



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 10 January 2025 and the information is correct at the time of publication (03:38 P.M., 10 January 2025). 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 **90000 or greater** indicate that the question was originally tabled as an oral question and has since been unstarred.

ANSWERS

ATTORNEY GENERAL

■ Fraud: Victims

James McMurdock:

[\[21156\]](#)

To ask the Solicitor General, what steps she is taking to support fraud victims throughout the recovery process.

Lucy Rigby:

This Government is committed to tackling fraud and supporting the victims of fraud.

The Attorney General's Office (AGO) superintends the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and Serious Fraud Office (SFO). The CPS is responsible for prosecuting fraud, among other criminal offences, which is primarily investigated by the police in England and Wales. The SFO investigates and prosecutes the most serious and complex fraud, bribery and corruption.

The CPS continues to implement its Economic Crime Strategy 2025 which includes ensuring victims and witnesses are at the heart of every case. In September 2021, the CPS developed guidance focused on prosecutors' engagement with victims of fraud, improving the experience of victims through close work with investigators to have a joint victim and witness engagement strategy from the outset of a case.

More broadly, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) is currently developing a new version of the Victims' Code, which is a practical and useful guide for all victims of crime, including victims of fraud. The CPS and SFO are actively engaging with them on this. The CPS is also working closely with the MoJ to support the delivery of the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024.

The SFO has a dedicated Victim and Witness Care Unit which looks after the needs of victims in all its cases and delivers its obligations in line with the current Victims' Code.

The SFO also provides bespoke information on relevant support services and makes referrals for ongoing support to local Police and Crime Commissioner commissioned victim services on behalf of victims. It also has a tailored needs assessment process which takes into account the length of time SFO investigations can take, and keeps victims updated via the SFO's website and individually on the investigation, including on matters such as appeals and ongoing proceeds of crime recovery processes. A dedicated witness care officer will also attend court to be with witnesses for the duration of a trial.

BUSINESS AND TRADE■ **CSL Vifor**

Peter Fortune: [21836]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of the accessibility of the consultation entitled Investigation into suspected anti-competitive conduct by Vifor Pharma in relation to intravenous iron treatments, published on 31 January 2024.

Justin Madders:

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) is the UK's independent competition authority, and its consultations, including the live consultation relating to commitments offered by Vifor Pharma (<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-proposed-commitments-in-respect-of-vifor-pharmas-supply-of-intravenous-iron>), are therefore independent of Government. Any questions relating to consultations carried out by the CMA should be sent directly to the CMA.

■ **Industrial Strategy Council**

Andrew Griffith: [21069]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will outline the process for appointments to the Industrial Strategy Council.

Andrew Griffith: [21246]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how many applications his Department received for the appointment to the Industrial Strategy Council; and how many and what proportion of those applications reached each stage of consideration for appointments.

Sarah Jones:

Appointments to the Industrial Strategy Advisory Council were made through direct ministerial appointment by the Secretary of State for Business and Trade and the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The Council's membership includes senior business leaders, policy experts and trade union representatives. Members have been appointed in a personal capacity and the Council will help to ensure our Industrial Strategy is informed by a broad and high-quality evidence base, and a diverse range of perspectives.

■ **Investment: Private Sector**

James Wild: [21043]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps he is taking to increase private investment as a proportion of GDP.

James Wild:[\[21045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to encourage foreign direct investment.

Sarah Jones:

Investment is at the heart of the government's growth mission, increasing the number of good, well-skilled jobs and improving productivity across the country. The Department for Business and Trade works with all investor-facing business units to deliver support for the highest-value, highest-impact FDI projects into the UK. DBT officials work on a daily basis with businesses of all sizes to ensure a close partnership between government and business, and to showcase the multitude of investment opportunities the UK has to offer.

The Industrial Strategy Green Paper (published 14 October) sets out a credible, 10-year plan to deliver the certainty and stability businesses need to invest in UK.

The government also hosted an international investment summit in October 2024 where nearly 38,000 jobs across the country were announced alongside a record-breaking £63 billion of investment.

Members: Correspondence**Munira Wilson:**[\[21669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, when he plans to respond to the correspondence of 2 October 2024 from the hon. Member for Twickenham on the reciprocity of aviation qualifications.

Sarah Jones:

A response was issued on 6 January.

Overseas Trade: Rural Areas**Stuart Anderson:**[\[21370\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether she is taking steps to support small businesses in rural areas with international trade.

Gareth Thomas:

Under the umbrella of the recently announced Business Growth Service, UK businesses can access The Department for Business and Trade (DBT) wealth of export support via Great.gov.uk. This comprises an online support offer and a wider network of support including the Export Academy, UK Export Finance, the International Markets network and one-to-one support from International Trade Advisers.

DBT is piloting an enhanced partnership with Greater Manchester Combined Authority, taking a targeted place-based approach to accelerate small business growth through exporting across the region. This will be rolled out to other regions across England over the next 12 months.

We will bring forward further proposals next year.

■ **Robotics: Industry**

Dr Scott Arthur:

[R] [21211]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether robotics will have a role in a future industrial strategy.

Sarah Jones:

The Industrial Strategy Green Paper identified eight growth-driving sectors. All sectors can shape and will benefit from policy reform through the Industrial Strategy's cross-cutting policies alongside the broader Growth Mission. This will create the pro-business environment for all businesses to invest and employ, with growth that supports high-quality jobs and ensures that the benefits are shared across people, places, and generations.

Advanced production machinery and robotics are central to increasing productivity across the manufacturing sector. The Made Smarter Adoption Programme is helping SME manufacturers adopt industrial digital technologies such as robotics and autonomous systems to increase their productivity and efficiency.

CABINET OFFICE

■ **Cabinet Office: Disclosure of Information**

Damian Hinds:

[21576]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he has changed the recipients by position entitled to pre-release access to reports since June 2024.

Georgia Gould:

The Minister for Cabinet Office has not made any changes to pre-release access to official statistics since 5 July 2024.

■ **Civil Servants: Re-employment**

Alex Burghart:

[21350]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, in what circumstances people in receipt of a civil service pension who re-join the civil service are subject to abatement.

Georgia Gould:

The circumstances have not changed since the Rt Hon Gentleman was a Minister in the department, and can be found at <https://www.civilservicepensionscheme.org.uk/>.

■ **Civil Service Governance and Accountability Review**

Mr Richard Holden:

[21398]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to Questions 10 to 12 of the oral evidence to the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee on 4

December 2024 on The work of the Cabinet Office, HC 463, whether his Department plans to publish a formal response to Lord Maude's review on governance and accountability in the Civil Service.

Georgia Gould:

The Department will consider Lord Maude's recommendations as this government develops its strategic plan for a more efficient and effective civil service.

■ **Conditions of Employment**

Alex Burghart:

[21347]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether his Department has issued guidance on non-contingent labour contracts.

Georgia Gould:

Departments are directed that Contingent labour contracts should only be used in government where better value alternatives are not available and that a justifiable need to use contingent labour has been identified as part of their workforce plans. Cabinet Office manages a spend control for contingent labour for which guidance is set out at [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk).

■ **Government Departments: Remote Working**

Alex Burghart:

[21343]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Answer of 18 September 2024 to Question HL835 on Government Departments: Remote Working, whether the Civil Service meets the requirement to attend the office or work face-to-face with colleagues at least 60% of the time.

Georgia Gould:

The Civil Service Headquarters (HQ) Occupancy statistics are published quarterly on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

■ **Prime Minister: Public Appointments**

Mr Richard Holden:

[21395]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, Pursuant to the Answer of 11 December 2024 to Question 17545 on Prime Minister: Public Appointments, if he will list the public appointments for which the Prime Minister is directly responsible; and when the term of office ends for each.

Georgia Gould:

I refer the Rt Hon Member to my answer of 11 December, Official Report, PQ 17545. The end dates of appointments are published alongside their announcement on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk).

■ Prime Minister's Chief of Staff: Pay**John Glen:** [\[21296\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 28 November 2024 to Question HL1343 on Prime Minister's Chief of Staff: Pay, what the annual salary amount that the Chief Secretary to the Treasury approved in the senior approvals pay process was.

Georgia Gould:

Salaries of special advisers of equivalent standing to the Senior Civil Service are published in the relevant year's Annual Report on Special Advisers.

■ Public Sector Reform and Innovation Fund**Mr Richard Holden:** [\[21397\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he plans to publish a prospectus to allow public bodies to bid for the Public Sector Reform and Innovation Fund.

Georgia Gould:

The Test & Learns are a new way of working. The Cabinet office will be working across government and with local partners to codesign the detailed approach to the allocation of the Innovation Fund in early 2025.

■ Senior Salaries Review Body**Alex Burghart:** [\[21349\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether there is a Framework Agreement between his Department and the Senior Salaries Review Body.

Georgia Gould:

A Framework Agreement between the Cabinet Office and the Senior Salaries Review Body will be finalised in due course.

■ Senior Salaries Review Body: Political Activities**Alex Burghart:** [\[21346\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether members of the Senior Salaries Review Body have made declarations of political activity.

Georgia Gould:

Political party activity is declared by all members of the Senior Salaries Review Body and is publicly available in the Pay Review Body members' register of interests: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ome-review-body-members-register-of-interests>

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ 10 Downing Street: Government Art Collection**

Mr Richard Holden: [\[21061\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 11 December 2024 to Question 18400 on 10 Downing Street: Government Art Collection and to the answer of 4 December 2024 to Question 16604 on 11 Downing Street: Art Works, if she will publish a list of each of the Government Art Collection works that have been removed from the 10 Downing Street estate since 5 July 2024.

Chris Bryant:

No. It is standard practice, as followed by the previous government of which he was a member, for new ministers to select works from the Government Art Collection for their ministerial offices. All such changes of displays of works from the Government Art Collection constitute 'business as usual' for the Collection. All artworks in the Government Art Collection are on the website and their present locations can readily be searched and identified. The Collection does not publish the history of the locations of artworks.

■ Charity Commission: Correspondence

Mr Richard Holden: [\[21388\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 7 November 2024 to Question 12252 on Charity Commission: Correspondence, if she will publish the regulatory advice and guidance issued by the Charity Commission to the Hope not Hate Charitable Trust.

Mr Richard Holden: [\[21389\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the answer of 7 November 2024 to Question 12252 on Charity Commission: Correspondence, if she will publish that letter; and if the Charity Commission will issue a public statement on the contents of that letter.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Charity Commission is not subject to Ministerial or departmental direction or control. It is for the Charity Commission to decide whether to publish correspondence or statements about its work on specific regulatory cases. The Charity Commission does not usually publish statements about regulatory cases that are not statutory inquiries, unless there is significant public interest in doing so.

■ Department for Culture, Media and Sport: Equality

Rupert Lowe: [\[21128\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, how many and what proportion of officials in her Department were hired via positive action schemes in the last financial year.

Stephanie Peacock:

All Civil Service departments work within the Recruitment Principles, as regulated by the Civil Service Commission, to recruit using a fair and open process and appoint on merit.

Departments will only limit a campaign to a specific group as a form of positive action as a proportionate response to achieve a legitimate aim as defined in section 159 of the Equality Act 2010.

The Civil Service is committed to a diverse workforce and culture of openness and inclusivity - not as ends in themselves but as means of delivering better outcomes to the citizens we serve.

[The Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022-25 Promoting Fairness and Performance](#), published in February 2022, is positioned as an essential lever to deliver a Modern Civil Service, where our values are to serve with integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality; driving our vision to be a skilled, innovative and ambitious Civil Service equipped for the future. This strategy sets out a broader definition of diversity, to include geographical, social and career backgrounds alongside the protected groups.

As set out in the [Civil Service People Plan 2024 - 2027](#), we are committed to ensuring we attract, develop and retain talented people from a diverse range of backgrounds, to create a modern Civil Service, now and for the future.

■ Football**Jim Shannon:****[20966]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what support her Department has offered grassroots football clubs in the last 12 months.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Government is committed to ensuring that everyone, regardless of background, has access to and benefits from quality sport and physical activity opportunities.

We are acting to support more people in getting onto the pitch wherever they live via the Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programme, which will invest £123 million UK-wide throughout 2024/25.

In Northern Ireland, funding from the Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programme is invested through our delivery partner, the Irish Football Association, who invites bids from local authorities, clubs and community organisations. Application windows are currently closed. The constituency of Strangford has received a total of £513,015.98 worth of funding from the Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programme.

If MPs would like to discuss investment in their constituency, or potential applicants want to enquire about future funding available, they can contact the relevant delivery partner Irish Football Association on dcms.funding@irishfa.com.

■ Gambling: Hendon

David Pinto-Duschinsky: [\[21213\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to support people with gambling addiction in Hendon constituency.

Stephanie Peacock:

Those experiencing gambling-related harm in England can access specialist treatment through the NHS National Gambling Clinic and a range of support through the National Gambling Support Network.

To improve and expand the services available to tackle gambling-related harm, the Government is introducing a statutory levy on gambling operators to improve and expand research, prevention and treatment of gambling harms. This will include ringfenced funding overseen by NHS England and appropriate bodies in Scotland and Wales to commission the full treatment pathway, from referral and triage through to aftercare. We will continue to work with NHS England in collaboration with the Scottish and Welsh governments, as well as third sector providers, to design and deliver our approach to treatment of gambling-related harms across Great Britain.

■ Government Departments: Flags

Mr Richard Holden: [\[21060\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what her policy is on which flags other than the Union flag should be flown on Government buildings to mark days of (a) national and (b) international significance; and if she will publish her Department's proposed schedule for which flags should be flown on which days in 2025.

Stephanie Peacock:

There is a standing encouragement for Government Buildings to fly the Union Flag every day, and the Ukrainian Flag on a second flagpole if they are able. Government Departments are generally free to fly whichever other flags they deem appropriate, provided they have the necessary consent from their local planning authority.

Regarding the flags flown by DCMS, a decision has not yet been taken on which non-Union flags will be flown in 2025. Over the last two years, this decision was finalised in February.

■ Listed Events

Mr Louie French: [\[21210\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what recent assessment she has made of the potential merits of recategorising sporting events designated as listed events under the Ofcom Code on Sport and Other listed and Designated Events.

Stephanie Peacock:

The listed events regime aims to ensure many of the nation's biggest sporting events are free-to-air wherever possible while protecting competition organisers' ability to

raise income from the sale of broadcast rights to invest in their sports. The government has no plans to amend the regime at this time.

■ Sports: Schools

Mr Louie French:

[\[21215\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Education on (a) sport in and (b) other aspects of the school curriculum review.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport regularly engages with the Secretary of State for Education on a range of issues, including school sport. Minister Peacock recently attended a roundtable discussion with PE and school sport sector leaders, hosted by the Minister for Schools.

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport will work closely with the Department for Education on the curriculum review.

DEFENCE

■ Civil Defence

Ian Roome:

[\[21125\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking with the Joint Civil Aid Corps (JCAC) to help improve the resiliency of the UK's civil defence.

Luke Pollard:

The Ministry of Defence engages with other Government Departments and civil authorities in the event that military aid is sought by them to respond to disruptive challenges to national resilience. Under the Military Aid to the Civil Authorities (MACA) process, mutual aid and commercial alternatives must have been exhausted before requesting military support. Such engagement with voluntary groups is the responsibility of the requesting organisation.

■ Defence: Procurement

David Reed:

[R] [\[21202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to improve its procurement processes to provide greater certainty for private sector defence investors.

Maria Eagle:

This Government is committed to improving the UK Defence industrial base to ensure a robust Defence sector and provide greater certainty in procurement processes. The Statement of Intent for the Defence Industrial Strategy, published on 2 December 2024, set out a commitment to prioritise UK businesses for investment, provide certainty and stability and boost sovereign capacity. As part of the Defence Industrial

Strategy, we will reform Ministry of Defence procurement and acquisition processes to ensure we deliver the capabilities defence requires now and in the future, whilst reducing waste, supporting growth and ensuring compliance with our obligations under our international trade agreements.

■ **Ministry of Defence: Equality**

Rupert Lowe:

[\[21139\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many and what proportion of officials in his Department were hired via positive action schemes in the last financial year.

Al Carns:

The Ministry of Defence has not hired any permanent civil servants using a positive action scheme in the last financial year.

■ **National Security: Cybersecurity**

David Reed:

[\[R\] \[21194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 9 December 2024 to Question 17491 on National Security: Cybersecurity, whether there is a formalised process whereby his Department meets with the (a) Cabinet Office and (b) Department for Science, Innovation and Technology to discuss the (i) development and (ii) procurement of digital capabilities for national security.

Maria Eagle:

Officials from the Ministry of Defence regularly meet with officials from the Cabinet Office and the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology through a number of Cross Whitehall meetings and boards. These forums allow Defence to feed in and engage on broader digital and national security related matters including the development and procurement of digital capabilities.

EDUCATION

■ **Carers: Finance**

Lee Anderson:

[\[21375\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, What steps her Department is taking to ensure that kinship families receive financial support similar to that of (a) foster and (b) adoptive families.

Janet Daby:

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

As local authorities know their carers best, they have the power to decide what financial support should be provided to kinship carers and any payments should be made in accordance with their model for assessing support needs.

The government does not set a maximum or minimum allowance for local authorities to administer. However, the kinship care statutory guidance, which was published in October 2024, states that, in its calculation of any ongoing special guardianship financial support, the local authority should have regard to the fostering allowance that would have been paid if the child was fostered.

At the Autumn Budget 2024, the department announced £40 million to trial a new kinship allowance in some local authorities in England. The department will test whether paying an allowance to cover the additional costs of caring for a child can help increase the number of children taken in by family members and friends. The department will share further details and the process for selecting local authorities in due course.

This is the single biggest investment made by government in kinship care to date. This investment could transform the lives of vulnerable children who can no longer live at home by allowing children to grow up within their families and communities, reducing disruption to their early years, so they can focus on schooling and building friendships.

The department understands the unique challenges kinship carers face and is committed to providing the necessary support.

■ Further Education: Pay

Ian Byrne:

[\[21545\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of levels of pay for further education teachers.

Janet Daby:

This government recognises the vital role that further education (FE) teachers and providers play in equipping learners with the opportunities and skills that they need to succeed in their education and throughout life.

That is why this government is committed to recruiting 6,500 new expert teachers across our schools, both mainstream and specialist, and colleges, and tackling retention challenges to support teachers to stay within the profession.

To boost recruitment and retention of teachers, the targeted retention incentive is giving eligible early career teachers working in disadvantaged schools, and in all colleges, up to £6,000 after tax annually, on top of their pay.

In colleges this includes those teaching in key subjects including science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, and technical shortage subjects, such as construction and early years.

The department also continues to support recruitment and retention with teacher training bursaries worth up to £30,000 tax-free in certain key subject areas, and with support for industry professionals to enter the FE teaching workforce through its 'Taking Teaching Further' programme.

FE colleges, including sixth form colleges, were incorporated under the terms of the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act, which gave them autonomy over the pay and contractual terms and conditions of their staff. The government plays no role in recommending or setting pay or terms of employment within the FE sector.

The Autumn Budget 2024 set out the government's commitment to skills, by providing an additional £300 million revenue funding for FE to ensure young people are developing the skills this country needs. The department will set out in due course how this funding will be distributed.

■ Home Education

Adam Jogee:

[21781]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many children deemed to be at risk of abuse or neglect are home schooled in (a) Staffordshire and (b) England.

Stephen Morgan:

The department collects data on children in elective home education (EHE) from local authorities. The latest data, including at the local authority level, is published here:

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/elective-home-education>.

The data collection includes whether a child is defined as a child in need (CIN) and if a child is the subject of a child protection plan (CPP). In England, around 1% of children in EHE were recorded as CIN and just under 0.5% of children in EHE have a CPP (1,600 and 500 children respectively in autumn 2024). Local authority level data is suppressed to protect confidentiality due to small numbers.

Local authorities have a legal responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children in their area, including taking appropriate action where safeguarding concerns are identified.

The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill, introduced on 17 December, will place a duty on all local authorities in England to hold and maintain registers of children not in school in their area. These registers will help to identify those children who are not in school, including those who may be at risk of harm. Parents and certain providers of out-of-school education will be required to provide the local authority with the information needed for the registers and there will be sanctions for failing to do so. The Bill also includes a new requirement for parents to obtain local authority consent before they can home educate if their child is subject to a child protection enquiry or has a CPP. Local authorities will have new powers to require any home educated child to attend school if their home or learning environment is unsuitable. These proposals will strengthen the existing system of oversight for these children.

■ Schools: Employers' Contributions

Nadia Whittome:

[21708]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the increase to employers' National Insurance contributions will be covered in full for schools.

Catherine McKinnell:

The government has agreed that public sector employers will receive compensation in recognition of the increase in their National Insurance contributions (NICs). That compensation will be additional to the £2.3 billion increase to the core schools budget for the 2025/26 financial year announced at the Autumn Budget 2024. Due to timing constraints, it will be provided as a separate grant, alongside the dedicated schools grant, in 2025/26. Further arrangements for this will be shared with schools as soon as is practicable.

■ **Science: Teachers****Mr Toby Perkins:**[\[21282\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of cuts to the continuing professional development budget for science teachers on teacher retention rates.

Catherine McKinnell:

This government is focused on fixing our economy after inheriting a £22 billion black hole in our public finances. That means we must take difficult decisions across our public services.

All children should have high quality science teaching, which is why at the Autumn Budget education was prioritised with a £2.3 billion increase to core school budgets for the 2025/26 financial year. Schools can use this funding for continued professional development, which evidence suggests can support teacher retention.

In addition, the department will continue to fully fund the Subject Knowledge for Physics Teachers programme to support the uptake and teaching of physics in the 2025/26 financial year.

However, along with other tough decisions to support cross-government efforts to rebuild economic stability, the department has taken the difficult decision to cease funding the Stimulating Physics Network beyond the end of its current contract in March 2025.

There is a range of other support for science education in schools, including free, optional materials from Oak National Academy in all three sciences.

Mr Toby Perkins:[\[21283\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much funding her Department has allocated to continuing professional development for science teachers in the financial years (a) 2022-23, (b) 2023-24 and (c) 2024-25.

Catherine McKinnell:

Support for high quality science teaching mainly comes from core school budgets which will increase by £2.3 billion in the 2025/26 financial year.

Funding allocations for continuing professional development in science were £8,385,649 for the 2022/23 financial year, £8,384,137 for the 2023/24 financial year and £4,455,281 for the 2024/25 financial year.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

■ Community Energy

Nick Timothy:

[\[21114\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to help tackle (a) national and (b) local barriers to community energy projects.

Michael Shanks:

The Government recognises the role community groups play in our efforts to tackle climate change. Great British Energy's Local Power Plan will partner with and provide funding and support to community energy groups to roll out renewable energy projects across the UK and help develop up to 8GW of cleaner power. DESNZ's £10m Community Energy Fund enables both rural and urban communities in England to access grant funding to develop local renewable energy projects.

■ Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: Equality

Rupert Lowe:

[\[21130\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how many and what proportion of officials in his Department were hired via positive action schemes in the last financial year.

Michael Shanks:

All Civil Service departments work within the Recruitment Principles, as regulated by the Civil Service Commission, to recruit using a fair and open process and appoint on merit.

Departments will only limit a campaign to a specific group as a form of positive action as a proportionate response to achieve a legitimate aim as defined in section 159 of the Equality Act 2010.

The Civil Service is committed to a diverse workforce and culture of openness and inclusivity - not as ends in themselves but as means of delivering better outcomes to the citizens we serve.

The [Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022-25 Promoting Fairness and Performance](#), published in February 2022, is positioned as an essential lever to deliver a Modern Civil Service, where our values are to serve with integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality; driving our vision to be a skilled, innovative and ambitious Civil Service equipped for the future. This strategy sets out a broader definition of diversity, to include geographical, social and career backgrounds alongside the protected groups.

As set out in the [Civil Service People Plan 2024 - 2027](#), we are committed to ensuring we attract, develop and retain talented people from a diverse range of backgrounds, to create a modern Civil Service, now and for the future.

■ Ithaca Energy: Occupied Territories**Carla Denyer:** [\[21077\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has had discussions with the Foreign Secretary about the potential implications for his Department's policies of reports the Rosebank oil field's minority owner is owned by a firm operating in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

My Rt hon Friend the Secretary of State has regular discussions with Ministerial Colleagues on a number of issues.

■ National Grid: Skilled Workers**Sir Bernard Jenkin:** [\[20912\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the (a) level of skilled labour and (b) extent of the shortage of the particular skills required to deliver the proposed upgrades to the National Grid electricity transmission system; and what steps he is taking to address these shortages.

Michael Shanks:

Reinforcing Great Britain's electricity network to meet net zero will require a range of skills in engineering, IT professionals, physical scientist and environmental professionals, project managers, chartered surveyors and quality control, metal working and maintenance fitters. Alongside the [Clean Power 2030 Action Plan](#), The Office for Clean Energy Jobs published an evidence annex that provides an assessment of the skills challenges for the Clean Energy Mission, including for electricity networks. This will be used along-side wider evidence and engagement to support skills planning and ensure that the UK has the workforce needed to become a clean energy superpower.

■ Natural Gas and Oil: Imports**Nick Timothy:** [\[21090\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will publish the (a) countries of origin, (b) value, and (c) volume of imported (i) oil and (ii) gas in each year since 2010.

Michael Shanks:

Annual oil and gas imports volume and value figures are published in the Digest of UK Energy Statistics, Annex Table G.1:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/dukes-foreign-trade-statistics>

More detailed import volume data are also published in individual chapter tables.

For oil see Table 3.7: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/petroleum-chapter-3-digest-of-united-kingdom-energy-statistics-dukes>

For gas see Table 4.5: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/natural-gas-chapter-4-digest-of-united-kingdom-energy-statistics-dukes>

■ Natural Gas: Hydrogen

Stephen Flynn: [21668]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of hydrogen blending in the transmission network.

Sarah Jones:

The Government remains committed to assessing the case for hydrogen blending. In December 2024 we set out an intention to consult on transmission-level blending within Great Britain in early 2025, to gather evidence to help inform a strategic policy decision on whether to support transmission blending.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Milk

Gregory Stafford: [20866]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of (a) banning the use of Bovaer and (b) allowing the use of Kelp in milk products.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has advised milk from cows given Bovaer is safe to drink. Bovaer has undergone a rigorous safety assessment and is approved for use in Great Britain.

Regulation of feed additives and materials, such as kelp, is the responsibility of the FSA. Both synthetic and natural feed products must be demonstrated as safe for use to be added to the GB Register of Feed Materials.

■ Sewage: Waste Disposal

Ben Maguire: [21934]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of providing the Environment Agency with ring-fenced funding from the proceeds of fines placed on water companies for breaching sewage dumping regulations.

Emma Hardy:

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

Through the new cost recovery power in the Bill, we will enable the Environment Agency to fully recover costs for the full extent of their water company enforcement

activities including prosecutions and civil sanctions, revocation notices of permits and pollution incidents.

The Water Restoration Fund, which launched in April 2024, was established to reinvest water company environmental fines and penalties into projects to improve the water environment. Defra is continuing to work with His Majesty's Treasury regarding continued reinvestment of the water company fines and penalties on water environment improvement. A final decision on this will be made when the Spending Review concludes later this year.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ **British Indian Ocean Territory: Sovereignty**

Priti Patel:

[\[21595\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations his Department has received from the Government of Mauritius on the UK and Mauritius Joint Statement on the exercise of sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago dated 3 October 2024; and whether the Government of Mauritius has proposed changes to the terms agreed.

Stephen Doughty:

The Governments of the UK and Mauritius issued a joint statement on 20 December setting out their continued commitment to finalising a treaty as quickly as possible, which will ensure the long-term, secure and effective operation of the existing base on Diego Garcia. The precise terms of the agreement continue to be the subject of discussions between both Governments.

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

Rupert Lowe:

[\[21136\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many and what proportion of officials in his Department were hired via positive action schemes in the last financial year.

Catherine West:

All Civil Service departments work within the Recruitment Principles, as regulated by the Civil Service Commission, to recruit using a fair and open process and appoint on merit.

Departments will only limit a campaign to a specific group as a form of positive action as a proportionate response to achieve a legitimate aim as defined in section 159 of the Equality Act 2010.

As set out in the Civil Service People Plan 2024 - 2027, we are committed to ensuring we attract, develop and retain talented people from a diverse range of backgrounds, to create a modern Civil Service, now and for the future.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Care Workers: Pay and Vacancies****Mike Amesbury:**[\[22347\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of (a) the average wages paid to social care sector workers and (b) the current number of vacancies in the sector.

Stephen Kinnock:

Skills for Care reports that most care workers as the entry-level occupation are paid on or just above National Living Wage. Average or mean hourly pay for all workers in the sector was £12.36 in March 2024. Skills for Care also reported that the overall vacancy rate in adult social care (ASC) decreased to 8.3% in 2023/24, or 131,000 vacant posts, from 9.9% or 153,000 vacant posts in 2022/23. Monthly estimates by Skills for Care suggest that the vacancy rate amongst independent social care providers fell further between March and November 2024. Vacancies reflect roles advertised by independent providers and therefore market conditions.

To improve retention and recognition in the ASC sector, the Government is currently introducing legislation to pave the way for the first ever Fair Pay Agreement so that care professionals are recognised and rewarded for the important work that they do.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination**James McMurdock:**[\[22238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions his Department has had with public health officials on adverse side effects to the Covid-19 vaccine.

Andrew Gwynne:

Each COVID-19 vaccine candidate is assessed by teams of scientists and clinicians on a case-by-case basis, and only authorised once it has met robust standards of effectiveness, safety, and quality set by the United Kingdom's independent medicines' regulator, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).

No medicine or vaccine is completely risk-free, but the MHRA continually monitors the safety of the COVID-19 vaccines through its comprehensive COVID-19 vaccine surveillance strategy to ensure that the benefits of the COVID-19 vaccines continue to outweigh the risks. Should any information indicate a possible new safety concern, the system will rapidly and thoroughly investigate, with advice for healthcare professionals and patients updated where appropriate.

■ Dental Services: East of England**Alex Mayer:** [\[22172\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many of the planned additional 700,000 urgent dental appointments a year will be in (a) Bedfordshire and (b) the East of England.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Government is committed to tackling the challenges for patients trying to access National Health Service dental care. We are working to ensure patients can start to access 700,000 additional urgent dental appointments as soon as possible, targeting areas that need them most including the East of England.

We will set out further information on this commitment, including how this will be measured, in due course.

■ Dental Services: North Cornwall**Ben Maguire:** [\[21948\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to make NHS dental care more accessible for people in North Cornwall constituency.

Ben Maguire: [\[21949\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the backlog of people waiting for NHS dental appointments in North Cornwall constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

This 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 areas that need them most. To rebuild dentistry in the long term, 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 is delegated to integrated care boards (ICBs) across England. For North Cornwall constituency, this is the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly ICB. The Cornwall and Isles of Scilly ICB is taking actions to make NHS dental care more accessible, including the commissioning of additional urgent dental care appointments across the South-West, a dental helpline for urgent advice; and an access pilot project in Cornwall to support the most vulnerable people to access an NHS dentist.

■ Dental Services: Spen Valley

Kim Leadbeater:

[21527]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his planned timescale is to provide funding for newly opened dental practices in Spen Valley aiming to secure NHS contracts.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 9 January 2025]: This 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 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 Spen Valley constituency, this is the NHS West Yorkshire ICB.

■ Dental Services: Standards

Alex Mayer:

[22173]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what criteria he uses for defining whether an area is a dental desert; and in what areas dentistry graduates will receive golden hellos.

Stephen Kinnock:

'Dental desert' is a term used colloquially to describe areas struggling with access to National Health Service dentistry. There are a range of metrics which can be used to assess dental access.

The responsibility for commissioning primary care dentistry to meet the needs of the local population is delegated to integrated care boards (ICBs) across England.

ICBs have started to recruit 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. Dental practices in specific areas, determined locally, were invited by their ICBs to express interest in participating in the scheme and notified of the outcome of their application via their ICB. Further information on the process can be found in guidance issued by NHS England, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/dental-recruitment-incentive-scheme-2024-25/>

As of 16 December 2024, 706 Expressions of Interest have been received of which 320 have been approved for participation in the Dental Recruitment Incentive Scheme. 212 posts have been advertised, with 19 dentists commenced in post.

■ Disabled Facilities Grants**Chris McDonald:**[\[22159\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to increase the maximum application amount for the Disabled Facilities Grant.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 9 January 2025]: We are giving older and disabled people more independence in their own homes through an immediate in-year uplift to the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) of £86 million in 2024/25. This increase will provide approximately 7,800 additional home adaptations. This is on top of the £625 million paid to local authorities in May 2024. The Government also announced an £86 million additional investment in the DFG for 2025/26 at the Budget, bringing total funding for 2025/26 to £711 million also.

To ensure the DFG is as effective as possible, we will continue to keep different aspects of the grant under consideration. As part of this, we are reviewing the suitability of the current upper limit and will set out further detail in due course.

Mike Amesbury:[\[22348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the local disabled facilities grants.

Stephen Kinnock:

We are giving older and disabled people more independence in their own homes through an immediate in-year uplift to the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) of £86 million in 2024/25. This increase will provide approximately 7,800 additional home adaptations. This is on top of the £625 million paid to local authorities in May 2024. The Government also announced an £86 million additional investment in the DFG for 2025/26 at the Budget, bringing total funding for 2025/26 to £711 million also.

To ensure the DFG is as effective as possible, we will continue to keep different aspects of the grant under consideration. As part of this, we are reviewing the suitability of the current upper limit and will set out further detail in due course.

■ General Practitioners and Primary Health Care: Investment**Clive Jones:**[\[R\] \[22478\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will implement a measure for general practice and primary care comparable to that of the mental health investment standard.

Stephen Kinnock:

Primary care providers, including general practices (GPs), are valued independent contractors who provide almost £20 billion worth of services in the National Health Service. Every year, we consult with each sector both about what services they provide, and the money providers are entitled to in return under their contract.

We have started consulting with the General Practitioners Committee in England of the British Medical Association on the 2025/26 GP contract and will consider a range of proposed policy changes. These will be announced in the usual way following the close of the consultation in 2025.

We have announced a proposed £889 million uplift for GP in 2025/26 and set out the proposed areas of reform which will help us to deliver on our manifesto commitments. This is the largest uplift to GP funding since the beginning of the five-year framework and means we are reversing the recent trend with a rising share of total NHS resources going to general practice.

■ Health Services: Standards

Mike Wood:

[\[22020\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to page 28 of the policy paper entitled Plan for Change: Milestones for mission-led government, published on 5 December 2024, CP1210, whether his Department plans to measure the success of the neighbourhood health service model by (a) patient satisfaction, (b) health outcomes and (c) service delivery times.

Stephen Kinnock:

We are committed to moving towards a Neighbourhood Health Service, with more care delivered in local communities to spot problems earlier, supporting people to stay healthier and maintain their independence for longer.

We recognise the need for robust evaluation and are developing plans to do so, including the appropriate measures of success. This will be aligned with the monitoring and evaluation activities of the 10-Year Health Plan.

James Naish:

[\[22120\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to support healthcare providers to ensure (a) uninterrupted access to essential patient care and (b) maintain the stability of primary care services.

Stephen Kinnock:

It is vital that patients can access primary care services when they need it.

In October 2024, we provided an £82 million boost to the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme, enabling the recruitment of 1,000 newly qualified general practitioners (GPs) across England. This will take pressure off the existing workforce, secure the future supply of GPs and increase the number of appointments delivered in general practice. We have uplifted a monthly payment to practices by 7.4% to fund a 6% increase in pay to the general practice workforce. We have also announced a proposed £889 million uplift to the GP contract for 2025/26, the largest uplift in years, with a rising share of total National Health Service resources going to general practice. We are currently consulting the profession on key proposals to improve access, continuity of care and GP recruitment.

We are working to ensure patients can start to access 700,000 additional urgent NHS dental appointments as soon as possible, targeting areas that need them most. To rebuild NHS dentistry in the long term, we will reform the dental contract with a shift to focus on prevention and the retention of NHS dentists.

We are committed to stabilising the pharmacy sector and building a service fit for the future, making full use of the skills of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians. That includes making prescribing part of the services delivered by community pharmacists as we shift care from hospital to the community.

■ Health: Charities

Dame Harriett Baldwin: [\[17090\]](#)

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

Stephen Kinnock:

My Rt hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, meets regularly with external stakeholders on a variety of issues.

■ Influenza

Alex Mayer: [\[22177\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of trends in the level of influenza cases in hospitals in the last 12 months.

Andrew Gwynne:

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) surveillance of influenza hospitalisations operates during winter season only, where most influenza activity is typically observed. Trends vary across the season and are published weekly at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-flu-and-covid-19-surveillance-reports-2024-to-2025-season>

UKHSA surveillance confirmed influenza cases admitted to hospital, shows the overall influenza hospitalisation rate in the most recent published data, namely week 52 commencing 23 December 2024, was 14.09 per 100,000. For comparison, in the 2023 to 2024 season, influenza hospitalisation rates peaked in week 52, namely the week commencing 25 December 2023, with a rate of 6.65 per 100,000 and again in week 4, namely the week commencing 22 January 2024, with a rate of 7.55 per 100,000.

■ Loneliness: Social Services**Paul Davies:**[\[21897\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that social care services are adequately funded to support individuals experiencing loneliness.

Stephen Kinnock:

Loneliness and social isolation can affect many people and impact on their health and wellbeing. The Government's current work to tackle loneliness includes: supporting a range of organisations through the Tackling Loneliness Hub, an online platform for professionals working to reduce loneliness; working to improve the evidence base around loneliness; and providing advice through the Better Health: Every Mind Matters campaign's advice pages. It also includes the Know Your Neighbourhood Fund, a grant fund designed to widen participation in volunteering and tackle loneliness in 27 disadvantaged areas across England.

To enable local authorities to deliver key services such as those that support individuals experiencing loneliness, the Government is making available up to £3.7 billion of additional funding for social care authorities in 2025/26, which includes a £880 million increase in the Social Care Grant.

■ Medical Records: Staffordshire**Adam Jogee:**[\[21777\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to allow up-to-date medical information to be shared between the NHS and care staff in (a) Newcastle-under-Lyme constituency and (b) Staffordshire.

Stephen Kinnock:

At a national level, in partnership with NHS England, the Department is building the foundations for improved information sharing between care and health staff. Digital social care records, that contain a person's care information, are now in use by more than 72% of Care Quality Commission-registered care providers, from a starting point of 41% in December 2021. We recently set out our ambition that all care providers will be fully digitised by the end of this Parliament.

Within the coming months, all assured Digital Social Care Records will also enable medical information to be shared with social care providers through GP Connect, which provides a restricted view of a person's general practice (GP) record to social care staff for direct care purposes, where there is consent for the data to be shared. Access to this information improves the quality and safety of care and saves time, currently spent on the phone waiting to speak to GP surgeries.

In Newcastle-under-Lyme and Staffordshire, the One Health and Care shared care record enables medical information sharing for direct care purposes across health and social care. This initiative has been in place since 2020. There is not currently a consistent way for information held by social care providers to be shared, and from

April 2025, we will begin work to establish a national shared platform that enables this essential information sharing and ensures health and care staff can access real-time social care, GP, and hospital data, providing access to essential medical information in a timely way. This could include when someone last took their medication, or whether there's been a change to their care regimen. By linking up systems, NHS and care staff will have access to the latest information, speeding up and improving care both in health and in care settings.

■ **Memory Clinics: Devon**

Steve Darling:

[\[21726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will set targets to reduce memory clinic waiting times in (a) Torbay, (b) Exeter and (c) Barnstaple.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Government is committed to transforming diagnostic services, including the detection and diagnosis of dementia, and will support the National Health Service to increase capacity to meet the demand for diagnostic services. We are committed to improving dementia diagnosis rates and recovering them to the national ambition for two thirds of people with dementia to have a formal diagnosis.

NHS England has funded an evidence-based improvement project to fund two trusts in each region, making 14 sites in total, to pilot the Diagnosing Advanced Dementia Mandate tool to improve the diagnosis of dementia and 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.

To support recovery of the dementia diagnosis rates and implementation of the Dementia Care Pathway, NHS England has developed a dashboard for management information purposes. The aim is to support commissioners and providers of memory services with appropriate data and enable targeted support where needed.

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

Damian Hinds:

[\[21574\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of spending on mental health services for children and young people in each year for which data are available.

Stephen Kinnock:

The following table shows actual spend on children and young people's mental health by clinical commissioning groups and integrated care boards:

FINANCIAL YEAR	AMOUNT (£ MILLION)
2017/18	687.2
2018/19	753.3

FINANCIAL YEAR	AMOUNT (£ MILLION)
2019/20	841.4
2020/21	938.3
2021/22	994.8
2022/23	1,087.70
2023/24	1,180.40

Source: NHS Mental Health Dashboard, NHS England

Laurence Turner: [22211]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the CQC's publication of 27 November 2024 entitled CQC finds improvement in CAMHS wards at Birmingham Women's and Children's NHS Foundation Trust, when the CQC plans to publish the full report.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 9 January 2025]: The Care Quality Commission (CQC) carried out an assessment of Child and Adolescent Mental Health wards at Birmingham Women's and Children's NHS Foundation Trust in September 2024. The report of that assessment was published on the CQC's website on 28 November 2024, and is available at the following link:

<https://www.cqc.org.uk/provider/RQ3/reports/AP2111/child-and-adolescent-mental-health-wards>

■ Mental Health Services: Universities

Jim Shannon: [20970]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Education on improving mental health provision in universities.

Stephen Kinnock:

My Rt. Hon. friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, has discussions on multiple areas across Government departments, including mental health for children and young people.

■ Pharmacy

Matt Bishop: [21916]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing a hub and spoke model to community pharmacy.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Government is working towards introducing legislation to enable hub and spoke dispensing between different legal entities this year. This change will be enabled via amendments to both primary and secondary legislation and is subject to the usual parliamentary processes.

■ Prescriptions**James Naish:**[\[22104\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase the number of (a) supervisor and (b) designated prescribing practitioners.

Stephen Kinnock:

NHS England is investing in training for independent prescribers, as well as initiatives to support the development and safe practice of designated prescribing practitioners (DPPs) and educational supervisors. This will ensure the National Health Service is ready to support and mentor foundation trainee pharmacists from 2025, alongside training for currently registered pharmacists that are learning to be independent prescribers.

Reforms to pharmacist education and training will allow for development of prescriber pharmacists from the point of registration from 2026. This will enable a career-long focus on prescriber services and an associated expansion of the DPP workforce, to support multi-professional teams and the expansion of cross-sector prescribing services.

■ Social Services: Fees and Charges**Alison Hume:**[\[21208\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Government plans to introduce a cap for social care costs.

Stephen Kinnock:

His Majesty's Government inherited a commitment to implement charging reforms, including a cap on personal care costs, in October 2025. Regrettably, funding for these reforms had not been guaranteed, preparations for full rollout were not on track, and thus it was impossible to deliver these reforms by next October.

This government remains committed to reforming the adult social care sector; and we are launching an independent commission into adult social care as part of our critical first steps towards delivering a National Care Service.

Chaired by Baroness Louise Casey and reporting to the Prime Minister, the Commission will be comprehensive and will build on the expert proposals of other reviews, including that of Sir Andrew Dilnot into care funding and support. It will be broader and wider than ever before, asking essential questions about the shape and future of the social care sector, including what long-term and sustainable funding solutions should look like.

■ Urinary Tract Infections: Screening

Luke Taylor:

[22156]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the NHS is taking to improve the accuracy of tests used by GPs to diagnose chronic urinary tract infections.

Andrew Gwynne:

Diagnostic tests for chronic urinary tract infections (UTIs), such as urinalysis and urine culture, are widely available across all pathology networks in England. Ensuring accurate diagnostic testing not only aids more effective identification of infection but can also reduce unnecessary prescribing and overprescribing of broad-spectrum antimicrobials and directly benefit patients who get the right treatment sooner.

General practitioners can request testing for chronic UTIs via several pathways, including at point-of-care, via community diagnostic centres, or via laboratories. Laboratories across England adhere to stringent quality standards for diagnostic tests, including the UK Accreditation Standard ISO 15189, and implement robust internal and external quality assurance schemes. Together, these measures ensure the accuracy and reliability of diagnostic testing.

The development of new products to diagnose infections more accurately is essential to ensure we can continue to treat infections and protect public health. NHS England is also supporting research into newer, more accurate point-of-care tests for UTIs, such as via the Toucan study. More information on the study is available at the following link:

<https://www.phctrials.ox.ac.uk/recruiting-trials/toucan-platform-for-uti-diagnostic-evaluation>

HOME OFFICE

■ Gender Based Violence

Kevin McKenna:

[21110]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to help reduce violence against women and girls; what funding is available to (a) local authorities and (b) policing agencies to reduce that violence; and what steps she is taking with Cabinet colleagues to help tackle the causes of that violence.

Jess Phillips:

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

Following the spending review announcements in October, the Home Office and other departments across Government are deciding how their budgets are allocated

to deliver the Government's priorities in 2025/26. This includes working with the police to ensure justice is delivered for victims of VAWG.

On 28th November 2024, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government announced a funding increase of £30 million, meaning a total investment of £160 million in the Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Grant in 2025/26. This will enable local authorities to invest in essential support for victims in safe accommodation. MHCLG published details of the provisional local government finance settlement for 2025-26 on 18th December 2024.

The Safer Streets Mission is the vehicle to drive delivery across Government to halve VAWG, halve knife crime, and restore confidence in the policing and justice system. All relevant departments will be responsible for achieving the government's ambition to halve VAWG. Discussions with Cabinet colleagues are continuing to take place, including through a VAWG Ministerial Group.

■ Missing Persons: Safety

Paul Davies:

[\[21087\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of issuing guidance to police forces advising them to offer independent return home interviews to adults who have been missing.

Jess Phillips:

Any missing person incident, especially when a person is vulnerable or has been missing previously, significantly increases the risk of harm occurring, and the Home Office continues to work with partners on the issue.

The Missing Persons Authorised Professional Practice (APP), issued by the College of Policing, sets out best practice guidance for all missing person investigations for police forces in England and Wales. This includes steps to be taken when a person returns from a missing incident and considerations regarding police prevention interviews and return interviews. More importantly, the APP offers advice on how information disclosed in a return interview should be fed into multi-agency safeguarding decisions. The APP for missing persons is publicly available on the College's website.

In addition to the APP, the National Police Chiefs' Council lead for Missing Persons has developed the '*Multi-agency response for adults missing from health and care settings*' framework, which currently is being rolled out. The framework outlines good practice that can be adopted by local areas when setting up their own multi-agency protocols for the strategic and operational response to a missing person incident. The framework aims to ensure that the appropriate safeguarding partner responds in the best interest of the missing person and sets out how return conversations can improve safeguarding outcomes for vulnerable adults and prevent future incidents.

The Government recognises the need for an effective multi-agency response to missing person investigations. We will continue to work closely across Government Departments to achieve this aim.

■ Rape: Inquiries

Rupert Lowe:

[\[21754\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will commission a national inquiry into rape gangs.

Jess Phillips:

The Government is committed to using every lever to ensure all children are protected from sexual exploitation and abuse across our communities and online, regardless of who is perpetrating that horrific abuse. We are committed to continuing to learn from past failings, providing support to victims and survivors, and ensuring across all sectors we all step up and take further responsibility for preventing and responding to child sexual abuse.

As part of this work, we continue to invest in the Child Sexual Exploitation Police Taskforce, which is giving practical, expert, on the ground support for local forces investigating child sexual abuse, with a focus on complex and organised child sexual exploitation. This is also supported by the Tackling Organised Exploitation programme, which is helping forces to uncover more of this offending. We are also driving targeted action to respond to exploitation through the Home-Office funded Prevention Programme, delivered by The Children's Society to tackle and prevent child sexual abuse and exploitation.

And we are committed to taking swift action against the recommendations of the final report of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA).

The Home Secretary announced we will be bringing in mandatory reporting, making grooming an aggravating factor in child sexual abuse cases, and taking further action to crack down on child sexual abuse and exploitation online.

The Home Secretary also announced that we will set up a new panel to ensure victims' and survivors' voices are prioritised in future policy making, alongside a dedicated inter-ministerial group on child sexual abuse. IICSA made several recommendations on how to improve routes to support and compensation for victims and survivors, which the Government will be considering as part of this broader approach.

The Government will continue to support further inquiries where they may be needed, and which can expose failings and wrongdoings in local areas and institutions. But we are clear that it is right that these take place at a localised level so that those are responsible for delivering services work to ensure lessons are learnt and that local partners are doing all they can to improve their response, and that these inquiries inform regional and national responses.

Furthermore, the Government's election manifesto included a commitment to introduce a 'Hillsborough Law', which the Prime Minister has committed to introduce by the next anniversary of the Hillsborough disaster (15th April 2025). This legislation will place a legal duty of candour on public servants and authorities.

■ UK Border Force: Seasonal Workers

Rebecca Paul: [\[21078\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 17 December 2024 to Question 18824 on UK Border Force: Seasonal Workers, what steps her Department has taken to mitigate the potential loss of capacity provided by the Border Force seasonal workforce.

Rebecca Paul: [\[21079\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 17 December 2024 to Question 18824 on UK Border Force: Seasonal Workers, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of the decision to stand down the Border Force seasonal workforce on the operational capacity of Border Force.

Seema Malhotra:

Border Force's seasonal workforce staff were recruited on fixed-term contracts to assist at the UK Border, covering shifts when operationally required, such as during peak periods of travel, and subject to their availability. These contracts utilised an authorised exception for short-term recruitment into the Civil Service.

Following an ongoing review of the recruitment process by the Civil Service Commission, Border Force has ceased to use these contracts and now recruits through a regular Civil Service recruitment process. All seasonal workforce staff on existing fixed-term contracts have been invited to apply through this recruitment process.

Our operational priority remains the protection of our border security, and this change will not affect the capacity of Border Force to deliver on that priority.

■ Visas: Palestinians

Mr Calvin Bailey: [\[21193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent steps she has taken to help facilitate access to the UK for Palestinian family members of UK nationals in (a) Egypt and (b) Gaza.

Seema Malhotra:

Immediate family members of British citizens, and those settled in the UK, who wish to come and live in the UK and do not have a current UK visa can apply under one of the existing family visa routes. There are no plans to create a bespoke family reunion scheme at this stage.

Further details are available here: <https://www.gov.uk/uk-family-visa>

We will accept applications, which would normally have to be made in the country where the person is living, at any of the UK's Visa Application Centres.

Visa Application Centres are open and operating in Egypt, in both Cairo and Alexandria, and Amman in Jordan. Application centres are also open and operating in Ramallah, Jerusalem, and Tel Aviv.

The FCDO is also providing consular assistance to those with British nationality, or dual nationality including British, who are in Gaza or who have left Gaza to a third country. Dual national British-Palestinians are not required to make a visa application as they have the right of abode in the UK. Our embassy staff are ready to provide support as appropriate.

■ **Visas: West Bank**

Dr Simon Opher:

[\[21094\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to support people applying for visas in the West Bank.

Seema Malhotra:

Currently, anyone who wishes to come to the UK can do so via the existing range of routes available. The Visa Application Centre in Ramallah is open and operating as normal.

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

We will accept applications, which would normally have to be made in the country where the person is living, at any of the UK's Visa Application Centres.

Visa Application Centres are also available in the wider region in Egypt, in both Cairo and Alexandria, and Amman in Jordan.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ **Affordable Housing: Construction**

Mr Clive Betts:

[\[20569\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the responsibilities of (a) unitary councils and (b) mayors will be for the delivery of the affordable homes programme.

Matthew Pennycook:

The government will set out details of new investment to succeed the 2021-26 Affordable Homes Programme at the multi-year Spending Review later this year. This will support local authorities as well as housing associations to build their capacity and make a greater contribution to affordable housing supply.

We are considering how all local authorities with housing responsibilities, including unitary authorities, will interact with our new investment for social and affordable housing and we will announce further details at the Spending Review.

The Devolution White Paper set out that mayors will be given the ability to set the strategic direction of any future affordable housing in their area. Further details will be set out as part of any future programme design.

■ Buildings: Fire Prevention

Marie Goldman: [\[21730\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of the availability of fire safety risk assessors who are able to carry out fire risk assessments of external wall systems.

Alex Norris:

The Department conducts regular capacity surveys and supplier engagement to ensure we have enough assessors to meet the expected requirement, in line with our objective in the Department's Remediation Acceleration plan to ensure capacity in the remediation supply chain. Our research to date demonstrates sufficient assessor capacity to meet expected demand, though with some local supply pinch points. Where this is the case, we support applicants in sourcing assessors.

■ Buildings: Insulation

Mike Amesbury: [\[21355\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to her Department's policy paper entitled Joint plan to accelerate developer-led remediation and improve resident experience, published on 2 December 2024, whether her Department plans to review the accuracy of previous assessments where a fire engineer has been suspended by a professional fire engineering body.

Mike Amesbury: [\[21356\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether Tri Fire is an approved panel member for the Cladding Safety Scheme.

Alex Norris:

Robust auditing processes are in place to ensure that all Fire Risk Appraisals of External Walls (FRAEWs) for buildings in the Government's remediation funding programmes meet appropriate standards before the associated funding application can progress.

Where required, feedback is given to allow assessors to make appropriate changes to the FRAEW to address any deficiencies identified. Reassessments of appraisals are therefore not necessary. Tri-Fire is a member of the Cladding Safety Scheme panel.

■ Buildings: Safety

Mike Amesbury: [\[21354\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department plans to introduce a Building Safety Leaseholder Support Scheme for people in financial hardship.

Alex Norris:

The Building Safety Act includes multiple protections and support mechanisms for leaseholders. These measures ensure that those who built defective buildings are responsible for fixing them and protect leaseholders from facing huge bills for historical safety defects.

For instance, qualifying leaseholders are exempt from costs associated with non-cladding defects and interim measures if their property is valued below certain thresholds (£325,000 in Greater London, £175,000 elsewhere in England). Any contributions required from leaseholders with properties above these thresholds are capped and spread over ten years, with costs already paid since 28 June 2017, counting towards the cap. Additionally, there is funding available for all leaseholders (whether they qualify for the leaseholder protections or not) to address life-threatening fire risks associated with cladding on residential buildings over 11 metres in height.

All leaseholders are protected from the costs of historical safety remediation if the building owner is - or is associated with - the developer who is responsible for that defect. The Act also includes measures which provide leaseholders with access to remediation contribution orders to recover costs from those responsible for defects.

In addition to financial support, free independent legal advice through the Leasehold Advisory Service has also been made available to leaseholders.

The Government is committed to reviewing how to better protect leaseholders from costs and to accelerate the pace of remediation across the country.

■ Community Relations**Kevin Hollinrake:**[\[20983\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 6 December 2024 to Question 16480 on Community Cohesion, if she will publish the (a) membership and (b) terms of reference of the Communities and Recovery Steering Group.

Alex Norris:

Membership and Terms of Reference for the Community and Recovery Steering Group will be published in due course.

■ Culture: Dunfermline**Graeme Downie:**[\[21884\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when she plans to announce the outcome of the consultation on cultural funding for the City of Dunfermline.

Alex Norris:

The consultation for this funding launched on 31 October with a deadline for responses by 13 December. Returns are being carefully considered. In line with our

expectations that the process would take approximately 12 weeks, we hope to communicate a decision to Fife Council and other consultees by the end of January.

■ Devolution: Devon

Martin Wrigley: [\[21420\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make a comparative assessment of the (a) Devon and Torbay Devolution deal and (b) English Devolution White Paper, published on 16 December 2024.

Martin Wrigley: [\[21422\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she will take account of the results of upcoming local elections in Devonshire in the implementation of the English Devolution White Paper.

Martin Wrigley: [\[21466\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how parameters set out in section 2.2.1 of the English Devolution White Paper, will be applied to Devonshire.

Jim McMahon:

In September last year, this Government confirmed the establishment of a non-mayoral Combined County Authority with Devon and Torbay, in line with the devolution deal agreed with that area under the previous government. This was an important first step as we continue to consider options to deepen and widen devolution in the area.

As set out in the White Paper, we want to see all areas, including Devon, access the strongest powers set out in new Devolution Framework.

We will work with local leaders, both before and after local elections, to deliver on these ambitions. This government would consider postponing elections only where the relevant local authorities explicitly request it, and where this will help the area to deliver both reorganisation and devolution to the most ambitious timeframe.

■ Housing: Insulation

Alex Brewer: [\[21869\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to expedite the removal and remediation of dangerous cladding on properties; and what steps she plans to take to ensure that properties that previously qualified for the Building Safety Fund are remediated in a timely way.

Alex Norris:

The Remediation Acceleration Plan (RAP) sets out key measures to fix buildings faster, identify remaining buildings still at risk and ensure that residents are supported through the remediation process.

No leaseholder in a high-rise residential building should wait a day longer for remediation than necessary, and under our plan by the end of 2029 all 18m+ (high-rise) buildings with unsafe cladding in a government funded scheme will have been remediated. In addition, every building of 11m+ with unsafe cladding will either have been remediated, have a completion date, or the landlord will be liable for severe penalties. Our plan will drive the pace of remediation through new proposed legal duties and powers, new funding, new resources and new partnerships.

By July 2024, we had moved 124 buildings (18m+) from the Building Safety Fund to the Cladding Safety Scheme. All 124 buildings now have a signed Grant Funding Agreement.

■ Local Government

Martin Wrigley: [\[21425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, for what reason the minimum population to become a Foundation Strategic Authority is different for (a) new unitary councils and (b) London boroughs.

Jim McMahon:

The assumed population threshold for all levels of Strategic Authority is 1.5 million or above, but we accept that in some places, smaller authorities may be necessary.

As set out in the English Devolution White Paper, new unitary councils must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks. For most areas, this will mean creating councils with a population of 500,000 or more, but there may be exceptions to ensure new structures makes sense for an area, including for devolution, and decisions will be on a case-by-case-basis.

As individual councils, London boroughs will not be designated as Strategic Authorities. The Greater London Authority will be designated as the Strategic Authority for London.

■ Local Government: Accountability

Kevin Hollinrake: [\[21632\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 29 November 2024 to Question 15453 on Local Government: Accountability, if she will take steps to make the data published under the Transparency Code more (a) accessible and (b) shareable as open data.

Jim McMahon:

We are keeping the Code under review in the context of work to fix the foundations of local government and ensuring that it continues to support local accountability. Our approach to reforming local government is set out in the English Devolution White Paper. This includes fundamentally reforming the local audit system, rebuilding the vital early warning system to recover a key part of our assurance mechanisms, restoring local government standards, and ensuring transparency.

We are supporting the Office for National Statistics to lead a refresh of the government's subnational data strategy, including supporting "ONS Local to gather user needs and understand data gaps, provide data access, analytical support, and capability to local data leaders".

■ Local Government: Devon

Martin Wrigley: [\[21421\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she plans to take to merge (a) the 8 Devon districts and (b) Devon County Council into unitary councils with Torbay and Plymouth.

Jim McMahon:

Following the publication of the English Devolution White Paper on the 16 December, I wrote to all councils where there is a two-tier structure of local government and to their neighbouring unitary councils, to set out further details on the Government's ambitions for local government reorganisation. Within that letter I set out my intention "to formally invite unitary proposals in January 2025 from all councils in two-tier areas, and small neighbouring unitary councils."

■ Mayors: Elections

Victoria Collins: [\[21435\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what voting system her Department plans to use for the 2026 mayoral elections.

Rushanara Ali:

I refer the hon Member to the answer given to Question UIN [20691](#) on 19 December 2024.

■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Equality

Rupert Lowe: [\[21140\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many and what proportion of officials in her Department were hired via positive action schemes in the last financial year.

Alex Norris:

All Civil Service departments work within the Recruitment Principles, as regulated by the Civil Service Commission, to recruit using a fair and open process and appoint on merit.

Departments will only limit a campaign to a specific group as a form of positive action as a proportionate response to achieve a legitimate aim as defined in section 159 of the Equality Act 2010.

The Civil Service is committed to a diverse workforce and culture of openness and inclusivity - not as ends in themselves but as means of delivering better outcomes to the citizens we serve.

The Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022-25 Promoting Fairness and Performance, published in February 2022, is positioned as an essential lever to deliver a Modern Civil Service, where our values are to serve with integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality; driving our vision to be a skilled, innovative and ambitious Civil Service equipped for the future. This strategy sets out a broader definition of diversity, to include geographical, social and career backgrounds alongside the protected groups.

As set out in the Civil Service People Plan 2024-2027, we are committed to ensuring we attract, develop and retain talented people from a diverse range of backgrounds, to create a modern Civil Service, now and for the future.

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

Kevin Hollinrake:

[\[20980\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 14 October 2024 to Question 6408 on Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Photography, whether her Department has recruited a photographer.

Alex Norris:

As is the case already in other government departments, official photographers help to share the work of the department and ministers with the public.

Photography and videography - for external use or on the department's corporate channels - can help to give the public and civil servants a greater sense of accessibility and transparency over the activities of government.

MHCLG has recruited a Chief Photographer.

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

Kevin Hollinrake:

[\[20981\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many and what proportion of job vacancies in her Department have been externally advertised since 4 July 2024.

Kevin Hollinrake:

[\[20982\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the (a) job title, (b) unit or division and (c) grade is of each job advertised on Civil Service Jobs but not to the public since 4 July 2024.

Alex Norris:

For the period, 4 July to 31 December 2024, 179 vacancies (67.6%) were advertised externally. 58 job vacancies (32.4% of total advertised) were advertised as Across Government only campaigns.

This data set reflects campaigns that were advertised and appointments made within this period – it does not include expressions of interest.

Further detail of across government campaigns, job titles and grade:

DEPARTMENTAL GROUP	GRADE BREAKDOWN	JOB TITLE	GRAD E
	Corporate Group		3x Careers and Grade Grade Development 7 6 5x Lead Grade 7 6x SEO
Physical Security Lead	SEO		
Workforce Team	Grade 6		
Statistician	Grade 7		
Ministerial Team Security Advisers	SEO		
Head of Programme Delivery	Grade 6		
Deputy Head of Profession	Grade 7		
Product Manager	SEO		
Assistant Departmental Records Officer	SEO		
Senior Product Manager	Grade 7		
Private Secretary & Business Manager	SEO		
Live Services Manager	SEO		
Subject Matter Expert	Grade 7		
Local Government and Public Services	1x HEO	Communications Officer	HEO
	Local Growth, Communities and Devolution		6x Delivery Grade Manager 6 5x Grade 7 5x SEO 3x HEO

DEPARTMENTAL GROUP	GRADE BREAKDOWN	JOB TITLE	GRAD E
Head of Unit	Grade 6		
Head of Unit	Grade 6		
Policy Lead	Grade 7		
Head of Policy	Grade 7		
Business Support Officer	HEO		
Head of Office	Grade 7		
Programme Manager	Grade 6		
Programme Management Office Manager	Grade 7		
Senior Policy Advisor	SEO		
Risk and Issue Manager	SEO		
Strategy Policy Advisor	HEO		
Policy lead	Grade 6		
Fund Evaluator	SEO		
Head of Elections Data	Grade 6		
Policy & Funding Analysis	Grade 6		
Policy Advisor	SEO		
Senior Strategy Advisor	Grade 7		
Policy Advisor	HEO		
	Regeneration, Housing and Planning		4x Policy Team Grade Grade Lead 7 6 7x Grade 7 4x SEO 1x HEO

DEPARTMENTAL GROUP	GRADE BREAKDOWN	JOB TITLE	GRADE
Head of Strategy	Grade 6		
Senior Policy Advisor	Grade 7		
Senior Policy and Strategy Advisors	Grade 7		
Head of Housing Insights & Strategic Policy	Grade 6		
Social Housing Directorate SEOs	SEO		
Property Technology Strategy Advisor	Grade 7		
Policy Advisor	SEO		
Policy Officer	HEO		
Policy Advisor	SEO		
Senior Policy Advisor	Grade 7		
Private Secretary	Grade 7		
Head of Programme Management Office	Grade 6		
Project Manager	SEO		
Head of Evaluation & Insight	Grade 7		
Head of Economic Analysis	Grade 6		
Senior Policy Adviser	SEO		
	Safer and Greener Buildings		1x Construction SEO Grade Products 6 3x Policy SEO Adviser 1x HEO
Community Relationship	SEO		

DEPARTMENTAL GROUP	GRADE BREAKDOWN	JOB TITLE	GRAD E
Manager			
Policy Advisor	HEO		
Policy and Briefing Advisor	SEO		
Lead Technical Architect	Grade 6		
	Strategy and Communications		1x Head of Data Grade Grade Science 6 6 1x Grade 7 1x HEO
Videographer	HEO		
Senior Private Secretary/Head of Office	Grade 7		

■ Parking: Private Sector

Ben Maguire:

[\[21933\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department plans to take to tackle private parking companies issuing penalties to customers for taking too long to purchase a ticket due to (a) queues at the parking payment machine and (b) limited mobile phone/internet signal.

Alex Norris:

The Government is committed to driving up standards across the private parking sector for the benefit of motorists.

The Parking (Code of Practice) Act 2019 places a duty on the Government to prepare a code of practice containing guidance about the operation and management of private parking facilities.

We hope to announce our proposals regarding the code as soon as possible.

■ Planning Authorities: Staff**Stuart Andrew:**[\[21294\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to her Written Statement of 30 July 2024 on Building the homes we need, HCWS48, how many of the new planning officers will have the expertise to handle historic and traditionally constructed buildings.

Matthew Pennycook:

At the Budget, the Chancellor announced a £46 million package of investment to support capacity and capability in local planning authorities.

We are working with delivery partners to understand how we can scale delivery and fund the recruitment and training of an additional 300 planners as part of that investment. This includes expansion of the Pathways to Planning programme which has had significant interest from prospective graduates wanting to take up roles in local planning authorities and train while they work.

In relation to the specific skills needed in managing historic buildings, we are developing a wider programme of support, working with partners across the planning sector, including Historic England, to ensure that local planning authorities have the types of skills, both now and in the future. More details will be announced in due course.

This will be further underpinned by increases in planning fees we are introducing in the coming months that will help improve the resourcing of planning services, so that LPAs can fund the skills they need.

■ Planning Permission: Agriculture**Helen Whately:**[\[21341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how the commitment to safeguard the Best and Most Versatile agricultural land will be applied to planning decisions called in by the Secretary of State .

Matthew Pennycook:

The government places great importance upon our agricultural land and food production.

The National Planning Policy Framework sets out how the best and most versatile agricultural land should be reflected in planning policies and decisions. We are maintaining the existing strong protection for the best and most versatile agricultural land. The Framework is clear that where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of a higher quality.

This will, where relevant, be a material consideration in planning decisions, including those made by the Secretary of State.

JUSTICE

■ Domestic Abuse

Jess Brown-Fuller:

[\[22222\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing financial protection to victims of (a) financially coercive and (b) other controlling behaviour.

Alex Davies-Jones:

This Government was elected with a landmark mission to halve violence against women and girls (VAWG) in the next decade. We will use every tool within our power to target perpetrators and address the root causes of abuse and violence, including domestic abuse.

The financial difficulties which cohabitants, including victims of abuse, can face when their cohabiting relationships come to an end, is a matter of concern. That is why the Government committed in its 2024 manifesto to strengthen the rights and protections available to women in cohabiting couples. The Government will set out the next steps in due course.

In relation to divorcing couples, the Law Commission's December 2024 scoping report on financial remedies considered how conduct, such as domestic abuse, including economic abuse, is considered by the courts when making decisions about a couple's finances on divorce. The Government will carefully consider the findings of this report.

■ Ministry of Justice: Video Recordings

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[21059\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the video on prisons published by her Department on 11 December 2024, what steps she is taking to ensure compliance with the (a) Civil Service Code and (b) Government Communication Service's Propriety & Ethics Guidance for Government Communicators in relation to video content posted online by her Department.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

This post was taken down from all channels on 12 December after civil servants identified the content did not meet expectations on impartiality.

The Ministry of Justice Communication Team's usual processes for checking the accuracy and appropriateness of social media posts were not followed properly in this instance. All staff involved have been spoken to and reminded of their responsibility to uphold the Civil Service Code.

In addition to our usual mandatory training on the Civil Service Code and propriety and ethics, the Director of Communications will deliver mandatory refresher training across the Communications Directorate and all staff joining the team will be required to complete the training within the first two weeks of employment.

■ Prisons: Repairs and Maintenance**Neil Duncan-Jordan:** [\[22229\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 18 December 2024 to Question 19860 on Prisons: Repairs and Maintenance, if she will publish the 2023 assessment.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The assessment carried out in partnership with the Cabinet Office in 2023, was conducted in line with Cabinet Office guidance and was consistent with the options appraisal approach prescribed by HM Treasury.

The information contained within the assessment is commercially sensitive and as such there is no intention to publish the assessment as this may prejudice future procurement exercises.

Neil Duncan-Jordan: [\[22230\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 18 December 2024 to Question 19860, Prisons: Repairs and Maintenance, whether the expected performance parameters of private sector providers have changed since these contracts were awarded.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The performance parameters of private sector providers are subject to ongoing contract management and are reviewed and, where appropriate, changed to align with the business requirements.

NORTHERN IRELAND**■ Northern Ireland Public Sector Transformation Board****Sorcha Eastwood:** [\[21747\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, how many departmental bids have been (a) received and (b) approved by the Northern Ireland Public Sector Transformation Board.

Hilary Benn:

Following the establishment of an Interim Public Sector Transformation Board in May 2024, the interim Board ran a process to consider the 47 proposals which were received from Northern Ireland Departments.

The Interim Board has recommended several proposals to the Northern Ireland Minister of Finance which it considers have the greatest potential to deliver real transformation and service improvement across a number of Executive priority areas in the draft Programme for Government.

■ Roads: Northern Ireland

Adam Jogee:

[\[21778\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, whether he has had recent discussions with the Northern Ireland Executive on the adequacy of road safety measures in Northern Ireland.

Hilary Benn:

The Government regularly engages with the Northern Ireland Executive on the importance of infrastructure investment in Northern Ireland, including the road and transport network. Responsibility for road safety measures is devolved to Northern Ireland's Department for Infrastructure and I welcome the Minister for Infrastructure's recent announcement that the upgrade of the A5, a vital artery of Northern Ireland's road network where many lives have been lost over the years, will commence this year.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

■ Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Equality

Rupert Lowe:

[\[21132\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how many and what proportion of officials in his Department were hired via positive action schemes in the last financial year.

Feryal Clark:

- All Civil Service departments work within the Recruitment Principles, as regulated by the Civil Service Commission, to recruit using a fair and open process and appoint on merit.
- Departments will only limit a campaign to a specific group as a form of positive action as a proportionate response to achieve a legitimate aim as defined in section 159 of the Equality Act 2010.
- The Civil Service is committed to a diverse workforce and culture of openness and inclusivity - not as ends in themselves but as means of delivering better outcomes to the citizens we serve.
- The Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022-25 Promoting Fairness and Performance, published in February 2022, is positioned as an essential lever to deliver a Modern Civil Service, where our values are to serve with integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality; driving our vision to be a skilled, innovative and ambitious Civil Service equipped for the future. This strategy sets out a broader definition of diversity, to include geographical, social and career backgrounds alongside the protected groups.

- As set out in the Civil Service People Plan 2024 - 2027, we are committed to ensuring we attract, develop and retain talented people from a diverse range of backgrounds, to create a modern Civil Service, now and for the future.

■ Glaucoma: Research

Dr Ben Spencer: [\[21035\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how much Government investment into open-angle glaucoma research was in 2023-24; and which public bodies provided that investment.

Dr Ben Spencer: [\[21036\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how much Government investment into closed-angle glaucoma research was in 2023-24; and which public bodies provided that investment.

Dr Ben Spencer: [\[21037\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how much Government investment into wet macular degeneration was in 2023-24; and which public bodies provided that investment.

Dr Ben Spencer: [\[21038\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how much Government investment into dry macular degeneration research was in 2023-24; and which public bodies provided that investment.

Dr Ben Spencer: [\[21039\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how much Government investment into diabetic retinopathy research was in 2023-24; and which public bodies provided that investment.

Dr Ben Spencer: [\[21040\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how much Government investment into retinitis pigmentosa research was in 2023-24; and which public bodies provided that investment.

Dr Ben Spencer: [\[21041\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how much Government investment into retinoblastoma research was in 2023-24; and which public bodies provided that investment.

Feryal Clark:

The Department of Health and Social Care funds medical research through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). The NIHR Biomedical Research Centre at Moorfields Eye Hospital NHS Foundation Trust and UCL Institute of Ophthalmology was awarded £20 million funding for a five-year period starting from December 2022.

UKRI's Medical Research Council (MRC) also plays a key role in funding underpinning research which may not be attributable to a specific condition but will benefit medical research more generally. UKRI delivers a substantial portfolio of researcher-led projects. This includes a wide variety of areas including physiological, biological, and mechanistic aspects that are applicable to many eye diseases and disorders of vision.

Details of UKRI and NIHR funding on specific areas is provided in the table below:

	NIHR FUNDING IN FY 2023/24	UKRI FUNDING IN 2023/24
open-angle glaucoma	NIHR allocated £140,000 for open-angle Glaucoma research in 2023-24	The total commitment across UKRI in 2023-24 for glaucoma research was £1,209,175 for 3 awards (1 award from Innovate UK; 2 awards from MRC).
closed-angle glaucoma	NIHR did not commit any specific funding for closed-angle glaucoma research during the financial year of 2023-24.	
wet macular degeneration	NIHR did not commit any specific funding for wet macular degeneration research during the financial year of 2023-24.	The total commitment across UKRI in 2023-24 for macular degeneration research was £3,941,644 for 11 awards (1 award from BBSRC; 3

	NIHR FUNDING IN FY 2023/24	UKRI FUNDING IN 2023/24
		awards from EPSRC; 1 award from Innovate UK; 3 awards from MRC; 2 awards from centrally managed UKRI schemes).
dry macular degeneration	NIHR did not commit any specific funding for dry macular degeneration research during the financial year of 2023-24.	
diabetic retinopathy	NIHR allocated £977,340 for diabetic retinopathy research in the financial year 2023-24.	The total commitment across UKRI in 2023-24 for diabetic retinopathy research was £1,068,246 for 2 awards (1 award from Innovate UK; 1 award from EPSRC).
retinitis pigmentosa	NIHR did not commit any specific funding for retinitis pigmentosa research during financial year 2023-24.	UKRI did not commit any specific funding for retinitis pigmentosa research in 2023-24.
retinoblastoma	NIHR did not commit any specific funding for	UKRI did not commit any

NIHR FUNDING IN FY 2023/24	UKRI FUNDING IN 2023/24
retinoblastoma research during the financial year of 2023-24	specific funding for retinoblastoma research in 2023-24.

■ Nanotechnology: Innovation

Dr Ben Spencer:

[\[21033\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what discussions he has had with the Government Office for Technology Transfer on their approach to support market innovation into nanotechnology since July 2024.

Feryal Clark:

The Government Office for Technology Transfer (GOTT) helps accelerate government's innovations towards the market, to impact growth and deliver new products and services for citizens. GOTT provides expertise, funding, and guidance to central government departments and arm's length bodies across the spectrum of technologies. Since July 2024 there have been no specific discussions between the Secretary of State and GOTT on its approach to supporting market innovation into nanotechnology.

■ Nanotechnology: Research

Dr Ben Spencer:

[\[21034\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what discussions he has had with the Regulatory Innovation Office on the UK's research into nanotechnology since July 2024.

Feryal Clark:

The Regulatory Innovation Office (RIO) was formally established on 8th October 2024. Initially it is supporting the growth of four fast-growing areas of technology. These are: Engineering biology, Space, Artificial Intelligence and digital in healthcare; and Drones and other autonomous technology. In developing the next priority areas, the RIO will explore a wide range of technologies.

TRANSPORT**■ British Transport Police: Finance**

Alex Mayer: [\[21229\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of funding for British Transport Police.

Simon Lightwood:

The British Transport Police's (BTP) budget is set by the British Transport Police Authority (BTPA). It is the executive non-departmental public body that oversees the Force and is their employer. BTPA sets the BTP's budget annually following proposals from the Force and views from industry. Set against a backdrop of wider public sector efficiencies and affordability by the rail industry it has agreed a budget increase for the financial year 2025/26 of 5.9%.

The cost of policing the rail network in Great Britain is primarily covered through the funding agreements that the British Transport Police Authority holds with Network Rail, the rail operators and Transport for London.

The Department can, under some limited specific circumstances, support the BTP with additional grant funding such as for additional policing during periods of civil unrest.

■ Bus Services: Fares

Charlotte Cane: [\[21810\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of changes to the bus fare cap on trends in the level of bus users.

Simon Lightwood:

The government is investing over £150 million to deliver the new £3 cap on single bus fares in England outside London from 1 January until 31 December 2025. Under the plans of the previous administration, the £2 cap on bus fares had been due to expire on 31 December 2024, and prior to the Budget, there was no further funding available to maintain a cap on bus fares beyond this point.

The published interim evaluation of the £2 fare cap showed that patronage continued to recover following the COVID 19 pandemic and early evidence from the first two months of the scheme suggested the £2 fare cap may have played a role in this recovery. The final evaluation of the £2 fare cap, including a further assessment of its impact on patronage will be published in due course.

■ Bus Services: Rural Areas

Charlotte Cane: [\[21809\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of bus services in rural areas.

Simon Lightwood:

Good local bus services have an essential role to play in keeping rural communities connected. The government introduced the Bus Services (No.2) Bill on 17 December as part of its ambitious plan for bus reform. The Bill puts the power over local bus services back in the hands of local leaders right across England and is intended to ensure bus services reflect the needs of the communities that rely on them, including in rural areas. The government has committed to increasing accountability by including a measure on socially necessary services so that local authorities and bus operators have to have regard for alternatives to changing or cancelling services.

In addition, the government has confirmed £955 million for the 2025 to 2026 financial year to support and improve bus services in England outside London. This includes £243 million for bus operators and £712 million allocated to local authorities across the country. Local authorities can use this funding to introduce new bus routes, make services more frequent and protect crucial bus routes for local communities.

■ Commuters: Greater London**Luke Taylor:**[\[22153\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will have discussions with Transport for London on mitigation of the potential impact of fare increases on commuters in London in March 2025.

Simon Lightwood:

Transport in London is devolved and decisions on TfL fares are for the Mayor of London and TfL. Department for Transport ministers and officials speak regularly with TfL on a wide range of issues impacting commuters in the capital.

■ Department for Transport: Equality**Rupert Lowe:**[\[21133\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many and what proportion of officials in her Department were hired via positive action schemes in the last financial year.

Mike Kane:

Seven officials have been hired by the Department at AO and EO grades via the Civil Service 'Going Forward into Employment' schemes in the last financial year.

■ Public Transport: Standards**Paul Davies:**[\[21903\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will take steps to improve public transportation to help people stay connected with communities.

Simon Lightwood:

The government knows that a modern public transport network is vital to providing access to services and keeping communities connected. The government introduced the Bus Services (No.2) Bill on 17 December to put the power over local bus services

back into the hands of local leaders. In addition, the government has confirmed £955 million for the 2025 to 2026 financial year to support and improve bus services in England outside London.

We have also set out plans for the biggest overhaul of our railways in a generation by delivering publicly owned passenger rail within the first term in government. The Passenger Railway Services Act 2024 will allow the government to deliver on this commitment, meaning services can be operated in the interests of passengers, not shareholders. The government will also establish a new arm's length body, Great British Railways, which will deliver a unified system that focuses on reliable, affordable, high-quality, and efficient services; along with ensuring safety and accessibility.

The government also launched its plan to develop an Integrated National Transport Strategy which will set the high-level direction for how transport should change over the next 10 years to better serve people and communities.

■ Roads: Safety

Mrs Elsie Blundell:

[\[21457\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to increase road safety for vulnerable road users.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Government treats road safety with the utmost seriousness, and we are committed to reducing the numbers of those killed and injured on our roads. My department is developing our road safety strategy and will set out more details in due course.

■ Transport

Alex Mayer:

[\[21225\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, which areas has her Department provided additional funding for to develop Mobility as a Service apps; and what the potential cost to the public purse is of this work.

Simon Lightwood:

The Transport Innovation Grants (TRIG) programme, which funds proof of concept projects to either fail fast or uncover early promise across the whole transport technology spectrum, has given funding of a total value of £289k to projects related to Mobility as a Service apps since 2024.

Local authorities receive various other streams of non-ringfenced funding which they have chosen to spend on MaaS projects, for example as part of the Future Transport Zones programme.

TREASURY**■ Beer: Excise Duties****Daisy Cooper:**[\[22079\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing duty relief to brewers of cask conditioned beers.

James Murray:

Draught Relief provides a duty discount for eligible draught beer and cider. Cask conditioned beers will be able to benefit from Draught Relief if they are sold in a container of 20 litres or more, connected to a dispense system and are below 8.5 per cent alcohol by volume (ABV).

At the Budget, the Chancellor increased the relief available on draught products to 13.9%. This represents an overall reduction in duty bills of over £85m a year and is equivalent to a 1p duty reduction on a typical pint.

Cask conditioned beer producers will also be eligible for Small Producer Relief if they make 4,500 hectolitres or fewer of alcohol per year on all products below 8.5 per cent ABV. This is an additional duty discount to support small producers.

■ Business Rates: Public Consultation**Daisy Cooper:**[\[22076\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the her Department's consultation entitled Transforming business rates, published 30 October 2024, whether she plans to meet with (a) British Business Improvement Districts, (b) The BID Foundation and (c) the Association of Town Centre Management as part of the engagement process.

James Murray:

At Autumn Budget, the Government published a Discussion Paper setting out priority areas for reform of the business rates system. This paper invites industry to help co-design a fairer system that supports investment and is fit for the 21st century.

Treasury officials are engaging with stakeholders who registered interest by the 15 November deadline, and the Government is open to receiving further written evidence to transformingbusinessrates@hmtreasury.gov.uk until the end of March 2025.

■ Combined Heat and Power: Climate Change Levy**James Naish:**[\[22118\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of changing the climate change levy exemption for natural gas combined heat and power.

James Murray:

The Climate Change Levy (CCL) is a tax on the supply of energy to businesses and the public sector, introduced in 2001 to encourage energy efficiency.

There are a number of CCL exemptions and reliefs, including for energy used by members of the Combined Heat & Power Quality Assurance (CHPQA) programme. Good CHP systems are the most energy efficient means of generating heat and power for many businesses and have more environmental benefits when compared to gas only generation. CHPQA was introduced to promote and reward best practice in CHP generation and members of the programme receive financial benefits, including tax relief on their CCL obligations.

As a tax, CCL policy is for the Chancellor and any representations will be considered as part of the tax policy making process. The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero are responsible for the CHPQA programme and will continue to review the objectives of programme in line with the missions and goals of the government.

Development Aid**Kenneth Stevenson:**[\[21086\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what proportion of gross national income has been allocated to Official Development Assistance spending for the next three financial years; and what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of such spending in the last three years.

Darren Jones:

The Government remains committed to international development. This is why we allocated £13.7 billion to ODA in 2025/26 at Autumn Budget 2024. We will restore Official Development Assistance (ODA) spending to the level of 0.7 percent of GNI as soon as the fiscal circumstances allow. The Independent Commission for Aid Impact scrutinises all UK aid spending to ensure it is spent effectively, and all reports are available on their website. The Chancellor announced Phase 2 of the Spending Review at Autumn Budget, which is the process by which ODA allocations for future financial years will be decided.

Wendy Morton:[\[22289\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the most recent quarterly Gross Domestic Product growth figures published by the Office of National Statistics on levels of available Overseas Development Aid spending for 2025.

Tulip Siddiq:

At Phase One of the 2025 Spending Review, departmental allocations for Official Development Assistance (ODA) were reset for 2024-25 and provided for 2025-26. As set out at Autumn Budget 2024, this settlement provides departments with £13.3 billion of ODA in Financial Year 2024-25 and £13.7 billion in Financial Year 2025-26, enabling the UK to spend 0.5% of Gross National Income (GNI) on ODA in Calendar Years 2024 and 2025.

■ Eat Out to Help Out Scheme

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[22089\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will assess the effectiveness of the Eat Out to Help Out Scheme.

Tulip Siddiq:

Following the conclusion of the Eat Out Help Out scheme, HMRC published statistical analysis, which included data on scheme's costs, take up, and geographical breakdown.

The Covid Inquiry is also investigating the UK's response to and impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The government is cooperating fully with the Inquiry in its extensive and detailed work.

■ Employers' Contributions and Income Tax

John Glen:

[\[20956\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to page 21 of the Plan for Change document, CP1210, published on 5 December 2024, what estimate she has been made of the potential impact of (a) changes to the level of employer National Insurance contributions and (b) the freezing of income tax thresholds on Real Household Disposable Income per person.

James Murray:

The Office for Budget Responsibility's [October 2024 Economic and Fiscal Outlook \(EFO\)](#) contains forecasts and assessments of government policy.

The OBR's forecast does not decompose policy impacts on Real Household Disposable Income (RHDI) per capita by individual policies. Accounting for the total impact of Budget measures including employer NICs, the OBR forecast RHDI per capita to rise at an annual average rate of 0.5% per year over the parliament. The OBR sets out in detail the impact of the employer NICs changes on wages in paragraph 3.11 of the EFO.

The OBR have assessed the impacts of fiscal drag from freezing Income Tax thresholds in their [March 2024 EFO](#).

■ Employers' Contributions: Public Sector

John Glen:

[\[20950\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 6 December 2024 to Question 16761 on Employers' Contributions: Public Sector, what the assumed unit cost per (a) headcount and (b) FTE employee of the estimated increase in National Insurance contributions on employers in the public sector was for the estimate.

Darren Jones:

The Government plans to update Parliament on the allocations of support by department in due course.

John Glen:

[\[20955\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 6 December 2024 to Question 16761 on Employers' Contributions: Public Sector, if she will publish the methodology used to draw up the estimates of support.

Darren Jones:

The Government plans to update Parliament on the allocations of support by department in due course.

■ Government Departments: Communication and Public Consultation

John Glen:

[\[20957\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 29 October 2024 to Question 10442 on Government departments: communication and public consultation, what non-essential spending in each Department has been stopped to deliver the £50 million of savings in (a) 2024-24 and (b) 2025-26.

Darren Jones:

To identify savings in Communications spending for 2024-25 and 2025-26, the UK Government conducted a comprehensive review of communications campaigns through the Spending Review. This review looked at the strategic logic, join-up, role for communications and value for money of each campaign. This led to 39 campaigns being cancelled, 46 continuing with reduced budgets and 46 aiming to reduce their expenditure by 25%.

As a result, Autumn Budget 2024 confirmed an £85 million saving from reducing unnecessary communications spend in 2024-25 and up to £96m in 2025-26 – exceeding the £50 million target set out in the Chancellor's July 2024 Inheritance speech.

■ Growth Mission Board

Liam Byrne:

[\[20927\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what role the Growth Mission Board will have in the Spending Review.

Tulip Siddiq:

Delivering growth is the government's number one mission; through the growth mission, the government is restoring stability, increasing investment, and reforming the economy to drive up prosperity and living standards across the UK. This will be reflected in the government's approach to the Spending Review, as part of which departments will be required to prioritise growth within their spending plans. The Growth Mission Board will continue to drive forward the government's growth mission to rebuild Britain and make every part of the country better off.

■ Individual Savings Accounts

Alex Brewer: [\[22495\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether her Department plans to review the Lifetime ISAs property price limit.

Tulip Siddiq:

Data from the latest [UK House Price Index](#) shows that while the average price paid by first-time buyers has increased, it is still below the LISA property price cap in all regions of the UK except for London, where the average price paid is affected by boroughs with very high property values.

The Government keeps all aspects of savings tax policy under review.

■ Insurance: Costs

Anna Sabine: [\[22218\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential implications for her policies of trends in the cost of insurance.

Anna Sabine: [\[22219\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of putting a cap on insurance costs for small businesses.

Tulip Siddiq:

Insurers make commercial decisions about the terms on which they will offer cover following an assessment of the relevant risks. This is usually informed by the insurer's claims experience and other industry-wide statistics. The Government does not usually intervene in these decisions by insurers, as this could damage competition in the market.

The Government is committed to ensuring that insurers treat all customers fairly and insurance companies are required to do so under the Financial Conduct Authority's (FCA) rules. The FCA is the independent body responsible for regulating and supervising the financial services industry.

The FCA requires firms to ensure their products offer fair value. The FCA monitors firms to make sure they provide products that are fair value, and, where necessary, it will take action.

■ Judiciary: Workplace Pensions

John Glen: [\[20949\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Autumn Budget 2024, whether the (a) pension and (b) associated pension benefits under the tax-unregistered Judicial Pension Scheme will be liable for inheritance tax.

James Murray:

There are three different types of UK statutory defined benefit judicial pension schemes. As defined benefit schemes, none of these have a dedicated fund which can be inherited as defined contribution schemes do.

- Schemes established under the Judicial Pensions and Retirement Act 1993 (JUPRA) (unregistered). Any lump sum death benefits under JUPRA received after the member is no longer in service are already subject to Inheritance Tax.
- The New Judicial Pension Scheme (NJPS) (registered) established under the Judicial Pensions Regulations 2015. Any lump sum death benefits payable under the NJPS are already subject to Inheritance Tax.
- The Judicial Pension Scheme 2022 (JPS 2022) (unregistered) established under the Judicial Pensions Regulations 2022. Any lump sum death benefits payable under JPS 2022 are already subject to Inheritance Tax.

Dependant scheme pensions, including partner pensions, are not subject to Inheritance Tax. This is the same for registered and unregistered UK schemes, and will not be impacted by the changes announced at Autumn Budget 2024.

■ Monetary Policy**Ben Maguire:**[\[21944\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of (a) expanding the base money supply and (b) other alternative monetary policy.

Tulip Siddiq:

Monetary policy is the responsibility of the independent Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Bank of England. This includes decisions on Bank Rate and the stock of UK government bonds held in the Asset Purchase Facility.

It is for the MPC to judge how it uses its tools to maintain price stability and Bank Rate is the MPC's primary macroeconomic tool. The separation of fiscal and monetary policy is a key feature of the UK's economic framework, so the government does not comment on the conduct or effectiveness of monetary policy.

■ Parental Pay**Munira Wilson:**[\[21027\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many people were in receipt of (a) Statutory Maternity Pay, (b) Statutory Paternity Pay, (c) Statutory Adoption Pay and (d) Statutory Shared Parental Pay in the 2023-24 financial year.

James Murray:

Data for number of people in receipt of Statutory Maternity pay, Statutory Paternity Pay, Statutory Adoption Pay, and Statutory Shared Parental Pay is provided in the table below.

TOTALS FOR 2023-24

Statutory Maternity Pay	623,100
Statutory Paternity Pay	207,600
Statutory Adoption Pay	4,500
Statutory Shared Parental Pay	17,200

Notes:

- 1) Data collected using HMRC Real Time Information (RTI) and extracted in August 2024. RTI is subject to revision or updates.
- 2) Claimants number has been rounded to nearest 100.

■ Working Hours

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[22058\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an estimate of the number of working age people who have reduced their working hours as a result of marginal state income deductions.

James Murray:

The Office for Budget Responsibility's [October 2024 Economic and Fiscal Outlook \(EFO\)](#) contains forecasts and assessments of government policy. Once the impact of all the Budget measures are taken into consideration, the OBR expect the employment level to increase from 33.1 million in 2024 to 34.3 million in 2029.

This government is committed to increasing labour supply and tackling the recent rise in labour market inactivity. The Get Britain Working White Paper sets out the government's strategy to support people back into work, and help them stay in work.

■ Workplace Pensions: Inheritance Tax

John Glen:

[\[20952\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 12 November 2024 to Question 12389 on Pensions: Inheritance Tax, whether the (a) partner and (b) dependent's scheme pension for the (i) Civil Service Alpha scheme and (ii) Ministerial Pension Scheme will be included in the value of the estate for inheritance tax for (A) married couples, (B) unmarried couples and (C) couples in a civil partnership.

James Murray:

Dependant scheme pensions, including partner pensions, are not subject to Inheritance Tax. This is the same for registered and unregistered UK schemes, and will not be impacted by the changes announced at Autumn Budget 2024.

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[21386\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 22 November 2024 to Question 14298 on Workplace Pensions: Inheritance Tax, whether the pension scheme established under The Pensions Increase (Pension Scheme for Keir Starmer QC) Regulations 2013 is UK registered.

James Murray:

The pension scheme referred to is an unregistered UK statutory defined benefit scheme, established under the Judicial Pensions and Retirement Act 1993 (JUPRA). As defined benefit schemes, pensions under JUPRA do not have a dedicated fund which can be inherited as defined contribution schemes do. Any lump sum death benefits under JUPRA received after the member is no longer in service are already subject to inheritance tax.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Advisory Services: Older Workers

John Milne:

[\[21920\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she plans to publish research on the (a) Midlife MOT initiative and (b) digital Midlife MOT website.

Alison McGovern:

The Midlife MOT initiative consists of three key work strands: the Job Centre Plus (JCP) Midlife MOT, the Private Sector Midlife MOT and the Digital Midlife MOT.

The Private Sector Midlife MOT pilot programmes concluded at the end of June 2024. Findings from qualitative research, conducted in house by the Department for Work and Pensions, will be published in early 2025.

The evaluation for the Job Centre Plus Midlife MOT is not yet complete but is planned for publication during 2025. The Digital Midlife MOT Website evaluation will start in February 2025, and we plan to publish once complete.

■ Employment

Liam Byrne:

[\[20924\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of how many economically inactive people will rejoin the workforce as a result of the measures announced in the Get Britain Working White Paper.

Liam Byrne:

[\[20925\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the impact on economic growth of the measures announced in the Get Britain Working White Paper.

Alison McGovern:

The trend of economic inactivity is a long-term challenge; the UK is the only country in the G7 with an inactivity rate higher than before the pandemic. Building a thriving labour market, reducing economic inactivity and increasing the number of people in work is central to growing the economy.

Fundamental reforms announced in the Get Britain Working white paper will help us achieve the bold, long-term ambition of an 80% employment rate, meaning over two million more people in work and the UK as one of the top performing labour markets in the OECD.

Backed by £240m of funding announced in the Budget, the White Paper sets out ambitious reform outlined in three interconnected parts:

- a new jobs and careers service, bringing Jobcentre Plus together with the National Careers Service in England. This new service will support more people into work and help them get on in work, including through an enhanced focus on skills and careers, and will be kickstarted by an initial £55m of funding for tests and trials next year. It will be open to all, helping the 890,000 people who have left the workforce since the pandemic and the 1.9 million who may wish to join it, back into the labour market.
- a new Youth Guarantee for all 18-21 year olds in England, to ensure they have an offer of education, training or help to find work. This is backed by £45m in funding for trailblazers across eight mayoral authorities in England starting next year to help bring the 946,000 young people not in education, employment or training back into the workforce.
- £15m to support the development of local Get Britain Working plans for areas across England. These plans will set out how economic inactivity will be tackled at a local level, led by Mayors and local areas. An additional £125m will fund eight trailblazers across England and Wales to tackle economic inactivity through increased engagement and tailored approaches because we know that one size does not fit all and inactivity rates vary between areas, with the North East at 26.8% and the South West at 17.9%.

■ Food: Poverty**John Milne:****[21923]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to help reduce the level of dependence on emergency food parcels.

Alison McGovern:

We are committed to tackling poverty and reducing mass dependence on emergency food parcels.

On 30 July, the Secretary of State held a food poverty roundtable with key food poverty stakeholders to understand the key priorities in this area.

We know that good work can significantly reduce the chances of people falling into food poverty so this will be the foundation of our approach. Backed by £240 million investment, the Get Britain Working White Paper launched on 26 November will target and tackle economic inactivity and unemployment and join up employment, health and skills support to meet the needs of local communities.

Additional steps include our plans to triple investment in breakfast clubs to over £30 million, introduce a Fair Repayment Rate for deductions from Universal Credit, and increase the National Living Wage to £12.21 an hour from April 2025 to boost the pay of 3 million workers.

In addition, on 17th July, we announced our joint ministerial taskforce, jointly chaired Work and Pensions and Education Secretaries, to begin work on an ambitious Child Poverty Strategy, to reduce child poverty, tackle the root causes, and give every child the best start in life.

The Taskforce's publication of 23 October 'Tackling Child Poverty: Developing our Strategy' sets out how we are developing the Strategy, exploring all available levers across Government to deliver an enduring reduction in child poverty this parliament. This is part of a 10-year strategy for lasting change which will be published in the Spring.

■ **Menopause: Employment**

Mims Davies:

[\[21656\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what progress her Department's appointed menopause champion has made.

Alison McGovern:

The Government's Menopause Employment Ambassador Mariella Frostrup has been working with policy officials to develop an action plan for her term of engagement. She has also spoken with government departments to promote and champion the role of women in the economy and is engaging with businesses in raising awareness and influencing workplace policies.

■ **Unemployment: Government Assistance**

Adam Dance:

[\[21819\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to support people who are out of work but not receiving employment support.

Alison McGovern:

As part of the biggest reforms in a generation, DWP will shift from being a department for welfare to being a department for work.

The Get Britain Working White Paper published in November set out plans to deliver fundamental reform of our health, employment and skills system, including:

- Delivering a new jobs and careers service to support people to enter work, progress in their careers, earn more and find higher quality work, this will apply to everyone who seeks support, regardless of whether they are in receipt of benefits.
- Working with local areas to tackle economic inactivity and increase participation in the labour market through the delivery of localised work, health and skills plans and the introduction of trailblazers.
- Delivering a Youth Guarantee for 18-21 year olds in England so that young people benefit from education, training or help to find work.

The Get Britain Working White Paper can be found at [Gov.uk. GBW White Paper](https://www.gov.uk/government/white-papers/get-britain-working) .

■ Young Futures Hubs

Mims Davies:

[21654]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many youth hubs led by her Department are still in place.

Alison McGovern:

Youth Hubs bring together employment support from a Jobcentre work coach alongside external partners on external-partner premises for up to six months. Wider support available from partners in the Hubs is place-based, but could include skills and training provision, mental health, budgeting, and housing support.

As of January 2025, there were 111 Youth Hubs fully opened across Great Britain with a further three in development.

Youth Hubs are based in external-partner-owned premises. Local DWP teams and external partners delivering Youth Hubs jointly discuss the ongoing need for the hubs in particular areas. These discussions take account of a range of factors, notably the number of young people claiming Universal Credit who are searching for employment in that local area, consequently, the number of operational Youth Hubs may fluctuate month by month.

The 'Get Britain Working' White Paper sets out this government's plan to Get Britain Working and includes a new Department for Work and Pensions and Department for Education led Youth Guarantee for all young people in England aged 18-21.

Our approach to the Youth Guarantee is to help all young people aged 18-21 in England to earn or learn. We will work in partnership with organisations at the national and local level to offer exciting and engaging opportunities to young people. This could include apprenticeships, work experience, training courses or employability programmes.

Work is underway on the design and delivery of the new Youth Guarantee. Starting in spring 2025, eight Mayoral Authorities in England will pilot the Youth Guarantee Trailblazers. These 12-month Trailblazers are an opportunity to develop the Youth Guarantee and test different interventions ahead of a national roll out. We will assess and incorporate our findings for future delivery and rollout of the Youth Guarantee

across the rest of England, working with Mayoral Authorities and Local Authorities in our roll out plans.

Mims Davies:

[\[21655\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what progress her Department has made on rolling out youth hubs.

Alison McGovern:

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