



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 14 January 2025 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:27 P.M., 14 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 **900000 or greater** indicate that the question was originally tabled as an oral question and has since been unstarred.

ANSWERS

BUSINESS AND TRADE

■ Construction: Mental Health Services

Mr Richard Holden:

[22704]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will take steps to ensure the availability of positive mental health initiatives including (a) on-site mental health resources, (b) training for employers in mental health first aid and (c) helplines for the construction industry.

Sarah Jones:

Considerable investment has been made in improving mental health in the construction sector. Since 2018, the Construction Industry Training Board has supported 950 employers and invested over £1.5m in mental health projects, including training mental health first aiders, and providing awareness training and other resources.

The Construction Leadership Council is working in partnership with the Mates in Mind charity, the University of Warwick, and firms in the construction industry, to identify the underlying factors leading to poor mental health, and how to tackle these.

■ Flexible Working Taskforce

Laurence Turner:

[R] [23073]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 8 January 2025 to Question 21859, on Flexible Working Taskforce, on what dates that taskforce met in each year from 2018 to 2022.

Justin Madders:

The Flexible Working Taskforce met on fourteen occasions between 2018 and 2022.

The dates of these meetings were:

29 March 2018; 09 May 2018; 11 July 2018; 12 September 2018; 16 November 2018; 16 January 2019; 27 March 2019; 02 July 2019; 22 September 2020; 14 April 2021; 27 April 2021; 07 July 2021; 13 October 2021; 07 February 2022.

The Government is committed to regular engagement with stakeholders on the topic of flexible working and other related issues.

■ Industrial Strategy Advisory Council: Public Appointments

Charlie Dewhirst:

[22190]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he plans to include appointments to the Industrial Strategy Advisory Council in the Public Bodies Order in Council; and whether the chair appointment will be classified as a significant appointment.

Sarah Jones:

The Industrial Strategy Advisory Council (ISAC) is an independent, non-statutory, expert committee and as such these appointments are not in scope for addition to the Order in Council or Significant Appointments under Cabinet Office guidance. We have committed to putting the Council on a statutory footing, and this will be reviewed after doing so.

■ **Israel: Arms Trade**

Apsana Begum: [\[20858\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether the deals announced on 16 December 2024 between the Israel Ministry of Defence and Elbit Systems for the supply of advanced communication systems to the Israel Defence Force will include products (a) developed or (b) made by Elbit Systems UK Ltd.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

We cannot comment on individual companies' commercial plans. Elbit Systems UK Ltd, like all UK companies, would be required to apply for an export licence to export military or dual-use items from the UK.

All such applications are assessed against the Strategic Export Licensing Criteria and under the terms of our current suspension of certain licences to Israel, any licence application for components that could be used in military operations in Gaza would currently be refused.

■ **Nissan: Sunderland**

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[22138\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what discussions he has had with Nissan on safeguarding jobs in Sunderland, in the context of the potential merger of Nissan, Honda and Mitsubishi.

Sarah Jones:

While we cannot comment on the commercial affairs of private companies, I can say that the Department of Business and Trade is in contact with both Nissan and Honda and we will work with the companies to support the future of the UK's world-leading automotive industry.

■ **Overseas Trade: Greece**

Adam Jogee: [\[22436\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps he is taking to help increase the (a) volume and (b) value of trade between the United Kingdom and Greece.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

Reinvigorating the UK's relationship with our European partners is a priority for this Government.

The Prime Minister met with his Greek counterpart in December, when both underlined the importance of the bilateral relationship, and agreed that there were opportunities to deliver further trade and investment for both countries. HM Trade Commissioner for Europe's visit to Athens in October 2024 also served to strengthen engagement with industry stakeholders.

My officials continue to work to identify opportunities for UK businesses and address barriers to trade with Greece.

■ Trade Promotion

Dame Harriett Baldwin: [\[21305\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he plans to appoint Trade Envoys.

Gareth Thomas:

The Trade Envoy programme will continue and the House will of course be notified of any appointments in due course.

Adam Jogee: [\[21772\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, when he plans to appoint country-specific trade envoys.

Gareth Thomas:

The House will be notified of any Trade Envoy appointments in due course.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Cabinet Office: 48 Group

Charlie Dewhirst: [\[22184\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he has issued guidance to Cabinet colleagues on engagement with the 48 Group.

Ms Abena Opong-Asare:

No guidance has been issued on engagement with the 48 Group specifically. The Cabinet Office routinely assesses information pertaining to external bodies and groups to guide Ministerial engagement.

■ Cabinet Office: Expenditure

Charlie Dewhirst: [\[22195\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's web page entitled Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: spending over £0, published on 10 October 2024, if he will publish a corresponding copy of the spending by his Department on (a) electronic purchasing cards and (b) Government procurement cards over £0 for August 2024

broken down by (i) expense type, (ii) supplier, (iii) item text, (iv) merchant category, (v) amount and (vi) date.

Georgia Gould:

The guiding policy setting out the requirement to only publish GPC transactions over £500 remains in place. Guidance is available to all government departments on gov.uk at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5e8b402686650c18ce2cb541/Procurement_Cards_-_Pan_Government_Policy_V4_06042020.pdf

In support of the Government's Transparency agenda, the Cabinet Office publishes GPC spend data over £500 on gov.uk.

■ **Cabinet Office: Pay**

Sir John Hayes: [21973]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much was paid in bonuses to staff in his Department in 2024.

Georgia Gould:

Details of staff bonuses are published on an annual basis for each financial year. The data for 2023/24 is available on gov.uk. Data for 2024/25 will be published later this year, after the end of the financial year.

■ **Cabinet Office: Recruitment**

Charlie Dewhirst: [22197]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 22 October 2024 to Question 8637 on Cabinet Office: Vacancies, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the length of the application window on the effectiveness the recruitment process.

Georgia Gould:

The vacancy adhered to the Civil Service Commission Recruitment Principles, which state: "the time allowed for advertising must be suitable for attracting a sufficiently strong and diverse field of applicants, taking account of the nature of the role and the relevant job market."

■ **Cabinet Office: Staff**

Charlie Dewhirst: [22189]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many staff work in the mission delivery unit; and what its (a) function and (b) remit is.

Ellie Reeves:

The Mission Delivery Unit has c 30 FTE. The core purpose of the Mission Delivery Unit is to advise the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on the delivery of the five Missions.

■ Civil Servants: Disability

Charlie Dewhirst: [\[22194\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many Civil Service fast stream applicants self-declared a disability in each year for which figures are available.

Georgia Gould:

The Fast Stream campaign data, including data pertaining to applicants with disabilities, is published annually and available on gov.uk.

■ Departmental Coordination

Mike Wood: [\[22307\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the policy paper entitled Plan for Change, published on 5 December 2024, CP1210, whether the Government has implemented a formal reporting framework to hold individual (a) Secretaries of State and (b) Director Generals accountable for the delivery of cross-departmental Plan for Change milestones.

Ellie Reeves:

The Plan for Change sets out clear, ambitious milestones for change that we aim to reach by the end of this Parliament.

The Prime Minister meets regularly with the Secretaries of State in charge in order to hold them to account for the delivery of the Government's priorities.

Each of the five missions has a Director General as the Senior Responsible Officer (SRO).

Mike Wood: [\[22309\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the policy paper entitled Plan for Change, published on 5 December 2024, CP1210, what steps his Department plans to take to ensure transparency in tracking the progress of the Plan for Change milestones; and if he will make it his policy to publish a cross-government performance dashboard with regularly updated data.

Ellie Reeves:

In the Plan for Change we published graphs and links to the statistics on the outcomes for the milestones. The statistical annex published on gov.uk on the [Plan for Change – Milestones for mission-led government](#) provides further detail.

Mike Wood: [\[22312\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the document entitled Plan for Change, published on 5 December 2024, if his Department will take steps to publish a consolidated annual report on the Government's performance against the Plan for Change including (a) auditable metrics for each milestone and (b) clear explanations for (i) delays and (ii) revisions to milestones.

Ellie Reeves:

The Plan for Change sets out clear and transparent milestones, and our plan to achieve them. These milestones will allow the public to track our progress and hold the government to account for their delivery.

Mike Wood:[\[22313\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the document entitled Plan for Change, published on 5 December 2024, what plans his Department has to publish guidance for Departments on using consistent (a) definitions, (b) methodologies and (c) data sources when measuring progress toward the Plan for Change milestones.

Ellie Reeves:

In the Plan for Change we published graphs and links to the statistics on the milestones. The statistical annex in the [Plan for Change – Milestones for mission-led government](#) provides further detail and has been published on gov.uk. These link to various different statistics which have well established definitions and methodologies.

Mike Wood:[\[22315\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the policy paper entitled Plan for Change, published on 5 December 2024, CP1210, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that cross-departmental dependencies are identified and managed in relation to the Plan; and if he will publish a comprehensive risk register outlining how delivery delays in one department might impact mission efforts in another or the overall timeline of mission delivery.

Ellie Reeves:

Missions are a new way of doing government. The core aim of the missions is to break down silos between departments to achieve specific, long-term outcomes. The Prime Minister has established 5 designated mission boards which bring together Ministers from across government, with the core aim to break down silos between departments to achieve specific, long-term outcomes that drive tangible change for the public.

Mike Wood:[\[22316\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the policy paper entitled Plan for Change, published on 5 December 2024, CP1210, whether his Department plans to have an independent audit of the plan's performance metrics.

Ellie Reeves:

The Plan for Change sets out clear and transparent milestones, and our plan to achieve them. These milestones will allow the public to track our progress and hold the government to account for their delivery.

Mike Wood:[\[22317\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the policy paper entitled Plan for Change, published on 5 December 2024, CP1210, if his Department will commission

an independent review of the (a) reliability and (b) robustness of the (i) targets and (ii) metrics used in the plan.

Ellie Reeves:

The Plan for Change sets out clear and transparent milestones, and our plan to achieve them. These milestones will allow the public to track our progress and hold the government to account for their delivery.

■ **Digital Technology: Infrastructure**

Jim Shannon:

[\[22606\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will make an assessment with Cabinet colleagues of the potential impact of an IT shutdown initiated by hostile foreign actors on (a) the NHS and (b) other critical digital infrastructure.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

The Cabinet Office works with Departments across Government, and the National Cyber Security Centre, to assess and tackle cross-cutting risks to the UK's critical infrastructure.

The cyber threat is dynamic and grows more complex each year, with implications for our Critical National Infrastructure (CNI). It is an issue this Government takes incredibly seriously, and we are committed to working closely with CNI operators to ensure resilience and preparedness to all threats, including cyber. This means understanding and managing cyber risk, and minimising the impact of cyber incidents when they occur.

For the health sector, in an increasingly digitised system, cyber-attacks are a direct threat to patient safety and people in care, as well as to public confidence. The Department of Health and Social Care and NHS England are delivering an ambitious Cyber Improvement Programme that addresses the changing cyber risk landscape, expands protection and services and reduces the risk of a successful attack.

■ **European Court of Justice**

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[21689\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he plans to discuss the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice in negotiations on changes to the EU-UK relationship.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

There has been no change in the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice rulings in relation to the UK. We are also clear that we will not be re-joining the Single Market, the Customs Union or Freedom of Movement.

■ **Foreign Investment in UK: National Security**

Charlie Dewhirst:

[\[22448\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps his Department has taken to safeguard British semiconductor firms from hostile foreign involvement; and how many

transactions in that sector have been referred to his Department under the National Security and Investment Act 2021 since 5 July 2024.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

The National Security and Investment (NSI) Act 2021 gives the Government powers to scrutinise and potentially intervene in acquisitions of control over entities and assets in or linked to the UK that may pose national security risks.

All areas of the economy are within scope, and qualifying acquisitions of entities in 17 areas of the economy - of which semiconductors are typically covered by both the Advanced Materials and Computing Hardware areas - must be notified to and receive approval from the Government.

The Government publishes annual reports to provide information about the transactions that it has been notified about and those it subsequently called in for a national security assessment. The period from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 will be covered in the next annual report, which will be published later this year.

■ **Government Departments: Departmental Coordination**

Mike Wood:

[\[22634\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the policy paper entitled Plan for Change, published on 5 December 2024, CP1210, if his Department will publish an annual cost analysis of each of the five milestones.

Ellie Reeves:

Decisions on government spending relating to the Plan for Change, will continue to be announced in the usual way. Departments are already required to report on their financial statements and review their activities and performance in their Annual Reports and Accounts.

■ **Great British Energy**

Charlie Dewhirst:

[\[22201\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to his Department's guidance entitled Public Bodies Handbook – Part 2: The Approvals Process for the Creation of New Arm's-Length Bodies, whether his Department's public bodies team assessed Great British Energy against the requirement that the creation of a new ALB should only be considered as a last resort; whether the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero provided evidence that alternative delivery models were considered; and which of the three tests in Chapter 2 of that guidance Great British Energy met.

Georgia Gould:

The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero is working through the approval process, in parallel with the passing of the Great British Energy Bill, to establish Great British Energy (GBE).

■ Intelligence Services: Finance

Charlie Dewhirst: [\[22457\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Security and Intelligence Agencies Financial Statement 2023-24, for what reason the net cash requirement for the Security and Intelligence Agencies was £419.85 million lower than the estimate; and what assessment he has made of the impact of this underspend on the delivery of planned programmes.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

As has been the policy of successive governments, the government does not comment on matters relating to the intelligence agencies. The Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament scrutinises the policies, expenditure, administration and operations of the intelligence agencies on behalf of Parliament.

■ Intelligence Services: Unpaid Work

Mr Richard Holden: [\[22360\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether any internship programmes at (a) MI5, (b) M16 and (c) GCHQ were open to people from white British backgrounds.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

Yes. In recent years, UKIC has run a number of internships and placement schemes. They are designed to provide insight about what it is like to work in UKIC to individuals who have particular skills and expertise, want to work in a particular area and/or are from demographics and backgrounds under-represented across Government.

Any internship participant wishing to subsequently apply for employment with UKIC or the Civil Service is required to take part in a fair and open competition, in the normal way, with selection based on merit.

■ Ministers: Aviation

Charlie Dewhirst: [\[22199\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether (a) Downing Street and (b) his Department collates information on each (i) domestic and (ii) overseas flight undertaken by (A) the Prime Minister and (B) other Ministers.

Georgia Gould:

Ministerial travel is undertaken using efficient and cost-effective travel arrangements. Security considerations are also taken into account. As was the practice under the previous Government, information about official overseas ministerial travel will be published as part of the Cabinet Office transparency returns and made available on GOV.UK.

Charlie Dewhirst: [\[22200\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much his Department has spent on carbon offsetting for Ministerial travel since 5 July 2024.

Georgia Gould:

As was the case under the previous administration, the Cabinet Office does not offset business travel, choosing to reduce rather than offset carbon emissions. However, official Prime Ministerial flights are carbon offset as part of the contractual arrangement for the GBNI flight.

■ **Ministers: Codes of Practice**

Charlie Dewhirst: [\[22186\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 4 December 2024 to Question 15193 on Ministers: Code of Practice, for what reason the Prime Minister included the previously removed duty for ministers to comply with international law in the new Ministerial Code.

Georgia Gould:

The reference has been reinserted into the Ministerial Code to provide clarity. This does not place any new duties on ministers; it brings together duties which exist elsewhere.

■ **Non-departmental Public Bodies**

Mr Richard Holden: [\[22991\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 8 January 2025 to Question 19414 on Non-departmental Public Bodies, how many non-departmental public bodies the Government plans to (a) open and (b) close.

Georgia Gould:

As said in my previous answer of 8 January 2025, Cabinet Office maintains records and oversight of formally established Arm's Length Bodies, including NDPBs. Individual departments are responsible for any proposals to open or close NDPBs.

■ **Peers: Convictions**

James McMurdock: [\[22240\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to reform the process for the forfeiture of peerages where a peer has been convicted of serious crimes.

James McMurdock: [\[22241\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether his Department has made an assessment of the adequacy of legislation for revoking peerages in cases involving serious criminal convictions.

James McMurdock:[\[22242\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to expand the grounds under which a peerage can be revoked to include crimes involving (a) sexual offences and (b) abuse of power.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

Currently, a member of the House of Lords automatically ceases to be a member if they are convicted of a criminal offence and given a custodial sentence of more than one year. Additionally, the House may expel members who have breached the Code of Conduct by approving such a sanction as may be recommended by the House of Lords Conduct Committee.

Revoking peerages requires bespoke primary legislation. The Government is focused on delivering its manifesto commitments on House of Lords reform, including strengthening the circumstances in which disgraced members can be removed from the House.

The manifesto was clear that, as an immediate reform, it would introduce legislation to remove the right of hereditary peers to sit and vote in the House of Lords. The House of Lords (Hereditary Peers) Bill has now completed its passage through the House of Commons and will soon enter Committee stage in the House of Lords.

■ Prime Minister: Furniture**Charlie Dewhirst:**[\[22185\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, who provided the lectern used by the Prime Minister for his press conference at Pinewood Studios on 5 December 2024.

Georgia Gould:

The lectern was loaned by the Labour Party.

■ Public Bodies: Reviews**Charlie Dewhirst:**[\[22191\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many of the reviews by Departments of public bodies in the financial year 2023/24 as part of the Public Bodies Review Programme (a) have been completed, (b) remain outstanding and (c) have been abandoned.

Georgia Gould:

Of the 50 public body reviews planned for 2023/24, 34 were completed. Nine remain in progress and seven are currently paused as the team progresses other work to deliver value for money.

■ Senior Civil Servants: Recruitment**Charlie Dewhirst:**[\[22196\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 11 November 2024, to Question 5280, on Senior Civil Servants: Recruitment, if he will list each of the (a) job

titles and (b) associated unit of the Senior Civil Service roles that were not open to external candidates.

Georgia Gould:

I refer the honourable member to the answer provided on 11 November. We are unable to provide a more detailed breakdown without individuals potentially being identifiable.

■ **Special Advisers: FDA**

Charlie Dewhirst: [\[22193\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many special advisers have affiliated to the First Division Association; and whether special advisers are a collective bargaining unit.

Georgia Gould:

Details of Trade Union memberships are not held by Civil Service employers. I refer to PQ 5303, which confirmed that there are currently no collective bargaining agreements for Special Advisers.

■ **Special Advisers: Pay**

Charlie Dewhirst: [\[22188\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to his Department's publication entitled Special adviser data releases: numbers and costs, November 2024, published on 28 November 2024, for what reason his Department has not published the list of special adviser salaries for the current administration; and if he will publish the current list of special advisers before the end of the calendar year.

Georgia Gould:

As was the case under the previous administration, annual reports on special advisers relate to the preceding financial year.

The Annual Report on Special Advisers published on 28 November 2024, therefore relates to the 2023/24 financial year.

The 2025 Annual Report on Special Advisers, which will relate to the 2024/25 financial year, will be published before the end of this year.

■ **State Retirement Pensions: Women**

Kirsty Blackman: [\[22905\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 8 January 2025 to Question 21320 on written representations to the Department of Work and Pensions, whether there have been changes to the directions to Government departments on the logging of enquiries from (a) MPs and (b) Members of the devolved Parliaments and Assemblies.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

The Guide to Handling Correspondence, owned by the Cabinet Office and published on GOV.UK, sets out the guidance for Government departments to follow when handling correspondence from MPs and Members of the devolved Parliaments and Assemblies. The guidance was last updated in 2021.

■ Temporary Accommodation: Pilot Schemes**Paula Barker:**[\[22363\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he has had discussions with local authorities on the provision of temporary accommodation for test-and-learn pilots.

Georgia Gould:

The Test & Learns are a new way of working. The Cabinet Office, in close partnership with MHCLG, will be working across government and with local partners to codesign the detailed approach to the allocation of the Public Services and Innovation Fund in early 2025. We will partner with the Local Government Association (LGA) on this process. The initial projects include work on temporary accommodation with Liverpool City Council and the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and Essex County Council.

Paula Barker:[\[22364\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the press notice entitled Pat McFadden vows to make the state more like a start up as he deploys reform teams across country, published on 9 December 2024, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on sharing the lessons learned from his Department's temporary accommodation pilot with the Inter-Ministerial Group on Homelessness.

Georgia Gould:

In December the Government launched the £100 million Innovation Fund to pioneer Public Service Reform by deploying new test-and-learn teams around the country to find innovative ways to fix some of our biggest challenges, including temporary accommodation.

My officials are working closely with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on this programme, ensuring they build on and complement the extensive programme of work the Secretary of State is taking forward on temporary accommodation and homelessness, including the Emergency Accommodation Reduction Pilots announced on 18 December 2024. I am a member of the Deputy Prime Minister's Inter Ministerial Group on homeless and temporary accommodation. I have also met with the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Homelessness and Rough Sleeping and we have jointly met with council leaders to discuss this issue.

Trialling new, innovative ways of doing government is right at the heart of the Public Service Reform agenda, and we will be sharing the lessons learned from our pilots across government, including with the Inter-Ministerial Group on Homelessness.

■ UK Relations with EU

Tim Roca: [\[22499\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of establishing an independent inquiry into options for the future UK-EU relationship.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

The Government was elected on the basis of a manifesto commitment to reset the UK's relations with the European Union, including through a broad-based security pact and tackling barriers to trade. There are no plans to establish an independent inquiry into options for the future UK-EU relationship. As we move forward, we recognise the importance of maintaining an effective dialogue with Parliament, industry leaders, trade unions and civil society.

■ UK Relations with EU: Trade Barriers

Ben Maguire: [\[22539\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will make an assessment of the potential (a) merits and (b) impact on trade barriers of re-joining the EU (i) single market and (ii) customs union.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

The Government is resetting the relationship with our European friends to strengthen ties and tackle barriers to trade. We have been clear that there will be no return to the customs union or the single market.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ 11 Downing Street: Art Works

John Glen: [\[20953\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 22 October 2024 to Question 8809 on 11 Downing Street: Art Works, what was the cost to the public purse of removing the artworks.

Chris Bryant:

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, so all costs are met from within existing budgets. All the newly installed artworks are part of the Government Art Collection, and no works have been acquired or procured for this new display. The whole collection, which is about to celebrate its 125th anniversary, shows great British art at its best in ministerial offices, departments, museums, galleries, embassies and consulates. Its diversity is a key part of its appeal and its championing of British art at home and abroad.

■ Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme

Lisa Smart:

[\[22125\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of the scheduled ending of the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme in March 2025 on local projects aimed at restoring listed places of worship; and what alternative sources of support her Department plans to provide to ensure the continued preservation and restoration of historic buildings.

Chris Bryant:

The Department monitors the implementation and impact of the grant scheme through the regular reporting of the grant administrator. Since 2010, the grant scheme has returned over £350 million to listed places of worship. We are aware of the importance of the scheme to local projects and listed places of worship across the UK.

Departmental settlements have been set following the Budget announcement on October 30. We will announce the outcomes of the Business Planning process, including for the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme soon.

■ Official Residences: Government Art Collection

Charlie Dewhirst:

[\[22187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 4 December 2024 to Question 16604 on 11 Downing Street: Art Works, if she will publish a corresponding list of the reference numbers of Government Art Collection works that have been (a) added and (b) removed from the (i) 10 Downing Street and (ii) the Prime Minister's Ministerial residence since 4 July 2024.

Chris Bryant:

No. It is standard practice, as followed by the previous government, 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.

■ Tourism: Buses

Alex Mayer:

[\[22176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department has made a recent assessment of the level of contribution of coaches to the tourism industry.

Chris Bryant:

Coaches are a really important part of the tourism industry, enabling millions of people every year to go on day-trips, visit heritage sites, go to the theatre or travel around the UK, often at affordable prices. We remain committed to collaborating with

stakeholders to strengthen our partnerships and promote sustainable growth within the sector.

DEFENCE

■ Amphibious Vehicles

David Reed: [\[21931\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 5 December 2024 to Question 17476 on Amphibious Vehicles, whether his Department has identified reductions in amphibious capability from the use of Bay Class Landing Ship Docks in place of HMS Albion and HMS Bulwark.

Luke Pollard:

The previous administration had no plans for either HMS Albion or HMS Bulwark to return to sea ahead of their leaving service in the 2030s, therefore there has been no reduction in capability.

The Bay Class are highly capable ships and, alongside RFA Argus, will continue to support Royal Marine operations until the introduction of Multi-Role Support Ships in the early 2030s.

■ Aquind: Electricity Interconnectors

Suella Braverman: [\[22049\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to protect national security in the context of the AQUIND interconnector project.

Maria Eagle:

Aquind's application for a development consent order in respect of their proposed project is subject to an ongoing re-determination process led by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, to which the Ministry of Defence is contributing.

■ Armed Forces and Defence Equipment

Mr Mark Francois: [\[22889\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, for what reason the annual armed forces equipment and formations statistics was not published on 31 October 2024.

Mr Mark Francois: [\[22890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what his planned timetable is for publishing his Department's annual statistics on armed forces equipment and formations.

James Cartlidge: [\[22968\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what his planned timetable is for publishing his Department's annual statistics on armed forces equipment.

James Cartlidge: [22969]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, for what reason have the annual armed forces equipment statistics not been published.

Maria Eagle:

The UK Armed Forces Equipment and Formations 2024 publication has been delayed due to a data quality review and has a provisional release date of February 2025. This is stated in the Statistics release calendar: [UK armed forces equipment and formations 2024 - Accredited official statistics announcement - GOV.UK](#)

■ Defence: Vocational Guidance

James Cartlidge: [22950]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has had recent discussions with the Secretary of State for Education on the potential impact of protest-related activity on university campuses on the ability of defence companies to participate in careers fairs.

Maria Eagle:

This Government recognises the critical importance of attracting new entrants into the defence sector, in order to ensure we have the skilled workforce needed to sustain a vibrant, innovation and competitive UK defence industrial base.

The Ministry of Defence is working closely with the Department for Education and Skills England to address the skills landscape in the defence sector. The Defence Industrial Strategy will further progress the Government's commitment to ensuring the UK defence sector has the right people and skills to meet the challenges of the future.

■ Diego Garcia: Military Bases

James Cartlidge: [22962]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what proportion of the cost of leasing the Diego Garcia military base will be covered by the United States.

Luke Pollard:

The Diego Garcia military base is a joint UK-US facility and is an essential part of the UK-US defence relationship. It is not normal practice for the UK to reveal the value of its payments for military bases anywhere across the globe.

James Cartlidge: [22963]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussion he has had with representatives of the United States administration on the cost to US armed forces of the leaseback of the Diego Garcia military base as part of the Chagos settlement.

Luke Pollard:

The Defence Secretary is in regular contact with Secretary Austin on a range of issues, including the British Indian Ocean Territory / Chagos Archipelago. The Diego

Garcia military base is a joint UK-US facility and is an essential part of the UK-US defence relationship.

■ HMS Albion and HMS Bulwark

James Cartlidge:

[\[22951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the oral contribution by the Minister for Defence Procurement and Industry of 6 January 2025, Official Report, column 586, what the disposal plan is for (a) HMS Albion and (b) HMS Bulwark.

Maria Eagle:

HMS Albion and HMS Bulwark are currently laid up awaiting disposal. Both ships require costly and time-consuming refits, and as such, were not considered a cost-effective use of taxpayers' money.

The Royal Navy is exploring options to sell both HMS Albion and HMS Bulwark in a government-to-government sale. These vessels had, in effect, been retired by the previous Government. Their sale will save £9M a year in maintenance costs in addition to the receipt from the sale, unlocking as much funding as possible to invest in modernisation, as well as reinforcing relationships with international partners.

■ Ministry of Defence Guard Service: Northern Ireland

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[22883\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, which Army Reserve Centres are envisaged to require armed guarding in Northern Ireland after 2028.

Luke Pollard:

Following a review of the guarding of Army Reserve Centres (ARCs) in Northern Ireland, we have concluded that an armed guard for 13 of the 15 ARCs is no longer appropriate to the current threat and does not align with the normalisation of the Army's presence in Northern Ireland. As such, the Army is working to implement a change, via consultation, to the guarding levels of the identified 13 ARCs from armed guarding to enhanced physical security measures.

The safety of personnel remains the top priority, and no sites will transition from armed guarding to physical security measures unless deemed safe to do so and with the necessary infrastructure in place. The initial phase of this work will see the first sites set to transition to the physical security guarding level by September 2025, once infrastructure enhancements are complete, with an intent to complete all sites by 2028. The two sites set to continue with armed guarding are Caw Camp and Dunmore.

A briefing to interested parliamentarians will be scheduled shortly to provide further details and to answer any questions about these changes.

■ Ministry of Defence: Written Questions**Mr Peter Bedford:**[\[22516\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he plans to answer Question 18061, tabled by the hon. Member for Mid Leicestershire on 4 December 2024 for answer on 9 December 2024.

Al Carns:

I will respond to the hon. Member shortly.

■ Russia: Chemical Weapons**Mr Mark Francois:**[\[21978\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of alleged reports that Russia has used chemical weapons in Ukraine .

Luke Pollard:

The Ministry of Defence continues to assess and monitor the evolving threat picture in Ukraine, including illegal Russian use of chemicals as a method of warfare. Russia has publicly admitted to the use of Riot Control Agents (RCAs) on the battlefield against Ukraine, and there are multiple reports of the use of the toxic choking agent chloropicrin. In December last year, a Technical Report confirming the use of Riot Control Agents in Ukraine was published by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

The UK has been at the forefront of international support and assistance to Ukraine and has previously provided respirators and decontamination kits to the Armed Forces of Ukraine, as well as other protective measures to enhance Ukraine's protective capabilities against chemical weapons. In December 2024, following a direct request for UK Assistance by Ukraine, the Ministry of Defence announced a further assistance package including funding for the procurement of respirators and other equipment to protect Ukraine's forces. This is being procured jointly with international partners through the G7 led Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons of Mass Destruction.

Our commitment to Ukraine is unwavering and we continue to work closely with our international partners, both bilaterally and in multilateral forums, to coordinate counter-CBRN support and assistance to Ukraine.

■ USA: Intelligence Services**Carla Denyer:**[\[22146\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has had discussions with representatives of the Five Eyes on the potential implications for that community of President-elect Donald Trump's plan to appoint Tulsi Gabbard as US Director of National Intelligence.

Luke Pollard:

The US is our closest security ally and, as you would expect, we maintain an open and ongoing dialogue on a range of defence issues. The intelligence we share bilaterally and through alliances such as the Five Eyes is fundamental to our own national security.

EDUCATION■ **Educational Institutions: Air Conditioning****Laurence Turner:****[R] [22210]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many air cleaning units were provided to education facilities in (a) Birmingham Northfield constituency, (b) Birmingham, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England since 2020.

Stephen Morgan:

Between January 2022 and April 2023, the department provided over 9,000 air cleaning units to over 1,300 education and childcare settings that had been identified with poor ventilation.

Four air cleaning units were provided to education settings in the Birmingham Northfield constituency, 269 units were provided to education settings in the Birmingham City Council area and 996 units were provided to education settings in the West Midlands. In total, 8,848 air cleaning units were delivered to education settings in England. These figures do not include units provided to early years settings.

The department has published guidance on how to use CO₂ monitors and air cleaning units, which can be accessed here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/using-co-monitors-and-air-cleaning-units-in-education-and-care-settings>.

■ **Poverty: Children****Liam Conlon:****[22162]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the child poverty strategy will include specific measures to help tackle child poverty amongst (a) disabled and (b) other groups that are most affected.

Catherine McKinnell:

The Child Poverty Taskforce, of which my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education is Co-Chair, is considering all children across the United Kingdom as it develops the child poverty strategy. We recognise different groups of children, including disabled children, have distinct challenges. The causes of child poverty are deep-rooted, with solutions that go beyond government, and the Taskforce is exploring all available levers in response.

The strategy will look at levers across four key themes of increasing incomes, reducing essential costs, increasing financial resilience, and better local support

especially in the early years. The terms of reference for the Child Poverty Taskforce were published on 14 August 2024 and can be accessed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/child-poverty-taskforce-terms-of-reference>.

■ Pupils: Cerebral Palsy

Liam Conlon:

[22163]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to help improve support for children with cerebral palsy in education settings.

Catherine McKinnell:

This government is committed to strengthening the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) system for all children and young people, including those with cerebral palsy, to ensure they receive the right support to succeed in their education and as they move into adult life.

The department will be improving inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools and colleges, as well as ensuring special settings cater to those with the most complex needs, restoring parents' trust that their child will get the support they need. This includes strengthening accountability for inclusivity, including through Ofsted, and encouraging schools to set up resourced provision or special educational needs units to increase capacity in mainstream schools.

High-quality teaching in schools is central to ensuring that all pupils are given the best possible opportunity to achieve. The department is committed to recruiting an additional 6,500 new expert teachers over the course of this Parliament. To support all teachers, the department is implementing a range of teacher training reforms to ensure teachers have the skills to support all pupils to succeed, including those with cerebral palsy.

The department is providing almost £1 billion more for high needs budgets in the 2025/26 financial year, bringing total high needs funding to £11.9 billion. This funding will help local authorities and schools with the increasing costs of supporting children and young people with complex SEND. The department has also announced £740 million of high needs capital funding for the 2025/26 financial year to invest in places for children and young people with SEND or who require alternative provision.

The department has also introduced a new mandatory leadership level qualification to enhance the training of special educational needs co-ordinators in mainstream schools.

■ Schools: Admissions

Damian Hinds:

[21578]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department is collecting data on trends in the number of in-year school applications in each local authority area.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department does not collect data on the number of in-year school admission applications received in each local authority area.

Admission authorities must notify their local authority of all in-year applications they receive and their outcomes.

Local authorities are not required to co-ordinate the in-year admissions process for schools in their area for which they are not the admission authority, although some local authorities choose to do so. In areas where the local authority does not co-ordinate in-year admissions, schools which are their own admission authority manage their own in-year admissions processes and parents must submit their applications directly to the admission authorities of the schools they wish to apply.

Schools: Dental Health**Jo White:**[\[22158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what progress she has made on introducing tooth brushing lessons in primary schools.

Stephen Morgan:

The department is working with the Department of Health and Social Care to help promote and deliver supervised toothbrushing programmes for 3 to 5-year-olds in the most deprived communities.

The department recognises that prevention is better than cure. For this reason, we will be targeting the areas of highest need to have the greatest impact on young children's oral health.

Further information on the implementation timetable will be confirmed in due course.

Currently all state-funded schools in England are required to teach about good oral hygiene as part of the statutory health education set out within relationships, sex and health education statutory guidance. Independent schools are required to cover health education as part of their responsibility to provide personal, social, health and economic education.

Schools: Educational Visits**Alex Mayer:**[\[22175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department holds data on the number of coaches booked by schools for (a) cultural and (b) sports trips in (i) 2024 to date and (ii) the last five years.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department does not hold data on the number of coaches booked by schools, including for (a) cultural and (b) sports trips.

■ Schools: Sports

Mr Louie French:

[\[22724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether it is her policy to continue the Opening Schools Facilities funding.

Catherine McKinnell:

This government is determined to create the healthiest generation ever and break down the barriers to opportunity for every child.

We are working across government to ensure that our funding is coherent and effectively contributes to a lasting and sustainable impact on children's physical activity levels and the provision of more opportunities for all children to participate in sport. The work sits alongside that of other system levers, for instance the Curriculum and Assessment Review which is examining how to deliver a curriculum which is rich and broad, so that children and young people do not miss out on subjects such as sport.

The Opening School Facilities programme will end in March as planned. The learning from the programme will help inform the department's ongoing work to support high-quality PE, school sport and physical activity for all pupils.

■ Special Educational Needs: Medical Examinations

Charlotte Cane:

[\[21803\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to increase access to assessments for Special Educational Needs.

Catherine McKinnell:

This government's ambition is that all children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) or in alternative provision receive the right support to succeed in their education and as they move into adult life.

Through a graduated approach, it is the responsibility of teachers to monitor the progress of all pupils and put support in place where needed. Where a child who has special educational needs requires more support than the school they are in can usually provide, schools, parents or carers can ask the local authority to carry out an education, health and care (EHC) needs assessment.

The department recognises the critical role of educational psychologists within the SEND system, including in their statutory contribution to EHC assessments. To support this, the department is investing over £21 million to train 400 more educational psychologists from 2024. This builds on the £10 million currently being invested in a cohort of over 200 trainees who began their training in September 2023. As these trainees complete their studies, they will join the workforce to support the capacity of local authority educational psychology services, including in delivering assessments.

■ Special Educational Needs: Visual Impairment

James Naish:

[\[22106\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of Vision Impairment education services; and what assessment she has made of the potential implications for her policies of the recommendations proposed by the report entitled A Vision for VI education by the Thomas Pocklington Trust, published in September 2024.

Catherine McKinnell:

For too long the education and care system has not met the needs of all children, particularly those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and this includes pupils with vision impairment. This government's ambition is that all children and young people receive the right support to succeed in their education and as they move into adult life. We are committed to improving inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools, as well as ensuring special schools cater to those with the most complex needs, restoring parents' trust that their child will get the support they need.

Whilst we recognise the urgency and need to drive improvements for children and young people with SEND, we are conscious that there are no quick fixes and want to take a considered approach to deliver sustainable education reform. We are aware that we cannot achieve this alone and want to work with organisations across the SEND sector, including the Thomas Pocklington Trust (TPT), as essential and valued partners to deliver our shared mission. We therefore welcome TPT's report entitled "A Vision for VI education" and are reviewing their recommendations.

■ Teachers: Recruitment

Mike Wood:

[\[22027\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the policy paper entitled Plan for Change, published on 5 December 2024, CP1210, at what grades new teachers will be recruited; and if she will publish recruitment targets by subject area.

Catherine McKinnell:

Recruiting and retaining more qualified, expert teachers is critical to the government's mission to break down barriers to opportunity and boost the life chances for every child. The within school factor that makes the biggest difference to a young person's educational outcome is high-quality teaching. Yet this government has inherited a system with critical shortages of teachers with numbers not keeping pace with demographic changes.

This is why the government has set out the ambition to recruit 6,500 new expert teachers across our schools, both mainstream and specialist, and our colleges over the course of this Parliament, including targeting shortage subjects.

The department will continue to work alongside the sector as it develops its delivery plan and seeks to re-establish teaching as an attractive profession. The department's

measures will include getting more teachers into shortage subjects, supporting areas that face recruitment challenges and tackling retention issues.

The department has already made good early progress towards this key pledge by accepting in full the 5.5% pay award, by expanding our 'Every Lesson Shapes a Life' recruitment campaign, by making £233 million available for bursaries in 2025/26 and by doubling retention payments for new teachers of mathematics, physics, chemistry and computing working in disadvantaged schools.

However, the best recruitment strategy is a retention strategy to ensure teachers stay and thrive in the profession. This is why the department is doing more to support workload and wellbeing. This includes introducing new report cards to replace Ofsted single-word judgements to provide parents with a clear picture of their schools and proportionate accountability for schools, allowing teacher's planning, preparation and assessment time to be taken from home and making key resources to support well-being, developed with school leaders, available to teachers.

■ Young Futures Hubs

Munira Wilson:

[\[22086\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what age ranges Young Futures hubs will work with.

Janet Daby:

The government is committed to breaking down barriers to opportunity. Too many children and young people today do not have access to the same enrichment opportunities as their peers, suffer from poor mental health and, in some cases, end up being drawn into crime rather than going on to achieve and thrive.

Young Futures Hubs will bring together the support services that tackle underlying needs and make them more accessible to those that need them. The department is engaging with local areas, communities, statutory partners, charities and other key stakeholders to support the design of the Young Futures Hubs, including the specific age-range they will serve. The department will share further information in due course.

■ Young Futures Hubs: Rural Areas

Stuart Anderson:

[\[22075\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many youth hubs will be established in rural areas.

Janet Daby:

The government is committed to breaking down barriers to success and opportunity. Too many children and young people today do not have access to the same enrichment opportunities as their peers, suffer from poor mental health, and, in some cases, end up being drawn into crime rather than going on to achieve and thrive.

Young Futures Hubs will bring together services to improve access to opportunities and support for young people at community level, promoting positive outcomes and enabling them to thrive. Ensuring young people from rural areas are included in the rollout of Young Futures Hubs is incredibly important.

As part of the development process, the department is engaging with local areas, communities, statutory partners, charities and other key stakeholders to support the design of the Young Futures Hubs and explore options for their delivery. This will ensure we are making use of the vast knowledge and experience that already exists, and will include considerations of the most suitable locations, as well as how best to engage with those young people who would benefit most from their support. The number of Young Futures Hubs, their specific locations and their reach are still being determined, and we will share further information regarding these Hubs in due course.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

■ Geoengineering

James Naish:

[\[22117\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether the Government (a) participates in and (b) funds geoengineering activities; what information his Department holds on organisations in the UK which participate in geoengineering; and whether he plans to introduce regulations on geoengineering.

Kerry McCarthy:

Geoengineering can be considered to include both greenhouse gas removal technologies (GGRs) and solar radiation modification (SRM). GGRs are important for achieving Net Zero. Government is developing GGR Business Models to incentivise private investment in large-scale projects, and funds small-scale demonstrator projects [1] All projects are subject to relevant Environment Agency and local government regulations. The Government is not deploying SRM and has no plans to do so however it funds modelling research to understand the potential impacts of SRM deployment. Currently there are no UK or international laws specifically governing SRM, but numerous relevant legal frameworks and principles exist [2]

[1] <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/direct-air-capture-and-greenhouse-gas-removal-innovation-programme-selected-projects>

[2] <https://co-create-project.eu/publication/scoping-note-on-applicable-legal-frameworks/>

■ National Grid: Brecon, Radnor and Cwm Tawe

David Chadwick:

[22836]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how many properties are not connected to the national (a) gas and (b) electricity grid in Brecon, Radnor and Cwm Tawe constituency.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Department publishes estimates of the number of [domestic properties not connected to the gas network](#) in Great Britain by constituency. In 2023, an estimated 19,000 domestic properties (41%) in Brecon, Radnor and Cwm Tawe constituency were not connected to the gas network. Equivalent figures for the electricity network are not published.

■ Renewable Energy

Mike Wood:

[22028]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to page 6 of the publication entitled Plan for Change: Milestones for mission-led government, what metrics his Department will use to track the commitment to generate at least 95% clean power by 2030.

Michael Shanks:

The Government will take a whole-system approach towards measuring progress towards our Clean Power 2030 target, including tracking power generation, transmission and distribution infrastructure, in addition to the development of flexible power production, consumption and smart demand.

■ Renewable Fuels: Public Consultation

Rachel Gilmour:

[22491]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to deliver a consultation on technical issues associated with renewable liquid heating fuel under Section 159 of the Energy Act 2023.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

As sustainable biomass is a limited resource, the Government expects to prioritise its use in sectors like aviation which have fewest options to decarbonise. Renewable liquid heating fuels (RLHF) are also much more expensive to use than other heating solutions.

Before taking decisions on whether to support the use of RLHFs, like hydrotreated vegetable oil, in heating, the Government would require stronger evidence on their affordability for consumers, and the availability of sustainable feedstocks.

■ Social Rented Housing: Boiler Upgrade Scheme

Mohammad Yasin:

[\[22343\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of extending the boiler upgrade scheme to social housing tenants.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Boiler Upgrade Scheme provides support to property owners in England and Wales to replace their existing fossil fuel boiler with a low carbon alternative by providing grants to reduce the total cost of the installation.

Other government schemes provide support for low-income households including social housing tenants to get a heat pump, such as the Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund and Warm Homes: Local Grant, Energy Company Obligation, Local Authority Delivery and Home Upgrade Grant.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Agriculture: Lincolnshire

Sir John Hayes:

[\[23124\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the contribution of farming to the economy of (a) South Holland and the Deepings constituency and (b) Lincolnshire.

Daniel Zeichner:

Regional estimates of total income from farming are produced at international territorial levels (ITL) 1, 2 and 3, with ITL3 being the most granular geographical breakdown. As such, the specific breakdown requested for part a) of the question is not available.

In 2023, total income from farming for Lincolnshire was £579.17 million.

■ Animal Welfare

Jess Brown-Fuller:

[\[22536\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of the conclusions within his Department's Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018 Post Implementation Review 2024, published in December 2024; and whether he plans to introduce regulatory requirements and conditions relating to cat breeding.

Daniel Zeichner:

Under the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018 (the 2018 Regulations), anyone in the business of breeding and selling cats as pets needs to have a valid licence issued by their local authority.

Licensees must meet strict statutory minimum welfare standards which are enforced by local authorities who have powers to issue, refuse, vary or revoke licences.

The Government is considering the findings of its post-implementation review of the 2018 Regulations and will be outlining more detail on next steps in due course.

■ Cats and Dogs: Animal Breeding

Steve Darling: [\[22398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the impact of breeding for extreme conformations on the health and welfare of (a) dogs and (b) cats.

Daniel Zeichner:

To provide a detailed scientific view on the range of issues faced by breeding dogs and cats, the Department commissioned two Opinions from the Government's Animal Welfare Committee. One Opinion assesses the welfare implications of specialised canine reproductive practices, and one on the welfare implications of current and emergent feline breeding practices. The Opinions can be found here: [Animal Welfare Committee \(AWC\) - GOV.UK](#).

■ Deer: Hunting

Jayne Kirkham: [\[20407\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will review the use of exemptions within the Hunting Act 2004 for stag hunting.

Mary Creagh:

This Government was elected on a mandate to introduce the most ambitious plans in a generation to improve animal welfare and that is exactly what we will do. The Government has already committed to a ban on trail hunting which will provide significant protections to wild animals including foxes and hares. Work to determine the best approach for doing so is ongoing and further announcements will be made in due course.

■ Dogs: Electronic Training Aids

Dr Allison Gardner: [\[22850\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department plans to ban the (a) sale and (b) use of shock collars for dogs.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Government will introduce the most ambitious programme for animal welfare in a generation and will bring forward plans in due course. Ministers will be considering available evidence around the use of hand-controlled e-collars and their effects on the welfare of animals.

■ Flood Control: South Ribble**Mr Paul Foster:**[\[23037\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much has been spent on flood prevention works to protect the village of Croston in South Ribble constituency in the last five years; and what funds are allocated for future improvements.

Emma Hardy:

Protecting communities around the country from flooding is one of the Secretary of State's five core priorities.

To ensure we protect the country from the devastating impacts of flooding, the Government will invest £2.4 billion in 2024/25 and 2025/26 to improve flood resilience by maintaining, repairing and building flood defences.

In South Ribble, the £7.3 million Croston Flood Scheme was completed in 2017 - protecting 438 properties. In the last 5 years (2019 -2024) there has been a further investment of around £500,000 for reconditioning projects, electricity running costs and repair works for the scheme and flood defence in Croston Village. An additional £42,000 is planned for 2024/25.

■ Floods: Leicester**Shivani Raja:**[\[23035\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support communities affected by recent flooding in Leicester; and whether he plans to make a flood recovery grant available to local authorities.

Emma Hardy:

Protecting communities around the country from flooding is one of the Secretary of State's five core priorities. This Government will invest £2.4 billion in 2024/25 and 2025/26 to improve flood resilience by maintaining, repairing and building flood defences.

During recent flooding, the Environment Agency has been operating flood assets and working with local partners across England to prevent and reduce the severity of the flooding.

In Leicester, the Environment Agency will continue to deploy officers to affected communities to assess the impacts of flooding to properties and businesses. It will also continue to work with the local resilience forum to identify further opportunities to reduce flood risk in Leicestershire and support the resilience of communities to flooding.

There are no plans to activate Defra's Property Flood Resilience grant scheme as the current scale of flooding has not met the threshold for its activation. Local Authorities should have contingencies in place for flooding and be able to provide support through their normal mechanisms.

■ Marine Environment: Licensing

Neil Duncan-Jordan: [\[22228\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to reform the marine licensing process.

Emma Hardy:

The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) is responsible for the operation of the marine licensing system. With Defra, the MMO seeks continuous improvement to ensure the system is streamlined, cost effective and proportionate, and supports economic growth and the delivery of environmental benefits. Defra is considering options for future reform which would be subject to stakeholder consultation in due course.

■ Nuclear Power: Regulation

Josh MacAlister: [\[22734\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of issuing a Regulation 12 determination under the Justification of Practices Involving Ionising Radiation Regulations 2004 confirming that the use of ionising radiation for the generation of electricity from nuclear energy using oxide fuel of low enrichment in fissile content in light water cooled, water moderated thermal reactors is considered an Existing Practice for projects such as those proposed by Great British Nuclear.

Emma Hardy:

In his role as Justifying Authority for nuclear energy, the Secretary of State can consider a broad class or type of practice under Regulation 12 of the Justification of Practices Involving Ionising Radiation Regulations 2004. A determination to justify a broad class or type of practice would assume that all potential nuclear reactor designs in scope of that class or type of practice would result in a similar balance of benefits and detriments. Where there is sufficient evidence to make such an assessment, the Justifying Authority remains open to the possibility of accommodating a broader range of designs in a class or type of practice when assessing justification applications.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Afghanistan: Women's Rights

Lisa Smart: [\[902157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps he is taking to help support the rights of women in Afghanistan.

Anneliese Dodds:

We condemn the Taliban's destruction of nearly every element of women and girls' freedoms. FCDO officials engage with the Taliban to urge them to reverse their

barbaric decisions and we work with our international partners to maintain collective pressure. The UK uses its prominent position in multilateral forums, such as the UN Security Council, to hold the Taliban to account for their deeply repressive policies.

■ Alaa Abd El-Fattah

Siân Berry: [\[902162\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help secure the release of Alaa Abd El-Fattah.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

We are committed to securing Mr El-Fattah's release so he can be reunited with his family and we continue to raise his case at the highest levels of the Egyptian government. The Prime Minister wrote to President Sisi on 26 December 2024 and 8 January 2025. The Foreign Secretary and National Security Adviser Jonathan Powell raised this case with Egyptian Foreign Minister Abdelatty on 12 January and 2 January respectively.

■ Amazonia: Rainforests

Satvir Kaur: [\[21168\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Brazilian counterpart on the (a) protection of the Amazon rainforest and (b) restoration of rainforest habitats destroyed by wildfires.

Catherine West:

The UK government is boosting its relationships with Brazilian ministers to prioritise the protection of the Amazon. The Foreign Secretary and Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero regularly underline our shared climate ambitions, including protection of the Amazon rainforest, with their counterparts in calls and meetings. The UK also supports a variety of programmes aimed at preventing deforestation and restoring rainforests destroyed by wildfires. In Ecuador and Peru, we are contributing up to £12.3 million through the Andes-Amazon Biodiverse Landscape Fund and in Brazil, through the Amazon Fund (£80 million contributed, £35 million committed).

■ Australia: Antisemitism

Alex Easton: [\[22493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Australian counterpart on (a) the arson attack on the Adass Israel Synagogue in Melbourne and (b) changes in the level of antisemitic incidents in Australia,.

Catherine West:

We regularly discuss issues relating to Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) with Australia. We condemn antisemitism globally and welcome the Australian government's condemnation of the global rise in antisemitism, as well as specific

incidents in Australia. We will continue to work closely with allies like Australia to counter the rise of antisemitism in our own societies and globally.

■ **Bashar al-Assad**

Mary Glendon:

[\[902158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his Department's policies of the overthrow of President Bashar al-Assad in Syria.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The situation in Syria remains fluid, and clearly has wide-ranging implications for UK policy. Our top priorities have been to prevent further escalation, especially in the North East; support an inclusive Syrian-led political transition; and ensure continued humanitarian access.

■ **British Indian Ocean Territory: Sovereignty**

Wendy Morton:

[\[22626\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what (a) engagement and (b) consultation he (i) has had and (ii) plans to have with parliamentarians on the treaty with Mauritius on the British Indian Ocean Territory.

Stephen Doughty:

As well as responding to numerous parliamentary and urgent questions regarding negotiations with Mauritius around the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) treaty. In December 2024 I met with the Chagos All party Parliamentary Group (APPG) where I briefed members of both houses on the deal. That month Baroness Chapman briefed Liberal Democrat Peers and Harriet Matthews, deputy chief negotiator for the BIOT treaty, briefed the Foreign Affairs Committee. In November 2024 the Foreign Secretary also appeared before the commons select committee on Foreign Affairs.

Later this month I will be briefing the Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories APPG where I will further answer questions around the treaty.

■ **Caribbean Community: Foreign Relations**

Adam Jogee:

[\[22438\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many times Ministers in his Department have engaged with the leadership of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) since 5 July 2024.

Catherine West:

The Foreign Secretary spoke with the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretary General, Dr Carla Barnett, on 15 August. The Foreign Secretary expressed solidarity with the Caribbean following Hurricane Beryl. They also discussed the situation in Haiti and reaffirm the deep UK-CARICOM relationship, including the need to advance the UK-CARICOM Memorandum of Understanding. During visits to Grenada and

Barbados, the Minister for Latin America and the Caribbean had a bilateral meeting with the then Chair of CARICOM, Prime Minister Dickon Mitchell of Grenada. They discussed a number of issues, including disaster preparedness, climate finance and the ongoing challenges in Haiti.

■ China: Foreign Relations

Wendy Morton: [\[22280\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans an audit of the UK's relationship with China.

Catherine West:

Work on the audit is underway, due to conclude in spring 2025. The China audit will examine the UK's interests with respect to China. This will improve our ability to understand and respond to the challenges and opportunities China poses. Parliament will be informed of the findings once the audit has concluded.

■ Detainees

Claire Young: [\[22166\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking with his international counterparts to help tackle extra-judicial imprisonment.

Anneliese Dodds:

The UK is committed to working with partners bilaterally, and at the UN, to end arbitrary detention, advocate for those who have been arbitrarily detained, and demand accountability. The UK is a vocal supporter of the Canadian initiative against the use of arbitrary detention in state-to-state relations. Minister Falconer recently met the US Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs to discuss this issue. Through the Rule of Law Expertise (ROLE UK) programme the FCDO is working in partnership with stakeholders across the legal, judicial and development sectors to promote and strengthen the rule of law around the world.

■ Development Aid: Climate Change

Anna Sabine: [\[22217\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will take steps to ensure that UK international climate finance reaches (a) children and (b) communities most vulnerable to climate change.

Anneliese Dodds:

Our international climate finance continues to prioritise support to the most vulnerable communities who are experiencing the worst impacts of climate change, including children. In addition, we are committed to amplifying the voices of the most marginalised, empowering them as decision-makers, advocates and leaders in the climate response, ensuring gender and other factors including age and disability are a key part of our policy and programming. At COP29, I championed gender-

responsive and inclusive international climate finance and policy, announcing over £5.8 million to support women's economic empowerment and social norms change and to build the resilience of women's rights organisations against climate threats.

■ Diplomatic Immunity

Chris Law: [\[20632\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many Special Mission Immunity certificates have been (a) applied for by and (b) granted to each state since 4 March 2013.

Catherine West:

Government officials from any country can apply for and be granted special mission certificates as part of official visits to the UK. As set out in a Written Ministerial Statement by the former Foreign Secretary dated 4 March 2013, a special mission is a temporary mission, representing a State, which is sent by one State to another with the consent of the latter, in order to carry out official engagements on behalf of the sending State. Since 4 March 2013, the FCDO has received 68 requests for special missions, of which certificates were issued for visits from the following states: Egypt 35 certificates, Iran 1 certificate, Israel 16 certificates, Qatar 2 certificates, Rwanda 1 certificate and Saudi Arabia 3 certificates. Certificates were not issued for visits that did not meet the criteria for special missions, as set out by the former Foreign Secretary in 2013.

■ Gaza: Ceasefires

Mary Glendon: [\[22604\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent diplomatic steps he has taken to encourage a ceasefire in Gaza.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

Since day one, this government has been clear that we need to see an immediate ceasefire, the release of all hostages cruelly detained by Hamas, better protection of civilians, significantly more aid consistently entering Gaza, and a path to long-term peace and stability. The UK has been clear that Israel must act in accordance with international humanitarian law and protect civilians. The war must end, and both sides need to show flexibility and do a deal now. We support the efforts of the US, Egyptian and Qatari negotiators and call on the parties to return to the negotiation table in a meaningful way. The Foreign Secretary met with Foreign Minister Sa'ar in Israel on 13 January, and stressed to him the urgent need for an immediate ceasefire with all restrictions on aid to Gaza lifted. We continue to raise issues of international humanitarian law compliance in Gaza with the Israeli Government. I raised this with the Israeli Government on 27 December.

■ Middle East: Armed Conflict**Wendy Morton:** [\[21995\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking with international partners to facilitate mediation between parties to reduce conflict in the Middle East.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK works closely with regional and international partners to reduce conflict in the Middle East. The UK is at the forefront of the response to fast moving events in Syria, engaging regularly with international partners to support a Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political transition process leading to an inclusive, non-sectarian and representative government and reduced conflict. The UK supports political efforts to achieve a lasting solution to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. The Foreign Secretary met Israeli Foreign Minister Sa'ar in Israel on 13 January, and stressed to him the urgent need for an immediate ceasefire with all restrictions on aid to Gaza lifted. In Lebanon, UK support to the Lebanese Armed Forces underpins the ceasefire conditions agreed in November 2024 and seeks to implement UNSCR 1701. In Yemen, the UK supports the UN Special Envoy's office work on dialogue and mediation. With Qatar, the UK will host a forum to exchange conflict resolution and mediation expertise to further our joint commitment to peace in the Middle East.

■ Pakistan: Extradition**Rupert Lowe:** [\[22425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of (a) restricting foreign aid, (b) restricting visas and (c) using other punitive international measures to encourage the Government of Pakistan to accept the return of people sentenced in the UK for their involvement in Pakistani heritage grooming gangs.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

We recognise and appreciate the great contribution of Pakistani people to the diverse culture of the UK. The UK has transitioned from a traditional aid relationship with Pakistan to a mutually beneficial partnership which underpins UK national interests, and we have regular constructive discussions with Pakistani authorities on a range of topics of vital mutual interest, including criminal justice. Despite significant and complex challenges when seeking to return foreign national offenders, this government is fully committed to making our communities safer by deporting those who break our laws. I raised these issues with Senior Ministers during my visit to Pakistan in November.

■ Palestinians: Sovereignty**Chris Webb:** [\[902156\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of recognising a Palestinian state.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

On 13 January, the Foreign Secretary sat down with President Abbas to talk about the Labour Party's longstanding support for the Palestinian cause. Palestinians must be given a credible route to a Palestinian state which is the right of the Palestinian people. We will recognise a Palestinian state at a time that is most conducive to making statehood a reality, and we are working with partners to support a two-state solution that guarantees security and stability for both the Palestinian and Israeli people.

Russia: Ukraine**John Cooper:**[\[902155\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps he is taking to support Ukraine's efforts to counter Russia's invasion.

Stephen Doughty:

The UK is in constant contact with our Allies to ensure a collective doubling down of support for Ukraine and pressure on Putin's war machine. The Foreign Secretary spoke to President Zelenskyy on 18 December at a meeting of European leaders hosted by NATO Secretary General Rutte, and reiterated the UK's unwavering commitment to support Ukraine for as long as it takes. On the 10 January, the Foreign Secretary announced sanctions on two Russian oil giants, Gazprom Neft and PJSC Surgutneftegas, alongside the US. The UK has sanctioned 93 vessels in the Russian shadow fleet.

South Africa: G20**Priti Patel:**[\[21592\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his South African counterpart on that country's objectives for the G20 Presidency.

Anneliese Dodds:

The UK welcomes South Africa's G20 presidency; the first African presidency. During the Foreign Secretary's visit to South Africa in November 2024 to co-chair the UK-South Africa strategic dialogue, he met Foreign Minister Lamola to discuss South Africa's objectives for the Presidency and how the UK and South Africa could work together to achieve them.

During my visit to Rio in July, I discussed South Africa's G20 presidency with both my South African and Brazilian counterpart linking the then current and future G20 president countries.

The UK looks forward to working closely with South Africa on its themes of solidarity, inequality and sustainability as Ministers across government visit over the coming year. South Africa's G20 presidency will also provide a platform to advance and focus our shared priorities on addressing climate change, promoting economic growth and promoting an open and stable international order.

■ Sudan: Humanitarian Aid**Wendy Morton:**[\[22008\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking with (a) international and (b) NGO partners to remove blocks on humanitarian aid entering Sudan.

Anneliese Dodds:

The UK continues to work with international partners, including the UN and NGOs, to press for improved access for the delivery of aid into and across Sudan and consistently calls for the removal of all bureaucratic and administrative impediments to ensure aid can reach those in need. We raised the critical importance of increased humanitarian cross-border access at open briefings at the UN Security Council on 19 December 2024 and 6 January 2025 and have engaged directly with the new Emergency Relief Coordinator, Tom Fletcher, on the UN response. On 25 November, the Foreign Secretary chaired a Sudan meeting with G7 and Arab Quint Foreign Ministers to discuss joint steps to improve humanitarian access and increase aid. On 18 October, the UK, along with 10 other donors, released a joint statement condemning the deliberate obstruction of humanitarian efforts by the warring parties. On 15 October, Lord Collins and I met with a range of NGOs to discuss humanitarian access in Sudan.

■ Syria: Religious Freedom**Wendy Morton:**[\[22290\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 19 December 2024 to Question 19310 on Syria: Religious Freedom, what recent discussions he has had with his Syrian counterparts on protecting freedom of religion or belief in that country.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The Foreign Secretary underlined the importance of an inclusive political process with interim Foreign Minister Al Shaybani during a meeting in Riyadh on 12 January. In December, senior Foreign Office officials met with the leader of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham and the interim Foreign Minister. They highlighted the need to protect the rights of all civilians, including religious minorities. We are closely monitoring the treatment of ethnic and religious minorities. No one should live in fear because of what they do or do not believe in. We will continue to advocate for the right of Freedom of Religion or Belief in Syria and for an inclusive political transition.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Alcoholic Drinks: Labelling****Dan Carden:****[R] [22971]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of the US Surgeon General's recommendations to include health warnings on alcohol labels; and whether he has plans to re-visit his Department's closed consultation entitled Updating labelling guidance for no and low-alcohol alternatives, published on 28 September 2023.

Andrew Gwynne:

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

We have noted the United States Surgeon General's recommendations, and will continue to consider how alcohol labelling can be improved to support consumers in making informed decisions about the products they are purchasing, whilst also promoting low risk consumption.

■ Allergies: Medical Treatments**Alicia Kearns:****[22696]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the new Neffy treatment for severe allergic reactions will be available on the NHS.

Karin Smyth:

It is critical that medicines used in the United Kingdom are safe and effective. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) assesses all medicines before they can be used in the UK. Neffy (epinephrine nasal spray) has not been licenced by the MHRA. Should an application for it be received, the MHRA will consider the benefit-risk of the product accordingly in regards to its quality, safety and effectiveness. It is the responsibility of the company to apply to the MHRA for a marketing authorisation.

Local National Health Service organisations are expected to make decisions on the availability of medicines based on an assessment of the available evidence and taking into account any relevant national guidance.

■ Ambulance Services: Standards**Jim Shannon:****[22616]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of ambulance waiting times over the 2024-25 Christmas and new year period.

Karin Smyth:

Ambulance response times have been below the high standards that patients should expect in recent years. The Government has committed to supporting the National Health Service to improve performance and achieve the standards set out in the NHS Constitution, including ambulance response times.

The following table shows the national ambulance response time performance in December 2024 for Category 1, 2, 3 and 4 incidents, in hours, minutes and seconds:

CATEGORY OF INCIDENT	DECEMBER 2024 NATIONAL AVERAGE	NHS CONSTITUTION STANDARD
Category 1 – average response time	00:08:40	00:07:00
Category 1 – 90 th centile response time	00:15:25	00:15:00
Category 2 – average response time	00:47:26	00:18:00
Category 2 – 90 th centile response time	01:41:40	00:40:00
Category 3 – 90 th centile response time	07:21:03	02:00:00
Category 4 – 90 th centile response time	08:15:44	03:00:00

Source: NHS England Ambulance Quality Indicators (<https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/ambulance-quality-indicators/>)

■ Arthritis: Health Services

Anneliese Midgley:**[23009]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve care for people living with arthritis.

Andrew Gwynne:

Services for those with musculoskeletal (MSK) conditions, including arthritis, are commissioned locally by integrated care boards (ICBs). The Department expects MSK services to be fully incorporated into integrated care system planning and decision-making.

As announced in the Get Britain Working white paper, we are delivering the joint Department for Work and Pensions, the Department of Health and Social Care, and NHS England Getting It Right First-Time (GIRFT) MSK Community Delivery

Programme. With a £3.5 million funding boost, the GIRFT teams will deploy their proven Further Faster model to work with ICB leaders to further reduce MSK community waiting times, including for those with arthritis, and improve data and metrics, and referral pathways to wider support services.

We will deliver an extra 40,000 operations, scans, and appointments per week during our first year in Government, as a first step in our commitment to ensuring patients can expect to be treated within 18 weeks. The Government announced £1.5 billion of new capital investment in the Autumn Budget, including investment for new diagnostic scanners and surgical hubs. This investment in scanners will build capacity for over 30,000 additional procedures and 1.25 million diagnostic tests as they come online.

To support health and care professionals in the early diagnosis and management of rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis, and in the provision of services for people living with arthritis, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence has published expert guidance for rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis, which are available, respectively, at the following two links:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng100>

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng226>

The Department funds research into MSK conditions, including arthritis, through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). Through that route, the Department spent approximately £26.3 million on MSK research in 2023/24 and £79.2 million since 2019/20. In particular, the Leeds Biomedical Research Centre aims to improve treatment for osteoarthritis. The NIHR, in collaboration with Versus Arthritis, also funds a dedicated UK Musculoskeletal Translational Research Collaboration, aligning investment in MSK translational research and creating a United Kingdom-wide ambition and focus to drive cutting edge research and improve outcomes for patients.

■ Blood: Donors

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[22664]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on the number of (a) times blood donors have been advised in advance of delays to their NHS Blood and Transplant donor session and (b) the number of donors that have been turned away by NHS Blood and Transplant after arriving later than their scheduled appointment time after having been advised about delays to their donor session in the last twelve months.

Andrew Gwynne:

NHS Blood and Transplant does not advise donors in advance of delays to blood donation sessions. Delays are generally only known on the day of the session, and are usually the result of sessions running over, staff shortages, for instance from sickness absence, or logistics, for instance from vehicle failure or venue issues.

■ Cancer: Young People

Paulette Hamilton: [\[22725\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the unique (a) medical, (b) psychological and (c) social needs of (i) teenagers and (ii) young adults with cancer are included within the NHS Long-Term Plan.

Paulette Hamilton: [\[22726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to (a) increase the use of rapid diagnostic centres and (b) otherwise help improve early diagnosis rates for (i) teenagers and (ii) young adults with cancer.

Paulette Hamilton: [\[22728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to ensure that teenagers and young adults with cancer have consistent access to specialist psychological support; and how such plans will be implemented as part of the NHS Long-Term Plan.

Paulette Hamilton: [\[22729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to raise public awareness of cancer symptoms in teenagers and young adults to improve early detection rates.

Andrew Gwynne:

We will get the National Health Service diagnosing cancer earlier, and treating it faster, so that more patients survive. This includes teenagers and young adults. We are committed to improving outcomes for all children and young people with cancer, and are considering the next steps to take forward work in this area through the relaunch of Children and Young People Cancer Taskforce in 2025.

To raise awareness of cancer symptoms in teenagers and young adults, NHS England and other NHS organisations, both nationally and locally, publish information on the signs and symptoms of many different types of cancer, including those that are most common in children. Further information on cancer signs and symptoms is available on the NHS.UK website.

To support early diagnosis, the Department is taking steps to improve waiting times for cancer diagnosis across all cancer patient groups in England. This includes offering an additional 40,000 appointments each week so that patients can be seen as quickly as possible. To support the use of rapid diagnostic centres, non-specific symptom (NSS) pathways have been rolled out across England for patients who present with vague symptoms which could indicate multiple different types of cancer, for example unexplained weight-loss and fatigue. NHS England's guidance on NSS services does not set a national age range for NSS pathways, and pathways aimed at children or young adults can be developed if considered locally appropriate.

The Department is also dedicated to ensuring teenagers and young adults with cancer have access to psychological support to help them through their diagnosis

and treatment. In accordance with NHS England's service specifications, all providers of young people's cancer services must ensure that every patient has access to specialist care and must reduce the physical, emotional, and psychological morbidity arising from treatment. Each Principal Treatment Centre, where care is managed, will also have a multi-disciplinary team which meets at least weekly, and includes a specific focus on the psychosocial needs of patients. Further information on NHS England's service specification is available at the following link:

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

On 21 October 2024, the Department launched a national engagement exercise to inform the 10-Year Health Plan. Following publication of the 10-Year Health Plan, there will be a national cancer plan. We are now in discussions about what form it should take, including how we will account for children and young people, and will provide updates in due course.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Sir Christopher Chope:

[22558]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of applications to the Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme relating to Covid-19 vaccinations have been (a) made and (b) successful for (i) Vaccine-induced thrombocytopenia and thrombosis, (ii) Guillain-Barré syndrome and (iii) other conditions.

Andrew Gwynne:

[Holding answer 13 January 2025]: As of 3 January 2025, the NHS Business Services Authority (NHS BSA) had received 183 assessed claims to the Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme (VDPS) relating to COVID-19 for vaccine-induced thrombocytopenia and thrombosis. These 183 claims reflect 1.9% of the total number of claims which have undergone a completed medical assessment. Of these 183 claims, 92, or 50.3%, have been successful. The NHS BSA also received 224 assessed claims to the VDPS relating to COVID-19 for Guillain-Barré syndrome. These 224 claims reflect 2.3% of the total number of claims which have undergone a completed medical assessment. Of these 224 claims, 63, or 28.1%, have been successful. Finally, the NHS BSA also received 9,480 assessed claims to the VDPS relating to COVID-19 for other conditions. These 9,480 claims reflect 95.9% of the total number of claims which have undergone a completed medical assessment. Of these 9,480 claims, 199, or 2.1%, have been successful.

These figures reflect conditions which have been identified from the medical records of claimants. Claims may relate to a combination of these conditions and other conditions from the medical records of claimants.

■ Dementia

Jim Shannon:

[\[22617\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of trends in levels of people diagnosed with dementia over the last five years.

Stephen Kinnock:

The national target is for 66.7% of people estimated to be living with dementia to receive a formal diagnosis. The latest dementia diagnosis rate reported by NHS England for the end of November 2024 was 65.8%.

The target had been met consistently at the national level from July 2016 until end of March 2020, when it dropped due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as memory services were reduced in capacity and general practitioner referrals into these services decreased significantly. At a national level, the dementia diagnosis rate is now gradually recovering due to sustained efforts.

NHS England continue to monitor the monthly dementia diagnosis rate and analyse trends at national, regional, and integrated commissioning board (ICB) level. This provides a clear direction for ICBs to support delivery of timely diagnoses within local systems and enable access to appropriate post diagnostic support.

■ Drugs: Shortages

Bambos Charalambous:

[\[22661\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure patients that rely on medicines for (a) epilepsy, (b) ADHD and (c) Parkinson's are not impacted by supply shortages.

Karin Smyth:

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

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

The Department is aware of supply constraints with one supplier of amantadine 100 milligram capsules used in the management of Parkinson's Disease, however stocks remain available from alternative suppliers to cover demand. The Department have also been notified of a discontinuation of apomorphine (APO-go PFS) 50 milligram/10 milligram pre-filled syringes from April 2025, used in the treatment of Parkinson's disease patients. Alternative formulations of apomorphine remain available for patients, and management guidance has been issued to the National Health Service.

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

We are continuing to work to resolve the remaining issues for methylphenidate prolonged-release tablets. We are engaging with all suppliers of methylphenidate prolonged-release tablets to assess the challenges faced and their actions to address them. We are also directing suppliers to secure additional stocks, expedite deliveries where possible, and review plans to further build capacity to support continued growth in demand for the short and long-term. To improve supply and resilience, we are working with prospective new suppliers of methylphenidate prolonged-release tablets to expand the UK's supplier base.

In collaboration with NHS England's national ADHD data improvement plan, we plan to combine modelling for future growth forecasts, which will be shared with industry to improve demand forecasting for ADHD medicines.

■ East Suffolk and North Essex NHS Foundation Trust: Procurement

Pam Cox:

[\[21722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether (a) his Department and (b) the Cabinet Office is required to sign off procurement of services over £20m by the East Suffolk and North Essex NHS Foundation Trust.

Karin Smyth:

The Department is not involved in the approval of the procurement of services by National Health Service trusts. Cabinet Office Commercial Spend Controls require that organisations in scope must provide a pipeline of all future commercial activity that is £20 million or more excluding VAT over the contract life before they publish a procurement or enter into a contract. The Cabinet Office reviews this pipeline and will determine whether activity requires full Cabinet Office review at outline business case and contract award stages.

The Cabinet Office Commercial Spend Controls have operated across Government for some time, but NHS trusts received a healthcare exemption until 2022. This exemption was removed in October 2022, and in agreement with the Cabinet Office, the controls have been rolled out to all NHS trusts over a two-year programme, phased by region. Currently the controls operate across all NHS trusts in six of the seven regions and were rolled out to all NHS trusts in the East of England region, which includes the East Suffolk and North Essex NHS Foundation Trust, in February 2024. Procurements that are live or in development at the point of rollout are deemed out of scope.

■ General Practitioners: Finance**Clive Jones:****[R] [22477]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how he plans to allocate the £100m of capital funding to upgrade 200 GP practices; and how GP practices will be able to apply for that funding.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Department and NHS England are working with integrated care boards, including primary care representatives, to identify and prioritise high-impact projects where investment can unlock significant productivity gains and additional usable space from existing buildings. Further detail on this process will be published in forthcoming capital guidance, which is due to be published later this month.

■ General Practitioners: Mental Health Services**Dr Allison Gardner:****[22532]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase the number of trainee GPs who undertake specialist training in mental health.

Stephen Kinnock:

The standard of medical training is the responsibility of the General Medical Council (GMC), which is an independent statutory body. The GMC has the general function of promoting high standards of education and co-ordinating all stages of education to ensure that medical students and newly qualified doctors are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes essential for professional practice. The curriculum for general practitioner (GP) specialty training is set by the Royal College of General Practitioners and must meet the standards set by the GMC and be formally approved by them. Whilst the curriculum may not necessarily highlight a specific condition, it instead emphasises the skills and approaches a GP must develop in order to ensure accurate and timely diagnoses and treatment plans for their patients. This is assessed by the MRCGP Examination. Health Education England, now part of NHS England, published a reform of GP Specialty Training, and this includes enhancing mental health training for all.

■ General Practitioners: Recruitment**Clive Jones:****[R] [22476]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 18 December to question 19158 on GP recruitment, for what reason this information is unavailable; and if he will make it his policy to publish the data once it is available.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 13 January 2025]: Information on the number of recently qualified general practitioners for which primary care networks are claiming reimbursement via the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme is currently being collated. We are

working to verify the data and establish its reliability, which is necessary before any dataset can be published.

■ General Practitioners: Standards

James Asser:

[\[22479\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of GP provision in (a) England, (b) London and (c) West Ham and Beckton constituency; and what steps he is taking to improve patient access.

Stephen Kinnock:

We know that patients are struggling to see a general practitioner (GP) and we are committed to improving GP provision and access to appointments across the country, including in the West Ham and Beckton constituency. In October 2024, we provided an £82 million boost to the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme, enabling the recruitment of 1,000 newly qualified GPs across England. This will both increase the number of GPs employed and the number of appointments delivered in general practice, benefitting thousands of patients that are struggling to receive the care they desperately deserve. This will also secure the future supply of GPs and take pressure off the existing workforce. Additionally, we have 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.

■ Health Professions: Recruitment

Dr Allison Gardner:

[\[22530\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase recruitment of (a) healthcare and (b) dentistry professionals in rural areas.

Stephen Kinnock:

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

In summer 2025, we will publish a refreshed Long Term Workforce Plan to ensure the NHS has the right people across healthcare and dentistry, in the right places, with the right skills to deliver the care patients need when they need it.

To tackle the challenges for patients trying to access NHS dental care, the Government has launched a rescue plan to provide 700,000 more urgent dental appointments and recruit new dentists to areas that need them most.

Integrated care boards 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.

■ Health Services: Reform

Helen Morgan:

[\[22388\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to his statement of 6 January 2025 on Health and Social Care Reform, Official Report, column 597, what his definition is of working class areas.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 13 January 2025]: The Department is committed to improving health outcomes across geographies and demographic groups to ensure that there is no two-tier system for healthcare in this country, where those who can afford it pay to go private, and those who cannot are left behind.

The Index of Multiple Deprivation, produced by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, is most commonly used as the means to determine the most deprived areas of the country, which are often where health needs are greatest. As an example of targeted support, the Further Faster 20 (FF20) initiative will support 20 trusts with long waits in areas of highest economic inactivity to tackle their waiting lists by improving productivity. Trust teams will work with the FF20 team of clinicians and managers to look at their pathways and ways of working with the aim of improving the way that outpatients, diagnostics, and theatres are run.

On 6 January 2025, NHS England published the new Elective Reform Plan, part of the Government's Plan for Change, which sets out a whole system approach to hitting the 18-week referral to treatment target by the end of this Parliament. The plan sets out the reform and productivity efforts needed to ensure that patients are seen on time and have the best possible experience during their care. The Plan for Change commits that by the end of this parliament, 92% of all patients will wait no longer than 18 weeks for treatment following a referral.

The Elective Reform Plan sets out a range of new measures to address health inequalities, including that people living in disadvantaged areas are 1.8 times more likely to wait over a year than someone living in one of the least deprived areas. This is why the plan commits not only to make progress on the 18-week standard in 25/26, to 65% nationally, but for all trusts to deliver a minimum five percentage point improvement by March 2026, recognising that we must have high expectations for progress across the country.

■ Hospices: Employers' Contributions

Edward Argar:

[\[22294\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the total cost to the hospice sector of the increase in employers National Insurance contributions.

Stephen Kinnock:

We have taken necessary decisions to fix the foundations in the public finances at Autumn Budget 2024, which enabled the Spending Review settlement of a £22.6 billion increase in resource spending for the Department from 2023/24 outturn to 2025/26.

The employer National Insurance contributions (ENICs) rise will be implemented in April 2025. The Government recognises the need to protect the smallest businesses and charities, like hospices, which is why we have more than doubled the Employment Allowance to £10,500, meaning more than half of businesses with ENICs liabilities either gain or see no change next year. Businesses and charities will still be able to claim ENICs reliefs, including those for under 21 and under 25 apprentices, where eligible.

Our approach to ENIC exemptions has been consistent with the approach taken by previous governments. This does not include an exemption for independent contractors, including charities like hospices.

On 19 December, the Government announced the biggest investment in a generation for hospices in England, supporting the sector with a £100 million boost for adult and children's hospices to ensure they have the best physical environment for care, and £26 million revenue funding to support children and young people's hospices. We will set out the details of the funding allocation and dissemination in the coming weeks.

■ Independent Commission into Adult Social Care**Bradley Thomas:**[\[22203\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to publish the terms of reference for the independent commission into adult social care to be led by Baroness Casey; and if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of including in the terms of reference local authority funding for adult social care.

Stephen Kinnock:

We expect to publish terms of reference when the commission formally starts in April 2025. The commission will set out a vision for adult social care, with recommended measures and a roadmap for delivery. This will include setting out the plan for how to implement a National Care Service that is able to meet the needs of older and disabled people over the coming decades.

■ Lyme Disease: Diagnosis**Lisa Smart:**[\[22126\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve the diagnosis and recognition of Lyme Disease.

Andrew Gwynne:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for South Cambridgeshire on 12 November 2024 to Question [13156](#).

■ Memory Clinics: Lincolnshire**Sir John Hayes:**[\[22247\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will set targets to reduce memory clinic waiting times in (a) South Holland and The Deepings constituency and (b) Lincolnshire.

Stephen Kinnock:

The national target for dementia diagnosis is 66.7%, with Lincolnshire at 67.8%. Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust has received funding to introduce a specific pathway for memory assessments, which will help tackle local waiting times for assessment and diagnosis of conditions such as dementia, and work is underway to finalise the model of care and launch towards the end of the financial year.

There is a review of current Memory Assessment Service waiting lists to identify referrals from 24-hour care settings that can be targeted via Diagnosing Advanced Dementia Mandate (DiADeM). The trust will train selected staff in DiADeM to undertake assessment of these identified cohorts from waiting lists in the fourth quarter of 2023/24, including staff in primary care, namely Enhanced Health in Care Homes teams.

The South Holland and The Deepings constituency is split across two Older People Community Mental Health Teams (CMHT), Stamford and Spalding CMHTs. The average wait to first appointment across the two CMHTs is 10 weeks. From January 2025, there will be two Memory Assessment Practitioners aligned to Spalding and one aligned to Stamford. This allocation is reviewed every eight weeks to ensure areas with the longest waits are targeted.

■ Mental Health Services: Children and Young People**Carla Denyer:**[\[20487\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his plans to provide mental health professionals in schools include access to children and young people's counsellors trained to Level 4 Diploma of Higher Education in counselling with clinical experience of working with children and young people.

Stephen Kinnock:

We know that waits for mental health services are far too long, including for children and young people. That is why we will recruit 8,500 additional mental health workers across children and adult mental health services, and introduce a specialist mental health professional in every school

We are not considering counsellors trained to Level 4 Diploma of Higher Education in counselling for these roles, however children and young people can be referred to higher qualified professionals if needs identified.

Dr Simon Opher:

[\[21713\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether hubs that provide open access mental health services for children and young people in every community will be delivered only through the Young Futures programme.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Government is committed to improving mental health support for children and young people, as demonstrated by our pledge to roll out a network of Young Futures Hubs in every community to provide open access mental health support. We are currently working across Government to deliver Young Futures Hubs, to bring together services, including mental health support, to improve how young people access opportunities and support at community level.

We will also improve mental health support for children and young people by providing access to a specialist mental health professional in every school and recruiting 8,500 additional mental health workers to help cut waiting lists across the country.

■ **Mental Health Services: Rural Areas**

Matt Bishop:

[\[22510\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to ensure that people in rural communities have access to mental health support within a one-hour radius using public transport.

Matt Bishop:

[\[22511\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that mental health services in rural communities are adequately (a) staffed and (b) supported.

Stephen Kinnock:

Waiting lists for those referred for support are too high including those in rural communities.

People with mental health issues are not getting the support or care they deserve and need, which is why we will fix the system to ensure we give mental health the same attention and focus as physical health and that people can be confident of accessing high quality mental health support when they need it.

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

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

to stay as an alternative to accident and emergency or a hospital admission. It is the responsibility of integrated care boards (ICB) to commission care to meet the needs of their local population.

■ **Mental Health Services: Standards**

Joe Robertson: [\[22824\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce the time taken for people to receive urgent mental health care.

Stephen Kinnock:

It is unacceptable that too many people are not receiving the mental health care they need, and we know that waits for mental health services are far too long. We are determined to change that.

As part of our mission to build a National Health Service that is fit for the future and that is there when people need it, the Government will recruit an additional 8,500 mental health workers to reduce delays and provide faster treatment which will also help ease pressure on busy mental health services.

We are also committing £26 million in capital investment to open new mental health crisis centres, reducing pressure on busy emergency mental health and accident and emergency services and ensuring people have the support they need when they need it.

Additionally, anyone in England experiencing a mental health crisis can now to speak to a trained NHS professional at any time of the day through a new mental health option on NHS 111.

Joe Robertson: [\[22827\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with (a) charitable organisations and (b) community groups on helping to (i) reduce pressure on mental health services and (ii) ensure comprehensive mental health support.

Stephen Kinnock:

Ministers and departmental officials hold discussions regularly with stakeholders in the mental health sector on a range of mental health issues.

■ **Mental Health Services: Young People**

Luke Taylor: [\[22154\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve access to mental health services for young people in London.

Stephen Kinnock:

Too many young people are not receiving the mental health care they need, including in London and we know that waits for mental health services are too long. As part of our mission to build a National Health Service that is fit for the future and that is there when people need it, we will recruit an additional 8,500 mental health workers across

children and adult mental health services in England to reduce delays and provide faster treatment. We will also provide access to a specialist mental health professional in every school and roll out Young Futures Hubs in every community.

There are currently approximately 65 locally-funded early support hubs in England offering early easy access mental health interventions to thousands of children and young people aged between 11 and 25 years old including those from low-income families.

The Department is running an £8 million Shared Outcomes Fund project throughout 2024/25 to boost and evaluate the impact of 24 of these existing early support hubs, including two in London.

Dr Allison Gardner:

[\[22528\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he has taken to improve mental health provision for young people in Stoke-on-Trent South constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

Too many young people are not receiving the mental health care they need, including in Stoke-on-Trent South constituency, and we know that waits for mental health services are too long. As part of our mission to build a National Health Service that is fit for the future and that is there when people need it, we will recruit an additional 8,500 mental health workers across children and adult mental health services in England to reduce delays and provide faster treatment. We will also provide access to a specialist mental health professional in every school and roll out Young Futures Hubs in every community.

There are currently approximately 65 locally funded early support hubs in England offering early easy access mental health interventions to thousands of children and young people aged between 11 and 25 years old including those from low-income families.

■ Neurological Diseases: Drugs

Mr Angus MacDonald:

[\[23114\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps with his counterparts in the devolved Administrations to implement a national strategy for treating neurological conditions.

Andrew Gwynne:

There are no current plans to implement a national strategy for neurological conditions. We have, however, announced that we are setting up a new United Kingdom-wide neuro forum, facilitating formal, biannual meetings across the Department, NHS England, the devolved administrations and health services, and the Neurological Alliances of all four nations in the UK.

The new forum will bring key stakeholders together to share learning across the UK, discuss important neurology services' transformation and workforce challenges, as

well as best practice examples and potential solutions that will add to both the existing programmes of work and wider health plans.

■ **NHS and Social Care Coronavirus Life Assurance Scheme 2020**

Ruth Cadbury: [\[22635\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether applications for the NHS and Social Care Coronavirus Life Assurance payment received after 30 September 2023 are eligible.

Karin Smyth:

The NHS and Social Care Coronavirus Life Assurance Scheme was launched on 20 May 2020 to recognise the increased risks that National Health Service and social care staff faced in carrying out their duties during the coronavirus pandemic.

The Scheme closed to new deaths on 31 March 2022. Under the rules of the scheme, claimants were required to submit claims for deaths that occurred while the Scheme was open before 30 September 2023.

■ **NHS Walk-in Centres**

James McMurdock: [\[22870\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase the number of walk-in centres.

Karin Smyth:

Integrated commissioning boards, in their commissioning of unscheduled and urgent care services, are responsible for determining where services will be most effective, and this may be co-located with the local emergency department or be a standalone service either on or off a hospital site.

■ **NHS: Weather**

Edward Argar: [\[22633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the oral contribution by the Minister for Secondary Care of 18 December 2024, Official Report, column 345, when he chaired the first of the weekly winter preparedness meetings.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 13 January 2025]: I chaired fortnightly meetings on winter preparedness from 26 September 2024 until early December 2024 at which point, as planned, my Rt. Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, began chairing a weekly meeting.

■ Rehabilitation: Health Services

Mike Amesbury:

[\[22346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what step he plans to take to increase access to rehabilitation health services in the (a) community and (b) acute health sectors.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Government understands the importance of having effective rehabilitation services available to help people recover from an injury or illness and regain the skills and confidence they need to live independently.

Improvements in intermediate care and reablement support services will be part of a wider approach to transforming community-based services and will link to the Government's vision of building an integrated neighbourhood health service.

■ Respiratory Diseases: Screening

Jim Shannon:

[\[22263\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to increase the availability of spirometry testing in primary care.

Stephen Kinnock:

NHS England is continuing to support the restoration of local spirometry services and is enhancing capacity through community diagnostic centres (CDCs). These initiatives provide structured pathways for general practitioners (GPs) to refer patients for essential respiratory diagnostic tests such as spirometry, ensuring faster access to these services for individuals with suspected respiratory conditions, including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). By equipping primary care with the tools and pathways for earlier and more accurate diagnosis, this effort addresses the significant issue of undiagnosed COPD, which is estimated to affect 2.1 million people in England. These measures are designed to strengthen the collaboration between primary and secondary care, increasing capacity to meet diagnostic demands effectively.

As part of Phase 2 of the GP Direct Access scheme, launched in December 2023, the National Health Service aims to achieve earlier detection and diagnosis of COPD so that patients access timely interventions and optimal treatment, improving patient management and outcomes. The guidance recommends that general practice teams refer patients for spirometry for the diagnosis of COPD.

■ Social Services: Finance

Zarah Sultana:

[\[22354\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the additional £880 million allocated to the Social Care Grant.

Stephen Kinnock:

The £880 million uplift in the Social Care Grant is in recognition of the important role local authorities have in commissioning and delivering social care services. This funding will support social care delivery and will take the total funding in the Social Care Grant to £5.9 billion in 2025/26.

This additional funding forms one part of a wider increase in local government funding, with up to £3.7 billion of additional funding being made available for social care authorities in 2025-26. Overall, the Government is providing an increase to core local government spending power in 2025/26 of 6% in cash terms.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is responsible for ensuring the adequacy of local government budgets. The Department of Health and Social Care will continue working closely with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, local authorities, and the adult social care sector to understand what the impact of cost and demand pressures will be on service delivery and budgets.

■ Surgery: Reform**Dr Simon Opher:**[\[22733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to document entitled the Reforming elective care for patients, published on 6 January 2025, what estimate he has made of the size of the workforce needed to implement the (a) perioperative care measures and (b) requirements for anaesthetists outlined in that plan.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 13 January 2025]: The Elective Reform Plan sets out the reform and productivity efforts needed to ensure that patients are seen on time and have the best possible experience during their care. Improving perioperative care can increase productivity by reducing cancellations, reducing length of stay, and minimising postoperative complications.

The Government will work closely with NHS England to develop a new long-term workforce plan for the National Health Service.

HOME OFFICE**■ Anti-social Behaviour****James Naish:**[\[22110\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will (a) review and (b) update the definition of anti-social behaviour in the (i) Antisocial Behaviour Act 2003 and (ii) Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 was repealed and replaced by the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. Section 2(1) of the 2014 Act defines

antisocial behaviour as “a) conduct that has caused, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress to any person; b) conduct capable of causing nuisance or annoyance to a person in relation to that person’s occupation of residential premises; c) conduct capable of causing housing-related nuisance or annoyance to any person”.

Section 101(2) of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 defines anti-social behaviour as “behaviour by a person which causes or is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to one or more other persons not of the same household as the person”.

There are no current plans to amend these definitions.

■ Asylum: Deportation

Apsana Begum: [\[21383\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the UK has any agreements with countries under which asylum seekers could be sent to them as a safe third country.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Government has been clear that it will be ending the Migration and Economic Partnership with Rwanda. The UK has no other such agreements.

■ Asylum: Hotels

Mr Peter Bedford: [\[22515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and which hotels are being used to house asylum seekers in Mid Leicestershire constituency; and how many asylum seekers there are in each hotel.

Dame Angela Eagle:

For the safety and security of residents and staff at its accommodation sites, the Home Office does not publish details of sites in use.

However, data on the number of supported asylum seekers in accommodation, including hotels, and by local authority can be found within the Asy_D11 tab for our most recent statistics release: [Immigration system statistics data tables - GOV.UK](#).

■ Asylum: Housing

Neil O'Brien: [\[22069\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 30 December 2024 to Question 20254 on Asylum: Housing, what the cost was of each of the Contract Change Notices.

Neil O'Brien: [\[22070\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 30 December 2024 to Question 20254 on Asylum: Housing, what difference each of the Contract Change Notices made to the contract.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The information sought on costs and changes related to the Contract Change Notices referenced in Question 20254 has been identified as being of operational and commercial sensitivity and cannot therefore be disclosed.

■ **Asylum: Palestinians**

Ayoub Khan: [\[21959\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her policy is on the asylum applications of Palestinian refugees who were formerly residents of Syria and left under the Assad regime.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Home Office acted swiftly to temporarily pause decisions on Syrian asylum claims whilst we assess the current situation. This includes Syrian nationals as well as those who have previously been habitually resident in Syria.

We keep all country guidance relating to asylum claims under constant review so we can respond to emerging issues.

■ **Border Security Command: Staff**

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[22141\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many staff the Border Security Command will have; and at what grade.

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[22142\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many (a) operational and (b) support staff Border Security Command employs as of 1 January 2025.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Border Security Command (BSC) provides cross-system strategic leadership across partners in the border security system to tackle the facilitators of organised immigration crime (OIC) and wider border security threats.

The BSC is being appropriately resourced to ensure it can deliver this cross-system effort. Roles are being filled in line with departmental practices and wider recruitment is ongoing as part of the broader organisational set up.

■ Child Sexual Abuse Independent Panel Inquiry

Mike Amesbury:

[\[22063\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she expects the recommendations of 2022 Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation to be implemented.

Jess Phillips:

Tackling child sexual abuse is a cross-government priority and we are working at pace to identify how we can best deliver against the recommendations of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA).

The Safeguarding Minister has met Professor Alexis Jay and victims and survivors and has convened the first dedicated cross-Government group to drive forward change and deliver an ambitious programme of activity in response to the inquiry. To ensure that victims' voices remain at the very heart of this process, we will set up a new victims and survivors panel to work on an ongoing basis with the inter-ministerial group and will set out more details and timescales based on that work in due course.

The Government has already announced action on three key recommendations on mandatory reporting, making grooming an aggravating factor in the sentencing of child sexual offences and introducing a new performance framework for policing.

■ Drugs: Organised Crime

Alicia Kearns:

[\[22097\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has made a recent assessment of the potential merits of making cuckooing a crime.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Cuckooing is an appalling practice associated with violence, exploitation and anti-social behaviour.

The Government's Safer Streets Mission aims to tackle these issues and we will make further announcements in the normal way in due course.

■ Electronic Travel Authorisations: Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland

Claire Hanna:

[\[23000\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions her Department has held with the (a) Northern Ireland Executive and (b) Irish Government on the introduction of Electronic Travel Authorisations.

Claire Hanna:

[\[23001\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions her Department has had with (a) the (i) Northern Ireland and (ii) Ireland tourism industry and (b) other stakeholders on the introduction of Electronic Travel Authorisations.

Claire Hanna:

[\[23002\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of Electronic Travel Authorisations on (a) tourism and (b) the economy in Northern Ireland.

Claire Hanna:

[\[23003\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of Electronic Travel Authorisation exemptions for tourists travelling from Dublin to Northern Ireland for one week or less.

Seema Malhotra:

The introduction of ETAs is a significant change to our migration and border system, affecting a cohort of travellers who have previously been able to travel without making any prior application to the Home Office.

To ensure that the requirement is fully understood by eligible nationals, including visitors to Northern Ireland from Ireland, we have been working with a wide range of partners so that ETAs are not seen as a barrier to cross-border tourism on the island of Ireland.

This includes developing specific ETA comms for Northern Ireland in conjunction with umbrella organisations for the Northern Irish and Irish tourism industries, and individual members of those organisations.

We have also worked closely with the Northern Ireland Executive and Irish Government since the inception of the ETA policy. ETAs are crucial in delivering the Government's commitment to strengthening the security of the UK border and the Common Travel Area. The ETA application is quick and light-touch, and many applications are decided within minutes.

■ **Electronic Travel Authorisations: Trade Competitiveness**

James MacCleary:

[\[21872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of airside transit electronic travel authorisation on the UK's international competitiveness.

Seema Malhotra:

The UK Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) scheme was launched to enhance our ability to screen travellers upstream and stop those who pose a threat from travelling to the UK.

ETAs form part of our long-term plan for a more efficient UK border, with a greater number of passengers able to benefit from automation and other technological advancements.

We continue to engage positively with industry and support the aviation sector in evaluating the impact of ETAs on passengers and airport services.

■ Firearms: Licensing

Charlie Dewhirst: [\[22183\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 13 December 2024 to Question 18268 on Firearms: Licensing, when she last held discussions with (a) the police, (b) gun control groups, (c) the British Shooting Sports Council and (d) the British Association for Shooting and Conservation on firearms licensing in England, Scotland and Wales.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Home Office regularly meets with the National Police Chiefs' Council lead for firearms licensing and other officers.

We also meet with representatives of other relevant stakeholder groups from time to time, including most recently, on 13th January 2025.

■ Foreign Influence Registration Scheme

Nick Timothy: [\[23031\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 7 October 2024 to Question 7443 on Trade Unions: Subversion, whether the Foreign Influence Registration Scheme will regulate foreign actors seeking to (a) lobby and (b) influence trade unions.

Dan Jarvis:

The scheme's political influence tier seeks to increase transparency of foreign power influence over the core aspects of the UK's democracy, including elections, political party proceedings, parliamentarians and decisions of the Government, but is limited in scope to ensure its proportionality.

However, where a foreign power is specified under the enhanced tier, those acting at the direction of that foreign power to carry out a broad range of activities will be required to register. This could include activities involving lobbying of, or influence over, trade unions.

■ Fraud

Nick Timothy: [\[22747\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will take steps with City of London Police to improve (a) the (i) support services and (ii) reporting tools available to victims of fraud and (b) the quality of intelligence on fraud provided to police forces.

Dan Jarvis:

We are replacing the current Action Fraud service with a new improved service. The new service will have an upgraded call centre and a new user-friendly, accessible website for reporting fraud, offering simpler pathways to support and guidance. The service will also offer a new data and intelligence platform to speed up the analysis and dissemination of reports to police forces for investigation.

Victims will also get better updates on the progress of their report and there will be faster identification of the most vulnerable victims to receive enhanced support, including through the National Economic Crime Victim Care Unit (NECVCU).

The aim of NECVCU is for victims to feel safe and more confident following contact, whilst assisting them to cope and recover from the crime and significantly reduce the likelihood of repeat victimisation. Since its inception in 2018, NECVCU has supported 440,994 victims of fraud and since January 2021, NECVCU has also helped victims recover £3,685,201.

■ Immigration: Syria

Ayoub Khan: [21958]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her Department's policy is on Syrian immigrants who have been granted leave to remain status.

Dame Angela Eagle:

Any Syrian nationals who are resident in the UK with valid permission to stay will need to apply for further permission to stay or settle before their current permission to stay expires. For Syrian refugees who apply for settlement protection after five years residency in the UK, in line with published policies, a safe return review will be undertaken to assess whether it is safe for the applicant to return to Syria.

For more information on the settlement protection policy, please see:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/settlement-protection-asylum-policy-instruction>.

■ Journalism and Legal Profession: Surveillance

David Davis: [21974]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what data her Department holds on the number of times UK police forces have authorised targeted surveillance of journalists and lawyers.

David Davis: [21975]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what guidance her Department has issued to police forces on the use of surveillance powers to carry out surveillance on journalists and lawyers.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) and the Investigatory Powers Act 2016 (IPA) contain additional safeguards and protections, where the intention is for relevant public authorities to acquire sensitive material, such as information relating to confidential journalistic material, journalists' sources and matters subject to legal professional privilege. Further specific detail is set out in the statutory codes of practice pursuant to the powers under these Acts.

The Investigatory Powers Commissioner provides oversight of the use of investigatory powers and publishes annual reports which provide statistical information relating to the operation of powers.

■ Metropolitan Police

Luke Taylor: [\[22150\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to increase public trust in the Metropolitan Police Service.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) Commissioner's 'New Met for London' plan sets out the force's work to improve its performance. The Mayor for London established the London Policing Board to hold the Commissioner to account for delivery of the plan. Home Office Ministers are in regular contact with the MPS Commissioner and Mayor of London to ensure progress is being made.

The MPS is also currently in the enhanced 'Engage' phase of routine monitoring by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS). The force has developed an improvement plan and on 13 November, HMICFRS closed one of the four causes of concern that led to the MPS being placed into 'Engage'. The Home Office will continue to monitor progress through attendance at HMICFRS's Police Performance and Oversight Board.

■ Offences against Children

Rupert Lowe: [\[21755\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will deport (a) foreign nationals prosecuted for membership of a rape gang, (b) UK dual nationals prosecuted for membership of a rape gang scandal and (c) foreign national family members of those prosecuted with complicit knowledge.

Dame Angela Eagle:

Any foreign national convicted of a crime in the UK and given a prison sentence is considered for deportation at the earliest opportunity.

Section 3(5)(b) of the Immigration Act 1971 also provides for the deportation of a family member of a person being deported. This includes the spouse, civil partner or children under the age of 18.

British citizens who have dual nationality have a right of abode in the United Kingdom and are not liable to deportation.

Sir John Hayes: [\[21968\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when Ministers in her Department held meetings on grooming gangs in the last five years; and who the external attendees at those meetings were.

Jess Phillips:

It is not for this Government to comment on meetings held by previous Government ministers, but I would refer the Rt Hon Member to the quarterly publications of transparency data on ministerial meetings available on the Home Office website.

Since coming to office in July, current Home Office Ministers have been prioritising engagement with victims and survivors of child sexual abuse and exploitation, child protection organisations, law enforcement partners, members of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, and colleagues across Government to further strengthen the response to child sexual abuse and exploitation.

Whilst not always published as some are internal meetings, I can assure the Rt Hon Member that I have taken meetings every single week on this subject since my appointment as a Minister. I have also convened the first dedicated cross-Government group to drive forward change in this crucial area.

■ Offences against Children: Ethnic Groups**Gregory Stafford:**[\[22224\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish perpetrator ethnicity data for (a) grooming and (b) sexual violence collected by the Tackling Organised Exploitation Programme.

Jess Phillips:

The Tackling Organised Exploitation Programme (TOEX) continues to work to develop a whole system approach to improving intelligence, analysis, and tasking to enhance the law enforcement response to the exploitation of vulnerable people, including sexual exploitation and abuse. This includes supporting the work of the Child Sexual Exploitation Police Taskforce to give practical, expert, and on the ground support for local forces investigating child sexual abuse, with a focus on complex and organised child sexual exploitation.

In November 2024, the Taskforce published its latest 2023 data on group-based offending, including any offence with two or more perpetrators. That data is available publicly online via <https://www.hydrantprogramme.co.uk/publications/hydrant-publications#LatestNews>) which includes available data on ethnicity. The Government will be working with the Taskforce to improve data collection, including seeking to improve the accuracy and comprehensiveness of data on ethnicity.

■ Offences against Children: Inquiries**Mr Richard Holden:**[\[22702\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many (a) national and (b) local inquiries have been carried out into rape grooming gangs.

Jess Phillips:

It is essential that we continue to learn from past failings on group-based Child Sexual Exploitation to improve and strengthen our ongoing response to grooming gangs offending.

The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA), led by Professor Alexis Jay, was conducted over seven years and engaged with more than 7,000 victims and survivors. None of the 20 recommendations from the final report were implemented by the previous Government. IICSA also conducted a dedicated two-year investigation into abuse by organised networks and published a report in February 2022. His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue (HMICFRS) published an inspection into the effectiveness of the police response to group-based Child Sexual Exploitation in December 2023. Local inquiries have also taken place in many local authority areas including Rotherham, Oldham, Rochdale, Bradford and Telford.

■ Passports

James McMurdock: [\[22873\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many passports were revoked due to links to terrorist activity in each month since January 2023.

Dan Jarvis:

Since the beginning of 2023, one British passport has been revoked due to links to terrorist activity. This occurred in January 2024.

■ People Smuggling

Adam Jogee: [\[21775\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to tackle organised immigration crime.

Dame Angela Eagle:

Since entering office, we have already launched the Border Security Command (BSC), led by Martin Hewitt CBE QPM, with £150m invested over this financial year and next.

The Border Security Command will act as the system leader across HMG leveraging functions across policy, operations, international engagement and uplifted capabilities to tackle organised immigration crime, driven by outcome focussed, system-wide plans.

Since the establishment of the Border Security Command, successes against organised immigration crime include:

- NCA's continued successful operations and arrests against prolific people smugglers
- Commitment to up to 100 new specialist intelligence and investigations officers deployed to the NCA
- the recent agreement with Iraq and the Kurdish Region of Iraq to target people smuggling gangs and strengthen border security co-operation

- the joint action plan with Germany to collaboratively break the business model of people smuggling gangs.

■ Radicalism

Dr Allison Gardner:

[\[22535\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to (a) monitor and (b) help tackle far right extremism.

Dan Jarvis:

The Government is committed to tackling those who spread views that promote violence and hatred against individuals and communities in our society, and that radicalise others into terrorism. To understand such threats, we maintain expertise and capabilities to understand terrorist and extremist online communications, in order to produce rapid, high-quality assessments designed to support the Prevent programme.

The Prevent programme tackles the ideological causes of terrorism and provides early intervention for people at risk of radicalisation. The programme deals with all forms of terrorist ideology, including Islamist, Extreme Right-Wing, other threats.

We work closely with law enforcement and multi-agency partners to respond to any such activity which may pose a threat.

■ Serious Crime Prevention Orders

James McMurdock:

[\[22239\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will take steps to ensure that interim Serious Crime Prevention Orders are not used to target individuals engaging in lawful political dissent.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Serious Crime Prevention Orders are a powerful tool for preventing and disrupting the activities of the highest-harm criminals involved in serious crime. SCPOs are not intended to target individuals who conduct themselves lawfully, including lawful political dissent.

SCPOs were established in the Serious Crime Act 2007. Schedule 1 of the Act sets out the serious offences for which an SCPO can be imposed. This includes a range of serious offences including drug trafficking, slavery, people trafficking, terrorism and firearms offences. Under section 2(2)(b) of the Act the court can impose an SCPO to prevent offences not in schedule 1 where the court considers the offence is sufficiently serious it should be treated as if it were set out in that list.

■ Stalking

Luke Taylor:

[\[22151\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to tackle underreporting of stalking.

Jess Phillips:

Stalking is an insidious crime that can leave victims living in fear just going about their daily lives. That is why this Government is fully committed to tackling it.

On 3 December the Government announced six new measures to tackle stalking. This included legislating to introduce multi-agency statutory guidance on stalking and providing for the courts to impose Stalking Protection Orders (SPOs) on conviction and acquittal of their own volition. We will bring forward legislation to introduce measures at the earliest opportunity.

The College of Policing provides an Authorised Professional Practice (APP) and e-learning on stalking to support the police. This includes guidance on identifying and investigating stalking and applying for and managing SPOs. The guidance and e-learning are being updated to reflect the findings from a recent super-complaint on stalking and will be kept under regular review. The CPS provides guidance for prosecutors with the general principles to be applied when making decisions about prosecutions involving stalking.

We know there is a gap between the prevalence of stalking and stalking offences reported to the police. For example, the Crime Survey for England and Wales estimates 3.1% of adults over 16 experienced stalking in the year ending June 2024 while police recorded 131,912 stalking offences. This is why we are committed to playing a more active role in policing to ensure officers have the right support, to significantly improve standards across the board and to ensure justice is delivered for victims.

Raising awareness of stalking is an important part of this and there are existing examples of local initiatives funded by police forces, Police and Crime Commissioners or local authorities. We are considering how raising awareness of VAWG crimes including stalking could form part of the upcoming new VAWG strategy.

■ Undocumented Migrants: Boats**Neil Duncan-Jordan:**[\[22231\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department plans to redistribute sea worthy boats used in migrant crossings to youth groups such as Sea Scouts.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The material and equipment rescued by Border Force from small boat crossings is usually totally unsuitable for any use, and there are therefore no plans to redistribute it as suggested.

■ Vetting: Health Services and Social Services

Josh Babarinde:

[\[22131\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to reduce the processing time for Disclosure and Barring Service checks for people working in the health and social care sector.

Jess Phillips:

The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) is operationally independent from the Home Office and operates to service standards of completing 85% of Basic check applications within 2 days, 85% of Standard check applications within 3 days, and 80% of Enhanced check applications within 14 days.

The DBS year to date performance against these targets up to November 2024 is 87.9% for Basic checks, 90.2% for Standard checks, and 75.7% for Enhanced checks. These attainments apply to applications across all employment sectors, including the health and social care sectors.

Specific support to the health and social care sectors is provided by the DBS Partnerships Team who have held recent meetings with NHS England, NHS Employers, Skills for Care, Care Quality Commission and Home Care Association, as well as on a regional level with local NHS, local authorities and care providers, about how checks are processed and how to improve the quality of applications submitted to the DBS in order to reduce processing times.

The DBS also provides the 'adult first' service to employing organisations in the care sector. Under this service, organisations can request a check of the DBS adults' barred list and, depending on the result, a person can be permitted to start work, under supervision, with vulnerable adults before the result of an Enhanced DBS check.

■ Visas

Daisy Cooper:

[\[22082\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether it is her Department's policy to notify successful applicants that they have been issued with an eVisa.

Seema Malhotra:

All applicants issued with an eVisa as evidence of their immigration status receive a written notification, either via email or post, once their immigration application has been successful, and their immigration permission granted. This notification confirms that the person has been issued an eVisa as evidence of their immigration status. It also includes information on what an eVisa is, and how to access and use it.

Immigration status holders who are not making an application but who take action to create a UKVI account to access their existing eVisa receive a notification via email once they complete the UKVI account creation process, confirming they can access their eVisa.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Community Ownership Fund

Alicia Kearns: [\[22096\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when the next round of the Community Ownership Fund will open for applications.

Alex Norris:

Following the announcement of Round 4 Window 1 outcomes on 23 December 2024, the Community Ownership Fund (COF) is now closed.

There will be no further application windows on the COF programme.

■ Community Ownership Fund: Scotland

Melanie Ward: [\[22212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what proportion of funding from the most recent round of the Community Ownership Fund was allocated to bids from Scotland.

Alex Norris:

In Round 4 Window, this government awarded £36.2 million to 85 projects across the UK, with £5 million allocated to 11 projects in Scotland.

The full list of [successful projects](#) can be found on GOV.UK.

■ Council Tax: Probate

Kevin Hollinrake: [\[22038\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 29 November 2024 to Question 15203 on Council Tax: Probate, whether the 12 month period for marketing for sale and let is in addition to the 12 month period for first becoming an empty dwelling before being liable for a premium.

Jim McMahon:

The government's guidance sets out that the one-year period of marketing for sale or let will begin to run from when the dwelling has first been marketed for sale or let.

This period may therefore run concurrently to or immediately following the one-year period during which a dwelling has been empty before the empty homes premium applies.

■ Elections: Proof of Identity

Mr Richard Holden: [\[22102\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate she has made of the increase in the number of veterans able to vote due to the introduction of the Veterans ID card as voter ID.

Rushanara Ali:

All veterans eligible to vote already have the opportunity to do so. If they do not have one of the accepted forms of identification, they are able to apply for a Voter Authority Certificate, free of charge, or they can choose to vote by post or by proxy.

The Veteran Card has been issued to approximately 250,000 former service personnel, and they will be able to use these as ID at the polling station from May 2025 onwards. We have no data on the number of those veterans who do not possess another form of accepted voter ID.

Government Departments: Trade Unions**Kevin Hollinrake:**[\[22040\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 2 December 2024 to Question 15443 on Government departments: trade unions, which recognised trade unions in her Department have their membership subscriptions collected via check-off; and how many staff members have their memberships so collected for each union.

Alex Norris:

120 members of staff pay their trade union membership subscriptions via check off, all are members of PCS.

Homelessness**Daisy Cooper:**[\[22077\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when her Department will publish a breakdown of planned spending on homelessness (a) support and (b) prevention for 2025-26.

Daisy Cooper:[\[22078\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether the (a) Rough Sleeping Initiative, (b) Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme and (c) Night Shelter Transformation Fund will continue in 2025-26.

Rushanara Ali:

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government announced funding allocations for homelessness and rough sleeping on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) in December 2024.

This includes funding for sector support to strengthen the capacity of the voluntary sector, the Homelessness Prevention Grant, the Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme and the Rough Sleeping Prevention and Recovery Grant, which consolidated the previous Rough Sleeping Initiative and Accommodation for Ex Offenders grants.

Paula Barker:[\[22362\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department has set up expert boards for homelessness policy.

Ian Byrne:

[\[23004\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department is taking to include the perspectives of people with lived experiences of homelessness in the cross-government strategy to end homelessness.

Rushanara Ali:

Homelessness levels are far too high. This can have a devastating impact on those affected.

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

We have also established an Expert Group to bring together representatives from across the homelessness and rough sleeping sector, local and combined authorities and wider experts. The role of this expert group is to provide knowledge, analysis and challenge to help Government understand what is working well nationally and locally and where improvements are needed.

As well as work on the Inter-Ministerial Group and Expert Group we are also working closely with the sector to deliver a number of lived experience forums to ensure that the voices of those with lived experience are reflected in the homelessness strategy. We will continue to meet with a range of stakeholders, including mayors and MPs, to make sure the strategy is informed by a range of expertise.

■ **Homelessness: Departmental Coordination**

James McMurdock:

[\[22235\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what progress her Department has made on setting up the Inter-Ministerial Group on ending homelessness.

Rushanara Ali:

The Government is committed to deliver long term solutions to end homelessness and will develop a new cross government strategy, working with mayors and councils across the country.

The Deputy Prime Minister chaired the first Inter-Ministerial Group on Homelessness in November to bring together ministerial colleagues across government to help get us back on track to ending homelessness.

The Group will continue to meet as required.

■ **Labour: Civil Servants**

Kevin Hollinrake:

[\[22043\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 3 December 2024 to Question 15832 on Labour: Civil Servants, whether

her Departments holds information on how many civil servants other than special advisers were permitted to attend last year's Labour Party conference.

Alex Norris:

Guidance on Party Conferences is published on gov.uk and can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-servants-and-party-conferences-guidance>.

Information on the number of civil servants who attended last year's Labour party conference is not held by the department centrally, in line with the guidance. There is no record in MHCLG of any breach of the guidance.

■ **Local Government Finance: Lincolnshire**

Sir John Hayes:

[21965]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate she has made of the funding gap for district councils in Lincolnshire in the next two years.

Jim McMahon:

The provisional Settlement for 2025-26 makes available £69 billion for local government, which is a 3.5% real terms increase in councils' Core Spending Power on 2024-25. The final Settlement will increase further, to incorporate the £515 million of funding announced for National Insurance Contributions.

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

Future funding for local government and the timings of the Local Government Finance Settlement are bound by the spending review cycle. The government has committed to a multi-year Spending Review in Spring 2025. We are committed to delivering the first multi-year Settlement in 10 years in 2026-27, which will distribute funding based on an updated assessment of need. We are fully consulting with the sector on our funding reform proposals.

■ **Local Government: Standards**

Kevin Hollinrake:

[22039]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 3 December 2024 to Question 15929 on Local Government: Standards, what her definition is of regional government; and what the statutory basis is of regional government in England.

Jim McMahon:

The proposed reforms to the local government standards and conduct framework in England would apply to all relevant authorities as defined by Section 27(6) of the

Localism Act 2011. This includes bodies such as combined authorities, combined county authorities, and the Greater London Authority.

We want to see all of England access this devolved power by establishing Strategic Authorities that can make the key decisions to drive economic growth. Outside of London, these Strategic Authorities should take the form of Combined or Combined County Authorities over areas of genuine strategic scale. The English Devolution Bill will establish in statute a standardised framework of powers for Strategic Authorities.

■ **Mayors: Lincolnshire**

Kevin Hollinrake: [\[21617\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answers of 3 December 2024 to Question (a) 15923 and (b) 15934 on Mayors: Elections, for what reason Greater Lincolnshire is not listed as having a mayoral election in 2025.

Jim McMahon:

Questions UIN 15923 and UIN 15934 concerned combined authorities. Greater Lincolnshire will be established as a combined county authority under legislation currently before Parliament. When that legislation is approved by Parliament, and made, the Greater Lincolnshire mayoral election will be added to the published list of elections.

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

Kevin Hollinrake: [\[22042\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 3 December 2023 to Question 15517 on Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Consultants, if she will publish the savings made on consultancy fees in her Department since 5 July 2024.

Alex Norris:

MHCLG publishes spend on consultancy as part of its annual report and accounts, at which point the savings achieved in financial year 2024/25 will be confirmed.

■ **Private Rented Housing: Energy**

Kevin Hollinrake: [\[22047\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the consultation entitled Reforms to the Energy Performance of Buildings regime, published on 4 December 2024, what estimate she has made of the potential impact of these proposals on regulatory costs for private sector landlords.

Kevin Hollinrake: [\[22048\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the consultation entitled Reforms to the Energy Performance of Buildings

regime, published on 4 December 2024, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of these proposals on the rating of an average dwelling with an EPC rating of C.

Alex Norris:

The average cost of an energy performance certificate (EPC) is estimated to be £70 for domestic properties and £400 for non-domestic properties. The average costs for private sector landlords who need to make improvements to their domestic properties as a result of the consultation proposal are between £1,500 - £2,500, with estimated lifetime savings of £6,400. An Impact Assessment has been published alongside the consultation ([impact assessment](#)).

The EPC is an information tool designed to support people making decisions at the point of buying, renting and retrofitting their properties. The changes in the proposal are intended to help people manage their energy costs and reduce their carbon emissions. Adding new metrics for fabric performance, heating system type and smart readiness to the EPC will provide further information for people about how to reduce their costs and transition to low carbon heating. These new metrics will potentially highlight additional areas for improvements, even for those who have already achieved an EPC C rating under the current system.

■ **Small Businesses: Business Rates**

Kevin Hollinrake:

[\[22045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, through what mechanism small business rate relief is financed; and how local authorities are reimbursed for the cost.

Jim McMahon:

The cost to local authorities of providing small business rate relief was taken into account when setting up the business rates retention system. The Government has also compensated local authorities through additional grants to reflect changes to the small business rates relief scheme since 2013.

■ **Standard of Living**

Mike Wood:

[\[22017\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the policy paper entitled Plan for Change, published on 5 December 2024, CP1210, how her Department plans to measure progress towards the target to raise living standards in every part of the UK; and if she will make it her policy to publish data on changes in real household disposable income per head in each local authority.

Alex Norris:

A range of metrics are needed to understand progress towards raising living standards across the UK. The Department has worked with the Office for National Statistics (ONS) to increase the granularity of a variety of statistic publications such as Gross Value Added (GVA) and Gross Disposable Household Income (GDHI) at small area geographies including local authorities.

These data are also available through ONS's Explore Local Statistics (ELS) service. This means that anyone can find, compare and visualise statistics about places in the UK using over 70 indicators.

The Department is continuing to work with ONS to identify possible future metrics to monitor the progress of raising living standards across the UK.

■ Temporary Accommodation: Greater London

Helen Hayes: [\[21643\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate she has made of the cost of temporary accommodation for London councils in each of the last four years.

Helen Hayes: [\[21644\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to help councils reduce the (a) need for and (b) costs of temporary accommodation.

Rushanara Ali:

Local authorities in England report revenue and expenditure on an annual basis. Data on council spending on temporary accommodation is contained in the Revenue outturn housing services (RO4) tables, accessible [here](#). The drop down can be used to access data for each local authority, as well as for groups of local authorities including London Boroughs. The net current expenditure column contains data on the net cost of temporary accommodation to local authorities, after they have accounted for income such as from housing benefit.

The Government recognises that homelessness levels are far too high and that this can have a devastating impact on those involved, as well as placing financial strain on councils. We must address this and deliver long term solutions. The Government is looking at these issues carefully and will develop a new cross government strategy, working with mayors and councils across the country to get us back on track to ending homelessness once and for all.

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

In December, MHCLG also announced the Emergency Accommodation Reduction Pilots, backed by £5 million in overall funding to work with 20 local authorities with the highest use of bed & breakfast (B&B) accommodation for homeless families, to test innovative approaches and kickstart new initiatives to reduce the use of B&Bs.

More widely, we are taking action to tackle the root causes of homelessness, including:

- delivering the biggest increase in social and affordable housebuilding in a generation and building 1.5 million new homes over the next parliament; and
- abolishing Section 21 'no fault' evictions, preventing private renters being exploited and discriminated against, and empowering people to challenge unreasonable rent increases.

■ Viva Midco: Insulation

Mike Amesbury: [\[21353\]](#)

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 Viva Midco has been asked to sign the agreement.

Alex Norris:

Yes. The department has invited all signatories to the Developer Remediation Contract to also sign up to the joint plan to accelerate developer-led remediation and improve resident experience. The full list of contract signatories can be found at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/developer-remediation-contract.

The full list of developers that have signed up to the joint plan can be found at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/joint-plan-to-accelerate-developer-led-remediation-and-improve-resident-experience.

JUSTICE

■ Court of Protection

Lisa Smart: [\[22124\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate her Department has made of the average processing times for deputyship applications by the Court of Protection.

Sarah Sackman:

Data on the average processing time for deputyship applications, from receipt to disposal by the Court of Protection, is not currently available.

The court has recently migrated to a new case management system and work is in hand as part of the HMCTS data strategy to develop management information data.

■ Crown Court: Trials

Andy Slaughter: [\[22891\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what metrics determine whether a Crown Court trial is classified as ineffective.

Andy Slaughter: [\[22892\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether trials in the Crown Court starting on day two or later are classified as ineffective.

Sarah Sackman:

If the trial does not go ahead on the scheduled day of listing due to action or inaction by the prosecution, the defence or the court (see list of reasons in table below), and a further listing for trial is required, it is termed 'ineffective.'

COURT	W1 - ANOTHER CASE OVER-RAN
	W2 - Judge / magistrate availability due to illness etc.
	W3 - Case not reached / insufficient cases drop out / floater not reached
	W4 - Equipment / accommodation failure
	X - Insufficient jurors available
Defence	Q1 - Defence not ready: disclosure problems (inc. late alibi notice)
	Q2 - Defence not ready: specify in comments (inc. no instructions)
	Q3 - Defence asked for additional prosecution witness to attend
	R - Defence witness absent
	S1 - Defendant absent - did not proceed in absence (judicial discretion)
	S2 - Defendant ill or otherwise unfit to proceed
	S4 - Defendant absent - unable to proceed as Defendant not notified of place and time of hearing
	T - Defence increased time estimate, insufficient time for trial to start
	U1 - Defence advocate engaged in other trial
	U2 - Defence advocate failed to attend
	V - Defendant dismissed advocate
Other	S3 - Defendant not produced by PECS
	W5 - No interpreter available
	Y - Outstanding cases in a Magistrates' Court
	Z - Outstanding cases in other Crown Court centre
Prosecution	M1 - Prosecution not ready: served late notice of additional evidence on defence
	M2 - Prosecution not ready: specify in comments
	M3 - Prosecution failed to disclose unused evidence
	N1 - Prosecution witness absent: police

COURT W1 - ANOTHER CASE OVER-RAN

N2 - Prosecution witness absent: professional / expert

N3 - Prosecution witness absent: other

O1 - Prosecution advocate engaged in another trial

O2 - Prosecution advocate failed to attend

P - Prosecution increased time estimate - insufficient time for trial to start

Where a trial is not ready to go ahead, it is recorded as ineffective and listed again, either for the following day, or if not possible, for some future date agreed by the court. If the trial starts on the second day, it will then be marked as effective.

However, if it is still unable to proceed on the second day, it will be marked as ineffective again.

Andy Slaughter: [\[22893\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what proportion of ineffective trials in the Crown Court started later than day one of the set trial date in 2024.

Andy Slaughter: [\[22894\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what proportion of ineffective Crown Court trials which started after day one of the set trial date in 2024 reached completion.

Sarah Sackman:

Of all Crown Court trials that were ineffective between January and September 2024, 21% were subsequently effective on a later date (up to the end of September 2024). The remainder will include trials listed for a date beyond the end of September 2024, as well as those cases no longer requiring a trial date (for example the defendant has pleaded guilty).

Of all ineffective trials that subsequently started between January and September 2024, 80% had reached conclusion by the end of September 2024.

These data are management information and are not subject to the same level of checks as official statistics. The data provided is the most recent available and for that reason might differ slightly from any previously published information. Recent data are especially vulnerable to quality checking and so may be subject to change.

■ Domestic Abuse: Rehabilitation

Josh Babarinde: [\[21736\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what (a) programmes and (b) interventions are used to reduce reoffending among domestic abusers in prison; and what the reoffending rates are among prisoners who participate.

Josh Babarinde:

[\[21737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what (a) programmes and (b) interventions are used to reduce reoffending among domestic abusers in the community; and what the reoffending rates are among people who participate.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

HM Prison and Probation Service currently offers five Accredited Programmes that may be undertaken by those convicted of domestic abuse offences. These are the Building Better Relationships programme, Becoming New Me +, New Me Strengths, Building Choices (available in prisons and probation), and Kaizen (available in prisons only). These programmes may also be undertaken by offenders with a range of offending types, however, so it is not possible to provide re-offending outcomes specifically in relation to domestic abusers.

Accredited Programmes more generally are well-evidenced. Most international reviews indicate that programmes reduce reoffending generally by about 20% to 30%.

In addition to Accredited Programmes, a number of approved interventions are also delivered by HMPPS and other partners, including Third Sector organisations. The [National Framework for Interventions Policy Framework - GOV.UK](#) sets out the minimum design standards for these types of interventions.

Structured Interventions are available as a sentence of the court, by inclusion in a Rehabilitation Activity Requirement. They are part of a set of interventions delivered by regional interventions teams in the community. Those which focus specifically on domestic abuse include Stepwise Relationships, Positive Pathways Plus, Help, and Developing Assertiveness for Women in Relationships.

■ Independent Sentencing Review

James McMurdock:

[\[22232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent estimate she has made of when the Independent Review of Sentencing will be complete.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

This Sentencing Review is chaired by former Lord Chancellor, David Gauke and aims to ensure that there is always a place in prison for violent offenders.

The Review launched on Tuesday 22 October 2024 and is estimated to run for six months. We therefore expect that the review will report in Spring 2025.

■ Offences against Children: Sentencing

James McMurdock:

[\[22233\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what discussions her Department has had with the independent Sentencing Council for England and Wales on the adequacy of sentencing guidelines for child sexual offences in (a) reflecting the severity of the crime and (b) preventing reoffending.

James McMurdock: [\[22234\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of requesting the Sentencing Council for England and Wales produce guidelines on the sentencing of grooming gangs.

James McMurdock: [\[22236\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of custodial sentences for child sexual offences in preventing reoffending.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Child sexual abuse and exploitation are the most horrific of crimes and the Government is determined to act to strengthen the law in this area. This is why we have committed to legislate to make grooming an aggravating factor in the sentencing of child sexual offences, to ensure that this behaviour is reflected in the sentencing of perpetrators. We will also make it a mandatory duty for those working with children to report child sexual abuse – a key recommendation of Professor Alexis Jay’s report – and this will go into the Crime and Policing Bill due to be introduced to Parliament this spring.

As set out in previous responses, the Sentencing Council for England and Wales is independent of Parliament and Government. It therefore decides on its own priorities and work plan for producing and reviewing sentencing guidelines. Sentencing guidelines for child sex offences, including for the offence of meeting a child following sexual grooming, were first published by the Council in 2013. Following consultation, revised guidelines for some child sex offences were published and came into force in May 2022.

■ Prisoners' Release

Steve Darling: [\[22122\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of the recall to prison programme.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The Government’s absolute focus is on public protection. Offenders on licence can be swiftly recalled to prison if they breach their licence conditions in such a way as to indicate that their risk to the public has increased and they are about to commit further offences. The recall of an offender to custody is an important public protection measure. We remain focused on reducing reoffending and the risks presented by offenders, so that they do not need to be recalled in the first place.

The HMI Probation Thematic Report on Probation Recall Culture & Practice, published in 2020, found that: “Public protection and the protection of victims are central to probation service decision-making on recall.”

We continue to work across Government to ensure that we take the necessary steps to reduce the recall population and keep the system functioning safely, whilst protecting the public which is our top priority.

■ Prisoners' Release: National Security**Paula Barker:**[\[22365\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that Prison pathfinder meetings are provided with intelligence risk assessments on the release of prisoners that could pose a threat to national security.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The improvements being made to the Pathfinder process, to further enhance our ability to make informed decisions about offenders who pose national security risks, are set out in the Ministry of Justice's response to the Prevention of Future Deaths Report by H M Coroner, following the inquest into deaths resulting from the terror attack in Forbury Gardens, Reading (<https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/2024-0276-Response-from-Ministry-of-Justice.pdf>). In addition, new guidance and templates have been produced for prison security departments to improve the quality and detail of the intelligence assessments that inform pre-release planning under the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY**■ Broadband and Mobile Phones: South Kesteven****Alicia Kearns:**[\[22095\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he is taking to improve mobile phone and broadband access in South Kesteven.

Chris Bryant:

Project Gigabit is the government's programme to deliver gigabit-capable broadband to UK premises that are not included in suppliers' commercial plans. Eligible premises in the district council area of South Kesteven are set to benefit from three Project Gigabit contracts currently set to deliver new gigabit-capable connections between now and 2029.

We also want all areas of the UK to benefit from good quality mobile coverage. 4G coverage is now available from all four mobile network operators in 97% of South Kesteven. Our ambition is to go further, with all populated areas, including South Kesteven, having higher-quality standalone 5G by 2030.

■ Copyright: Performing Arts**Claire Hanna:**[\[22361\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of (a) withdrawing the Copyright and Performances (Application to Other Countries) (Amendment) (No.2) Order 2024 (SI, 2024, No. 1124) and (b) commencing a consultation into the potential impact of introducing the regulation.

Feryal Clark:

The Government introduced SI 2024/1124 following a public consultation and careful consideration of the views and evidence submitted thereto. The effect of the SI is to largely maintain the effect of the law as it formerly applied (Option 0 in the consultation), except for limited changes, most of which are made to allow the UK to comply with its international obligations. Revoking this SI and adopting any of the other options considered at consultation would risk costs and disruption for the UK's creative industries, as set out in [the Government's response to the consultation](#).

■ Databases: Regulation

Jo Platt: [\[22066\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how the Data (Use and Access) Bill will ensure that publishers can access data effectively when ensuring regulatory compliance.

Chris Bryant:

When processing personal data organisations, including publishers, must comply with the UK General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018. If publishers are providing online services, then they may also be required to comply with requirements of the Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations 2003 (PECR). The Data (Use and Access) Bill introduces a new exception to PECR that would permit online publishers to use cookies and similar technologies to collect statistical data to enable them to improve their online services, subject to certain safeguards being met.

■ Information Commissioner's Office

Jo Platt: [\[22067\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the enforcement practices of the Information Commissioner's Office cohere with the regulatory duties of that Office.

Chris Bryant:

Although DSIT acts as the ICO's sponsor within government, it is an independent regulator and accountable to Parliament. It is not appropriate for Government to comment on how it exercises its regulatory duties.

The ICO publishes details of its enforcement activity and an annual report across its operations on its website.

The Data (Use and Access) Bill introduces a new governance structure for the ICO – including a new statutory board - to bring it into line with regulatory best practice. The Bill also introduces new reporting requirements on the ICO, including annual metrics on its investigations, their outcomes and use of its powers. This will bring greater transparency and accountability.

■ Intimate Image Abuse: Artificial Intelligence

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[\[22134\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps the Government is taking to prevent the use of denuding apps used to create pornographic deepfake images.

Feryal Clark:

The Government made a manifesto commitment to ban the creation of sexually explicit deepfake images, as part of the government's commitment to halve the prevalence of violence against women and girls (VAWG) within the decade.

We are bringing forward provisions in the Crime and Policing Bill to meet that commitment. This will make this behaviour criminal, so that perpetrators can be brought to justice.

The sharing of or threatening to share a deepfake intimate image without consent is already a criminal offence under the Online Safety Act and was designated as a priority offence in November 2024. Companies in scope of the Act's illegal safety duties will be required to proactively tackle this type of content, preventing its proliferation online.

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[\[22135\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he is taking to prevent the use of denuding apps by children in the creation of pornographic deepfake images.

Feryal Clark:

Where an adult or a child uses generative AI to make sexual images of a child, that content is child sexual exploitation and abuse material, and is illegal.

We are also bringing forward provisions to ban the creation of sexually explicit deepfake images of adults without consent in the Crime and Policing Bill, making this behaviour criminal so that perpetrators can be brought to justice.

The sharing of or threatening to share a deepfake intimate image without consent is already a criminal offence under the Online Safety Act and was designated as a priority offence in November 2024. In-scope services will be required to proactively tackle this type of content, preventing its proliferation online.

■ Mobile Phones

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[22059\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether his Department is taking steps to allow people to retain their mobile numbers when changing mobile contracts while retaining the same network provider.

Chris Bryant:

Consumers can retain their existing mobile number when renewing their contract or moving to a new contract.

Ofcom has in place rules on retaining an existing number when moving providers, known as "porting", but these only apply when the consumer is leaving one provider and joining a new one.

We would expect mobile operators retaining customers who are changing contract to be motivated to help them retain their existing number should they wish to. People should speak directly to their provider if they are experiencing any issues.

■ Revenue and Customs: Electronic Government

Alex Burghart:

[\[22054\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, pursuant to the Answer of 19 December 2024 to Question 20241 on Electronic Government, what his planned timetable is for onboarding HMRC to One Login.

Feryal Clark:

GDS and HMRC continue to collaborate on delivering the technical requirements necessary to go-live and conducting end-to-end testing within GOV.UK One Login as part of its ongoing internal private beta phase to support users accessing HMRC services. The aim is to launch an external private beta in Spring 2025, followed by a rollout to all new users over the remainder of the year, with existing HMRC users included in subsequent phases.

TRANSPORT

■ Driving Tests: Waiting Lists

Jim Shannon:

[\[22609\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of waiting times for practical driving tests on the duration of the validity of driving theory tests.

Lilian Greenwood:

It is important road safety knowledge and hazard perception skills are up to date at the critical point a person drives unsupervised for the first time.

The maximum duration of two years between passing the theory test and a subsequent practical test is in place to ensure a candidate's road safety knowledge and ability to identify developing hazards is current. This validity period is set in legislation and the Government has no current plans to lay further legislation to extend it.

Ensuring new drivers have current relevant knowledge and skills is a vital part of the preparation of new drivers, who are disproportionately represented in casualty statistics. Learners will therefore need to pass another theory test if their certificate expires.

■ Pakistan International Airlines**Mr James Frith:**[\[22345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the Civil Aviation Authority is reviewing the ban on Pakistan International Airlines; and what assessment she has made of the potential impact of that ban on travel between the UK and Pakistan since 2020.

Mike Kane:

Pakistan is currently listed on the UK Air Safety List (ASL). The UK Air Safety Committee regularly reviews all carriers and States listed on the ASL.

No assessment is made on the impact of the ban as decisions are based on a safety assessment only. Travel between the UK and Pakistan since 2020 has continued to be facilitated through direct services – including via UK airlines, British Airways and Virgin Atlantic – and indirect services.

■ Railway Stations: Access**Melanie Ward:**[\[22213\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when her planned timetable is for allocating the next round of Access for All funding.

Simon Lightwood:

Improving the accessibility is an important element of our plan to fix Britain's broken rail system. The Department is carefully considering the best approach to station accessibility and recognises the huge social and economic benefits it brings to communities. MPs and stakeholders will be updated in due course.

■ Railway Stations: Greater London**Luke Taylor:**[\[22152\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, for what reason late-night services at Worcester Park station are not being reinstated between Thursday and Sunday.

Simon Lightwood:

Worcester Park continues to have a later train on Fridays and Saturdays from London Waterloo, but there is judged to be insufficient demand to justify the costs of a similar provision on Thursdays and Sundays.

■ Railways: Fares**Charlotte Cane:**[\[21811\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to make rail fares more affordable.

Simon Lightwood:

Whilst it is our ambition through public ownership to deliver a more affordable railway, any long-term changes or concessions made to rail fares policy require balancing against the potential impacts on passengers, taxpayers and the railway. Most

regulated rail fares will increase by 4.6 per cent on 2 March 2025. This will be the lowest absolute increase in three years and will support the Government's long-term plans to achieve financial sustainability of the railway.

■ Roads: Lighting

Rebecca Paul: [\[22501\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many miles worth of road lighting on (a) motorways and (b) all-purpose trunk roads have been permanently switched off following completion of the TA 501 appraisal process each of the last five years.

Lilian Greenwood:

The answer could only be provided at a disproportionate cost.

Rebecca Paul: [\[22502\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many road lighting schemes on (a) motorways and (b) all-purpose trunk roads that were switched off following completion of the TA 501 appraisal process were in the final 18 months of their design life in each of the last five years.

Lilian Greenwood:

The answer could only be provided at a disproportionate cost.

Rebecca Paul: [\[22503\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has made a comparative assessment of the relationship between switching off lighting on stretches of (a) motorways and (b) major trunk roads and trends in the level of accidents on these roads.

Lilian Greenwood:

National Highways assesses the benefits and costs of any potential changes in lighting provision. This is in line with the design and appraisal standards set out in the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges, which ensures that road lighting is provided at a sufficient level to support road safety, whilst also being cost effective, energy efficient and not causing unnecessary light pollution.

Where National Highways determines lighting should be removed, the implementation plan includes a full switch-off for an initial period of one year. This enables the collision and casualty rates to be monitored to determine if there is an impact on safety and if mitigating action is required.

■ Transport: Documents

Alex Ballinger: [\[22485\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to tackle issues related to falsified (a) driving licences and (b) other transport-related documents created by AI.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) has processes in place to identify fake and forged documents including genuine documents that may have been altered. These measures help to make original documents difficult to counterfeit and forgeries easier to identify. DVLA documents, including the driving licence, contain a number of security features to prevent misuse. These features are regularly reviewed and periodically updated to help keep documents secure and to help tackle fraud.

The DVLA also provides the police with information about these security features to help them to identify genuine documents.

TREASURY**■ Banking Hubs****Mr Gregory Campbell:**[\[22885\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will have discussions with financial institutions to establish which additional banks will participate in the roll out of banking hubs.

Tulip Siddiq:

Banking hubs are a voluntary service developed by the financial services sector in the context of legislation to protect access to cash under the Financial Services Act 2023. Their rollout is overseen by Cash Access UK, a not-for-profit company set up and funded by industry for the purpose of delivering shared access to cash solutions. Membership of Cash Access UK and involvement in banking hubs is voluntary, and it is possible for banks and building societies in scope of the FCA's access to cash regime to choose to meet their cash access obligations through other methods, for example their branch network.

However, the Government understands the importance of face-to-face banking to communities and is committed to championing sufficient access for all as a priority. This is why the Government is working closely with industry to roll out 350 banking hubs across the UK. The UK banking sector has committed to deliver these hubs by the end of this parliament. Over 175 hubs have been announced so far, and over 100 are already open.

■ Defence: Expenditure**James Cartlidge:**[\[22961\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of recent trends in borrowing costs on the Government's capacity to increase defence spending to 2.5% of GDP expenditure.

Darren Jones:

This government is fully committed to economic stability and sound public finances. That is why the Chancellor has made clear that meeting the fiscal rules is non-negotiable.

Economic stability is one of the foundations that underpins the Prime Minister's Plan for Change, and the government has restored it with tough decisions, strict spending rules and robust institutions.

The Spending Review will rewire government spending, to deliver the Plan for Change priorities, focusing on driving growth and reforming public services, whilst living within the spending envelope that has been set out.

The first duty of government is to keep the country safe and protect our citizens. Under this government the Ministry of Defence's budget is increasing by £2.9 billion from 2024-25 to 2025-26. It means the Defence budget will grow in line with the economy in 2025-26, ensuring the UK comfortably exceeds the NATO target of 2% of GDP.

As the Chancellor set out at Budget, we will set a path to spending 2.5% of GDP on defence at a future fiscal event.

Economic Growth

Mike Wood: [\[22012\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the policy paper entitled Plan for Change, published on 5 December 2024, CP1210, what metrics she plans to use to measure progress towards the target to deliver the highest sustained growth in the G7.

Tulip Siddiq:

Improving economic growth is one of the core missions of the government and our Plan for Change. We aim to have the highest growth in the G7 by the end of the parliament, measured using estimates of real terms Gross Domestic Product per capita.

Fraud: Compensation

James McMurdock: [\[22551\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 7 January 2025 to Question 21166 on Fraud: Compensation, what discussions her Department has had with HMRC on victims of fraud being taxed on the money taken from them.

James Murray:

HMT has ongoing discussions with HMRC on all aspects of the tax system.

National Income

Mr Gregory Campbell: [\[22886\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent estimate she has made of the change in GDP per capita by 2030.

Tulip Siddiq:

GDP per capita is projected by the independent Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) to grow by an annual average of 1.1% over this parliament. The government, as set out in the Plan for Change, is committed to kickstarting economic growth. This will fund our public services, lead to more people in good jobs, higher living standards and productivity growth in every part of the United Kingdom.

As set out at the Autumn Budget 2024, through the seven pillars of the growth mission, the Government is restoring stability, increasing investment, and reforming the economy. Growth can only be achieved in partnership with business, so we will develop and deliver these policies together.

Public Expenditure**Mike Wood:**[\[22014\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the written statement entitled Plan for Change: Milestones for mission-led Government, published on 5 December 2024, HCWS285, and the policy paper entitled Plan for Change, published on 5 December 2024, CP1210, whether funding announced in the Plan for Change includes funding previously announced by the Government; and whether there will be Barnett consequential funding for devolved administrations.

Darren Jones:

The government sets out its plans for departmental expenditure at regular Spending Reviews. The current Spending Review (SR25) is split into two phases.

Phase 1 of the Spending Review was published alongside Autumn Budget 2024, resetting budgets for 2024-25 and setting departmental budgets for 2025-26, including funding which will support delivery of the Plan for Change priorities. Autumn Budget confirmed the largest real-terms funding settlement for the Devolved Governments since devolution.

Phase 2 of the Spending Review will conclude later this year and the milestones announced in the Plan for Change will be the core priorities. Phase 2 will allocate departmental budgets between 2026-27 and 2028-29, with an additional year (2029-30) for capital spending. The Barnett formula will continue to apply in the usual way.

Mike Wood:[\[22016\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the policy paper entitled Plan for Change, published on 5 December 2024, CP1210, if she will make it her policy to publish an annual spending review for the milestones set out in the Plan for Change showing how much funding has been (a) allocated, (b) spent and (c) reallocated for each of the five milestones.

Darren Jones:

The Prime Minister's Plan for Change sets out the government's agenda and priorities for the remainder of this Parliament, to strengthen our country through a decade of national renewal. The Spending Review will deliver on this agenda.

Phase 1 of the Spending Review was published alongside Autumn Budget 2024, resetting budgets for 2024-25 and setting departmental budgets for 2025-26. Phase 2 of the Spending Review will conclude later this year and the milestones announced in the PfC will be the core priorities. Phase 2 will allocate departmental budgets between 2026-27 and 2028-29, with an additional year (2029-30) for capital spending.

The government has committed to regular Spending Reviews, allocating all departmental spending, every two years to provide a more stable and transparent spending framework.

■ Revenue and Customs: Fraud

James McMurdock: [\[22863\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions her Department has had with victims of fraud on their experiences with HMRC.

James McMurdock: [\[22864\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of HMRC's policies on supporting victims of fraud.

James Murray:

The Treasury and HMRC have frequent discussions on a wide range of issues relating to policy development and delivery. Furthermore, HMRC regularly review their policies on the support they provide to customers who need extra help, which includes but is not limited to victims of fraud.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ Disability: Discrimination

Jim Shannon: [\[21985\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps she is taking to help tackle disability discrimination in workplaces.

Anneliese Dodds:

The Government is fully committed to the Equality Act 2010 (the Act), which protects disabled people from discrimination in the workplace. The Act prohibits direct and indirect disability discrimination and requires employers to make reasonable adjustments for disabled employees and jobseekers to ensure that they are not placed at a substantial disadvantage compared to their non-disabled colleagues. This could include improving access to premises for wheelchair users, through installing ramps or other auxiliary aids or services.

The failure of an employer to make reasonable adjustments could amount to direct disability discrimination. However, the Act also recognises the need to strike a balance between the needs of disabled employees and the circumstances of their

employers. What is 'reasonable' will therefore depend on the circumstances of each case.

Strong legal remedies are available to employees and applicants who feel that they have experienced disability discrimination by an employer. Guidance and codes of practice have been published by The Equality and Human Rights Commission and Acas, to help employers follow the law and employees and applicants understand their rights.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Autism Employment Review

Mims Davies:

[\[21657\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department has taken to implement the Buckland Review of Autism Employment.

Sir Stephen Timms:

We welcomed the Buckland Review of Autism Employment. This made recommendations to employers, third sector organisations and Government on addressing barriers autistic people face when seeking and remaining in employment and the Minister for Employment and I were pleased to meet Sir Robert in October to talk about his findings and key drivers for change in the workplace. He has indicated his willingness to continue to work with the department on this matter and we are continuing to build on those recommendations that were directed to Government, such as working with employers to reform Disability Confident to improve the schemes outcomes and realise the scheme's full potential.

As a Government, we want to support all forms of neurodiversity in the workplace, and we are looking to build on the Review by gathering expert evidence in line with this expanded focus. In parallel, we are working with other areas of government to promote awareness of neurodiversity amongst employers and we recently announced Keep Britain Working, a major independent review of the employer's role in reducing health-related inactivity and to promote healthy and inclusive workplaces, led by the former Chair of John Lewis, Sir Charlie Mayfield. Our expert evidence on neurodiversity at work will be available to inform this independent review which will help ensure employers receive a coherent set of messages from Government about inclusive workplace practices.

■ Child Maintenance Service

Pippa Heylings:

[\[22129\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what her planned timetable is for responding to the Gingerbread report entitled Fix the Child Maintenance Service, published on 25 November 2024.

Andrew Western:

The Child Maintenance Service (CMS) continues to engage regularly with stakeholders as we consider CMS reform. We are currently considering the recommendations from the Gingerbread report 'Fix the CMS' alongside other potential changes we have been discussing with stakeholders.

Department for Work and Pensions: Artificial Intelligence**Chi Onwurah:**[\[21605\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the answer of 17 December 2024 to Question 19694 on Department for Work and Pensions: Artificial Intelligence, what period of time her Department considers a regular interval.

Andrew Western:

Machine learning for tackling fraud is used to flag cases that require further examination. The departments Annual Report and Accounts (ARA) provides an annual assessment to Parliament on the impact of machine learning on protected groups and vulnerable claimants. Outside of the ARA the department will review its fairness analysis if new models are developed or there are changes to the existing model. There is no single timescale across the development, testing and operation of models.

Department for Work and Pensions: Correspondence**Kirsty Blackman:**[\[22906\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department records the number of enquiries received from (a) hon. Members and (b) Members of Devolved (i) Parliaments and (ii) Assemblies on a quarterly basis.

Andrew Western:

The department receives and responds to enquiries from Members of Parliament and Members of devolved Parliaments or Assemblies but does not collate, report or produce statistics on this.

Departmental Coordination: Disability**Mims Davies:**[\[22942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when she next plans to review the departmental ministerial disability champions programme.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Ministerial Disability Champions were an initiative of the previous administration.

On 3 December 2024, International Day of Persons with Disabilities, I was pleased to announce new Lead Ministers for Disability in every Government department.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/lead-ministers-for-disability>

The Lead Ministers for Disability will help to break down barriers to opportunity right across our long-term missions, and to fulfil the manifesto commitment to ensure the views and voices of disabled people are properly heard.

I chaired our first meeting on 17 December and we will meet regularly to make sure that this Government is delivering on that manifesto commitment and our missions, right across every department.

■ Employment: Disability

Mark Sewards:

[23070]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that people with (a) fibromyalgia, (b) ADHD and (c) other invisible disabilities are supported back into work.

Alison McGovern:

Backed by £240m investment, the Get Britain Working White Paper launched on 26 November will drive forward approaches to tackling economic inactivity and work toward the long-term ambition of an 80% employment rate.

As a Government, we want to support all forms of neurodiversity in the workplace, and we are looking to build on the findings of the Buckland Review of Autism Employment by gathering expert evidence in line with this expanded focus.

Appropriate work is generally good for health and wellbeing, so we want everyone to get work and get on in work, whoever they are and wherever they live.

Disabled people and people with health conditions, including those with fibromyalgia, ADHD and other invisible conditions, are a diverse group so access to the right work and health support, in the right place, at the right time, is key. We therefore have a range of specialist initiatives to support individuals to stay in work and get back into work, including those that join up employment and health systems.

Measures include support from Work Coaches and Disability Employment Advisers in Jobcentres and Access to Work grants, as well as joining up health and employment support around the individual through Employment Advisors in NHS Talking Therapies and Individual Placement and Support in Primary Care.

Employers play a key role in increasing employment opportunities and supporting disabled people and people with health conditions, to thrive as part of the workforce.

Our support to employers includes increasing access to Occupational Health, [a digital information service for employers](#) and the Disability Confident scheme.

■ Employment: Offenders

Dr Allison Gardner:

[22518]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to support people with a criminal record to find employment.

Andrew Western:

This Government understands the challenges a criminal record can bring to finding a job and also recognises that employment significantly reduces the risk of reoffending.

The recently published Get Britain Working White Paper sets out Government's proposals to reform employment, health and skills support to tackle economic inactivity. This includes support for people with a criminal conviction.

DWP provides a range of support to help ex-offenders find employment. This includes around 200 prison work coaches based in prisons across Great Britain who provide employment, training, and benefit support before release. Upon release, our jobcentre work coaches can offer individually tailored employment and training support, including access to DWP employment programmes such as Restart and Sector-based Work Academies.

DWP's Strategic Relationship Team works with around 300 national employers and partners, and 80 trade associations across a wide range of labour market sectors to generate employment opportunities for claimants including ex-offenders. The Civil Service wide Social Mobility Recruitment Schemes such as Going Forward into Employment provide fixed-term appointment opportunities within the Civil Service for people who face barriers to work, including ex-offenders.

The National Partnership Agreement between MoJ, DWP and the HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) sets out how we are jointly driving rehabilitation and reducing reoffending. This includes DWP working alongside HMPPS's New Futures Network, which brokers partnerships between prisons and employers in developing local agreements to enhance joined-up working for continuity of support on release. I refer the Hon. Member to the previous parliamentary question response 18064 on 9 December from Sir Nicholas Dakin.

A criminal record should not be a barrier to finding stable employment and having a positive future. Employers are encouraged to delay disclosure of convictions during job applications through the 'Ban the Box' scheme to give people with a criminal record a better chance to show their suitability and commitment to a job role. DWP is a proud member of the scheme.

■ Extended Services: Universal Credit**Damian Hinds:**[\[22896\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether costs for (a) before-school breakfast and (b) after-school clubs and programmes for children of (I) primary (II) secondary school age are eligible for reimbursement through universal credit as childcare costs for working parents.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Universal Credit childcare support is paid to eligible Universal Credit customers in work for childcare for children up to the age of 16 and can be considered for the costs of wraparound childcare, including breakfast and afterschool clubs. Childcare providers must be registered with OFSTED or their equivalent in Northern Ireland,

Scotland and Wales or childminders registered with a child-minding agency that is registered.

Providers of wraparound childcare provided within school settings do not need to be registered but must be providing their childcare services under the authorisation and direction of the governing body of a school registered with OFSTED or their equivalent in the devolved nations.

■ **Hearing Impairment: Employment**

Peter Prinsley: [\[22181\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will hold discussions with the Health and Safety Executive on the potential merits of taking steps encourage employers to (a) organise regular hearing tests, (b) distribute adequate personal hearing protectors and (c) implement other measures to help prevent occupational hearing loss.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Duties on employers are well established in the Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005, which require employers to:

- a) Carry out hearing tests regularly by a competent person (health surveillance) when there may be a risk to their employee's hearing, and undertake protective measures based on the results, and
- b) Provide adequate personal hearing protection where noise exposure cannot be eliminated or controlled at source.

Health and Safety Executive (HSE) provides guidance and tools to help employers understand their obligations through its website, and regularly engages stakeholders to promote noise controls and ensuring hearing protection is fit for purpose in terms of its condition and specific use.

HSE enforces these regulations and is conducting a long-term programme of targeted inspections of higher risk workplaces, forming a key element of HSE's Protecting People and Places strategy to reduce work-related ill-health in the workplace.

■ **Mobility Foundation: Finance**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[22057\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how much funding her Department has provided the Mobility Foundation in each of the last five years; and for what purpose.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The Motability Foundation charity, which is independent of government, oversees Motability Operations in its delivery of the Motability Scheme. The Motability Scheme does not receive any direct funding from the Department for Work and Pensions.

The Department for Work and Pensions facilitates a direct transfer to Motability of a claimant's Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payment or Armed Forces Independence Payment mobility allowance if they elect to join the Scheme.

The Motability Scheme allows eligible claimants to exchange a qualifying mobility benefit for a lease on a Motability car, powered wheelchair, scooter or Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle.

■ **Sickness Benefits: School Leaving**

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[\[22132\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of people claiming out of work benefit for sickness reasons have done so immediately following leaving full-time education.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The information requested is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

■ **Social Security Benefits: Chronic Illnesses and Disability**

Matt Bishop:

[\[22513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to ensure that planned reforms to the disability benefit system ensure security and support for seriously ill and disabled people.

Sir Stephen Timms:

This government believes there is a strong case to change the system of health and disability benefits across Great Britain so that it better enables people to enter and remain in work, and to respond to the complex and fluctuating nature of the health conditions many people live with today. The system must also work to reduce poverty for disabled people and those with health conditions and support disabled people to live independently.

We want to engage with disabled people, and others with expertise and experience on these issues, to consider how to address these challenges and build a better system. We are working to develop proposals for reform and will set them out for consultation and engagement in a Green Paper in spring 2025. This government is committed to putting the views and voices of disabled people at the heart of all that we do, so we will consult on these proposals with disabled people and representative organisations.

■ **Social Security Benefits: Convictions**

Rupert Lowe:

[\[22430\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what proportion of people convicted for their involvement in Pakistani heritage grooming gangs were in receipt of (a) Universal Credit and (b) another benefit when they committed their crimes.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The requested information is not held.

■ Universal Credit

Ben Maguire:

[\[21946\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a protected minimum floor for Universal Credit.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The Government recognises the importance of the social security safety net and the role Universal Credit has to play in tackling poverty and making work pay. That is why a Fair Repayment Rate will be introduced from April 2025, reducing the overall cap on Universal Credit (UC) deductions from 25% to 15%. This means approximately 1.2 million of the poorest families will benefit by an average of £420 a year.

At this time, the Government have no plans to make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a protected minimum floor for Universal Credit at this time.

■ Universal Credit: Applications

Jim Shannon:

[\[22611\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will take steps to make the application process for Universal Credit more accessible for people (a) who are not able to go online and (b) with learning difficulties.

Sir Stephen Timms:

DWP provides alternative channels to make a claim to UC for those who are unable to use the digital channel, this includes telephone or Jobcentre attendance. A home visit may also be considered if additional support is required.

A range of support is available to support customers asked to move to UC. This includes information on gov.uk and support from the Help to Claim service provided by Citizens Advice and Citizens Advice Scotland. Help to Claim offers independent support to customers making a claim to UC, right up until their first full correct payment. Those individuals who are unable to access support via these channels, can go to their local jobcentre where staff will identify the right support to meet their needs to make and/or manage their Universal Credit claim.

■ Universal Credit: Farmers

David Smith:

[\[22817\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will review the Minimum Income Floor for self-employed farmers on Universal Credit.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Universal Credit treats all forms and sectors of self-employment in the same way, focusing on the level of a customer's earnings rather than the sector in which they

work. The Minimum Income Floor (MIF) encourages self-employed customers to progress in work and grow their earnings to a sustainable level.

The Government is committed to reviewing Universal Credit. Further details will be provided in due course.

■ Universal Credit: Self-employed

Claire Young:

[\[22793\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the minimum income floor on self-employed workers that are unable to work for brief periods due to (a) health issues and (b) care responsibilities.

Sir Stephen Timms:

No assessment has been made.

The level of the MIF is equivalent to what a person in employed work in similar circumstances to the customer could expect to earn at living or minimum wage for their age. The MIF is therefore tailored to a customer's individual circumstances; where a person has limitations on the hours they can reasonably be expected to work, for example because they have a health condition or caring responsibilities, the level of their MIF can be reduced.

Short-term health conditions experienced by a customer, such as colds, flu, strains, and sprains, are regarded as part of the normal pattern of self-employment.

Therefore, customers must plan for these periods as part of their ordinary business cycle.

Claire Young:

[\[22794\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what additional support is available for self-employed workers in receipt of Universal Credit that experience a short-term fall in their earnings.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Customers who are new to gainful self-employment are eligible for a 12-month 'start-up period', during which the Minimum Income Floor does not apply. This means that if a customer experiences a drop in their earnings, their Universal Credit award will increase. This gives customers the opportunity to adjust to the characteristics of the sector in which they work, such as seasonal or fluctuating earnings patterns.

Where a customer reports a loss from their self-employment, the value of the loss is considered when assessing earnings in future assessment periods. If the sum of any unused losses exceeds the amount of earnings in the subsequent monthly assessment period, the remaining value of the loss is carried forward to be offset against future earnings, until the loss is used up or the customer ceases self-employment. This may result in a customer receiving a higher Universal Credit award in the future.

Work Coaches can signpost customers in the start-up period to national and local support where available, such as business advice, mentoring or training. This may

also include connecting self-employed customers with other government support including:

- The Start Up Loans scheme, run by the British Business Bank
- The Business Support Helpline

Local Growth Hubs in England, Business Wales and Find Business Support and Business Gateway in Scotland, which offer support, advice and guidance to new and existing businesses.

If a self-employed customer has earnings below £2,600 (or £3,600 if in a couple) in the six months prior to an application, they may be eligible for a budgeting advance to help finance intermittent/ unforeseen expenses or expenses. This ensures low-income families that have an emergency financial need and do not have access to adequate savings or affordable loans can access funding to meet the emergency.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ **UK Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe**

Minister of State for Europe, North America and Overseas Territories (Stephen Doughty): [\[HCWS364\]](#)

The Hon. Member for Lichfield (Dave Robertson MP) has been appointed as a full member of the United Kingdom Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in place of the Hon. Member for Rugby (John Slinger MP).

HOME OFFICE

■ **Legislative proposals to counter ransomware**

The Minister of State for Security (Dan Jarvis): [\[HCWS365\]](#)

Today the Government is launching a public consultation on proposed legislative measures to combat the threat of ransomware. We want to protect UK businesses from the most harmful cyber crime facing the UK and facilitate growth.

These measures will hit ransomware criminals in their wallets, cutting off their funding; and improve reporting of these cyber incidents, to shine a light on this criminal world and provide law enforcement with the information they need to pursue criminals.

The National Crime Agency assess ransomware as the greatest serious and organised cyber crime threat, the largest cyber security threat, and a risk to the UK's national security. Ransomware incidents are continuing an upward trend.

In 2023, incidents of ransomware attacks reported to the Information Commissioner's Office reached their highest level since 2019 and private sector reporting to the National Crime Agency indicates the number of UK victims appearing on ransomware data leak sites has doubled since 2022. This is reflected globally, with 2023 resulting in the highest financial yield for ransomware criminals so far, with an industry estimate of over \$1bn.

Ransomware criminals ruin lives, wreck businesses and damage the UK economy. The impacts of ransomware - financial, reputational, psychological, and social - can be wide ranging, as seen in recent incidents, such as those affecting Synnovis the supplier of services to the NHS across London, the British Library, Capita, and Royal Mail.

It is this significant risk of harm that warrants focused and specific intervention to reduce the impact of ransomware across the UK.

We are seeking to build on existing resilience and disruption strategies, including sanctions, where the UK has already sanctioned 36 ransomware criminals, and our work with the international Counter Ransomware Initiative, where the UK led a commitment from 48 countries and two international organisations that their governments would not pay ransoms.

The Home Office has developed three world-leading tailored legislative proposals for consultation - they reflect the seriousness of the threat and the need for transformative action. The measures will be consistent and align with the proposals in the forthcoming Cyber Security and Resilience Bill.

The three measures are:

1. A targeted ban on ransomware payments for the public sector and critical national infrastructure – making the essential services the country relies on the most unattractive targets for ransomware criminals.
2. Ransomware payment prevention regime – to increase transparency of criminal demands, and provide victims not covered by the ban with advice and guidance before they decide how to respond.
3. Mandatory reporting regime for all ransomware incidents – bringing ransomware out of the shadows and maximising information for law enforcement on criminal activity.

The targeted ban will protect the systems that the UK relies on every day for our most critical and essential services. We are making a strong statement to these criminals that there is no financial gain in disrupting the core of our economy.

The consultation explores whether the payment prevention regime should be economy wide or operate via a threshold, with the potential exclusion of individuals and/or small businesses. Such a regime would provide the Government with the ability to block payments and allow law enforcement greater oversight of ransomware, supporting disruptive operations such as the recent success of Operation CRONOS, the NCA-led global collaboration to disrupt Lockbit, one of the most prolific ransomware groups in the world.

For those ransomware incidents that do not result in a payment, we are proposing to introduce a mandatory ransomware incident reporting regime. This could include a threshold-based mandatory reporting requirement for suspected victims of ransomware, with the potential exclusion of individuals and/or small businesses. Our aim is to build the Government and law enforcement's understanding of the threat landscape and allow us to provide greater levels of support and guidance to victims.

The consultation seeks public input on key issues, including: the extent to which supply chains should be captured in the targeted ban; what support the Government can provide to victims, such as improved guidance; the appropriateness of paying ransoms in any circumstances; and the extent to which information should be shared with authorities. These world-leading measures reflect the new Government's commitment to tackling ransomware and making the UK a less attractive target for such attacks globally.

The consultation will run for 12 weeks, and the Government will publish its response in due course. Copies of the consultation document and the related options assessment will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses and made available on Gov.uk.

TRANSPORT**■ Changes to International Law**

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport (Mike Kane): [\[HCWS363\]](#)

I am making this statement to record updates to maritime legislation as a result of changes to international law. This fulfils a commitment made to Parliament to make such a statement. The legislative changes came into force on 1 January 2025.

Some domestic maritime secondary legislation includes ambulatory reference provision to give direct effect in UK law to certain amendments to international obligations. This means that where the legislation refers to a requirement of an international instrument, this reference will be ambulatory; in other words, it is a reference to the most up to date version of that requirement. This approach ensures so far as possible that the UK keeps up to date with its international maritime obligations.

Amendments have been made to two maritime Codes which are made mandatory by the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, 1974 (SOLAS), which is the main international instrument governing maritime safety: the International Maritime Solid Bulk Cargoes (IMSBC) Code (“the IMSBC Code”) and the International Maritime Dangerous Goods (IMDG) Code (“the IMDG Code”). Two sea areas identified in the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973 (MARPOL), which are subject to enhanced pollution protection requirements, have been established under the agreed procedure in MARPOL.

The IMSBC Code is made mandatory by Chapter VI of SOLAS and is implemented in the UK by the Merchant Shipping (Carriage of Cargoes) Regulations 2024 (SI No. 2024/637) (“the Carriage of Cargoes Regulations”). The IMSBC Code provides the international regulatory framework for the safe loading, stowage and shipment of solid bulk cargoes other than grain, and includes mandatory carriage requirements specific to each type of solid bulk cargo covered by the Code.

To remain up to date and fit for purpose, the IMSBC Code is amended in the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and a new edition adopted every two years. Changes to the IMSBC Code text are proposed to, and considered by, the IMO’s Sub-Committee on the Carriage of Cargoes and Containers (“CCC”) with participants including member states and industry bodies. The latest edition of the Code was adopted by IMO Resolution MSC.539(107) and became mandatory internationally on 1 January 2025 when, by way of the ambulatory reference provision in the Carriage of Cargoes Regulations, it also became mandatory in the UK. It includes carriage requirements for a number of new solid bulk cargoes in order to permit and facilitate their safe transport by sea, and amendments to some existing cargo schedules.

The IMDG Code is made mandatory at the international level by Chapter VII of SOLAS, and also by Annex III of MARPOL. The IMDG Code is implemented in the UK by the Merchant Shipping (Carriage of Dangerous Goods and Harmful Substances) (Amendment) Regulations 2024 (SI No. 2024/636) (“the Dangerous Goods Regulations”). The IMDG Code provides the international regulatory framework for the carriage of

dangerous goods and marine pollutants by sea. It makes mandatory provision for the classification, notification, packaging, labelling, stowage and segregation of dangerous goods to enable their safe transport by sea.

In order to keep it up to date and harmonised with the requirements for the carriage of dangerous goods in other modes of transport, the IMDG Code is updated in the IMO every two years. The latest edition of the Code was adopted by IMO Resolution MSC.556(108). It applies on a voluntary basis from 1 January 2025 and will become mandatory internationally on 1 January 2026 when, by way of the ambulatory reference provision in the Dangerous Goods Regulations, it will also become mandatory in the UK. It includes clarifications on the requirements for marine pollutants, new provisions for electric vehicles and provisions for cargo tracking devices.

Further amendments to MARPOL will come into force in the UK by way of the ambulatory reference provisions in the Merchant Shipping (Prevention of Oil Pollution) Regulations 2019 (SI 2019/42) (“the Oil Pollution Regulations”) and the Merchant Shipping (Prevention of Pollution by Garbage from Ships) Regulations 2020 (SI 2020/621) (“the Garbage Regulations”). MARPOL contains mandatory requirements for the prevention and control of pollution from ships and identifies geographical areas, known as Special Areas, where sea traffic and the sensitive nature of the marine environment mean that additional control measures are required for the protection of that environment. Annex I of MARPOL, which makes provision for the prevention of pollution by oil from ships, and Annex V of MARPOL, which makes provision for the prevention of pollution by garbage from ships, both include provisions defining the Red Sea as a Special Area. Annex I further defines the Gulf of Aden as a Special Area. Until now, these Special Areas were identified in MARPOL but had not been established as such. MARPOL contains provision to allow the IMO to establish the Special Areas identified in MARPOL. By Resolutions MEPC.381(80) and Resolution MEPC.382(80), the IMO has determined that both Special Areas were established internationally on 1 January 2025. By way of the ambulatory reference provision in the Garbage Regulations, and also by way of specific provision in the Oil Pollution Regulations which replicates the MARPOL procedure, these Special Areas were also established for the purposes of UK legislation on that date.

Further information and guidance on all amendments referred to in this statement has been published by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency and is available on www.gov.uk.