituency, in the context of the emergency relocation of the North Birmingham Urgent Treatment Centre to Good Hope Hospital.

Paulette Hamilton: [\[17628\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether any consultation took place between the Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care System and (a) local stakeholders, (b) elected officials, (c) the police and (d) community organisations prior to the decision to relocate the North Birmingham Urgent Treatment Centre.

Paulette Hamilton: [\[17629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the relocation of the North Birmingham Urgent Treatment Centre to Sutton Coldfield is intended to be permanent; and what steps his Department plans to take to ensure equitable healthcare access in the long-term for residents in Birmingham Erdington constituency.

Paulette Hamilton: [\[17910\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to provide additional interim healthcare services to people affected by the relocation of the North Birmingham Urgent Treatment Centre to Good Hope Hospital.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 9 December 2024]: The reconfiguration of services is a matter for the local National Health Service. All service changes should be based on clear evidence that they will deliver better outcomes for patients. The NHS Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care Board (ICB) conducted its own evaluation to assess the move of the Urgent Treatment Centre (UTC) from the Erdington Health and Wellbeing Centre to Good Hope Hospital. The plan aims to increase access to appropriate UTC services and reduce pressure on Good Hope Hospital's accident and emergency department by ensuring patients who attend accident and emergency can be triaged and treated at the co-located UTC. The relocation of the UTC from its current location also takes into consideration the need to ensure the safety of patients and staff.

Good Hope Hospital is 0.8 miles closer to the original location of the UTC, prior to its first move to the Erdington Health and Wellbeing Centre. Patients continue to be able to access any of the six UTCs operating within Birmingham and Solihull. While the ICB does not plan to provide additional services in Erdington as a result of this

temporary emergency change, the Erdington UTC based at the Stockland Green Primary Care Centre remains open for patients in the Erdington area. The ICB has liaised with:

- the UTC provider;
- landlords of the building, NHS Property Services; and
- West Midlands Police.

The ICB has also briefed the Birmingham Health and Scrutiny Oversight Committee, and complied with the Memorandum of Understanding between the Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care System and the Birmingham and Solihull Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee regarding local authority health scrutiny of health services.

The permanent future location of the North Birmingham UTC will be decided as part of a review of all UTC provision across Birmingham and Solihull, which is in its preliminary stages. During the process, the ICB will invite feedback from its communities, including elected representatives, to ensure the urgent care offer is fit for purpose and convenient for the ICB's population in the longer term.

Any decision about the permanent future location will be subject to the normal statutory duties in relation to public involvement and consultation with the local authority.

■ Visual Impairment: Rehabilitation

Steve Darling: [\[17632\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing vision rehabilitation services under the same (a) regulatory and (b) monitoring regimes as other adult social care services.

Stephen Kinnock:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Colne Valley on 4 October 2024 to Question [7299](#).

Steve Darling: [\[17635\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what data his Department holds on the provision of vision rehabilitation support in England.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Department does not collect or hold this information.

Ian Byrne: [\[17901\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the provision of vision rehabilitation.

Stephen Kinnock:

Under the Care Act 2014, local authorities are tasked with the duty to shape their care market to meet the diverse needs of all local people. This includes supporting

people with sight loss to develop practical skills and strategies to maintain independence.

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) is now assessing how local authorities are meeting the full range of their duties under Part 1 of the Care Act 2014. These assessments identify local authorities' strengths and areas for development, facilitating the sharing of good practice and helping us to target support where it is most needed. This means that sensory services, including vision rehabilitation, form part of the CQC's overall assessment of local authorities' delivery of adult social care. In that context, the CQC will report on sensory services when there is something important to highlight, for example, something being done well, innovative practice, or an area for improvement.

HOME OFFICE

■ Action Fraud

Alex Mayer:

[17352]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of enquiries to Action Fraud were taken up in the latest period for which data is available.

Dan Jarvis:

Action Fraud is the national reporting point for fraud and cyber crime, operated by City of London Police who are the national policing lead for fraud. The National Fraud Intelligence Bureau (NFIB) analyses reports from Action Fraud for key information and considers this together with data received from industry and other agencies.

Where there are viable lines of enquiry, the NFIB bundles up linked reports into investigative packages which are then disseminated to law enforcement agencies for potential investigation. The Home Office publishes data on the total number of fraud and computer misuse offences recorded by the NFIB and the number then referred to forces for investigation annually.

The most recent publication, covering the year ending March 2024, can be accessed at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/crime-outcomes-in-england-and-wales-2023-to-2024>.

■ Animal Experiments: MBR Acres

Liam Byrne:

[17766]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when he expects the end of (a) animal testing and (b) testing on beagles at MBR Acres.

Dan Jarvis:

This Government has made a commitment to the development of alternative methodologies to the use of animals in science. The plan we develop will maintain the UK's place at the forefront of science development and innovation.

In the limited circumstances where there is no animal alternative and procedures are required to deliver important benefits to people, the environment, and other animals then we deliver robust, rigorous and trustworthy regulation of those procedures.

The Home Office assures that, in every research proposal: animals are replaced with non-animal alternatives wherever possible; that experiments are appropriate designed and analysed experiments that are robust, reproducible, and add to the knowledge base; and that we assure the methodologies use the latest technologies to minimise pain, suffering and distress and improve understanding of the impact of welfare on scientific outcomes.

■ Asylum: Age

Sir John Hayes: [\[17072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps the Border Security Command is taking to assess the age of asylum seekers arriving on small boats.

Dame Angela Eagle:

I refer the Rt Hon Member to the Answer I gave on 4 December to Question UIN 16274.

Sir John Hayes: [\[17073\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many age assessments of people arriving on small boats and seeking asylum have taken place in each of the last three years.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Home Office publishes data on asylum in the '[Immigration System Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'. Data on age disputes for all individuals with asylum claims raised and resolved is published in table Asy_D05 of the '[Asylum applications, initial decisions and resettlement detailed datasets](#)'.

■ Bicycles: Theft

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[17197\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what percentage of reported bicycle thefts result in a (a) suspect being arrested and (b) prosecution being authorised by the CPS.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[17198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what percentage of reported incidents of shoplifting result in a (a) suspect being arrested and (b) prosecution being authorised by the CPS.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Home Office collects and publishes information on the number of shoplifting and bicycle theft offences, and their investigative outcomes, recorded by the police in England and Wales. This includes a breakdown of those where a suspect has been

charged. However, the data held centrally does not provide a breakdown on whether the police have made a charging decision themselves or had it authorised by the CPS.

The data is published every quarter as official statistics and the latest can be accessed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-recorded-crime-open-data-tables>

The Home Office does not hold data centrally on the number of people arrested for shoplifting or bicycle theft.

The Home Office collects and publishes data on the number of arrests made by police in England and Wales, broken down by offence group, on an annual basis. The latest data, covering the period to March 2024, is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/stop-and-search-arrests-and-mental-health-detentions-march-2024>

However, the data is collected by broader offence group only, such as 'theft offences', and further details are not provided.

■ **Body Searches: Ethnic Groups**

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[17226\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she plans to take to tackle disproportionate use of full strip searches during stop and searches of (a) Black, (b) Asian and (c) other ethnic minority people.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Strip search is one of the most intrusive powers available to the police and its use must be fair, respectful and without unlawful discrimination. No one should be subject to the use of any police power based on their race or ethnicity. That is why the Government's manifesto committed to introducing new legal safeguards around strip-searching children and young people.

This Government welcomes the recent reduction in the disproportionate use of stop and search powers, but there is more work to do. We are also increasing transparency in the use of these powers. Figures published in September, covering the 12 months to March 2024 includes, for the first time, data on whether the stop and search included a strip search.

■ **Commission for Countering Extremism**

Nick Timothy:

[\[17297\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the Commissioner for Countering Extremism plans to review (a) teaching material for Prevent and (b) all material on gov.uk.

Dan Jarvis:

Prevent training is vital for ensuring that frontline staff subject to the Prevent Duty know how to spot the signs of radicalisation and get support.

The Prevent Duty training services are continually reviewed in collaboration with relevant cross-government partners. The Commission for Countering Extremism provide expert input and advice into the development of all Prevent training products.

The Home Office also ensures that training aligns with the government's counter-terrorism strategy CONTEST 2023, the recommendations made in the Independent Review of Prevent and the updated Prevent Duty Guidance. All these inputs are reflected in the Prevent Duty GOV.UK training, and in Home Office-issued Prevent face-to-face training products.

We remain committed to continuously improving and updating these training resources to ensure they reflect the terrorist threat.

■ Deportation**Richard Tice:****[17380]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people have been deported (a) in total and (b) by nationality in each month since July 2024.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Home Office routinely publishes data on returns in the "[Immigration Systems Statistics](#)" quarterly release. Data on quarterly returns of individuals since July 2024 can be found in table Ret_D01 of the "[returns detailed datasets](#)". The latest data is for September 2024, with data up to December 2024 to be published on 27 February.

■ Domestic Abuse**Alex Easton:****[18020]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps the Government is taking to (a) recognise domestic abuse as a form of violence against women and girls, (b) prioritise funding for specialist services, (c) implement reforms to family courts recommended in the Ministry of Justice's Harm Panel review and (d) take other steps to tackle such violence.

Jess Phillips:

Domestic Abuse is a form of Violence Against Women and Girls and this Government is committed to tackling VAWG in all its forms.

Our new VAWG strategy will be published next year and will set out our continued recognition of the fundamental importance of specialist services. We will use every tool available to target perpetrators and address the root causes of abuse and violence.

On 20th September, we announced a package of measures to tackle VAWG. This included launching the Domestic Abuse Protection Orders in selected police forces and courts on 27th November to further strengthen protections for victims and

introducing domestic abuse specialists into 999 control rooms from early 2025 as part of 'Raneem's Law'. On 3rd December, we also announced new measures to tackle stalking.

We are committed to responding to the Harm Panel's recommendations and the Pathfinder pilot is central to reforming the family justice system. This entirely reformed court model is currently operating in Dorset, North Wales, Birmingham and South-East Wales and seeks to improve the experiences of children and families and reduce re-traumatisation through a more investigative and less adversarial approach.

Following the spending review announcements in October, the Home Office and other departments across Government are deciding how their departmental budgets are allocated to deliver the Government's priorities in 2025/26. Phase 2 of the Spending Review will be mission-led, ensuring Departments work together to develop a shared strategy for delivering the Government's priority areas for reform.

■ **Electronic Travel Authorisations: Hong Kong**

Mr Connor Rand:

[\[17379\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of using electronic travel authorisations on the speed in which Hong Kong (a) BNO status holders and (b) political prisoners can leave Hong Kong.

Seema Malhotra:

Electronic travel authorisations (ETAs) were expanded to all eligible non-European nationalities on 27 November, and will be a requirement for travel to the UK from 8 January. ETAs have been introduced to strengthen the UK's border security and help prevent the arrival of those who present a threat to the UK.

The application is quick and light-touch, and many applications are decided within minutes. Individuals who already have a UK immigration status, including a British National (Overseas) (BN(O)) visa, will not need to obtain an ETA to travel to the UK.

■ **Fire and Rescue Services: Farms**

Joe Morris:

[\[17311\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that fire and rescue services are equipped to manage large-scale farm fires effectively.

Dame Diana Johnson:

It is the responsibility of Fire and Rescue Authorities to set local priorities based on their Community Risk Management Plans to ensure that Fire and Rescue Services have the appropriate equipment and training needed to safely respond to the wide range of incidents which they attend.

■ GTD Healthcare**Rupert Lowe:** [\[17361\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will provide a list of all contracted services from GTD Healthcare; and what the cost to the public purse of those services is.

Dame Angela Eagle:

Home Office does not hold any direct contracts with GTD Healthcare.

■ Home Office: Disclosure of Information**Rupert Lowe:** [\[17363\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if the Minister of State for Border Security and Asylum will meet the hon. Member for Great Yarmouth to discuss data release policies.

Rupert Lowe: [\[17366\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will conduct a review of the accuracy of the methodology used to collect immigration statistics.

Seema Malhotra:

Home Office statistics comply with the Code of Practice for Statistics ("the Code"). This means these statistics meet the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value as set out in 'the Code'. Our statistical practice is regulated by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) which sets the standards of the Code of Practice for Statistics that all producers of official statistics should adhere to. Further information about official statistics can be found on the (OSR) website.

■ Home Office: Military Aid**Ben Obese-Jecty:** [\[17313\]](#)

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

Dan Jarvis:

The Home Office have made no Military Aid to the Civil Authority request that has required the use of RAF CH-47 Chinooks Helicopters since 2019.

■ Home Office: Staff**Mr Peter Bedford:** [\[18060\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many employee settlement agreements there were in her Department in each year since 2020; and what the total value of such agreements is.

Dame Diana Johnson:

This information can only be obtained for the purposes of answering this question at disproportionate cost.

Lord Walney

Apsana Begum: [\[17605\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 5 November 2024 to Question 11671 on Lord Walney, whether Lord Walney (a) has been since 5 July 2024 and (b) is the Independent Adviser on Political Violence and Disruption while her Department reviews the role.

Apsana Begum: [\[17606\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 5 November 2024 to Question 11671 on Lord Walney, whether Lord Walney is participating in the review of the role of the Independent Adviser on Political Violence and Disruption through the Counter-Extremism sprint.

Apsana Begum: [\[17607\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 5 November 2024 to Question 11671 on Lord Walney, whether she has discussed with Lord Walney (a) his role as the Independent Adviser on Political Violence and Disruption, (b) political violence and disruption, (c) legislation relating to political violence and disruption and (d) policing of political violence and disruption.

Dan Jarvis:

The Counter-Extremism Sprint has included a review of the advice the Government receives from a variety of sources on policy in this area, including the Independent Advisor on Political Violence and Disruption.

The Government is currently considering the findings from the Sprint, and Lord Walney remains in post while that work is ongoing.

Muslim Council of Britain

Nick Timothy: [\[17298\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions (a) Ministers, (b) special advisers, and (c) officials in her Department have had with the Muslim Council of Britain since 5 July.

Dan Jarvis:

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

■ Religious Buildings: Radicalism

Rupert Lowe: [\[17371\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many (a) churches (b) synagogues (c) mosques and (d) other places of worship were investigated for suspected ties to extremism in each of the last five years.

Dan Jarvis:

The Home Office does not conduct investigations into suspected ties to extremism for places of worship.

It is for the police to conduct investigations if an alleged criminal offence is reported to them.

■ Serco: Contracts

Rupert Lowe: [\[17374\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will list all contracted services undertaken by Serco related to irregular migrants.

Dame Angela Eagle:

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

■ Slavery

James McMurdock: [\[18088\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to stop modern slavery practices within supply chains (a) domestically and (b) internationally.

James McMurdock: [\[18089\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to ensure law enforcement agencies are equipped with the necessary (a) training and (b) resources to (i) identify and (ii) tackle modern slavery cases effectively.

James McMurdock: [\[18090\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with her international counterparts on tackling (a) human trafficking and (b) modern slavery across borders.

James McMurdock: [\[18091\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the effectiveness of its policies on tackling modern slavery.

James McMurdock: [\[18092\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the support services available to victims of modern slavery; and what

steps her Department is taking to ensure these services are (a) accessible and (b) fit for purpose.

Jess Phillips:

The UK Government is committed to tackling all forms of modern slavery, holding perpetrators to account, and ensuring that victims are supported to recover and rebuild their lives.

Long-term reform will focus on driving up prosecutions and convictions and ensuring tailored and holistic support is available for victims.

The Government is taking a range of measures to tackle modern slavery and support victims including, but not limited to:

- In England and Wales, the Government provides victims in the National Referral Mechanism with significant support through the Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract (MSVCC). The Care Quality Commission provides an independent inspection regime to ensure that MSVCC support services are delivered to an appropriate standard.
- In Spring 2025 the Government intends to launch an exercise to procure the next victim support contract called the Support for Victims of Modern Slavery service. The Service will deliver a needs-based model that introduces key improvements to support provision directly as a result of survivor and wider stakeholder engagement.
- In addition to the statutory support local authorities provide for children who are potential child victims of modern slavery, the Government has rolled out the Independent Child Trafficking Guardian (ICTG) service to two thirds of local authorities in England and Wales. An ICTG's role is to provide an additional source of advice and support for potential child victims of modern slavery (regardless of nationality or immigration status). Since the ICTG service was first piloted in 2017, multiple evaluations have taken place. These evaluations and recommendations have been used to assess the service and to inform its future direction. The latest evaluation was published in May 2024 and can be accessed here: [Independent Child Trafficking Guardian \(ICTG\) MSA evaluation - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)\[NC1\]](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/125444/Independent-Child-Trafficking-Guardian-ICTG-MSA-evaluation-2024.pdf)

With regards to our engagement with law enforcement and supply chains:

- The Government is determined to increase the prosecution of modern slavery offenders. The Minister for Safeguarding and Violence Against Women and Girls met with criminal justice system partners during Anti-Slavery Week to discuss the barriers that prevent prosecutions. The Government is committed to continue working with them to address those barriers and understand what more can be done to support investigations and increase prosecutions.
- The Home Office has provided over £19m of dedicated funding, including £1.26m in 2024/25, to the Modern Slavery and Organised Immigration Crime Unit since 2016, to help to improve the police's ability to identify victims and to investigate and prosecute the perpetrators. The unit has developed bespoke capabilities, including producing tailored training and guidance that is accessible to all police officers.

- The Government is in the process of establishing the Fair Work Agency, which will act as the principal body responsible for ensuring compliance with labour rights and standards across all sectors.
- The Home Office is also working with a wide group of stakeholders to update the Transparency in Supply Chains statutory guidance. This will further support businesses to produce high quality statements, which are underpinned by effective measures to prevent and effectively respond to instances of modern slavery in supply chains.

Internationally, we remain committed to working with partners to jointly tackle modern slavery as a global issue. The UK has close relationships with the Albanian, Vietnamese, and Romanian Governments to address shared priorities on modern slavery. Partnerships with these countries cover initiatives to prevent modern slavery, improve law enforcement cooperation, and support effective reintegration of victims.

■ Terrorism: Surveillance

Rupert Lowe: [\[17368\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of individuals on the terror watchlist are (a) UK citizens, (b) Dual national citizens, (c) UK citizens with at least one non-UK parent and (d) non-UK citizens.

Rupert Lowe: [\[17369\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how individuals on the terror watchlist are monitored.

Rupert Lowe: [\[17370\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish a breakdown of the conditions that need to be met for an person to be placed on the terror watchlist.

Dan Jarvis:

It is longstanding policy not to discuss either the specific information held on any security-related watchlist, the source of the information or how it is used.

To do so would be harmful to the national security of the UK.

■ Undocumented Migrants

Rupert Lowe: [\[17375\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will list all companies contracted by her Department to undertake work related to (a) irregular migration and (b) irregular migrants.

Dame Angela Eagle:

Information about contracts worth over £12,000 (including VAT) agreed by the Government and its agencies is available at: [Contracts Finder - GOV.UK](#). Extracting the relevant information from this publicly available data source for the purposes of answering this question could only be done at disproportionate cost.

■ Violent and Sex Offender Register: Personal Names

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[17768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what guidance her Department has issued on the circumstances in which registered sex offenders can apply to change their name.

Jess Phillips:

Registered sex offenders are required to notify their personal details to the police as an automatic consequence to a conviction or caution for a Schedule 3 offence under the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

They must provide a record of (among other things) their name, address, date of birth, and national insurance number. They must do this annually or whenever their details change. Registered sex offenders must notify the police within three days of their using a new name. This includes names used online. The Home Secretary publishes guidance on Part 2 of the Sexual Offences Act, which is the legislative framework for the police's management of registered sex offenders: Guidance on part 2 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 (accessible version) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).

As part of the King's Speech, the Government has committed to placing restrictions on registered sex offender's ability to change their names.

■ Visas: Digital Technology

Neil Duncan-Jordan:

[\[17498\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the e-Visa scheme on (a) older people, (b) those with learning difficulties, (c) non-English speakers and (d) those with limited access to technology.

Neil Duncan-Jordan:

[\[17499\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has had recent discussions with representatives of migrant organisations on the development of a digital solution for the e-visa scheme.

Seema Malhotra:

The Home Office has implemented a comprehensive engagement strategy to smooth the transition to eVisas and to maximise awareness raising across various sectors. This includes collaboration with key stakeholders including migrant organisations.

The Home Office is committed to ensuring everyone, including the elderly, those with learning disabilities, those with limited English and the most vulnerable, are properly supported as we transform our immigration system.

On 18 September 2024, we announced that the Government is providing up to £4m in dedicated grant funding to a UK wide network of voluntary and community sector organisations to deliver valuable support to those who need it, during the transition from physical immigration documents to eVisas. The list of organisations is available

here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evisa-community-support-for-vulnerable-people>.

We have ensured that the wording used to explain how to create a UKVI account and get access to an eVisa is simple and can be easily translated using various free online services. In consultation with stakeholders, we are also considering providing some information about the transition to eVisas in other languages.

People can nominate a 'helper' and give them limited access to their account, so that they can assist with creating a UKVI account to access an eVisa, and with any immigration application. Where a person is unable to manage their own affairs due to, for example, age or disability, an authorised 'proxy' can create and manage the account on behalf of the person. People can also contact the UK Visas and Immigration Resolution Centre (<https://www.gov.uk/contact-ukvi-inside-outside-uk> for support via email and webchat, and telephone.

For those inside the UK our Assisted Digital service is available to provide support by phone and email to those who need help with IT-related aspects of creating a UKVI account and accessing an eVisa. Access needs can include any disability that requires support to use online services, a lack of device or a lack of internet access. More information is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/assisted-digital-help-online-application>

We are also taking further steps to reduce the number of circumstances where people need to provide evidence of their immigration status, by developing services to make the relevant immigration status information available automatically through system to system checks with other government departments and the NHS.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Buildings: Repairs and Maintenance

Mike Amesbury: [\[17223\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of setting building remediation targets for (a) buildings under 11 meters and (b) non qualifying leaseholders.

Mike Amesbury: [\[17224\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of setting building remediation targets for non-cladding building defects.

Alex Norris:

Our assessment remains that building safety related remediation works are required in a very small number of buildings under 11m in height. We already expect building owners to undertake assessments of their buildings to identify internal and external wall fire safety defects and remediate them at pace where they are life critical.

Those developers that have signed the Developer Remediation Contract are required to remediate internal fire safety defects arising from design and construction, we will continue to make sure that developers meet the contract obligations and are auditing their fire risk assessments and will hold them to account.

We maintain that the responsibility for the costs of fixing historical cladding and building fire safety defects should rest with building owners. They should not pass these costs on to leaseholders but should seek to recover costs from those who were responsible for building unsafe homes.

Alongside taking action to increase the pace of remediation, following consideration of the phase 2 report of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry, we will announce further measures to protect leaseholders.

■ Buildings: Safety

Mike Amesbury: [\[17225\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will she make an assessment of the potential merits of creating a Building Works Agency to assist with building safety remediation.

Alex Norris:

We have a new Cladding Safety Scheme for the private sector with standardised assessment, tendering, technical support, funding and sign-off.

The scheme has for some time been consolidating other funds where this will help buildings go faster.

The Remediation Acceleration Plan focuses on the blockers and accelerators across all building owner types. It is essential to drive action now using all routes.

In the developer joint plan, for instance, we are driving a rapid acceleration in pace which would inevitably slow down if we re-designed the underlying framework for developers fixing their buildings.

■ Business Rates: Tax Allowances

Kevin Hollinrake: [\[17130\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the debate on the Non-Domestic Rating (Multipliers and Private Schools) Bill of 25 November 2024, Official Report, column 594, whether the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure multipliers from 2026 will (a) be in addition to and (b) replace the small business rate relief multipliers.

Jim McMahon:

To deliver our manifesto pledge, we intend to introduce permanently lower tax rates for retail, hospitality, and leisure properties, including those on the high-street, from 2026-27. This permanent tax cut will ensure they benefit from much-needed certainty and support. This tax cut must be sustainably funded, and so we intend to introduce a

higher rate on the most valuable properties from 2026-27 - those with Rateable Values of £500,000 and above.

The government has no plans to abolish small business rates relief which is a permanent relief set down in legislation. In our paper 'Transforming Business Rates' we have committed to exploring whether and how small business rates relief can be improved to better support business investment and expansion.

■ Charities: Employers' Contributions

Mike Amesbury: [\[17222\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of the change in the level of employer National Insurance contributions on homelessness charities.

Rushanara Ali:

The government has received representation from the homelessness sector about their concerns on the potential impact to the changes in National Insurance Contributions. We welcome feedback from charities who do so much to help those experiencing homelessness. Officials are working across government to understand the impacts on the wider voluntary and community sector.

■ Combined Authorities

Andy McDonald: [\[17104\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department plans to publish outcomes of annual discussions with combined mayoral authorities.

Jim McMahon:

Outcomes of conversations with Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs) are not currently published by government.

From 2025/26, we will introduce Integrated Settlements, starting in Greater Manchester and the West Midlands. Authorities will be monitored against a single outcomes framework that provides a structured approach to defining, measuring, and reporting on the MCAs' performance on single settlement delivery during the SR period. The outcomes framework will be published by HMG and each of the MCAs.

■ Combined Authorities: Expenditure

Andy McDonald: [\[17102\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what data her Department holds on the outcomes of funding provided to combined mayoral authorities.

Andy McDonald: [17103]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department plans to publish (a) metrics and (b) outcomes for the spending performance of combined mayoral authorities.

Andy McDonald: [17106]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department plans to require combined mayoral authorities to publish evaluation reports on individual funding programmes in a standardised format.

Jim McMahon:

Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs) manage a number of different funds including adult skills funding, transport funding and the Mayoral Investment Fund. These are monitored according to the Local Assurance Framework in each place. Combined Authorities are also subject to internal and external audit.

From 2025/26, we will introduce Integrated Settlements, starting in Greater Manchester and the West Midlands. Authorities will be monitored against a single outcomes framework that provides a structured approach to defining, measuring, and reporting on the MCAs' performance on single settlement delivery during the SR period. The outcomes framework will be published by HMG and each of the MCAs. Government recognises the importance of evaluating devolution and we will set out more plans in White Paper.

■ Council Tax: Bedfordshire

Blake Stephenson: [R] [17334]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how much she expects (a) Central Bedfordshire Council and (b) Bedford Borough Council to increase council tax in 2025/26.

Jim McMahon:

Council tax levels are decided by each council. The local government finance policy statement 2025 to 2026 proposed a core council tax referendum limit of up to 3% and an adult social care precept of 2% for all local authorities responsible for adult social care services, including Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedford Borough Council. The policy statement is available [here](#).

■ District Councils: Business Rates

Sir John Hayes: [17075]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will take steps to help ensure that district councils receive business rates from (a) all energy infrastructure and (b) sub stations located within their boundaries.

Jim McMahon:

District councils collect and retain a share of Business Rates in their local area where properties are in the local list. Where a property is found to cross local authority

boundaries, the Valuation Office Agency follow legislation which stipulates that the VOA assess which local authority is considered to contain the greatest amount of rateable value and allocate the business rates for the whole property to this authority.

■ Homelessness

Edward Morello: [\[17455\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of changes in the level of living costs on homelessness rates; and what steps she is taking to mitigate that potential impact.

Rushanara Ali:

Homelessness levels are far too high. This government recognises the devastating impact this can have on those at risk of, or affected by, homelessness.

The Household Support Fund (HSF) is a scheme providing discretionary support to those most in need towards the cost of essentials, such as food, energy and water. Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) are available to those in receipt of Housing Benefit or the housing element of Universal Credit who need additional help with rent or housing costs. Both schemes are delivered via local authorities.

The Government is investing £1 billion in extending the HSF by a further year, from 1 April 2025 until 31 March 2026 and extending DHPs into 2025/26. Additional funding for the Devolved Governments will be provided through the Barnett formula to be spent at their discretion, as usual. As announced at Autumn Budget we are also introducing a Fair Payment Rate for Universal Credit customers with deductions to retain more of their benefit award.

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

■ Homelessness: Temporary Accommodation

Grahame Morris: [\[18121\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what information her Department holds on the number of cases in which location data for out-of-area placements made while discharging a homelessness duty is (a) not recorded or (b) unknown, in each of the last five years.

Mike Amesbury: [\[18178\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of temporary accommodation on the mental health of children within that accommodation.

Mike Amesbury: [\[18180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of temporary accommodation on the (a) mental and (b) physical health of families in that accommodation.

James MacCleary: [\[18298\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing additional funding to local authorities to support them to meet their statutory homelessness duties effectively.

Rushanara Ali:

Homelessness levels are far too high. This can have a devastating impact on those affected, especially children. Too many families are spending years in temporary accommodation, at a point in a child's life when they need space to play and develop, nutritious food to thrive and access to education.

We must address this and deliver long term solutions. The Government is looking at these issues carefully and will develop a new cross government strategy, working with mayors and councils across the country to get us back on track to ending homelessness once and for all. This includes a dedicated Inter-Ministerial Group, chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister, bringing together ministers from across government.

More widely, we are taking action to tackle the root causes of homelessness by delivering the biggest increase in social and affordable housebuilding in a generation and building 1.5 million new homes over the next parliament. The government is also abolishing Section 21 'no fault' evictions, preventing private renters being exploited and discriminated against, and empowering people to challenge unreasonable rent increases.

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 25/26. Allocations for individual local authorities in England will be set out later in December.

The department regularly collects homelessness data, including on out of area placements, which can be found here in table TA 1 and are published quarterly: [Statutory homelessness in England: April to June 2024 - GOV.UK](#). Records on the location of accommodation where accommodation is secured to end the prevention or relief duties, including where that accommodation is out of area, are published annually and can be found in tables P4 and R4 here: [Detailed LA 20232024.xlsx](#).

Local Government Finance**Andy McDonald:** [\[17105\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what progress her Department has made on developing accountability processes for institutions that secure single funding settlements at the Spending Review.

Jim McMahon:

Integrated Settlements will be supported by the establishment of a streamlined, overarching, single assurance framework coordinated by MHCLG rather than multiple frameworks administered by different departments. This will build on and will be incorporated into future editions of the English Devolution Accountability Framework.

MHCLG's Accounting Officer will act as the systems AO for the Integrated Settlement. Core accountability processes within the Authorities will be carried out by the Chief Executive, who will be responsible for agreeing outcomes with Government, local outcome delivery and value for money. Other government departments will sign off the outcomes and targets relevant to their functions. Further details on accountability arrangements are available at the following [link](#).

Authorities receiving Integrated Settlements at the start of the next financial year are undergoing a readiness check carried out by a body external to government for additional assurance.

Further details of the Integrated Settlements for 2026-27 will be confirmed at the conclusion of Phase 2 of the Spending Review.

Local Government Finance: Bedfordshire**Blake Stephenson:** [R] [\[17333\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how much she expects the non-Council Tax element of the core spending power of (a) Central Bedfordshire Council and (b) Bedford Borough Council to increase in 2025/26.

Jim McMahon:

The government published a policy statement on 28 November 2024 that confirmed that local government will receive an around 3.2% real-terms increase overall in Core Spending Power as part of the Local Government Finance Settlement 2025-26.

We will set out more detail at the provisional Settlement in December where we will consult on allocations for 2025-26, alongside launching a consultation on the objectives and principles of local government funding reform.

Local Government Finance: North Cornwall**Ben Maguire:** [\[17494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether any parts of North Cornwall constituency will receive funding from the Recovery Grant

announced by her Department on 28 November 2024; and what additional steps she is taking to tackle rural poverty in that constituency.

Alex Norris:

The government published a policy statement on 28 November 2024 that confirmed that local government will receive an around 3.2% real-terms increase overall in Core Spending Power as part of the Local Government Finance Settlement 2025-26. Places with a significant rural population will on average increase of around 5%.

We are also introducing a new 'Recovery Grant', worth £600 million, distributed using a formula that is based on deprivation and council tax base. This will start to correct the unfairness of the current system by putting councils in the areas with greater need and demand for services on a more stable footing. This grant marks the first meaningful step towards preparing for reform that has been taken in over a decade.

We will set out more detail at the provisional Settlement in December where we will consult on allocations for 2025-26, alongside launching a consultation on the objectives and principles of local government funding reform.

■ **Local Government: Bedfordshire**

Blake Stephenson:

[R] [[17335](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what changes she expects to make to governance arrangements in Bedfordshire through the English Devolution White Paper.

Jim McMahon:

In July, the Deputy Prime Minister invited places without devolution agreements, including Bedfordshire, to come forward and submit devolution proposals for their areas. This process closed in September and the government is now working closely with local leaders and stakeholders to review these proposals. The upcoming English Devolution White Paper will set out further detail on this government's ambitions, including the benefits that can be gained through the establishment of combined authorities and combined county authorities over sensible economic geographies and supported by a mayor.

■ **Local Government: Reorganisation**

Kevin Hollinrake:

[[17128](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to page 58 of the Autumn Budget 2024, HC 295, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of local government restructuring on social care (a) delivery and (b) economies of scale.

Jim McMahon:

The upcoming English Devolution White Paper will set out more detail on the government's devolution plans, including on working with councils to move to simpler structures that make sense for their local areas, with efficiency savings from council reorganisation helping to meet the needs of local people.

■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Civil Servants**Sir Ashley Fox:** [\[9070\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many civil servants are assigned to work in each of her Department's offices; and how many desks are available in each office.

Alex Norris:

I refer the Hon Member to the answer to Question UIN [9071](#) on 28 November 2024.

■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Offices**Nadia Whittome:** [\[18234\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of her Department's regional office closures on (a) staff who are unable to relocate and (b) all staff.

Alex Norris:

The department is consulting staff and Trade Unions on the decision to close six offices over the next two years. This consultation will consider the impact on the individuals affected with a view to putting in place measures to mitigate that impact and enable all staff affected to continue to perform their roles effectively.

■ Muslim Council of Britain**Nick Timothy:** [\[17299\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions (a) Ministers, (b) special advisers and (c) officials in her Department have had with the Muslim Council of Britain since 5 July.

Alex Norris:

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

■ Politics and Government: Finance**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[17199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps the Government is taking to reduce the influence of foreign funding in democratic processes.

Rushanara Ali:

The Government is committed to strengthening our democracy and upholding the integrity of elections and, as stated in our manifesto, we intend to strengthen the rules around donations to political parties to protect our democracy.

We are developing proposals to give effect to these commitments and will make them public in due course. Furthermore, the Government's Defending Democracy

Taskforce brings together all work on defending democracy to allow a whole of government approach in tackling threats to those processes.

■ Regeneration: Thornaby

Matt Vickers: [\[17265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what funding Thornaby on Tees will receive from the (a) Town Deal programme and (b) long-term plan for towns.

Alex Norris:

The Towns Fund has allocated £23.9 million pounds to Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council to deliver 4 projects in the Thornaby area. The projects are now being delivered as part of the Simplification Pathfinder Pilot, a model that brings local growth funding together, providing financial flexibility and streamlined monitoring to aid delivery.

Thornaby-on-Tees was not selected to receive funding through the Long-Term Plan for Towns programme. A list of places selected and the place selection methodology can be found on gov.uk.

■ Storms: Chippenham

Sarah Gibson: [\[18286\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 3 December 2024 to Question 16051 on Storms: Disaster Relief, how she defines exceptional.

Sarah Gibson: [\[18287\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions she has had with the Minister for Water and Flooding following her visit to Chippenham on 26 November 2024; and if she will publish a note of those discussions.

Alex Norris:

My thoughts remain with householders and business owners impacted by flooding after Storm Bert, flooding is a devastating experience for those affected.

Activation of the Flood Recovery Framework is at Ministerial discretion and there is no fixed threshold for activation. When making that decision each event is considered on its own merits looking at factors including how widespread the event is, the significance and scale of impacts, comparison to previous events / activations and the severity of the on-going situation. These factors combined help to determine if an event can be considered exceptional. Overall, the scale of impacts was similar to that seen in many local areas this autumn and were not sufficiently significant for Government to intervene and for the Framework to be activated.

The government has set up a floods resilience taskforce to provide a forum in which partners from across government, frontline agencies, emergency responders and interest groups will work together to strengthen flood resilience across the country.

Ministers and officials from the department are in regular contact with counterparts in the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. As has been the case under successive administrations, we do not normally disclose details of internal discussions.

JUSTICE

■ Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme Review

Laurence Turner:

[\[18008\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether her Department plans to respond to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme Review 2020, published on 16 July 2020.

Alex Davies-Jones:

The previous Government held three consultations, in 2020, 2022 and 2023, as part of its review of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme 2012. It did not publish a response to these consultations prior to the 2024 election.

This Government is looking at how we can best support victims of crime. As part of this we are considering the previous review of the Scheme, and further updates will be provided in due course.

■ Domestic Abuse: Family Courts

Helen Morgan:

[\[18235\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the level of support available to domestic abuse victims and their children in the Family Court system.

Alex Davies-Jones:

Family courts have various tools available to protect participants. Courts have the power to prohibit the cross-examination of domestic abuse survivors by their abusers. Victims of domestic abuse are automatically considered to be vulnerable when the court is determining whether to make special measures, such as allowing someone to give evidence by video link, or from behind a screen. The Family Procedure Rules and Practice Directions allow for Independent Domestic Violence Advisers and Independent Sexual Violence Advisers to accompany parties in the courtroom.

Central to the Department's commitment to reform the family justice system is the rollout of the Pathfinder pilot. This innovative court model uses a less adversarial approach for private law children proceedings and is operating in Dorset, North Wales, Birmingham and South-East Wales. The pilot courts work closely with local domestic abuse agencies, including Independent Domestic Violence Advisers, to ensure that specialist support and domestic abuse risk assessments are in place. We are committed to expanding the pilot so that more people can benefit from this approach.

Evaluation of the pilot is ongoing and involves seeking the views of both parent and child victims of domestic abuse to understand how the support available in the Pathfinder model has impacted their experiences. This evaluation will be published once it is completed.

On 27 November, the Government also begun piloting a new Domestic Abuse Protection Order (DAPO) in selected areas. This new order is available across family, civil and criminal courts and brings together the strongest features from current protective orders into a single more comprehensive order. DAPOs can offer more tailored protection to victims and place greater sanctions on a perpetrator.

■ Magistrates: Boston

Sir John Hayes:

[\[17071\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many justices of the peace served at Boston Magistrates court in each of the last five years.

Sarah Sackman:

HMCTS deploys Magistrates (Justices of the Peace) who are allocated to a bench and are then placed on a rota to sit as a panel. Boston Magistrates would be served by the Lincolnshire Bench and the numbers on that bench are below for the period stated:

YEAR	NO. OF MAGISTRATES
1/4/24 – 3/12/24	170
1/4/23- 31/3/24	182
1/4/22- 31/3/23	161
1/4/21 – 31/3/22	158
1/4/20 – 31/3/21	159
1/4/19 – 31/3/20	174

■ Ministry of Justice: Staff

Mr Peter Bedford:

[\[18063\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many employee settlement agreements there were in her Department in each year since 2020; and what the total value of such agreements is.

Alex Davies-Jones:

The information requested is not held centrally in a manner which enables readily extractable information to respond to the question and therefore obtaining it would incur disproportionate costs.

■ Slavery: Victims

Sarah Champion:

[\[17817\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the oral contribution of the then Minister of State in her Department during the Ninth sitting of the Public Bill Committee on the Victims and Prisoners Bill on 4 July 2023, Official Report column 310, and to correspondence on the timetable for implementation of the duty on public authorities to collaborate under the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024, published on 5 November 2024, whether (a) the guidance to be developed under this implementation process will clarify that modern slavery victims (i) can and (ii) are likely to be covered by the duty and (b) stakeholders involved in supporting victims of modern slavery will be included in the consultation process.

Alex Davies-Jones:

The duty to collaborate, as set out in sections 13-14 of the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024, will, once in force, require local policing bodies, local authorities and integrated care boards to collaborate when commissioning services for victims of domestic abuse, sexual abuse and serious violence in England.

Collaboration in relation to the commissioning of services for victims of modern slavery will be required under the duty where the crime amounts to serious violence, including the threat of violence and violence against property (see section 13(7) of the 2024 Act).

The statutory guidance on the duty issued pursuant to section 15 will make this clear and will be consulted on in early 2025, in accordance with section 15(2). The Ministry of Justice has engaged with stakeholders involved in supporting victims of modern slavery during the development of the draft guidance and will continue to do so during consultation.

■ Young Offenders: Diseases

Paul Davies:

[\[17441\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps she is taking with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to develop a coordinated strategy for managing the health and wellbeing of children in custodial settings during future pandemics.

Paul Davies:

[\[17442\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of issuing guidance to prisons on supporting children in custody in different pandemic scenarios.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The Youth Custody Service (part of HMPPS) works with the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), the Department for Education, and NHS England's Health & Justice Children's Team to ensure a co-ordinated strategy for managing the health and wellbeing of children in custodial settings, and to ensure appropriate resources

and guidance are developed to support the children and young people secure estate (CYPSE) in responding to any new or emerging threats, including a future pandemic.

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the UKHSA with the support of the Youth Custody Service and other partners, commissioned a review into how to improve guidance and resources for secure children's settings on preventing and responding to infectious disease threats. Following this review, UKHSA has worked with partners on a co-ordinated strategy to ensure that these recommendations inform continuing work on preventing, preparing for and responding to infectious disease threats, and on pandemic preparedness in the CYPSE.

The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Youth Custody Services – the final report of the Youth Custody Service's COVID-19 Research and Evaluation Programme, published in October 2022 – is an extensive piece of research across the secure estate, which captured and assessed the experience of dealing with the threat of COVID-19. The results have not only informed recovery planning, but also became part of the wider plan to prepare for any future pandemic. Establishments and providers have been given greater flexibility in learning from this report to enable them to meet the individual needs of children, by enabling holistic and tailored service delivery, that is evidence-based.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

■ Diabetes: Research

Dr Ben Spencer:

[\[17252\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what the total amount of Government investment into type 1 diabetes disease research was in 2023-24; and which public bodies provided that investment.

Feryal Clark:

Through UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), the government committed £17.2 million funding for Type 1 Diabetes research in 2023 and 2024 (and includes funding from the Horizon Europe Guarantee). £8.3 million of this is through UKRI's Medical Research Council funding, which includes research into novel diagnostic technology, cell replacement and pancreatic biology as well as research into foot ulcers and diabetic neuropathy.

The Department of Health and Social Care funds research through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). The NIHR spent £5.2 million on Type 1 Diabetes in 2023-24.

■ Food: Research**Dr Ben Spencer:** [\[17248\]](#)

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

Feryal Clark:

I refer the Hon Member to the reply I gave in UIN [16568](#)

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[17316\]](#)

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

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[17317\]](#)

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

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[17318\]](#)

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

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[17319\]](#)

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

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[17320\]](#)

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

Feryal Clark:

I refer the Hon Member to the reply I gave in UIN [16568](#)

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[17321\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the domestic opportunities through Horizon Europe for research into food biosecurity.

Feryal Clark:

The UK's association to Horizon Europe means that UK researchers and businesses can participate in the world's largest programme of research cooperation, worth £80bn+, alongside their EU colleagues and those from other Associated Countries. UK researchers are fully eligible, and DSIT encourages them to apply for funding

calls in Horizon Europe's 'Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment' cluster.

Making Horizon Europe association a success is the Government's priority, and that is why DSIT is engaging with key stakeholders to boost UK participation and remove barriers to international R&D collaborations.

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[\[17324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the Geospatial Commission on research into food biosecurity.

Feryal Clark:

The Government recognises the importance of food biosecurity and the role of geospatial data in preventing the spread of disease-causing agents and protecting the safety of food, animals, and humans.

The Department engages regularly with geospatial data providers to continuously improve the data available to Defra, the Food Standards Agency and other stakeholders to support a range of cross-sectoral research and operational activities in this area.

■ **Kidney Diseases: Research**

Dr Ben Spencer:

[\[17251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what the total amount of Government investment into chronic kidney disease research was in 2023-24; and which public bodies provided that investment.

Feryal Clark:

Through UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) the government committed £8.9 million for Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) in 2023 and 2024 is £8.9m. £5.8 million of this is through UKRI's Medical Research Council funding, which includes research into CKD after pregnancy complications, rare genetic diseases and cardiovascular disease as well as discovering new therapies to treat CKD.

The Department of Health and Social Care funds research through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). The NIHR spent £13.4m on Chronic Kidney Diseases in 2023-24.

■ **Product Security and Telecommunications Infrastructure Act 2022**

Alex Mayer:

[\[17353\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, when he plans to implement sections (a) 61 to 65, (b) 67 (c) 70 to 74 and (d) other remaining provisions of the Product Security and Telecommunications Infrastructure Act 2022.

Chris Bryant:

The Government is committed to implementing all remaining provisions of the Product Security and Telecommunications Act 2022 as soon as possible. These measures will help deliver the benefits of advanced digital connectivity.

Most provisions have been implemented. Those remaining are complex and technical. We must ensure they are implemented carefully, to create certainty and avoid post-implementation delays. The Department has policy and legal resources dedicated to deliver these, and we will bring forward a consultation on the implementation of sections 61 to 64, including transitional provisions, as soon as possible.

■ Suicide: Internet

Munira Wilson: [\[17236\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what estimate his Department has made of the number of (a) suicide and (b) eating disorder forums accessible to UK internet users.

Munira Wilson: [\[17238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether his Department has set a target for reduction in the numbers of deaths by suicide associated with suicide forums following full implementation of the Online Safety Act 2023.

Munira Wilson: [\[17239\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment he has made of the potential (a) implications for his policies of the number of pro-anorexia coaches and (b) impact of such coaches on mental health services.

Munira Wilson: [\[17240\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of the number of deaths associated with pro-anorexia coaches operating online.

Munira Wilson: [\[17241\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what guidance he plans to issue on whether seeking a suicide partner online is regulated under the Online Safety Act 2023.

Feryal Clark:

DSIT published an impact assessment for the Online Safety Act which contains estimates on the number of firms in scope. DSIT has not made a specific estimate in these areas nor has set specific targets.

The Act will require in-scope services to prevent all users from accessing illegal suicide and self-harm content including illegal eating disorder content, as well as protecting children from legal content which encourages, promotes or provides instruction for suicide, self-injury or eating disorders online.

Ofcom, responsible for the Act's implementation, will provide guidance or codes of practice relating to the safety duties.

DSIT is developing a framework to evaluate the Act's implementation and core outcomes.

TRANSPORT

■ Aviation: Environment Protection and Health

Sarah Olney: [\[18164\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether it her policy that the proposed UKADS will assess the (a) environmental and (b) health impacts of new flight paths.

Mike Kane:

The proposed UK Airspace Design Service (UKADS) will be focused on delivering holistic and modernised airspace design for the UK.

As is currently the case, the UKADS would still be required to follow the Civil Aviation Authority's (CAA's) CAP1616 Airspace Change Proposal (ACP) process. CAP1616 sets out how sponsors of airspace change must undertake full, comprehensive environmental assessments for airspace options which are under consideration.

All ACPs must also allow for sufficient consultation to take place with those potentially affected by the proposed changes.

■ Boats: Waste Disposal

Neil Duncan-Jordan: [\[17748\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, which authority is responsible for the recovery and disposal of boats that have sunk or are stranded near the shoreline when they do not present a navigation hazard.

Mike Kane:

In the case of sunk or stranded vessels, the owner of that vessel is responsible for carrying out any actions required to mitigate environmental consequences under the Merchant Shipping Act 1995. This may be carried out in conjunction with an insurance company. Sunk vessels that are not hazards to navigation may be assessed for their potential environmental impact by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) and Secretary of State's Representative for Maritime Intervention and Salvage (SOSREP). Where vessels are stranded near the shoreline, the responsibility for the removal of the vessel still sits with the owner. In some cases, it is not possible to trace an owner for stranded vessels on the shoreline. In these cases, the responsibility for remediation may fall to the landowner. The landowner may choose to instigate legal action against the vessel's owner where possible. Regulations such as the Environmental Protection Act 1990 (England and Wales) may apply. In such cases, the vessel could also be salvaged voluntarily, by any

person, to prevent further damage and in return for a salvage fee from the owner, or insurer.

■ **Bus Services: Fares**

Gareth Bacon: [\[18190\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what information her Department holds on the number of people who have made journeys using the £2 cap on bus fares.

Simon Lightwood:

The Department for Transport does not hold data on the number of people that have used the fare cap.

■ **Electric Bicycles: Fires**

Dr Neil Hudson: [\[18229\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what information her Department holds on the number of fires as a result of batteries in electric bikes reported to emergency services.

Simon Lightwood:

The Department does not hold information on the number of fires caused by batteries in electric bikes. The Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) published analysis of e-cycle and e-scooter fires in August 2024, which is available on gov.uk. It includes a summary of matters such as where these fires occurred; what types of e-cycle and e-scooter were involved; and how many fires led to fatalities.

Dr Neil Hudson: [\[18230\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to reduce the number of fires caused by batteries in electric bikes.

Simon Lightwood:

In February 2024, the Department published detailed safety guidance on how to buy, store and charge e-cycles and e-scooters. The Department for Business and Trade also launched a “Buy safe, be safe” campaign and further guidance in October 2024 to help users of e-cycles reduce the risk of battery fires. All of the information is readily accessible on gov.uk.

The Government has also introduced the Product Safety and Metrology Bill. This will create powers that will allow government to set specific product regulations, including on batteries used in e-cycles.

In the meantime, all e-cycles sold in the UK must comply with various product safety requirements, as must all mains battery chargers. The Department continues to work with other Government Departments and other stakeholders to understand why battery fires occur so that the Government can take any further action necessary to tackle the issue.

■ Electric Vehicles: Finance

Kevin Hollinrake: [\[17126\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to paragraph 3.80 of the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 October, what proportion of the £120 million is new funding.

Mike Kane:

The £120m of funding announced in the Budget for 2025/26 is in addition to the existing funding of £120m in 2024/25, and will continue to support the purchase of new electric vans as well as the manufacture of wheelchair accessible electric vehicles (EVs).

■ High Speed 2 Line: Complaints

Rachel Taylor: [\[18240\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 27 November 2024 to Question 15335 on High Speed 2 Line: Complaints, how HS2 Ltd differentiates between enquiries and complaints; and how enquiries are escalated to complaints.

Lilian Greenwood:

There is a dedicated HS2 Helpdesk which is available 24 hours a day, every day of the year, to help with any questions or concerns anyone may have about HS2 or work being carried out. It is available via freephone, email, minicom and through the HS2 website. HS2's Helpdesk team receive, log and track enquiries and complaints through to resolution.

HS2 Ltd defines an enquiry as a question or a request for information about the project, whereas a complaint is where a stakeholder is unhappy about anything HS2 Ltd does, or about anything another company does on their behalf. If a stakeholder makes an enquiry but is unhappy with the outcome, they can request that it is treated as a complaint by contacting the HS2 Helpdesk. If the complaint needs immediate attention (for instance, if it involves a risk to safety, HS2 will always deal with it straight away. In any case, an acknowledgement of the complaint will be issued within two working days of receiving it and HS2 Ltd aim to provide a substantive response within 20 working days.

HS2 Ltd's complaints process which includes independent reviews from the HS2 Construction Commissioner, DfT Independent Complaints Assessors and the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO). The full details of the HS2 complaints process are publicly available at <https://www.hs2.org.uk/contact-us/how-to-complain/>.

■ Railways: Employers' Contributions**Gareth Bacon:** [\[18188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her Department plans to provide additional funding to publicly-owned rail operators for the cost of changes to employer National Insurance contributions made at the Autumn Budget 2024.

Simon Lightwood:

In line with the contracts, the Department receives revenue collected and pays most operating costs incurred by TOCs through a regular contract payment.

■ Railways: South West**Rachel Gilmour:** [\[17411\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will meet the hon. member for Tiverton and Minehead and the Peninsula Rail Task Force.

Simon Lightwood:

I'm pleased to advise that the Rail Minister Lord Hendy has accepted an invitation to meet with the Chair of the Peninsula Rail Task Force, Cllr Andrea Davis, and officials are currently making the necessary arrangements.

■ Railways: Standards**Blake Stephenson:** [\[17329\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she plans to take to improve the reliability of train services.

Simon Lightwood:

Improving railway performance and delivering reform is a top priority for the Department. Ministers continue to meet with Managing Directors of the worst performing train operators and their Network Rail counterparts to address poor performance and demand immediate action to raise standards. Furthermore, performance information will be displayed at stations, demonstrating transparency, and allowing passengers to hold us to account as we deliver change.

Blake Stephenson: [\[17330\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential impact of train delays in (a) Q3 and (b) Q4 2024 on productivity.

Simon Lightwood:

Whilst the Department has not made an assessment of the impact of train delays on productivity, we recognise the inconvenience and costs felt by passengers, local communities and businesses arising from poor performance.

Ministers have been clear that rail services have been failing passengers. The Department expects passenger services currently operated by private sector operators under contract with the Secretary of State to transfer into public ownership over the next three years. The failures of the past three decades cannot be fixed

overnight, but bringing train operations into public ownership is the first step in the government's plans to improve the railways for passengers and taxpayers.

■ **Roads: Accidents**

Alex Ballinger:

[\[18464\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to reduce the number of road fatalities.

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.

■ **Rolling Stock: Procurement**

Alex Mayer:

[\[17346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what her planned timetable is to publish her Department's strategy on rolling stock procurement.

Simon Lightwood:

The Government is in the early stages of formulating a rolling stock strategy. The strategy will include considerations around the timelines for new build and refurbishments which will provide more visibility to the rolling stock market.

Once established, GBR will take the strategy forward providing a long-term approach to future rolling stock needs and helping to secure better value from the private rolling stock market.

■ **South Western Railway: Fares**

Luke Taylor:

[\[17338\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make it her policy to reverse fare increases introduced in 2024 on South Western Railway when it is brought into public ownership in 2025.

Simon Lightwood:

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

Through future legislation, we will set out the role Great British Railways will have in fares, ticketing, and other operational aspects of the Railway. Fares and ticketing will continue to be the responsibility of train operators until Great British Railways is established.

■ Stansted Airport: Construction**Gareth Bacon:** [\[18193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of the proposed expansion of Stansted airport on regional airports.

Mike Kane:

The Government has been clear that it is not opposed to airport expansion as long as it provides economic growth and is compatible with strict environmental standards.

This Government recognises the importance of maintaining a thriving and competitive aviation sector in the UK to deliver connectivity, including the provision of Public Service Obligations that enable protection of existing domestic routes that are in danger of being lost.

I am unable to comment on any future planning application should it come before ministers for consideration.

■ Train Operating Companies: Nationalisation**Alex Mayer:** [\[17347\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the oral statement entitled Rail Performance of 11 November 2024, Official Report, column 517, when she plans to issue a private train operating company with three months' notice that it will be taken into public ownership.

Simon Lightwood:

The Secretary of State announced on 4 December that South Western Railway's services will transfer into public ownership on 25 May 2025, followed by c2c's on 20 July 2025 and Greater Anglia's in autumn 2025. No expiry notice needs to be issued to South Western Railway or c2c as their contracts are already set to expire on those dates. An expiry notice will be issued to Greater Anglia in due course.

TREASURY**■ Agriculture****Victoria Atkins:** [\[18139\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what meetings she had with the (a) National Farmers Union, (b) Country Land and Business Association, (c) Countryside Alliance, (d) Tenant Association Farmers and (e) Central Association for Agricultural Valuers before 30 October 2024.

Victoria Atkins: [\[18140\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what meetings she has had with the (a) National Farmers Union, (b) Country Land and Business Association, (c) Countryside Alliance, (d) Tenant Association Farmers and (e) Central Association for Agricultural Valuers since 30 October 2024.

James Murray:

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

www.gov.uk/government/publications/agricultural-property-relief-and-business-property-relief-reforms.

The Government takes into account all representations, and HM Treasury officials and Ministers meet with stakeholders on a regular basis.

Business Rates**Kevin Hollinrake:****[17123]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment has the Valuation Office Agency made of the potential impact of the 2026 business rates revaluation on businesses, broken down by (a) special category code and (b) each English region.

James Murray:

The Valuation Office Agency (VOA) has a statutory duty to compile and maintain accurate rating lists. The [Non-Domestic Rating Act 2023](#) set the date of completion for the next revaluation as 1 April 2026. Valuation activity is now underway.

In line with [section 41 of The Local Government Finance Act 1988](#), the VOA will publish the valuation list in draft by 31 December 2025. Following the publication of the draft list, the VOA will also publish official statistics on changes to rateable value, including by special category code and billing authority.

Kevin Hollinrake:**[17131]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what guidance she has issued on whether (a) supermarkets, (b) hotels and (c) department stores with a rateable value over £500,000 will be liable to pay the new business rates rateable value multiplier surcharge from 2026-27.

Kevin Hollinrake:**[17138]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the decision to apply a higher multiplier to all properties with a rateable value of £500,000 or above on (a) large supermarkets and (b) department stores.

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 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.

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.

Kevin Hollinrake: [17133]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate she has made of the level of the (a) lower multiplier for retail, hospitality and leisure hereditaments from April 2026 and (b) higher multiplier for hereditaments above £500,000 Rateable Value; and whether she has a target for the average (i) decrease and (ii) increase in business rates as a (A) proportion and (B) number.

Kevin Hollinrake: [17139]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate she has made of the additional revenue to be raised from properties with rateable value of £500,000 or above in order to be able to set lower multipliers for retail, hospitality and leisure properties below that threshold.

James Murray:

At Autumn Budget 2024, the Government announced that it intends 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.

The Government will confirm the rates for the new multipliers at Budget 2025.

The Non-Domestic Ratings Bill due for Committee Stage sets out the parameters within which the government proposes the multipliers would be set by Treasury regulations.

Kevin Hollinrake: [17134]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what is the (a) mean and (b) median Rateable Value of hereditaments over £500,000.

Kevin Hollinrake: [17137]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate she has made of the number of properties that the proposed new multiplier above £500,000 Rateable Value will apply to by (a) special categories and (b) sector.

James Murray:

The VOA regularly publishes official Non-Domestic Rating statistics on gov.uk here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/valuation-office-agency-non-domestic-rating-statistics>. The number of properties over £500,000 in rateable value, broken down by property sector is published in table 2.2 here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66695d2cf5e751f1b786db07/ndr_stoc_k_of_properties_2024.xlsx

The highest rateable value band where the VOA publishes a breakdown of properties by special category code, mean and median is £51k. The VOA does not currently publish a further breakdown of data for properties with a rateable value over £500k but plans to do so in an ad hoc publication.

The publication date is expected to be announced within the next two weeks, and information published by 31 March 2025.

■ Business Rates: Tax Allowances

Kevin Hollinrake: [\[17135\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will publish an impact assessment for the proposed reduction in business rate relief for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses in England.

Kevin Hollinrake: [\[17136\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will publish an impact assessment for the proposed application of a higher multiplier to properties with a rateable value of £500,000 or above.

James Murray:

At Autumn Budget 2024, the Government announced that it intends 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.

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.

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, HM Treasury intends to publish analysis of the effects of the new multiplier arrangements.

■ Financial Services: Euro

Lauren Edwards: [\[R\] \[17434\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 25 November 2024 to Question 13971 on Financial Services: Euro, what steps her Department is taking to mitigate against the risk of the EU not extending its equivalence decision for UK central counterparties after June 2025.

Tulip Siddiq:

As set out in my previous response, it is a decision for EU authorities whether to extend further the Article 25 EMIR decision for UK CCPs. As the Bank of England has noted previously, there are financial stability risks which might arise from EU firms having to exit from UK CCPs at pace. HM Treasury, alongside the financial services regulators, will therefore continue to monitor the situation.

■ Further Education: VAT**Alex Burghart:** [\[18166\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 14 October to Question 6418 on Further Education: VAT, for what reason further education colleges do not meet the rationale for admission to either refund scheme.

James Murray:

I refer the member to the answer given on the 14 November to PQ 13459.

■ Higher Education: VAT**Ian Sollom:** [R] [\[17327\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 22 November 2024 to Question 14160 on Higher Education: VAT, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of enabling groups of universities to share VAT-exempt costs at contract level without creating a separate legal entity.

James Murray:

The requirement for groups using the cost sharing exemption to create a separate legal entity is in place to ensure that use of the exemption aligns with normal VAT principles that apply to all taxpayers. The Government keeps all taxes under review as part of the policy making process, but there are currently no plans to change this.

■ Holiday Accommodation: Taxation**Dr Al Pinkerton:** [\[17431\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of abolishing the furnished holiday let tax regime on local (a) economies and (b) jobs.

James Murray:

The Government will abolish the Furnished Holiday Lets (FHLs) tax regime from April 2025. This will equalise the tax treatment of FHL and non-FHL landlords' income and gains.

The Government wants to support the visitor economy alongside housing for longer-term residents to rent or buy. Achieving this balance is crucial in supporting the tourism sector, and many of the people who work in the sector need access to local housing.

■ Hospitality Industry: Employers' Contributions**Rachel Gilmour:** [\[17410\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of exempting hospitality businesses from proposed changes to employer National Insurance contributions.

James Murray:

The Government has taken a number of difficult but necessary decisions on tax, welfare, and spending to fix the public finances, fund public services, and restore economic stability after the situation we inherited from the previous administration.

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

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

Loans: Developing Countries**Steve Race:**[\[17302\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 22 November 2024 to Question 14217 on Loans: Developing Countries, how many loan commitments have been published under the Principles for Debt Transparency since June 2023; and if she will take steps to ensure that the (a) existence and (b) details of loans to governments by private lenders are published.

Tulip Siddiq:

The UK is a strong advocate for enhancing debt transparency, including for private sector debt. We have supported the Institute of International Finance (IIF) and the OECD Debt Transparency Initiative, set up in 2021, and the IIF's Voluntary Principles for Debt Transparency, which underpinned it. The UK has taken a lead in ensuring its own lending is transparent and meets G20 best practice, publishing details of all new direct lending quarterly and the stock of debt owed to the UK annually.

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

Public Houses: Business Rates**Kevin Hollinrake:**[\[17132\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will publish a list of the Rateable Value of each pub in England by (a) address, (b) local authority and (c) Rateable Value.

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 Rating Lists at:

www.gov.uk/find-business-rates

The address, local authority and rateable value of each property is included within these lists. The advanced search function allows users to select properties by special category code and to filter by pubs using codes 226 and 227.

■ Renewable Energy: Liquefied Petroleum Gas

Jim Shannon:

[\[17815\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of including renewable liquid gases in the green taxonomy.

Tulip Siddiq:

The purpose of implementing a green taxonomy is to support investment into activities aligned with sustainability goals, and to mitigate greenwashing.

However, the government is aware that taxonomies can be complex in practice, and feedback on their value is mixed. The government has therefore published a consultation to gather views on the value case for launching a UK Green Taxonomy as part of a wider sustainable finance framework.

At this stage in the consultation process, the government is not seeking feedback on the detail of the sectors for inclusion. Instead, the government is focused on the bigger picture of whether and how this can be a useful tool for companies and investors.

■ Tax Avoidance: Reviews

Dr Al Pinkerton:

[\[17432\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps she is taking to ensure the independence of the new review on the loan charge.

James Murray:

The Government is committed to an independent review of the Loan Charge to help bring the matter to a close for those affected whilst ensuring fairness for all taxpayers.

Further details will be set out in due course.

Dr Al Pinkerton:

[\[17433\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the review into the loan charge will include examining the roles of (a) scheme promoters, (b) umbrella companies and (c) tax advisers.

James Murray:

At Autumn Budget 2024, the Government committed to an independent review of the Loan Charge to help bring the matter to a close for those affected whilst ensuring fairness for all taxpayers.

Further details about the review will be set out in due course.

■ UK Relations with EU**Stephen Gethins:** [\[17820\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to oral contribution of 3 December 2024 by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, if she will make an overall estimate of the impact of the UK's exit from the EU.

Darren Jones:

No. The Government is focussed on resetting the relationship with the EU, which will support economic growth, the central mission of the Government.

WORK AND PENSIONS**■ Income: Equality****Danny Kruger:** [\[17268\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department (a) made and (b) has since made an assessment of the potential impact of Autumn Budget 2024 on trends in the level of income inequality.

Alison McGovern:

HM Treasury have published distributional analysis showing the estimated impact of tax, welfare and public service spending decisions on household incomes, across the household income distribution. This can be found here [Impact on households.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/131111/impact-on-households.pdf)

■ Jobcentres and Universal Credit: Telephone Services**Neil O'Brien:** [\[17877\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 2 December 2024 to Question 15704 on Jobcentres and Universal Credit: Telephone Services, how many calls were translated by language code since 2021; and what the cost was of translating calls by language code.

Andrew Western:

Following consultation with the supplier, we consider that the release of the information requested would prejudice commercial interests.

■ State Retirement Pensions: British Nationals Abroad**Mike Amesbury:** [\[17873\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of an annual state pension increase for British pensioners living outside the UK.

Emma Reynolds:

No assessment is planned.

The UK's policy on the up-rating of the UK State Pension for recipients living overseas is a longstanding one. The UK state pension is payable worldwide without regard to nationality and is uprated abroad where we have a legal requirement to do so.

Up-rating is based on levels of earnings growth and price inflation in the UK which has no direct relevance where the pensioner is resident overseas.

Over many years, priority is given to those living in the United Kingdom when drawing up expenditure plans for additional pensioner benefits.

■ Universal Credit: Interpreters

Rupert Lowe: [\[17377\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of Universal Credit claimants have a note on their record saying that an interpreter is required when her Department contacts them.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Currently, we do not collect structured data on customers who need an interpreter within UC. However, we know of the **43,203,214** calls the department received last year that **865,299** needed an interpreter which is around 2%. The data shown is unpublished management information, collected and intended for internal departmental use and has not been quality assured to National Statistics or Official Statistics publication standard.

■ Workplace Pensions

Susan Murray: [\[17360\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of implementing measures to support pensioners whose defined benefit schemes are underfunded.

Emma Reynolds:

The UK has a robust and flexible regime for protecting defined benefit (DB) pensions.

Sponsoring employers are ultimately responsible for meeting the promised pensions and DB pension schemes are subject to the statutory funding objective which requires them to have sufficient and appropriate assets to provide for their pension liabilities. Schemes must be valued, at least every three years, and where there is a funding deficit a recovery plan must be put in place, and the deficit filled as soon as the sponsor can reasonably afford.

The Pensions Regulator has a range of enforcement powers and can intervene to protect member benefits when needed.

Where an employer becomes insolvent, and the scheme winds up underfunded, benefits are underpinned by the Pension Protection Fund (PPF) which can provide compensation at 100% of scheme benefits for pensioner members and 90% of scheme benefits for deferred members.

■ Workplace Pensions: Inflation

Susan Murray: [\[17355\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of regulations not subjecting pre-1997 defined benefit pensions to statutory indexation on the financial wellbeing of pensioners.

Susan Murray: [\[17359\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the financial status of people (a) who received pre-1997 defined benefit pensions and (b) who received payments from schemes with mandatory increases.

Emma Reynolds:

Analysis by the Pensions Regulator estimates that, as of 31 March 2023, more than three quarters of schemes provide indexation on scheme benefits accrued before 6 April 1997. This is in addition to any Guaranteed Minimum Pension rights accrued between 1988 and 1997, which must be indexed by the scheme. These schemes represent over 80 per cent of the membership of private-sector occupational Defined Benefit (DB) pension schemes. This information is published and available at: [Data requests | The Pensions Regulator](#)

The Department does not hold any data on the financial status of the members of these schemes.

Susan Murray: [\[17356\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will take steps to address the lack of statutory inflation protection for pre-1997 defined benefit pension entitlements.

Susan Murray: [\[17357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will take steps with Cabinet colleagues to encourage private pension schemes to voluntarily offer inflation protection for pre-1997 defined benefit pension entitlements.

Emma Reynolds:

It is for sponsoring employers to decide on what pension benefits they offer, provided they meet minimum standards. Scheme rules set out how the scheme should be run. It would not be appropriate for the Government to interfere in decisions made by individual schemes, beyond setting clear, affordable minimum standards that apply to all.

Pensions legislation does not usually apply new provisions retrospectively to rights that have already been accrued. It is generally seen to be unreasonable to add liabilities to pension schemes that could not have been taken into account in the funding assumptions that determined the contributions to be paid at the time. In some cases, the additional unplanned liabilities could result in significant additional contributions for the sponsoring employers, and ultimately threaten the future viability of some schemes.

It is extremely important to achieve a balance between providing members with some measure of protection against inflation and not increasing schemes' costs beyond a level that schemes and employers can generally afford.

Susan Murray:

[17358]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what information her Department holds on the number of retirees affected by the lack of statutory inflation protection for pre-1997 defined benefit pensions.

Emma Reynolds:

Analysis carried out by the Pensions Regulator estimates that, as of 31 March 2023, 23 per cent of private-sector occupational Defined Benefit (DB) pension schemes have no indexation applied to pre-1997 benefits. However, this is in addition to any Guaranteed Minimum Pension rights accrued between 1988 and 1997, which must be indexed by the scheme.

This information is published and available at: [Data requests | The Pensions Regulator](#)

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

EDUCATION

■ Early Years Funding 2025-26

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Minister for Early Education (Stephen Morgan):

[\[HCWS292\]](#)

This government is clear that whoever you are, wherever you come from, ours should be a country where hard work means you can get on in life. Ensuring every child has the best start in life is crucial to breaking down barriers to opportunity from the earliest point in our lives.

Early years educators, providers and local authorities are already doing incredible work to meet this mission and expand their provision so that more families can benefit from affordable, accessible and high-quality early education and childcare.

As announced at 2024 Autumn Budget, we expect to provide over £8 billion for the early years entitlements in 2025-26 – a more than 30% increase compared to 2024-25 - as we work towards the expansion of the entitlements.

Today, we have also published the new early years local authority core funding rates for 2025-26. The national average 3- and 4-year-old hourly funding rates of local authorities is increasing by 4.1%, the 2-year-old hourly funding rates is increasing by 3.3%, and the 9 months to 2-year-old hourly funding rate is increasing by 3.4%. As usual, the hourly funding rates will vary between local authorities, reflecting the relative needs of the children and different costs of delivering provision across the country.

To ensure that providers are set-up to deliver 30 funded hours of childcare and early education for children age 9 months to when they start school, and that parents are able to access this across our communities from September 2025, on top of over £8 billion through the core funding rates, we will be investing an additional £75 million of revenue funding in 2025-26 through an expansion grant, recognising the significant effort and planning to prepare for the final phase of the expansion. This grant is on top of over £8 billion provided through the core funding rates.

It is essential that high quality early education and childcare are accessible for all children and families, given the importance of the early years of life. However, currently there are gaps in both provision and quality, especially for disadvantaged children. That is why we are delivering the largest ever uplift to the early years pupil premium, increasing EYPP rates by over 45% per hour in 2024-25 to £1 per hour in 2025-26, equivalent to up to £570 per eligible child per year.

This unprecedented increase is an investment in quality early education for those children who need it most, providing additional support for disadvantaged children to meet development goals at age 5.

Eligible children can also receive £938 per child per year through the disability access fund to support reasonable adjustments for children with a disability. We also expect to spend £92.6 million on maintained nursery school (MNS) supplementary funding in 2025-26, in recognition of the additional costs MNS face.

It is important that providers can plan ahead, therefore we have set the expectation that local authorities communicate their rates to providers by 28th February 2025 at the latest and we will be working with local authorities to support them to do this. This will become mandatory from 2026-27.

From April 2025, we are increasing the minimum pass-through requirement, meaning local authorities must pass on at least 96% of funding to providers, as part of a phased approach to a 97% pass-through in the future.

Full details on the 2025-26 local authority hourly funding rates, including step-by-step tables, have been published on GOV.UK.

HOME OFFICE

■ Calais Group

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Yvette Cooper): [\[HCWS293\]](#)

Today I, jointly with German Interior Minister Faeser, convened Calais Group partners; Belgium, France, and The Netherlands, in London, in the presence of the European Commission and its agencies, Frontex and Europol to deliver real and tangible results on the fight against the dangerous people smuggling networks that threaten our collective border security.

At this important forum, all Calais Group partners agreed to jointly deliver the Calais Group Priority Plan in 2025. This plan is testament to our shared commitment to dismantle the people smuggling networks – it builds on our excellent joint working through existing structures and refocuses shared priorities to bring to justice those that undermine our border security.

The Priority Plan contains actions which will deliver enhanced cooperation in 2025, taking a whole of route approach to tackle the end-to-end criminality of migrant smuggling networks who continue to deploy more dangerous tactics, putting lives at risk.

The key areas of collaboration include:

- Coordinating preventative communications to deter irregular migrants from paying Organised Crime Groups (OCGs) to facilitate dangerous journeys.
- Strengthening our ability to work together via Europol to enhance targeting and disruption of prominent OCGs and their criminal supply chains through deepening intelligence and information sharing and ensuring there are effective and robust legislative frameworks criminalising the small boat supply chain with a focus on the evolving tactics and targeting the end-to-end criminality of the Kurdish/Iraqi OCGs involved in the smuggling of migrants into and across Europe.

- Tackling the use of social media by OCG's to recruit and advertise dangerous journeys across Europe and the Channel to migrants.
- Targeting the illicit finance models of migrant smuggling networks to better target preventative, investigation and disruption efforts to take action on criminal finances and ensure that migrant smuggling is not a viable or profitable business.
- Enabling reciprocal exchange of the most pertinent information relating to migration flows and border security issues to better understand and respond to emerging trends and migrant flows.

It demonstrates the commitment of near neighbour partners to break the business model of migrant smuggling networks and reaffirms our resolve to use every tool available to ensure these criminals are brought to justice.

Alongside this crucial meeting, the Government is also today publishing a statement on Delivering Border Security, setting out our approach to establishing the Border Security Command, tackling organised immigration crime and improving the UK's border security. The new Border Security Command will lead and drive forward the required step change in the UK's approach to border security, including our international response.

Organised immigration crime is a global threat, with no respect for national boundaries. Tackling it requires working closely with international partners. The Border Security Command is scaling up efforts with key near neighbour partners and the EU, through the Calais Group to disrupt the people smuggling trade and the criminal gangs that profit from it.

Copies of the Calais Group Priority Plan and the Delivering Border Security Statement will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses and will also be published on GOV.UK later this afternoon.

■ UK - Germany Joint Action Plan

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Yvette Cooper): [\[HCWS291\]](#)

Organised immigration crime is an international problem which requires international solutions. That is why we are substantially scaling up collaboration with international partners to disrupt the people smuggling trade and the criminal gangs that profit from it.

Yesterday, I signed a landmark agreement with the German Federal Minister of the Interior and Community Nancy Faeser. The UK-Germany Joint Action Plan to tackle irregular migration will deliver strengthened investigative and prosecutorial responses to organised immigration crime, alongside enhanced intelligence sharing between our respective law enforcement agencies and greater coordination of our efforts in source and transit countries to tackle irregular migration at source.

Many of the same criminal smuggler gangs who organise small boats in the Channel are also operating in Germany and across Europe with an impact on the security of all our countries and therefore stronger law enforcement across borders is essential to tackle the dangerous gangs, illicit finance and supply chains that affect.

There is recognition on both sides that activities on German soil which facilitate migrant smuggling towards the UK require a clarified legislative approach. Once enacted, this legal change will make it easier to disrupt and prosecute organised crime including making it easier to significantly increase the number of arrests and prosecutions made in relation to the supply of small boats equipment – ensuring that those driving this trade are brought to justice.

Germany is a key international partner in our efforts to tackle people smuggling and the organised criminal groups who profit from this trade. The Joint Action builds on our existing cooperation with Germany and will deliver a new framework for enhancing our joint efforts to tackle organised immigration crime.

Minister Faeser's visit to London yesterday included a visit to NCA Headquarters for a briefing on the scale of the small boat supply chain, existing operational cooperation between our respective law enforcement agencies, and the further cooperation UK and German law enforcement agencies can undertake together through the Joint Action Plan.

A copy of the UK - Germany Joint Action Plan will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses and will also be published on GOV.UK.