



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 15 January 2025 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:33 P.M., 15 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

#### ■ **Consumer Goods: Safety**

**Ben Maguire:**

[\[22538\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment his Department has made of the impact of the EU General Product Safety Regulation on UK small businesses exporting to the EU.

**Justin Madders:**

I appreciate that for some businesses, the updated EU General Product Safety Regulation (GPSR) will require changes, and we take these concerns very seriously. Government is supporting small businesses to understand GPSR and is engaging directly with businesses to assess the regulation's impact.

We have published guidance on GPSR's application in Northern Ireland, which we will keep under review. The responsibility for interpreting EU legislation lies with the European Commission. The Commission have published their own business guidance and impact assessment of the regulation.

Small businesses exporting to the EU may also wish to contact the Government's Export Support Service.

#### ■ **Minerals: National Security**

**Richard Tice:**

[\[22807\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of reliance on imported rare earth minerals for net zero technologies on national security.

**Sarah Jones:**

Critical minerals, including rare earth elements are crucial for the UK in terms of security, clean energy, industry and emerging technologies. That is why the Government is developing a critical minerals strategy to ensure we are diversifying our supply chains, delivering the security we need and supporting the many UK-based companies that mine and process around the world. The strategy will be published this year.

#### ■ **Post Offices**

**Alex Mayer:**

[\[21445\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what discussions his Department has had with the Post Office on the number of expressions of interest for remaining directly-managed Crown Post Office branches.

**Gareth Thomas:**

As the Minister responsible for the Government's interest in Post Office Limited, I meet regularly with the CEO and Chair of Post Office to discuss various issues related to Post Office Limited, including directly managed branches. My officials also meet regularly with Post Office and discuss a range of issues including directly-managed branches.

■ **Small Businesses: UK Trade with EU****Ben Maguire:**[\[22537\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will take steps to support small businesses with the costs of compliance with (a) EU general safety and performance requirements and (b) EU regulations.

**Justin Madders:**

UK businesses exporting medical devices to the EU should comply with EU General Safety and Performance Requirements (GSPR), which outline the criteria for medical and in vitro diagnostic devices marketed in the EU. These apply under the EU Medical Device Regulations (MDR) and the In Vitro Diagnostic Regulation (IVDR), which came into force in 2017.

Responsibility for interpreting and providing guidance on EU legislation rests with the European Commission. For detailed guidance, businesses should refer to the European Commission's website. UK Government continue to assess implementation milestones of MDR and IVDR. Businesses experiencing EU market access issues, may seek support via the [UK Export Support Service](#).

**CABINET OFFICE**■ **Cabinet Office: Ministers' Private Offices****Emily Thornberry:**[\[20170\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 5 December 2024 to Question 9833 on Cabinet Office: Ministers' Private Offices, how much was spent on (a) new furniture and fittings and (b) other refurbishment of Ministerial offices in his Department between 4 July 2022 and 4 July 2024; and on what items this was spent.

**Georgia Gould:**

The Government Property Agency confirmed £33,315.61 excluding VAT was spent during the period 4th July 2022 to 4th July 2024 on new furniture and fittings plus other refurbishment (including moves). This is broken down as follows;

- New furniture and fittings - £0
- Other refurbishment of ministerial offices including moves - £33,315.61

The full itemised list can be found below:

- Date: 04/2023



- What: The ministerial offices in 70 Whitehall, redecorated due to water damage.
- How much: £19,956.50 ex VAT.
- Date: 11/2023
- What: The redecoration of the ministerial waiting room in 70 Whitehall with furniture alterations, partly due to health and safety concerns.
- How much: £13,359.11 ex VAT.

### ■ Cabinet Office: Pay

**Mr Richard Holden:**

[\[22992\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 9 January 2025 to Question 21403 on Cabinet Office: Pay, whether the mean salary of civil servants in the (a) Women's Equality Unit, (b) Race Disparity Unit and (c) Disability Unit will be included in the Government's transparency reporting.

**Georgia Gould:**

Details of Cabinet Office structure and salaries are due to be published by the end of January 2025 as part of regular transparency reporting. This will include the Office for Equality and Opportunities and within it the sub units of: Women's Equality Unit, Race Disparity Unit, and Disability Unit. As was the case under the previous administration, the Cabinet Office does not specifically publish the mean salaries of these civil servants.

### ■ Cabinet Office: Public Appointments

**Charlie Dewhirst:**

[\[22451\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the new Cabinet Secretary has recused himself from any policy areas.

**Georgia Gould:**

Any relevant outside interests for the new Cabinet Secretary will be published in the usual way.

The Cabinet Secretary has previously recused himself from aspects related to Infected Blood issues and this remains the case in his current role.

### ■ Cabinet Office: Senior Civil Servants

**Charlie Dewhirst:**

[\[22450\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many members of the senior civil service in his Department have been in post on an interim basis for more than 12 months.

**Georgia Gould:**

There are 13 Senior Civil Servants in the Cabinet Office who have been in post on a temporary promotion for more than 12 months as of the 31st of December 2024.

**■ Chinese Embassy: Planning Permission****Kevin Hollinrake:** [\[22335\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 19 December 2024 to Question 20229 on Chinese Embassy: Planning Permission, for what reason the readout does not include reference to discussions on the Chinese Embassy.

**Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:**

There is nothing further to add to my answer of 19 December, Official Report, PQ 20229

**■ Civil Service Board****Charlie Dewhirst:** [\[22456\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, who are the members of the Civil Service Board; how often does it meet; and where does it meet.

**Georgia Gould:**

The members of the Civil Service Board are listed on the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/civil-service/about/our-governance>

The Civil Service Board meets approximately 10 times per year. Meetings are generally held at 70 Whitehall, London and virtually.

**■ Civil Service: Equality****Charlie Dewhirst:** [\[22461\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Civil Service Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Expenditure Guidance, published on 14 May 2024, who is responsible for authorising external equality, diversity and inclusion expenditure in his Department.

**Georgia Gould:**

The Cabinet Office complies with the Civil Service Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Expenditure guidance published on 14 May 2024, where approval of any external spend is signed off by a Minister or delegated to the Permanent Secretary.

**■ Departmental Coordination****Mike Wood:** [\[22318\]](#)

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 he will make it his policy to publish minutes of cross-departmental delivery board meetings to monitor the implementation of the plan's milestones.

**Ellie Reeves:**

I refer to The Right Hon. Member to the answer I gave to PQ7447 on 14 October 2024.

## ■ Government Departments: Communication

**Charlie Dewhirst:** [\[22462\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Answer of 13 November 2024 to Question HL2210 on Government Departments: Communication, which communications campaigns have been (a) downsized and (b) ended following the review.

**Georgia Gould:**

I refer the Honourable Member to the answer provided by HMT to Question 20957 on 10 January 2025.

## ■ Government Departments: Secondment

**Charlie Dewhirst:** [\[22452\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to his Department's press notice on start-ups published on 9 December 2024, how will the new secondment scheme differ from previous secondment schemes.

**Georgia Gould:**

The scheme will be an inward secondment programme into the Public Sector Reform, Test & Learn team, for public service delivery experts, working near the frontline to help drive public service reform in their field. The scheme will be flexible in terms of duration and location, and specifically for those with experience relevant to the public service reform project. In addition, the Government is encouraging people from startups and tech companies to enter Government for six to twelve month "Tours of Duty", putting their skills to use tackling big challenges such as criminal justice or healthcare reform in the next phase of the No 10 Innovation Fellows Programme.

## ■ Government Departments: X Corp

**Charlie Dewhirst:** [\[22454\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 14 November 2024 to Question 14352 on Government Departments: X Corp and with reference to the SAFE Framework for HMG Brand Safety, how many instances have been recorded where HM Government advertising appeared alongside content later deemed unsuitable since 5 July 2024; and what corrective actions were taken in each case.

**Georgia Gould:**

Our third party supplier uses verification technology to check that advertising only appears next to appropriate content online. This happens automatically on all our campaigns.

They also continue to monitor after delivery. If they find an issue, we immediately pause the advertising campaign until the issue is addressed, and we can be sure it is safe.

We have not had any reported issues between 5 July 2024 and present.

## ■ Honours

**Charlie Dewhirst:** [\[22459\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, when the Honours and Appointments Secretariat last updated the guidance on involvement of Ministers in the Honours System; and if he will place a copy of the current guidance in the Library.

**Nick Thomas-Symonds:**

Ministerial guidance on their involvement in the Honours System was last issued by the Prime Minister's Office in June 2022.

## ■ Ministers: Convictions

**Charlie Dewhirst:** [\[22458\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 11 December 2024 to Question 18218 on Ministers: Convictions, whether the established process for appointing Ministers involves the Cabinet Office Ethics and Propriety Team asking if an appointee has previous criminal convictions.

**Georgia Gould:**

Appointees have a declaration of interests conversation with the Propriety and Ethics Team on appointment, the details of which are confidential. All ministers are expected to adhere to the high standards of conduct set out in the Ministerial Code.

## ■ Permanent Secretaries: Recruitment

**Charlie Dewhirst:** [\[22453\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to paragraph 60 of the Government response to the 17th Report of Session 2022-23 of the House of Lords Constitution Committee, Permanent Secretaries: their appointment and removal, HL 258, published on 20 October 2023, what recent progress his Department has made on preparing guidance on best practice; whether that guidance will apply to civil servants in the devolved administrations on areas relating to reserved matters; and when he plans to publish that guidance.

**Georgia Gould:**

I refer to the answer to PQ 14099.

## ■ Permanent Secretary Remuneration Committee

**Charlie Dewhirst:** [\[22449\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 26 November 2024 to Question 14113 on the Permanent Secretary Remuneration Committee, whether decisions on Permanent Secretary remuneration are subject to ministerial (a) review and (b) approval.

**Georgia Gould:**

The Prime Minister makes the final decisions on Permanent Secretary remuneration following recommendations made by the Permanent Secretary Remuneration Committee.

**Public Appointments: Employment Agencies****Charlie Dewhirst:**[\[22460\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether agreement is required from a Minister in his Department before departments employ recruitment consultants for use in public appointment campaigns.

**Georgia Gould:**

The Governance Code on Public Appointments sets out the process for departments to follow when considering the use of recruitment consultants for public appointment campaigns.

The Governance Code requires departments to seek ministerial agreement on the use of recruitment consultants. It also requires the Cabinet Office to be consulted.

**Public Sector****Mike Wood:**[\[22311\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what Key Performance Indicators have been set to evaluate the success of the test-and-learn programme during its (a) initial wave and for (b) planned expansion.

**Georgia Gould:**

The Evaluation Taskforce is working to ensure a robust framework for evaluation, supporting understanding of impact and assessing potential to scale learning across public services. The outcomes for the programme will support delivery of the Government's missions, supporting new service models and interventions that reduce pressure on public services, drive efficiency, and improve experience for citizens.

**Unpaid Work: Ethnic Groups****Mr Richard Holden:**[\[22989\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of (a) 6 January 2025 to Question 21057 on Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Unpaid Work and (b) 20 November 2024 to Question 14502 on Gender: Equality, whether guidance is provided to Government departments on the potential situations in which it would be permissible for access to internship schemes to be restricted to people from non-white backgrounds.

**Georgia Gould:**

Individual departments are responsible for recruitment decisions and they are required to meet all obligations of relevant legislation, including the Equality Act 2010. If a department wants to restrict an internship programme to a specific group or

groups, it would be expected to ensure on a case by case basis that it complies with the relevant legislation. As a result, as was the case under the previous administration, no central guidance is provided on this matter.

## DEFENCE

### ■ Armed Forces: Cadets

**Mr Gregory Campbell:** [\[23128\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 3 December to Question 16717 on Armed Forces: Cadets, what external organisations other than (a) existing cadets and (b) adult volunteers he is consulting to help expand numbers.

**Al Carns:**

A discussion held in December 2024 canvassed opinion from a wide range of existing cadet advocates, including senior military leaders, Honorary Colonels, Lord Lieutenants, council leaders and representatives from education and academia, as to what activity and governance would be required to enable the Ministry of Defence (MOD) to expand cadets. Representation included all branches of MOD cadets (Royal Navy, Army, Royal Air Force) as expansion was considered for all.

I, myself met with Honorary Colonels before Christmas, and just last week with a leading academic in this field, who led the team who published the University of Northampton study on the social and economic benefit of cadets. We have discussed how to work together to best advocate for our cadets, and I am committed to their expansion.

### ■ British Indian Ocean Territory: Sovereignty

**James Cartlidge:** [\[23155\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what proportion of the UK's contribution to the cost of Chagos settlement will be funded from his Department's budget.

**Luke Pollard:**

As a former Defence Minister, the hon. Member will be familiar with the spending processes in the Ministry of Defence. Spending decisions will be taken in the usual way in due course.

### ■ Defence: Procurement

**Rebecca Paul:** [\[21428\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what proportion of his Department's procurement contracts have been awarded to UK-based manufacturers in the last 12 months; and what steps he is taking to promote the growth of domestic defence manufacturing.

**Maria Eagle:**

The Department does not record within our systems directly where a contract is manufactured or the location of the supplier manufacturing. The Department do however collect the prime location of the contract as marked by the contact owner on Contract Purchasing and Finance system (CP&F) when the contract is first created.

Between 16 Dec 2023 to 15 Dec 2024 there have been 2,266 contracts created on the Ministry of Defence's CP&F commercial system.

Of these contracts 583 (26%) have been marked with a known location for the contract.

Of these 583 contracts, 531 (91%) have a prime contract location of the UK, while 52 (9%) are marked as a foreign country.

By contract value this works out as £3.85 billion of £20.68 billion (19%) having a known location.

This equates to 78% of the total contract spend with a prime contract location of UK (£2.99 billion UK vs £0.85 billion foreign country).

The UK's defence manufacturing industry is vital not only to our national security but to our prosperity and economic growth. The Government's new Defence Industrial Strategy will aim to align the imperatives of national security and a high growth economy.

**Mr Mark Francois:**[\[22887\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 8 January 2025 to Question 21267 on Defence: Procurement, when he plans full implementation of the NATO test across all his Department's procurement decisions.

**Maria Eagle:**

Implementation work is ongoing and will conclude as soon as possible. The detail on metrics or evaluation remains under active consideration, but the work overall is being conducted under close oversight by the Permanent Secretary and Ministers, including through regular updates to the Defence Board. This will continue throughout, and after implementation, to ensure the process meets our objectives and remains effective.

**Mr Mark Francois:**[\[22888\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 8 January 2025 to Question 21267 on Defence: Procurement, what plans he has to review the effectiveness of the NATO test once implemented; and with what metrics.

**Maria Eagle:**

Implementation work is ongoing and will conclude as soon as possible. The detail on metrics or evaluation remains under active consideration, but the work overall is being conducted under close oversight by the Permanent Secretary and Ministers, including through regular updates to the Defence Board. This will continue

throughout, and after implementation, to ensure the process meets our objectives and remains effective.

### ■ **Diego Garcia: Military Bases**

**James Cartlidge:** [\[23156\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many meetings he has held with the incoming US administration on the terms of the Diego Garcia military base as part of the Chagos settlement.

**Luke Pollard:**

The Defence Secretary is regularly in touch with the US on a range of matters including the British Indian Ocean Territory/Chagos Archipelago. We look forward to discussing these matters with the incoming Administration in the usual way.

### ■ **Israel: Air Force**

**Brian Leishman:** [\[22473\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has (a) shared F-35 flight mission data files with the Israeli air force and (b) received such files from that air force since October 2023.

**Luke Pollard:**

No.

### ■ **Royal Fleet Auxiliary**

**Rebecca Paul:** [\[22505\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of losses in (a) personnel and (b) ships on the capability of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary.

**Al Carns:**

Recruitment and retention of Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) personnel remains a priority. We welcome the recent agreement between the Government and the Maritime Trade Unions of a pay award for the RFA, which is a significant step forward in the plan for RFA reforms. These reforms will improve the wider employee offer for those serving in the RFA and ensure that it can continue to perform its vital role supporting the Royal Navy and our allies.

The retirement of RFA Wave Knight and RFA Wave Ruler will have no impact on the RFA. Neither tanker was due to go to sea again and nor had they been to sea in years. The RFA continues to operate the newer Tide class tankers and is preparing for the introduction of all three Fleet Solid Support ships by 2032.



## ■ Royal Fleet Auxiliary: Labour Turnover and Recruitment

**Rebecca Paul:**

[22504]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to (a) retain and (b) recruit personnel into the Royal Fleet Auxiliary.

**Al Carns:**

The Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) are highly valued, specialist personnel. We welcome the recent agreement of a pay award for the RFA and thank the Maritime Trade Unions for their support in reaching this resolution.

This agreement is a significant step in a plan to reform the RFA. These reforms will improve the wider employee offer for those serving and ensure the RFA can continue to perform its vital role supporting the Royal Navy and our allies.

## EDUCATION

### ■ Allergies: Schools

**Alicia Kearns:**

[22697]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing the new Neffy treatment for severe allergic reactions to schools when available on the NHS.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

Needle-free epinephrine nasal spray is not currently licensed for use in the United Kingdom. Consideration as to whether this could be used in schools would have to be taken once the medicine receives a marketing authorisation.

Since October 2017, the Human Medicines (Amendment) Regulations 2017 have allowed all schools to buy adrenaline auto-injector devices without a prescription for emergency use. The Department of Health and Social Care has published non-statutory guidance to accompany this legislative change, which can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/using-emergency-adrenaline-auto-injectors-in-schools>.

### ■ Apprentices and Further Education: Young People

**Jim Shannon:**

[22264]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to encourage more young people into (a) further education and (b) apprenticeships.

**Janet Daby:**

Education is a devolved matter, and the response outlines the information for England only.

The government is developing a comprehensive strategy for post-16 education and skills, to break down barriers to opportunity, support the development of a skilled workforce, and drive economic growth through our Industrial Strategy.

Young people are required to continue in education or training until they turn 18-years-old. We are preventing young people from losing touch with education or employment before the age of 18 through a guaranteed place in education and training for all 16 and 17-year-olds, expanded work experience and careers advice, action to tackle school attendance and improved access to mental health services for young people in England.

Over £7.5 billion 16 to 19 programme funding will be invested during the 2024/25 academic year, to pay for education for any 16, 17 or 18-year-olds in post-16 education.

£240 million has been announced to drive forward measures in the Get Britain Working White Paper. This includes a Youth Guarantee for all young people aged 18 to 21-years-old in England to ensure they can access quality training, educational opportunities or help to find work. Working with Mayoral Authorities, and building on existing provision and entitlements, the department will test new ways of supporting young people into employment or training. To do this we will mobilise eight place-based Youth Guarantee trailblazers with £45 million of funding in 2025/26.

In addition, the department's reformed growth and skills offer, which will have apprenticeships at its core, will deliver greater flexibility for learners and employers, including through shorter duration apprenticeships in targeted sectors. This will help more people learn new high-quality skills at work, and fuel innovation in businesses across the UK. The department has also begun work to develop new foundation apprenticeships, a training offer that will give more young people a foot in the door and support clear pathways and progression in work-based training and employment.

## ■ Apprentices: Finance

**Daisy Cooper:**

[\[22081\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when her Department plans to publish a decision on which apprenticeships will be impacted by cuts to Level 7 apprenticeship funding.

**Janet Daby:**

This government is committed to spreading opportunities and economic growth supported by a strong skills system.

This government has an extremely challenging fiscal inheritance. There are tough choices that need to be taken on how funding should be prioritised in order to generate opportunities for young people that enable them to make a start in good, fulfilling careers. The department will therefore be asking more employers to step forward and fund a significant number of level 7 apprenticeships themselves outside of the levy-funded growth and skills offer.

The department is taking advice from Skills England, who engaged with employers on funding for level 7 apprenticeships over the autumn, and the department expects to make a final decision on affected apprenticeships shortly.

## ■ Children: Protection

**Matt Bishop:**

[\[22512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to ensure the needs of children placed with kinship carers are fully assessed and supported especially in cases of (a) trauma and (b) disrupted care.

**Janet Daby:**

The government is determined to give every child the opportunities they deserve, and kinship carers play a crucial role in delivering this.

In October 2024, the department published the new Kinship Care statutory guidance for local authorities, setting out the support and services local authorities should provide to kinship families, including reaffirming the requirement to publish their local offer of support in a clear, accessible way.

The guidance makes it clear that children and young people should receive the support that they and their carers need to safeguard and promote their welfare. There is no limit on the level of support, including financial support, that local authorities can provide. All local authorities should have in place clear eligibility criteria in relation to the provision of support services.

Regulation 11 of the Special Guardianship statutory guidance states that, in the case of a child who was looked after immediately prior to the making of a Special Guardianship Order (SGO), the child, special guardian or parent has a right to receive an assessment by the local authority for support services, which may include financial support.

In the context of kinship foster carers, when considering whether a relative, friend or other connected person should be approved as a foster carer, account must be taken of the needs, wishes and feelings of the child, and the capacity of the carer to meet those particular needs. The child's placement plan will set out in detail how the placement is intended to contribute to meeting the child's needs and should make clear any support or services that the kinship foster carer needs in order to meet the needs of the child.

The Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund helps children who were previously looked after and are now in kinship care under a SGO or a Child Arrangements Order and their families access therapeutic interventions related to trauma and attachment.

## ■ Education: Access

**James McMurdock:**

[\[22550\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 12 December 2024 to Question 18093 on Education: Access, what progress the Regional Improvement for Standards and Excellence teams are making on engaging with schools.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

The new Regional Improvement for Standards and Excellence (RISE) teams will begin in early 2025, with their first RISE advisers in post this January.

Once established, RISE teams will engage schools to facilitate networking and sharing best practice, bringing together oversight and coordination of improvement programmes to empower schools so that they can better access this support and learn from one another. For schools that require more intensive support, the new RISE teams will work with their responsible body and supporting organisations to agree bespoke packages of targeted support, based on a school's particular circumstances.

**Further Education: Assistive Technology****James Naish:**[\[22107\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to ensure that all further education colleges comply with (a) accessibility regulations on (i) access to assistive technology and (ii) the use of accessible design in learning resources and (b) other accessibility regulations.

**Janet Daby:**

The government is committed to ensuring that all learners, including learners with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), have access to a world-class education that sets them up for life and supports them to achieve positive outcomes.

Further education (FE) colleges must endeavour to secure the special educational provision that students need.

In addition, colleges also have duties and obligations under the Equality Act 2010 to ensure that they are acting inclusively and not discriminating against disabled students. As with other FE providers, colleges are obliged to make reasonable adjustments to ensure disabled students are not placed at a substantial disadvantage. This may include making provision for accessibility and assistive technology. Where a student has a learning difficulty or disability that calls for special educational provision, the college must use its best endeavours to put appropriate support in place.

Furthermore, under the SEND code of practice there should be a named person with oversight of SEND provision in every college. They co-ordinate, support and contribute to the strategic and operational management of the college. Curriculum and support staff in a college should know who to go to if they need help in identifying a student's special educational needs (SEN), are concerned about their progress or need more advice.

Colleges should keep the needs of students with SEND under regular review. They should involve the student and, particularly for those aged 16 to 18, their parents, closely at all stages of the cycle. Colleges should ensure that their staff have the skills to do this effectively.

Colleges should be ambitious for young people with SEN, whatever their needs and whatever their level of study. They should focus on supporting young people so they can progress and reach positive destinations in life, including higher education or further training or employment. They should equip them for independent living, good health and participating in the community.

Ofsted also ensures that colleges comply with accessibility requirements, as inspectors will determine whether staff are suitably qualified and/or have appropriate expertise to support learners or specific groups of learners. Ofsted will determine whether learning resources, including assistive technology and online/remote learning resources, are to the required standard and specification and whether they are used effectively to support learners to overcome their barriers to achieving their challenging learning goals.

### ■ Higher Education: Liability

**James Naish:**

[\[22391\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will meet with members of ForThe100 to discuss duty of care owed by higher education providers to their students.

**Janet Daby:**

I refer my hon. Friend the member for Rushcliffe to the answer of 08 January 2025 to Question [21515](#).

### ■ Home Education: Assessments

**Ben Obese-Jecty:**

[\[22405\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many students will require individual home invigilation to sit their (a) GCSEs, (b) A-Levels and (c) other exams in 2025.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

Alternative site arrangements for sitting exams, including home invigilation, can be put in place as an access arrangement if, in exceptional circumstances, it is required to enable a candidate to access exams and assessments.

As in any year, there is no way of knowing in advance of the exam season how many candidates will need access arrangements.

As the use of alternative site provision is a decision for centres based on the needs of individual candidates and for which centres do not need exam board approval, data on this arrangement is not published in Ofqual's annual statistics on access arrangements.

### ■ Homicide: Children

**Mark Pritchard:**

[\[21571\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many minors were murdered by family members in 2022-23; and what steps she plans to take to help prevent such deaths.

**Janet Daby:**

In 2022/23, there were 201 notifications where a child had died and abuse or neglect was known or suspected or where a looked after child had died, whether or not abuse or neglect is known or suspected. These statistics show the number of incidents notified in the period, rather than the number of incidents that occurred in the period and are based on one notification per incident, which can relate to more than one child in some instances.

Protecting children at risk of abuse and stopping vulnerable children falling through cracks in services are at the heart of the government's landmark Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill, introduced on 17 December. Reforming children's social care is critical to giving hundreds of thousands of children and young people the start in life they deserve. This includes ensuring that every child is safe inside and outside of their home and has access to the right help at the right time.

This government's vision to ensure children are kept safe is reflected in the legislative changes we are making in the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill. This includes:

- Improving information sharing across and within agencies through the use of a Single Unique Identifier for children.
- Strengthening protecting children from harm through integrated multi-agency child protection teams.
- Placing a new duty on safeguarding partners to ensure education is sufficiently involved in multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.
- Ensuring parents have consent from local authorities to home educate children where there are child protection concerns.

The department continues to deliver whole-system reform to help families to overcome challenges, stay together and thrive, where appropriate, and to keep children safe and in stable loving homes, including when they cannot stay with their family. This includes through the roll out of the Families First for Children Pathfinder and Family Networks Pilot, which includes multi-agency child protection reforms. The 'Local Government Finance Settlement' policy statement also set out an additional £250 million through the Children's Social Care Prevention Grant which will enable investment in prevention activity, and is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-government-finance-policy-statement-2025-to-2026/local-government-finance-policy-statement-2025-to-2026>.

Tackling domestic violence and abuse is a priority for this government, and we are committed to using every government tool available to target perpetrators and address the root causes of such abhorrent behaviours. Cross-government delivery of the Opportunity and Safer Streets Missions is driving policy and practice improvements for child victims of domestic violence and abuse. The department is also working with other departments and the wider sector, including local authorities and schools, to ensure that children are recognised as victims in their own right in line with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, and that the best use is made of available

resources in the provision of universal, targeted and specialist support for child victims.

## ■ Pre-school Education: Standards

**Mike Wood:**

[\[22301\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the policy paper entitled Plan for Change, published on 5 December 2024, CP1210, how she plans to measure good development for school readiness; whether she plans to use teacher-completed Early Years Foundation Stage Profiles to measure good development; and whether she plans to use all seven categories of Early Years Foundation Stage measurement.

**Stephen Morgan:**

Giving young children the best start in life is the foundation of the government's Opportunity Mission. Children's earliest years are crucial to their health, development and life chances.

The department has set a milestone of a record proportion of children starting school ready to learn in the classroom. We will measure our progress through 75% of children at the end of reception reaching a good level of development in the early years foundation stage (EYFS) profile assessment by 2028.

The statutory EYFS framework sets the standards and requirements that all early years providers must follow to ensure all children have the best start in life and are prepared for school. It requires that children be assessed against the EYFS profile in the summer term of the academic year in which they turn 5 years old.

The EYFS profile seeks to measure a child's level of development to support their successful transitions into year 1 and to support parents, carers and early years educators to recognise children's progress and understand their needs.

It comprises an assessment of the child's outcomes in relation to 17 early learning goals across 7 areas of learning.

Children are defined as having a good level of development at the end of the EYFS if they are at the expected level for the 12 early learning goals within the 5 areas of learning relating to: communication and language; personal, social and emotional development; physical development; literacy; and mathematics. This is the definition that will be used to measure progress on school readiness as set out in the Plan for Change.

## ■ Pupils: Absenteeism

**Ian Roome:**

[\[22414\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to improve rates of persistent absence among pupils in state-funded (a) primary, (b) secondary and (c) special schools.



**Stephen Morgan:**

This government is determined to tackle the generational challenge of school absence, which is a fundamental barrier to learning and life chances. Missing school regularly is harmful to a child's attainment, safety and physical and mental health, which limits their opportunity to succeed. There is evidence that more students are attending school this year compared to last, thanks to the efforts of families and school staff, although around 1.6 million children remain persistently absent and miss 10% or more of lessons.

Central to the department's approach to tackling absence are stronger expectations of local authorities and schools, as set out in the 'Working together to improve school attendance' guidance, which was made statutory on 19 August 2024. The guidance promotes a 'support first' approach and sets out clear expectations on how schools, trusts, local authorities and wider services should work together and with families to address attendance barriers and provide the right support, including where a pupil is not attending due to special educational needs.

Every state school in England should now be sharing their daily attendance register data with the department, local authorities and trusts. These bodies can access this data through a secure, interactive dashboard which is maintained by the department, allowing them to target attendance interventions more effectively.

The department recognises the importance of creating opportunities within the sector to share existing best practice on how to improve attendance. This is why the department set up a network of 31 attendance hubs, who have offered support to 2000 primary, secondary and alternative provision schools and shared their strategies and resources for improving attendance.

In addition to this work, the department also aims to improve the existing evidence on which interventions work to improve attendance. Over £17 million is being invested across two mentoring projects that will support at least 12,000 pupils in 15 areas. These programmes will be evaluated and the effective practice will be shared with schools and local authorities nationally.

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

School attendance is also supported by broader investments, such as funded breakfast clubs across all primary schools to ensure children start their day ready to learn.

The department is working across government on plans to provide access to specialist mental health professionals in every school, new Young Futures hubs,



access to mental health support workers and an additional 8,500 new mental health staff to treat children and adults.

Schools can also allocate pupil premium funding, which has now increased to over £2.9 billion for the 2024/25 financial year, to support pupils with identified needs to attend school regularly.

## ■ Schools: Citizenship

**Adam Jogee:**

[\[22443\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to support youth democracy in (a) primary schools, (b) secondary schools, (c) alternative provision and (d) sixth forms and colleges in Newcastle-under-Lyme.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

This government is committed to improving the rates of electoral registration and encouraging the engagement of young people and has committed to lowering the voting age to 16 for all elections in the UK.

It is up to schools, sixth forms, further education providers and alternative provision settings to decide what steps to take to support youth democracy in the context of their duty to promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. Ofsted's inspection framework assesses how well schools, colleges and independent learning providers promote the values.

For secondary schools, democracy is currently taught through the national curriculum for citizenship at key stages 3 and 4, which covers parliamentary democracy, the key elements of the constitution of the United Kingdom, the power of government and how citizens and Parliament hold it to account. Primary schools can choose to teach citizenship, using non-statutory programmes of study at key stages 1 and 2.

Support for curriculum delivery is available through optional, free and adaptable resources from Oak National Academy (Oak). Oak launched its new curriculum sequences for secondary citizenship earlier this academic year, with the full package of curriculum resources expected to be available by autumn 2025.

The UK Parliament run educational tours for pupils, youth and community groups to see how Parliament works in action. The UK Parliament also produce resources which can be downloaded or ordered for free, tailored to different age groups.

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport funds the UK Youth Parliament (UKYP) to support young people to engage in the democratic process. Every two years, the UKYP runs 'Make Your Mark', open to all 11 to 18-year-olds in the UK, to enable them to vote on what are the most important issues for young people.

## ■ Schools: Transport

**James McMurdock:**

[\[22547\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions her Department has had with (a) parents and (b) teachers about home-to-school transport for children with special educational needs and disabilities.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

The department's home-to-school travel policy aims to make sure that no child is prevented from accessing education by a lack of transport. Local authorities must arrange free home-to-school travel for children of compulsory school age, 5 to 16, who attend their nearest school and would not be able to walk there because of the distance, their special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) or mobility problem, or because the nature of the route means it would be unsafe for them to do so.

Officials work closely with local authorities to understand the challenges they face and support the delivery of home-to-school travel. The department knows it is challenging for authorities to arrange free travel for all eligible children largely due to challenges within the wider SEND system, where more children and young people need to travel a long way to a school that can meet their needs. The government is committed to improving inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools so more children can have their needs met in their local community.

The delivery of home-to-school travel is governed by statutory guidance for local authorities. The department revised this guidance in 2023. The insight and experiences of a wide range of partners, including individual parents and schools as well as bodies that represent them, were valuable in revising the guidance. Officials continue to engage with a wide range partners to understand how the current arrangements are operating.

## ■ Schools: Uniforms

**Sir John Hayes:**

[\[21969\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent steps she has taken to ensure school uniform is affordable.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

The cost of school uniform, particularly of branded items, remains a key concern for parents. Whilst uniforms play a valuable role in creating a sense of common identity among pupils and reducing visible inequalities, too many schools still require high numbers of branded uniform items despite statutory guidance stating branded items should be kept to a minimum. Currently 24% of primary and 71% of secondary schools still require five or more branded items, with some parents saying they were asked to provide 10 or more.

This is why the department has introduced legislation to limit the number of branded items of uniform and physical education kit that schools can require to bring down costs for parents and remove barriers from children accessing sport and other school

activities. This will give parents more choice in where to purchase uniform and allow them greater flexibility to make the spending decisions that suit their circumstances.

### ■ **Special Educational Needs: Low Incomes**

**James McMurdock:**

[\[22548\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to ensure schools with SEND provision are accessible for low-income families.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

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

By strengthening support in the early years, children's needs can be identified earlier ensuring that support is put in place which can prevent needs escalating and ensure children are able to thrive when they arrive at school.

The department will also strengthen accountability on mainstream settings to be inclusive including through Ofsted, support the mainstream workforce to increase their SEND expertise and encourage schools to set up resourced provision or special educational needs units to increase capacity in mainstream schools.

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 AP.

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

**James McMurdock:**

[\[22549\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to help reduce the number of children who need to travel long distances to a school with SEND provision.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

This government is aware that many children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) struggle to find a suitable school placement that is close to their home and meets their needs. This government committed to addressing this by improving inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools, as well as ensuring special schools cater to those with the most complex needs.

We want more children and young people to receive the support they need to thrive in their local mainstream school, reducing the need for pupils to travel a long way to access a specialist placement. Many mainstream settings are already delivering specialist provision locally, including through resourced provision and special education needs units but we need to go much further to ensure this support is available to far more children across the country.

This government is also committed to ensuring special schools play a vital role in supporting pupils with the most complex needs. The Children and Families Act 2014 requires local authorities to ensure there are sufficient school places for all pupils, including children and young people with SEND. If a local authority identifies a shortage of special school places, resulting in a significant number of pupils needing to travel a long way to access a placement, they could consider creating or expanding provision.

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education has announced £740 million for high needs capital in the 2025/26 financial year to support children and young people with SEND or who require alternative provision. This new funding can be used to adapt classrooms to be more accessible for children and young people with SEND, create specialist facilities within mainstream schools that can deliver more intensive support adapted to suit the pupils' needs, alongside continuing to provide places to support pupils in special schools with the most complex needs. The department will confirm local authority allocations for this funding in the spring.

## ■ Students: Loans

**Olly Glover:**

[\[22506\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of either (a) removing the margin or (b) capping the interest rate on student loans.

**Janet Daby:**

Student loans are subject to interest to ensure that those who can afford to do so contribute to the full cost of their degree. The government does not make a profit from the student loan repayment system.

The department is determined that the higher education (HE) funding system should deliver for our economy, for universities and for students and the government is committed to supporting the aspiration of every person who meets the requirements and wants to go to university. We will set out this government's longer-term plan for HE reform by summer 2025.

Interest rates on student loans do not affect monthly repayments made by borrowers. Regular repayments are based on a fixed percentage of earnings above the applicable student loan repayment threshold, not on the amount borrowed or the rate of interest. If a borrower's income drops, so does the amount they repay. If income is below the relevant student loan repayment threshold, or a borrower is not earning, then they do not have to make repayments at all. Any outstanding debt, including

interest built up, is written off after the loan term ends (or in case of death or disability) at no detriment to the borrower.

Interest rates are set annually in relation to the Retail Price Index. The government caps maximum student loan rates when needed to ensure that student loan interest rates do not exceed market rates for comparable unsecured personal loans.

A full equality impact assessment of how student loan reforms may affect graduates, including detail on changes to average lifetime repayments under Plan 5, was produced and published in February 2022 and can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-reform-equality-impact-assessment>.

## ■ Teachers: Pay

**Laurence Turner:**

**[23229]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the average full-time salary was for (a) classroom and (b) all teachers in (i) academies, (ii) free schools, (iii) local authority maintained schools and (iv) all publicly-funded schools in 2023.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

Information on the school workforce is published in the 'School workforce in England' statistical publication, which is available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england>.

The attached table provides the full-time equivalent median average salary for classroom teachers and all teachers in academy schools, free schools, local authority maintained schools and all state-funded schools in England, as at November 2023.

### Attachments:

1. All\_Teachers\_Median\_Average\_Salary  
[23229\_PRD\_attachment\_teacher\_pay\_2025.xlsx]

## ■ Teachers: Recruitment

**Stuart Anderson:**

**[22353]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many new teachers will be delivered in (a) South Shropshire and (b) other rural areas.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

Delivering the government's agenda to break down the barriers to opportunity relies on a highly skilled workforce in schools, and high-quality teaching is the in-school factor that makes the biggest difference to a child's education.

There are now 468,693 full-time equivalent teachers in state-funded schools in England but numbers have not kept pace with demand. This is why the department is committed to recruiting an additional 6,500 new expert teachers across our schools, both mainstream and specialist, and our colleges over the course of this Parliament. This will help ensure that children in South Shropshire and all other areas of the

country, including rural areas, have the expert qualified teachers they need in order to achieve and thrive.

## ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

### ■ Agriculture: Energy

**James McMurdock:** [\[22545\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an estimate of the potential impact of GB Energy on the cost of energy bills paid by farmers.

**Michael Shanks:**

Great British Energy is a key part of the government's mission to make Britain a clean energy superpower by achieving clean power by 2030.

This is part of a sustainable, long-term plan to protect all UK billpayers, including farmers, from volatile international gas markets. In an unstable world, the only way to guarantee our energy security and protect billpayers permanently is to accelerate the transition away from fossil fuels and towards homegrown clean energy.

### ■ Americium: Space Technology

**Josh MacAlister:** [\[22736\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to support the UK's National Nuclear Laboratory in expanding the development of americium so it could be used by the space industry.

**Michael Shanks:**

The Department is supporting the UK's National Nuclear Laboratory (UKNNL)'s work to extract americium from the UK's civil separated plutonium inventory at Sellafield for the European Space Agency's (ESA's) ENDURE Programme. This includes supporting UKNNL and the UK Space Agency in the development of a new facility which aims to upscale americium extraction to meet future ESA demand.

### ■ Energy Performance Certificates: Private Rented Housing

**Helen Hayes:** [\[23154\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to his Department's press release Home upgrade revolution as renters set for warmer homes and cheaper bills, published on 23 September 2024, when he plans to consult on new EPC requirements for the private rented sector.

**Miatta Fahnbulleh:**

The Government will consult shortly on increasing minimum energy efficiency standards in the domestic private rented sector. The consultation will include proposals for rented homes to achieve Energy Performance Certificate C or equivalent by 2030.

## ■ Energy Supply

**Mike Wood:**

[\[22305\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to the policy paper entitled Plan for Change, published on 5 December 2024, CP1210, what key performance indicators his Department will use to measure energy security; and how his Department plans to demonstrate its progress toward insulating households from international fossil fuel price shocks.

**Michael Shanks:**

As part of the Government's Clean Energy Superpower Mission, the milestone this Parliament is to secure Britain's energy supply with home-grown, clean power, which protects the country from exposure to unstable international fossil fuel markets. We will measure this by being on track to achieving at least 95% of low carbon generation by 2030 in line with advice from the National Energy System Operator (NESO). The Clean Power 2030 Action Plan sets out the government's further steps; key outcomes and progress against the target will be tracked in the run up to 2030.

## ■ Energy: Prices

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[22267\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of levels of energy prices in 2024.

**Miatta Fahnbulleh:**

The Government believes the only way to protect consumers permanently is to speed up the transition towards homegrown clean energy. The creation of Great British Energy will help us harness clean energy and have less reliance on foreign volatile energy markets which affect the energy price cap.

We continue to monitor energy prices and the price cap and are working to ensure bills are affordable for consumers in the long-term, including through our work with Ofgem to reform standing charges, and through our Warm Homes Plan which will transform homes across the country by making them cheaper and cleaner to run.

In the short-term, we are continuing to deliver the Warm Home Discount which provides an annual £150 rebate off energy bills for eligible low-income households, and through our collaboration with Energy UK on the Winter 2024 Commitment, which promises £500 million of industry support to billpayers this winter.

## ■ Great British Energy

**Mike Wood:**

[\[22304\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he plans to lay an Official Statistics Order to include Great British Energy.

**Michael Shanks:**

I refer the hon Member to the answer I gave to the hon Member for Basildon and Billericay (Richard Holden) to Question UIN [21394](#).



**■ Great British Energy and Renewable Energy****Mike Wood:**[\[22302\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to the policy paper entitled Plan for Change, published on 5 December 2024, CP1210, what criteria he will use to measure the success of Great British Energy; and if his Department will publish quarterly data on (a) investment returns, (b) operating costs and (c) contribution to the clean energy target.

**Michael Shanks:**

Great British Energy's (GBE) mission is to drive clean energy deployment, to create jobs, boost energy independence, and ensure UK taxpayers, billpayers, and communities reap the benefits of clean, secure, homegrown energy.

GBE will be held accountable through regular reporting to the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero. Furthermore, Parliament will be presented with a copy of the annual report and accounts of Great British Energy. Parliament will also be able to hold GBE to account through the normal methods of accountability.

**■ Great British Energy: Edinburgh****Tracy Gilbert:**[\[22470\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what estimate his Department has made of when the satellite sites for Great British Energy in Edinburgh will (a) be announced and (b) open.

**Michael Shanks:**

This Government is focused on establishing Great British Energy at its Headquarters in Aberdeen. Additional sites in Glasgow and Edinburgh will follow in the longer term to ensure the company can tap into expertise across Scotland. Estimates for these additional sites will depend upon the detailed workforce plans for the new company, which are being developed.

**■ Great British Energy: Scotland****Tracy Gilbert:**[\[22469\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what remit the Great British Energy satellite sites in (a) Edinburgh and (b) Glasgow will have.

**Michael Shanks:**

This Government has been clear that Great British Energy (GBE) will be operationally independent, and decisions such as these will ultimately sit with the company itself. These additional sites in Glasgow and Edinburgh will allow GBE to tap into other expertise across Scotland, and workforce planning is ongoing to ensure the company secures the right skills in the right locations. The work GBE delivers across all of its locations will be in accordance with the strategic priorities, which will be set by the Secretary of State.



## ■ Heat Pumps: Fines

**Pippa Heylings:**

[\[23190\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make it his policy to return non-compliance fines for the clean heat market mechanism to the level proposed for 2026 in the document entitled Clean Heat Market Mechanism Consultation: Summary of responses received and government response, published on 30 March 2023.

**Miatta Fahnbulleh:**

The Government has made the decision to reduce the level of the payment-in-lieu for the Clean Heat Market Mechanism from the previously proposed £3000 per missing heat pump credit to £500 for the first baselining year, in order to provide industry with additional capacity to adjust to the scheme's introduction. No decisions have been taken about this or other scheme parameters for future years. The Government will keep the effectiveness of the payment level under close review and will consult on whether and how it should evolve for future years.

**Pippa Heylings:**

[\[23191\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the decision to reduce non-compliance fines in the Clean Heat Market Mechanism on the UK's ability to meet carbon budgets.

**Miatta Fahnbulleh:**

The Government believes that the reduction to the payment-in-lieu for the Clean Heat Market Mechanism for the first baselining year will provide manufacturers with additional capacity to adapt to the scheme's introduction, while still providing an incentive to invest in the transition. An impact assessment was published on 21 November 2024 alongside the draft statutory instrument. The adjustment to the payment-in-lieu for the introductory year has not changed the Department's assessment of expected carbon savings from heat pump installations over the scheme's lifetime. The Government will keep the payment-in-lieu level, like all scheme parameters, under review for future years.

**Pippa Heylings:**

[\[23192\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of reducing non-compliance fines in the Clean Heat Market Mechanism on the uptake of heat pumps.

**Miatta Fahnbulleh:**

The Government believes that the reduction to the payment-in-lieu for the Clean Heat Market Mechanism for the first baselining year will provide manufacturers with additional capacity to adapt to the scheme's introduction, while still providing an incentive to invest in the transition. An impact assessment was published on 21 November 2024 alongside the draft statutory instrument. The government is confident that the targeted retrofit heat pump installations for the first scheme year can be

achieved but will keep the payment-in-lieu level, like all scheme parameters, under review for future years.

## ■ Lighting: Housing

**Jim Shannon:**

[22265]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he is taking steps to promote the use of energy saving lightbulbs in domestic properties.

**Miatta Fahnbulleh:**

The Warm Homes Plan will help people find ways to save money on energy bills. Consumers can use the Government advice site ([www.gov.uk/improve-energy-efficiency](http://www.gov.uk/improve-energy-efficiency)) to get tailored recommendations for home improvements to increase energy efficiency. There is also existing Ecodesign regulations which sets the minimum energy performance standards for lighting products.

## ■ National Nuclear Laboratory

**Josh MacAlister:**

[22735]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to ensure the UK's National Nuclear Laboratory is able to conduct commercially beneficial research.

**Michael Shanks:**

The Government published its Strategic Review of the UK's National Nuclear Laboratory (UKNNL) establishing a bold vision for its future (<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6762a4b1ff2c870561bde75b/strategic-review-of-the-national-nuclear-laboratory.pdf>). This is a vision of UKNNL as a platform for the private sector to accelerate technology to market. Much of the strategic review focuses on how the Government supports UKNNL in this, and considers issues ranging from UKNNL objectives through to the requirement for core government funding. The Government is now working with UKNNL, and industry, on implementing the findings. Industry were extensively consulted on the strategic review, and we are continuing to engage with them.

Whilst UKNNL will remain a public corporation, it will operate a commercially driven model which supports customer-focused research. The optimal long-term model of the laboratory remains under consideration to ensure UKNNL can deliver nuclear outcomes for government, and support sector growth.

## ■ Renewable Energy

**Mike Wood:**

[22303]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to the policy paper entitled Plan for Change, published on 5 December 2024, CP1210, whether his Department plans to publish an updated roadmap for achieving 95% clean power by 2030; and whether his Department has interim targets for clean energy generation in (a) 2025, (b) 2026, (c) 2027, (d) 2028 and (e) 2029.

**Michael Shanks:**

The Government published the Clean Power 2030 Action Plan ‘a new era of clean electricity’ on 13 December 2024 detailing our plan to achieve deliver clean power by 2030. The Department has not set annual interim targets for clean power generation.

**Renewable Energy: Investment****Mike Wood:**[\[22306\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to the policy paper entitled Plan for Change, published on 5 December 2024, CP1210, if his Department will publish an annual report detailing private investment leveraged by its clean energy strategy.

**Michael Shanks:**

The Government and DESNZ publishes information on clean energy private investment flows, most recently announcing around the International Investment Summit in October that £34.8bn of clean energy investment has been committed to the UK [1]. DESNZ utilises Bloomberg New Energy Finance data to understand total (public plus private) investment flows, in particular capital expenditure deployed across low carbon sectors. According to our analysis of the BNEF energy transition investment 2023 dataset, between 2010 and 2023, the UK has seen £300 billion of public and private investment across low carbon sectors. We are considering what further information could be published.

[1] <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/record-breaking-international-investment-summit-secures-63-billion-and-nearly-38000-jobs-for-the-uk>

**ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS****Affordable Housing: Rural Areas****Stuart Anderson:**[\[22976\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department will continue to support the Rural Housing Enablers Scheme.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

The Government is committed to funding the Rural Housing Enabler programme until 31 March 2025.

It is also providing over £5 billion total housing investment in 2025-26 to boost the supply of new housing, including in rural areas. This includes a £500 million top up to the Affordable Homes Programme.

Funding allocations for individual programmes for the next financial year will be determined in upcoming months through the department’s business planning exercise and announced in due course.

## ■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Recruitment and Unpaid Work

**Rupert Lowe:** [\[20086\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will ensure (a) internships and (b) job opportunities in (i) his Department and (ii) its non-departmental public bodies are open to all applicants.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

The core department complies with the Civil Service Recruitment Principles by ensuring that appointments to the Civil Service are made on the basis of merit following a fair and open competition. Defra's Non-Departmental Public Bodies are accredited by The Civil Service Commission, which means the relevant HR Policies are similarly compliant with the Recruitment Principles.

Internships in both the core department and Defra's Non-Departmental Public Bodies are commonly linked to a specific scheme or programme. They are therefore open to all applicants who meet the relevant advertised entry requirements of the individual scheme or programme.

## ■ Farmers: Income

**James Cartlidge:** [\[22960\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he has met representatives of farming businesses in South Suffolk constituency to discuss recent trends in farm incomes.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

Ministers and officials regularly meet with a range of farming stakeholders, including the National Farmers Union, the Country Land and Business Association, and the Tenant Farmers Association. We will continue to meet with stakeholders to ensure their views are heard.

## ■ Flood Control: Finance

**Dame Caroline Dinage:** [\[22902\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 19 November 2024 to Question 14034 on Flood Control: Gosport, when her Department plans to confirm the list of projects to receive Government flood resilience funding through the Southern Regional Flood and Coastal Committee.

**Emma Hardy:**

I refer the Rt Hon Member to [the answer](#) provided to Dame Caroline Dinage on 19 November 2024. The list of projects to receive Government funding in 2025/26 will be consented in the usual way through Regional Flood and Coastal Committees, with local representation – in order that allocations are confirmed before the start of the financial year.

## ■ Floods: Housing

**Mike Amesbury:**

[\[22349\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the number of additional homes in (a) Runcorn and Helsby constituency and (b) the North West at risk of flooding by 2050.

**Emma Hardy:**

On 17 December 2024 the Environment Agency published the '[National assessment of flood and coastal erosion risk in England 2024](#)' report on GOV.UK which provides a picture of current and future flood and coastal erosion risk across England.

On 28 January 2025 they will publish the new NaFRA data on [check your long term flood risk](#) and on [data.gov.uk](#) which will cover all of England, including Runcorn and Helsby constituency. This will include the latest [UK Climate Projections](#) and the potential impact of climate change on flood risk in areas across England.

## ■ Floods: Warnings

**Mike Amesbury:**

[\[22350\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the (a) adequacy of flood warnings and (b) potential merits of steps to ensure they are as (i) timely and (ii) accurate as possible.

**Emma Hardy:**

There are 1.6 million users in England signed up to the free flood warning service by the Environment Agency (EA) which sends a message directly by voice message, text or email when a flood warning is issued. In November and December 2024, the EA issued over 1,500 Flood Warnings (977 Flood Alerts, 543 Flood Warnings and two Severe Flood Warnings), two million messages were sent directly to the public via email, phone and text. The EA is developing the next flood warning system, ready for launch by the end of 2025. This will deliver a new flood warning capability that is more resilient.

The EA issues Flood Warnings ahead of flooding so that the public can take action to protect their safety and their livelihoods. The EA undertakes reviews on Flood Warnings issued and makes appropriate improvements to the service, this includes improvements to the forecasts and processes to ensure Flood Warnings are as accurate and timely as possible. As a resilience measure the EA has developed an automated warning system to make sure that communities receive Flood Warnings at all times, even for example when there is significant flood risk across the country.

## ■ Hunting Act 2004

**Ian Byrne:**

[\[18671\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the effectiveness of the Hunting Act 2004.

**Mary Creagh:**

Defra holds no data on the adequacy of the effectiveness of the Hunting Act 2004 as the enforcement of the Hunting Act is an operational matter for the police.

**■ Plants: Import Controls****Alicia Kearns:**[\[22700\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to improve border infrastructure for importing (a) large plants and (b) trees.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

Defra continues to work with port operators to ensure that there are effective import inspections of large plants and trees to maintain the UK's high biosecurity standards, including ensuring equipment is available to handle goods. Defra has laid legislation which will implement an exemption to enable certain large commodities to be unloaded and inspected in outside areas at these facilities, subject to certain requirements. This will come into force on 30 January 2025.

**■ Rivers: Dredging****Mr Toby Perkins:**[\[22257\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when the (a) River Rother and (b) River Hipper was last dredged.

**Mr Toby Perkins:**[\[22258\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the regular dredging of rivers on flooding.

**Mr Toby Perkins:**[\[22259\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what his Department's policy is on the regular dredging of rivers.

**Mr Toby Perkins:**[\[22260\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much the Environment Agency has spent on dredging rivers in each year since 2009.

**Emma Hardy:**

The Environment Agency has no record of dredging the rivers Rother and Hipper during the last 10 years. The Environment Agency (EA) undertakes dredging to manage flood risk where it is technically effective, does not significantly increase flood risk for others downstream and is environmentally acceptable.

In most places there are much more effective and efficient ways to better protect communities and increase their resilience to flooding, as part of a catchment-based approach. Whilst dredging is part of the solution in some locations, it is not a universal solution to what is a complex issue.

Since 2009, the EA has spent the following amounts on dredging rivers.

Note that more funding was used on dredging in 2016/17 mainly due the winter floods of 2015/16 and an additional £40 million resource funding that was announced in March 2016. This allowed teams to undertake more maintenance activities, including dredging.

FINANCIAL YEAR	CHANNEL MAINTENANCE (£M)	DREDGING (£M)
2010/11	45	5
2011/12	39	10
2012/13	45	8
2013/14	30	4
2014/15	45	12
2015/16	47	9
2016/17	59	22
2017/18	59	8
2018/19	45	5
2019/20	45	5
2020/21	34	4
2021/22	29	3
2022/23	36	6
2023/24	38	7

### ■ Squirrels: Conservation

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[23286\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to support the conservation of red squirrels.

**Mary Creagh:**

This Government is committed to taking action to recover our threatened native species and delivering our legally binding biodiversity targets on species abundance, species extinction and habitat creation and restoration, which will benefit many of our priority native species including red squirrels.

The leading causes of red squirrel decline in England include the squirrel pox virus, habitat availability and competition from non-native grey squirrels. We are considering how to go further to reduce the impacts of grey squirrels on our woodlands and red squirrel populations and shall have an update in due course.

**FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ **Antisemitism**

**Alex Easton:** [\[22494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps his Department is taking to help tackle anti-Semitism.

**Anneliese Dodds:**

Antisemitism has no place in our, or any, society and the UK has a long-standing track record of fighting it. Last year, the UK contributed to drafting new Global Guidelines for Countering Antisemitism, which were launched in Buenos Aires in July and endorsed by 36 countries. We currently hold the presidency of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance and are demonstrating global leadership in tackling antisemitism and promoting Holocaust remembrance, education, and research. We are championing the right to Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) and promoting tolerance and mutual respect through our bilateral work and engagement in multilateral fora.

■ **Bangladesh: Assets**

**Phil Brickell:** [\[R\] \[22788\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to assist the Central Bank of Bangladesh in repatriating UK-based assets diverted illegally from that country.

**Catherine West:**

The UK is committed to assisting investigative, prosecuting and judicial authorities in combating international crime. We have robust illicit finance legislation and instruments which can be used to support asset recovery requests. We would not comment on any individual Asset Recovery cases but we are in discussions with the International Anti-Corruption Coordination Centre hosted by the UK's National Crime Agency and the International Centre for Asset Recovery on how to support the Interim Government of Bangladesh. In October 2024, the UK National Crime Agency visited Dhaka as part of the UK's effort to support Bangladesh in this area, as well as wider engagement on law enforcement issues. We will continue to support these recoveries to the extent that we can.

■ **Bashar al-Assad**

**Wendy Morton:** [\[22005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking with international partners to prosecute the former President of Syria Bashar al-Assad.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The UK will work closely with civil society and the international community to support a Syrian-led transitional justice and accountability programme to ensure that those



responsible for war crimes and other atrocities are held to account. Accountability is key to any sustainable transition.

We will continue to support partners who are playing a pivotal role in developing a credible evidence base to record atrocities committed by the former regime and others. This year alone, we have committed £1.15 million to accountability and documentation-related programmes.

## ■ **Belarus: Sanctions**

**Wendy Morton:** [\[21999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 19 December 2024 to Question 19314 on Belarus: Sanctions, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of sanction avoidance by Belarus in liquefied natural gas (a) imports and (b) exports.

**Wendy Morton:** [\[22000\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 19 December 2024 to Question 19314 on Belarus: Sanctions, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of sanction avoidance by Belarus in banking and financial services (a) imports and (b) exports. .

**Wendy Morton:** [\[22001\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 19 December 2024 to Question 19314 on Belarus: Sanctions, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of sanction avoidance by Belarus in alcohol (a) imports and (b) exports.

**Stephen Doughty:**

The Government is committed to working with partners to hold the Lukashenko regime to account for its lack of respect for human rights and support for Putin's illegal war. That includes ensuring our sanctions are as effective as possible. That is why we have legislated to strengthen our sanctions enforcement powers, with the formal launch of the new Office of Trade Sanctions Implementation, and launched a cross-Government review of sanctions enforcement to ensure we have the right powers, approach and resourcing. We are also coordinating closely with G7 partners on our efforts to tackle circumvention risks across priority countries, ranging from technical support to diplomatic engagement at all levels.

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

**Alex Easton:** [\[22492\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much Mauritius has requested in (a) reparations and (b) annual subsidy in the negotiations on sovereignty of the Chagos islands.

**Stephen Doughty:**

A financial element was crucial to securing the agreement between the UK and Mauritius on 3 October. It is not normal practice to reveal payments for military bases and we have not done so for any other base. Further details of the Treaty will be put before both Houses for scrutiny, after signature and before ratification, in the usual way.

■ **Gaza: Humanitarian Aid****Mary Glendon:**[\[22605\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has held recent discussions with humanitarian organisations on the adequacy of prosthetics supplies in Gaza; and if he will take steps to assist humanitarian organisations increase their supply.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The plight of sick, injured and disabled people in Gaza is deeply distressing. We have pressed Israel at senior levels to urgently improve healthcare provision, including significantly increasing medical supplies, and to establish sustained, safe and timely passage for patients who need medical or surgical interventions not available in Gaza. The UK has provided funding to the Jordan Hashemite Charitable Organisation (JHCO), which includes the supply of prosthetics to Jordanian field hospitals in Gaza. Through our disability inclusion programmes, we have also provided funding for assistive technology products in Gaza via the World Health Organisation. In July, we announced £5.5m in funding to UK-Med for their field hospitals. UK-Med have provided vital care to over 300,000 Gazans since the start of the conflict, including critical limb and life-saving surgeries, physiotherapy, and rehabilitation.

■ **Gaza: Israel****Wendy Morton:**[\[21994\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had recent discussions on (a) effective deconfliction and (b) the humanitarian situation in Gaza with his Israeli counterpart.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

We continue to press Israel to end its aid restrictions and ensure that the UN and humanitarian partners can work safely and effectively. The Foreign Secretary recently wrote to Israeli Foreign Minister Sa'ar, alongside his French and German counterparts, calling on Israel urgently to increase, and ensure the safe distribution of, aid.

The Foreign Secretary made his third visit to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories this week, where he restated that Israel must avoid civilian casualties, protect civilian infrastructure, allow unfettered aid into Gaza, and ensure the UN and its humanitarian partners can operate effectively.

I have raised the dire situation in the north of Gaza with both the Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister and the Israeli Ambassador to the UK, most recently on 3 January.

The scale of human suffering in Gaza is unimaginable. Israel must act to address it immediately. Effective deconfliction is an important part of this.

## ■ **Gaza: UNRWA**

**Mr Calvin Bailey:**

[\[22392\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help support access for UNRWA to northern Gaza.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The humanitarian situation in Gaza is unacceptable. I have raised the dire situation in the north of Gaza with both the Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister and the Israeli Ambassador to the UK, most recently on 3 January. We have repeatedly urged the Government of Israel to ensure that UNRWA can continue its vital operations across Gaza, including in our contacts with Israeli ministers, and at the UN Security Council in January. The Prime Minister underlined the UK's support for UNRWA by announcing, on 11 December, an additional £13 million for UNRWA to support vital services for Palestinian refugees in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and the region, bringing our support for UNRWA's work across the region to £41m this financial year.

## ■ **Hong Kong: Human Rights**

**Priti Patel:**

[\[22599\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of recent trends in the prevalence of human right abuses in Hong Kong] and if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of such instances on civilians.

**Catherine West:**

China's imposition of the National Security Law on Hong Kong has seen opposition stifled and dissent criminalised. The UK continues to call for the National Security Law to be repealed and for an end to the prosecution of all individuals charged under it, including Jimmy Lai.

The UK will continue to stand up for the rights of the people of Hong Kong. The Foreign Secretary has raised human rights in every meeting with his Chinese counterpart Foreign Minister Wang Yi, including during his recent visit to China on 18 October. I again raised these concerns with the Chinese and Hong Kong authorities on my visit to Hong Kong on 14-15 November.

On Christmas Eve, the Foreign Secretary strongly condemned the Hong Kong police's targeting of individuals for exercising their right to freedom of expression and called on Beijing to repeal the National Security Law. Officials have raised concerns directly with the Chinese and Hong Kong authorities.

**■ Hostage Taking****Alicia Kearns:** [\[22098\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when he plans to appoint the (a) special envoy for hostage affairs and (b) special envoy for arbitrary detention.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The FCDO is committed to strengthening support for British Nationals overseas, including through the appointment of an Envoy. Further details will be announced in due course.

William Middleton has succeeded Charles Hay as Director for Gaza Hostages.

**■ Libya: Israel****Mr Gregory Campbell:** [\[22884\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of the action by the Israeli Air Force on 8 September 2024 in Libya on Hezbollah's armed capability.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

Israel has not taken any action against Hezbollah in Libya.

**■ Palestinians: Detainees****Cat Smith:** [\[22319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make representations to his Israeli counterparts on the immediate release of Palestinian healthcare workers currently being detained without charge or trial.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

Gazan civilians must be protected, and able to access effective healthcare. The UK has consistently raised concerns about the impact of this conflict on Gaza's healthcare system and medical staff, including reiterating the requirement for all parties to comply with international humanitarian law. Israel must allow medical staff to carry out their work unimpeded, and to travel around Gaza as needed. On 27 December I made clear to Israel's government that the situation in northern Gaza cannot continue, and raised our serious concern about repeated strikes on Kamal Adwan hospital, and the safety of civilians and medical workers there. 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 and the release of all hostages.

We are particularly concerned by the reports of the recent Israel Defense Forces operation at Kamal Adwan hospital, and the reported detention of medical personnel there. We have raised this, and will continue to do so, directly with the Israeli Government. In recent weeks, I have specifically raised the detention of Kamal Adwan hospital director, Dr Hassam Abu Safiya, along with the wider need to ensure healthcare facilities in North Gaza are protected, and to enable World Health

Organisation and International Committee of the Red Cross access, with both the Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister and Israel's Ambassador to the UK. We urge Israel to urgently clarify the reasons for Dr Hassam Abu Safiya's detention (and that of paediatrician Mohammed Hamouda), and all other health workers detained in Gaza.

## ■ **Palestinians: Medical Treatments**

**Abtisam Mohamed:** [\[22796\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many evacuations from Gaza to the UK of (a) British nationals including dual Palestinian and British nationals, (b) their immediate family members, (c) UK visa holders who have spouses or partners or children under 18 living in the UK who have valid permission to enter or remain in the UK for longer than 6 months and (d) UK visa holders who have valid permission to enter or remain in the UK for longer than 6 months granted outside the Immigration Rules or on the basis of Article 8 ECHR have been facilitated by his Department since 7 October 2023.

**Abtisam Mohamed:** [\[22799\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, for how many evacuations to the UK of Palestinians in Gaza with visas that are valid for more than six months his Department has sought permission from the Israeli authorities since 7 October 2023.

**Abtisam Mohamed:** [\[22800\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, for how many evacuations of Palestinians in Gaza with (a) pre-determination and (b) biometric excuse decisions his Department has sought permission from the Israeli authorities since 7 October 2023.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The UK Government has helped 505 people to leave Gaza since October 2023. 306 are British nationals and their Palestinian dependants; 38 are Palestinian nationals who qualified for assistance under the extended eligibility criteria for Gaza published on 14 December 2023. Israeli exit clearance was sought and received in each of those cases. The extended eligibility criteria are published on FCDO Travel Advice and provide for the UK Government to try to support the exit of Palestinian nationals who have a spouse, partner or a child aged 17 or under living in the UK; and who hold valid permission to enter or remain in the UK for longer than 6 months. Border crossings out of Gaza have been closed to civilians since Israel took control of Rafah crossing in May 2024. Nevertheless, the FCDO has helped 21 people to leave Gaza, mostly children, since October 2024.

**Abtisam Mohamed:** [\[22797\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, for how many medical evacuations to the UK of Palestinians in Gaza who are non-British

nationals his Department has sought permission from the Israeli authorities since 7 October 2023.

**Abtisam Mohamed:** [\[22798\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many medical evacuations to the UK of Palestinians in Gaza who are non-British nationals there have been since 7 October 2023.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

We regularly press Israel at senior levels to re-open safe, regular medical evacuation routes, and to protect healthcare facilities and staff. It is unacceptable that north Gaza now has no functioning hospitals and that medical personnel are being detained without justification.

Our support to UK-Med has treated over 300,000 patients in Gaza and we recently provided £1m, delivered through WHO, to support medically evacuated Palestinians in Egypt. We are keeping our policy under constant review to ensure the UK does everything we can to support sick and wounded Palestinian civilians.

#### ■ Ryan Cornelius

**Sir Iain Duncan Smith:** [\[22882\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make representations to his counterpart in the United Arab Emirates to condemn the (a) detention of Ryan Cornelius in contravention of the ruling of the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, (b) treatment of Ryan Cornelius in Al Awhir prison in contrary to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and (c) attempted coercion of Ryan Cornelius to sign a statement that he is well-treated in Al Awhir prison.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

FCDO Ministers regularly raise consular cases with their foreign counterparts. The Foreign Secretary last discussed Ryan Cornelius' case with the UAE Foreign Minister in December 2024. The FCDO takes the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention's opinions seriously. While their recommendations are not legally binding, we will continue to highlight their concerns in discussions with UAE authorities. The FCDO are providing Mr Cornelius with consular assistance, and we take any reports of human rights violations, including coercion and poor prison conditions very seriously and, with the consent of Mr Cornelius, will raise any concerns with local authorities.

#### ■ Southern African Development Community

**Adam Jogee:** [\[22437\]](#)

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 Southern African Development Community since 5 July 2024.

**Anneliese Dodds:**

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office Ministers, including the Foreign Secretary and I, have enjoyed broad engagement with the leaders of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) during visits to South Africa, Malawi and Zambia. The Minister for Africa, Lord Collins, has had three ministerial engagements with the Tanzanian government and the current Chair of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Affairs. Lord Collins is due to meet with Southern African Development Community leadership during his upcoming visit to Botswana (14-16 January 2025), discussing areas of mutual interest, including energy reform and regional security.

**■ Sub-saharan Africa: Foreign Relations****Adam Jogee:**[\[22439\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the (a) effectiveness, (b) potential and (c) adequacy of relations between the UK and sub-Saharan Southern Africa.

**Anneliese Dodds:**

The Foreign Secretary launched a five-month consultation to inform the UK's new approach to the African continent during a visit to Nigeria and South Africa in November 2024. Our goal is a fundamentally transformed partnership that delivers mutual long-term benefits, driving our domestic economic growth and addressing migration priorities. The UK enjoys warm relations with the different countries in sub-Saharan Southern Africa, illustrated by the numerous visits to the region by me, the Foreign Secretary and the Minister for Africa in 2024. The Minister for Africa has upcoming trips to Botswana and Tanzania in January 2025.

**■ Sudan: Weapons****Wendy Morton:**[\[22276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his international counterparts on the provision of weapons to Sudan.

**Anneliese Dodds:**

The Foreign Secretary regularly raises the Sudan conflict with his international counterparts, including UK concern over violations of the UN arms embargo. We have regularly condemned, including in the UN Security Council, the flow of external arms into Sudan and urged those who have influence over the parties to use it to bring them to the negotiating table to seek a political resolution to the conflict.

**■ Syria: Armed Conflict****Wendy Morton:**[\[21996\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 24 December 2024 to Question 19304 on Syria: Armed



Conflict, if he will make an assessment of the effectiveness of those discussions in ensuring a peaceful transfer of power in Syria.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

Intensive diplomatic engagement with Syria continues. The Foreign Secretary and I continue to engage with our regional and international partners. The Foreign Secretary recently underlined the importance of an inclusive political process with interim Foreign Minister Al Shaybani during a meeting in Riyadh on 12 January. In addition, senior Foreign Office officials travelled to Damascus in December 2024 to meet with the leader of Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham and interim Minister for Foreign Affairs. They reiterated the UK's support for the Syrian people and discussed the pathway to a more hopeful, representative and peaceful future for Syria. We will continue to call on all parties to preserve Syria's territorial integrity and national unity and respect its independence and sovereignty.

**Wendy Morton:**

[\[21997\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 24 December 2024 to Question 19304 on Syria: Armed Conflict, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the (a) availability in and (b) access of aid into Syria.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The UK continues to monitor the humanitarian situation, assess needs and respond. Since the fall of Assad, the UK has announced an additional £61 million to support vulnerable Syrians. However, needs remain high while funding has fallen as donors seek to respond to multiple crises. We will continue to work with the UN and others to ensure aid in Syria is focused on meeting the most critical needs in the most efficient and effective way.

Most border crossings remain open for humanitarian aid. Humanitarian actors are able to deliver assistance throughout Syria where it is safe to do so. We continue to call for unhindered access for and facilitation of humanitarian operations.

■ **Syria: Christianity**

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[21990\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Syrian counterpart on the protection of Christians 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.

### ■ Syria: Development Aid

**Wendy Morton:**

[\[22291\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 19 December 2024 to Question 19311 on Syria: Development Aid, what discussions his Department has had at official level to support the transition process.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

Senior officials, including the UK Special Representative for Syria, have been engaging intensively and widely with international and regional partners. Senior Foreign Office officials travelled to Damascus in December to underline the UK's support for the Syrian people and discuss the pathway towards a more hopeful, representative and peaceful future for Syria with the new interim Syrian authorities and civil society. They discussed the importance of an inclusive transitional political process, protecting the rights of all Syrians and preventing further instability. The UK will continue to stand with the Syrian people in building a more stable, free and prosperous future.

### ■ Syria: Humanitarian Aid

**Wendy Morton:**

[\[22278\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure UK humanitarian aid reaches civilians in Syria.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The UK continues to monitor the humanitarian situation in Syria. Most border crossings remain open for humanitarian aid, enabling assistance to be delivered throughout Syria, except where active conflict is constraining this. We continue to call for unhindered access for and facilitation of humanitarian operations.

The UK has announced a further £61 million in humanitarian assistance to support vulnerable Syrians inside Syria and across the region. Through NGO and UN organisations, we are providing food, healthcare, protection and other life-saving assistance. We remain in regular contact with those organisations to assess aid access and how they are managing delivery risks.

### ■ Syria: Politics and Government

**Wendy Morton:**

[\[22006\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies on Syria of the fall of the Bashar al-Assad government.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

After decades of atrocities committed by the Assad regime, we stand with the people of Syria. The UK has been at the forefront of the response to fast moving events, engaging regularly with regional, UN and international partners, calling for a Syrian-owned political transition process leading to an inclusive, non-sectarian and representative government. We have scaled up our humanitarian response, announcing a further £61 million to support vulnerable Syrians inside Syria and refugees across the region. We continue to monitor the situation closely.

■ **Syria: Religious Freedom****Wendy Morton:**[\[22004\]](#)

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 assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the treatment of Christians in Syria.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The situation in Syria remains fluid. It is too early to say what recent events might mean for Syria or the wider region. The FCDO has consistently underlined the importance of protecting all civilians, including religious and ethnic minorities, publicly and in our engagement with the interim Syrian authorities, regional and international partners. We are closely monitoring the treatment of ethnic and religious minorities, including Christians. We will continue to advocate for the right of Freedom of Religion or Belief in Syria and for an inclusive political transition.

■ **Syria: Women****Wendy Morton:**[\[22292\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 24 December 2024 to Question 19309 on Syria: Women, what recent discussions he has had with (a) women's rights activists, (b) women-led organisations and (c) women involved in the political process in Syria.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The Foreign Secretary and I have been engaging intensively with international and regional partners to support an inclusive political transition. The UK signed a joint statement with G7 leaders and another following the Aqaba Joint Contact Group ministerial meeting on Syria affirming that we stand ready to support a transition process that leads to credible, inclusive and non-sectarian governance with respect for human rights, including for women and minorities. Support to women and girls will continue to be at the heart of the UK's policy and programmes in Syria, including through active engagement with women's rights activists, women-led organisations and women involved in the political process.

## ■ West Africa: Foreign Relations

**Adam Jogee:**

[\[22442\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the (a) effectiveness, (b) potential and (c) adequacy of relations between the UK and West Africa.

**Anneliese Dodds:**

The UK and West Africa have shared interests from security to investment and development to climate resilience. But West Africa is also a diverse region, with the UK valuing its partnership with each West African nation. For example, the Foreign Secretary visited Nigeria in November and agreed a new Strategic Partnership enabling greater UK-Nigerian cooperation on shared priorities. On 7 January, Lord Collins attended Ghanaian President John Mahama's inauguration, strengthening ties with Ghana and other regional leaders. Lord Collins also visited Ghana and Senegal in September focusing on UK support to boost growth, clean energy, food security and women's empowerment. In his speech at the UK/Francophone West and Central Africa Trade Forum on 4 December, Lord Collins highlighted the Government's desire to strengthen UK trade partnerships across the region.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

### ■ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: Drugs

**Mr Luke Charters:**

[\[22816\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to review the adequacy of levels of access to ADHD medication; and if a Minister will meet with the hon. Member for York Outer to discuss ADHD medication shortages in that constituency.

**Karin Smyth:**

*[Holding answer 13 January 2025]:* The Department has been working hard with industry and NHS England to help resolve 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 continue to work to resolve remaining supply 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 all current 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 further improve supply and resiliency, we are also working with prospective new suppliers of methylphenidate prolonged-release tablets to expand the UK supplier base.

However, we anticipate that supply for certain strengths of methylphenidate will remain limited until March 2025. We are actively working with all suppliers to resolve the remaining issues as quickly as possible.

To minimise the impact of the shortages on patients, the Department has worked with specialist clinicians, including those within the National Health Service, to develop management advice for NHS clinicians to consider prescribing available alternative brands of methylphenidate prolonged release tablets generically or available alternative ADHD medicines. To support ADHD patients throughout the NHS, we would expect all ADHD service providers and specialists to follow our guidance. To aid healthcare professionals further we have widely disseminated our communications and continually update a list of currently available and unavailable ADHD products on the Specialist Pharmacy Service website, helping ensure that those involved in the prescribing and dispensing of ADHD medications can make informed decisions with patients.

We are supporting a cross-sector taskforce that NHS England has established to look at ADHD service provision bringing together expertise from across a broad range of sectors, including the NHS, education, and justice, to better understand the challenges affecting people with ADHD including timely access to services and support.

The Department monitors and manages medicine supply at a national level so that stocks remain available to meet regional and local demand. Information on stock levels within individual pharmacies is not held centrally.

I am very sorry that I cannot meet at this time but I hope the information I have provided in this answer helps to address the issues raised and assures the hon. Member of the Department's focused work in this area.

#### ■ **Community Diagnostic Centres: Cambridgeshire**

**Steve Barclay:**

**[22603]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many patients were seen at North Cambs Diagnostic Centre in each month since its opening in June 2023.

**Karin Smyth:**

Published data is not held in the format requested. Activity data, specifically the number of tests delivered, rather than patients seen, for community diagnostic centres (CDCs) is held centrally and published at the national level, and is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/diagnostics-waiting-times-and-activity/cdc-management-information/>

## ■ Defibrillators: Railway Stations

**Rebecca Paul:** [\[23089\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will take steps to help ensure that emergency services are provided with up to date information on the (a) location and (b) status of defibrillators installed at train stations.

**Rebecca Paul:** [\[23090\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will take steps to ensure that all defibrillators installed at train stations are (a) registered and (b) visible on The Circuit national defibrillator network website.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The Government is committed to improving access to automated external defibrillators (AEDs) in public spaces and reducing inequalities in access to these life saving devices. Following the depletion of the existing AED fund, launched in in September 2023, the Government approved a further £500,000 in August 2024 to fulfil existing applications to the fund.

The Department does not hold data on AEDs installed in train stations or whether those AEDs are registered on The Circuit, a national defibrillator and ambulance service database, operated independently by the British Heart Foundation in collaboration with the National Health Service.

However, AEDs procured through the Department's AED fund, once installed, are required to be registered on The Circuit. Upon registration, contact details are provided for the nominated AED guardian or guardians who are local to the defibrillator's location and conduct checks when required. The registered guardian receives an automatic email or SMS text message notification if the defibrillator has potentially been used, therefore prompting the guardian to conduct a check. The Circuit records the potential use of each registered defibrillator. The registered guardian of the defibrillator will automatically be contacted if their AED is potentially used, and may therefore require replacement pads. In addition, The Circuit will also send out an automatic notification to the guardian approximately three months before the AED battery or pads expire.

## ■ Department of Health and Social Care: Carbon Emissions

**Richard Tice:** [\[23060\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much his Department has spent on measures to achieve net zero targets in the last five years.

**Karin Smyth:**

In the last five years, the Department has not provided ringfenced capital for the National Health Service's Net Zero targets.

Direct investment in the decarbonisation of NHS buildings and operations is primarily supported by external grant funding. For example, NHS trusts have secured over

£1.2 billion for heat-decarbonisation projects under the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero's Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme since 2020.

The Department works with NHS England to ensure that NHS national programmes and day-to-day capital budgets support decarbonisation objectives where appropriate.

We have also previously provided capital to improve trusts' energy efficiency, with associated benefits for carbon reduction. For instance, in 2023/24 we worked with the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero to invest £40 million in NHS light emitting diode lighting and solar projects through the NHS National Energy Efficiency Fund. The substantial savings from such investments can be directed into frontline services.

### ■ General Practitioners: Finance

**James MacCleary:**

[\[23079\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to update guidance on how funds are allocated to GP surgeries in places with high demand such as Seaford, East Essex.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

There are currently no plans to update how funding is allocated to general practice (GP) surgeries. GP practices receive funding through a range of income streams in return for providing services specified in the GP contract. 'Global sum', which is the funding allocated for providing core services, makes up between 50 and 60% of practice income. The rest of the income is made of Quality and Outcomes Framework, premises payments, directed enhanced service and additional services, for example vaccine and immunisation.

The global sum allocation formula, also known as the Carr-Hill formula, is designed to ensure that resources are directed to practices based on an estimate of their patient workload and unavoidable practice costs.

The formula considers GP-registered patient list size, adjusted and weighted to reflect differences in the age and sex composition of the practice's registered patient list, together with a range of factors that take into account the additional pressures generated by differential rates of patient turnover, morbidity, mortality and the impact of geographical location. Under this formula, practices whose registered patients have greater healthcare needs are paid more per patient than practices whose registered patients have fewer healthcare needs.

The global sum figure for 2024/25 is set at £112.50 per patient as set out in the General Medical Services Statement of Financial Entitlements 2024.

## ■ **Marriage: Relatives**

**Mr Richard Holden:**

[\[21701\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on the (a) cost and (b) incidence of cousin marriage.

**Karin Smyth:**

*[Holding answer 8 January 2025]:* The Government has not carried out an assessment of health costs resulting from cousin marriage. The Department also does not hold data on the incidence of cousin marriage.

## ■ **Mental Health Services: Finance**

**Melanie Onn:**

[\[22031\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when it was decided that community interest companies should be ineligible for capital funding provided to NHS mental health trusts in the 2024-25 financial year; and whether he plans to make an assessment of the potential merits of making community interest companies eligible.

**Karin Smyth:**

Government capital funding is provided for specific purposes, and for the National Health Service is for NHS organisations to manage their assets and provide NHS services. Community interest companies (CICs) are therefore outside the remit of most of this funding.

However, there may be some instances where integrated care systems (ICSs) can commission and fund other organisations including CICs to provide NHS services; for example, the Mental Health Urgent and Emergency Care programme funds, amongst other things, new and improved facilities and alternatives to accident and emergency, and hospital admission such as crisis houses and cafes, safe havens and step-down services.

Any changes to the current capital regime, including funding distribution will be considered during the development of the 10-Year Health Plan.

## ■ **Mental Health: Drugs**

**Mr Luke Charters:**

[\[23071\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has had with stakeholders on intermittent shortages of (a) Olanzapine and (b) other anti-psychosis medicines in the UK.

**Karin Smyth:**

Department officials regularly meet with manufacturers and suppliers to discuss shortages of olanzapine and other anti-psychosis medicines, and how to manage them.



We have been notified of some issues for olanzapine tablets and orodispersible tablets, however we understand there is sufficient stock available for all olanzapine strengths to meet market demand.

We are aware of intermittent disruptions in the supply of olanzapine (Zypadhera) 210 milligram prolonged-release suspension for injections. This is due to a global manufacturing capacity constraint faced by the supplier. We are actively working with the supplier to address these manufacturing issues as quickly as possible, to ensure that patients in the United Kingdom have access to this medication, and have issued communications to healthcare professionals.

Olanzapine (Zypadhera) 300 milligram and 405 milligram prolonged-release suspension for injections remain available.

### ■ NHS Trusts: Freedom of Information

**Clive Jones:**

[R] [\[23072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will issue guidance to NHS Trusts on adopting a standardised FOI request system.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Department has no intention to publish guidance on how National Health Service trusts respond to Freedom of Information (FOI) requests. Guidance for organisations on responding to FOIs is published by the Information Commissioner's Office.

### ■ NHS: Expenditure

**Neil O'Brien:**

[\[20253\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Answer of 1 May 2024 to Question 19413 on NHS: Expenditure, how much (a) NHS England, (b) clinical commissioning groups and (c) integrated care boards spent in aggregate on (i) mental health services, (ii) acute health services, (iii) social care services, (iv) primary medical services, (v) specialised services, (vi) NHS continuing healthcare and (vii) all other recorded spending categories in each financial year since 2015-16; and how much those organisations plan to spend in aggregate in each of those areas in the 2024-25 financial year.

**Karin Smyth:**

*[Holding answer 19 December 2024]:* The attached table sets out the spend categories for the specified services commissioned by NHS England, clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) and integrated care boards (ICBs) between 2015/16 and 2023/24.

Information for 2024/25 is unvalidated and not quality assured. In-year data is not routinely reported on the methodology used for this answer and would be subject to material change between plan and outturn as a result.

Purchase of Social care expenditure is an accounts category within the Operating Expense note of the NHS England Annual Report and Accounts 2023-24, with



consolidated group expenditure for 2022/23 totalling £1,196,487,000 and that for 2023/24 totalling £1,024,918,000. Most of this expenditure, namely 76.2%, falls under the 'Community' category in the analysis provided. The report is available at the followed link:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6709344a92bb81fcdbe7b728/nhs-england-annual-report-and-accounts-2023-to-2024.pdf>

**Attachments:**

1. PQ20253 - Supplementary table [FORMATTED TABLE PQ20253 FOR MINISTERIAL CLEARANCE.docx]

■ **Pancreatic Enzyme Replacement Therapy**

**Michael Payne:**

**[23198]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to ensure that (a) patients requiring Creon are updated on the availability of that medication and (b) local guidance issued by (i) his Department and (ii) NHS England is shared with patients.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Department has been working with suppliers, NHS England, and national clinical specialists to address the current supply issues with Creon, which is a brand of pancreatic enzyme replacement therapy. Comprehensive guidance has been issued to the National Health Service and is being regularly reviewed and updated as the supply situation changes. This guidance includes information clinicians can share with patients, and refers to advice from patient groups aimed at supporting patients in managing the supply issues and addressing their questions.

The Department has not issued any local guidance on this supply issue, but has issued a National Patient Safety Alert in December 2024, with an action for integrated care boards to put in place a local mitigation plan for instances when patients are unable to obtain stock from their community pharmacy or dispensing general practice. In all cases of medicines supply issues, healthcare professionals should endeavour to communicate any supply issues and relevant information about resupply dates and the proposed management plan clearly with patients. They should also undertake counselling to support affected patients where possible.

■ **Prescriptions: Fees and Charges**

**Ben Maguire:**

**[23106]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will undertake a review of the prescription charge exemption list to include more (a) chronic and (b) lifelong conditions.

**Karin Smyth:**

There are no current plans to review the list of prescription charge exemptions, or the list of medical conditions that entitle someone to apply for a medical exemption certificate.

There are extensive arrangements in place in England to ensure that prescriptions are affordable for everyone. Approximately 89% of prescription items are dispensed free of charge in the community in England, and there is a wide range of exemptions from prescription charges already in place, for which those with long term or chronic conditions may be eligible. Eligibility depends on the patient's age, whether they are in qualifying full-time education, whether they are pregnant or have recently given birth, whether they have a qualifying medical condition, or whether they are in receipt of certain benefits or a war pension.

People on low incomes can apply for help with their health costs through the NHS Low Income Scheme. Prescription prepayment certificates (PPCs) are also available. PPCs allow people to claim as many prescriptions as they need for a set cost, with three-month and 12-month certificates available. The 12-month PPC can be paid for in instalments.

### ■ Radiotherapy

**Tim Farron:**

[\[23298\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what percentage of cancer patients have access to radiotherapy as their primary treatment; and what assessment his Department has made of the potential implications for his policies of barriers to increasing that percentage.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

Radiotherapy is available to all patients. Clinicians will help patients to determine the best treatment option for their cancer. No assessment has been made of the potential implications, as all patients have access to radiotherapy treatment on the National Health Service.

### ■ Radiotherapy: Infrastructure

**Tim Farron:**

[\[23296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will make an assessment of the adequacy of radiotherapy infrastructure.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

There are currently no plans to make an assessment of radiotherapy infrastructure.

### ■ Radiotherapy: Medical Equipment

**Tim Farron:**

[\[23289\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to paragraph 2.71 of the Autumn Budget 2024, whether the £70 million for new radiotherapy machines will be made available to upgrade machines.

**Tim Farron:** [\[23290\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to paragraph 2.71 of the Autumn Budget 2024, how the £70 million for new radiotherapy machines will increase access to (a) adaptive radiotherapy and (b) other forms of modern radiotherapy.

**Tim Farron:** [\[23293\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to paragraph 2.71 of the Autumn Budget 2024, what criteria he plans to use to prioritise the allocation of the funds for radiotherapy cancer treatments.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The funding for new radiotherapy machines will be used to replace outdated machines, and allocated to trusts using criteria that NHS England has developed. The new machines will support the recovery of cancer waiting times and help ensure that patients have access to the most up-to-date treatments.

**Tim Farron:** [\[23292\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to paragraph 2.71 of the Autumn Budget 2024, what estimate he has made of the number of radiotherapy machines that will be replaced; and whether his Department plans to fund a rolling replacement programme.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

NHS England will allocate funding to trusts to purchase new radiotherapy machines, and trusts may purchase different types of machines. Therefore, it is not yet known how many machines will be purchased. There are currently no plans to have a rolling replacement programme.

**Tim Farron:** [\[23295\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department (a) has consulted and (b) plans consult with (i) clinical experts, (ii) the radiotherapy industry, (iii) patients and (iv) charities on how best to allocate the funds announced in the Budget for new radiotherapy machines.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The funding for new radiotherapy machines will be used to replace outdated machines, and allocated to trusts using criteria that NHS England has developed, so that the new machines can best meet the needs of patients across the country. The Department has no plans to consult on this matter.

## ■ Respiratory Diseases

**Derek Twigg:** [\[22251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion patients who attended A&E with a respiratory condition and were admitted to a hospital ward were subsequently readmitted with a respiratory condition at a later date at each acute hospital trust since 2019.

**Karin Smyth:**

A table showing the information requested is attached.

**Attachments:**

1. PQ22251 Table [PQ22251 Table.xlsx]

**■ Royal Hampshire County Hospital: Accident and Emergency Departments****Dr Danny Chambers:**[\[23239\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the average wait time in the Royal Hampshire County Hospital's Accident and Emergency department was between December 2024 and January 2025.

**Karin Smyth:**

The data is not available in the format requested. The latest provisional published data for the median average time spent at emergency departments at the Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust for November 2024 was 218 minutes. Information relating to December 2024 will be published on 13 February 2025.

**■ Royal Hampshire County Hospital: Agency Workers****Dr Danny Chambers:**[\[23238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the cost of agency staff employed by Royal Hampshire County Hospital was in the last 12 months.

**Karin Smyth:**

The information requested is not available. Information regarding expenditure on agency staffing will be held locally by the National Health Service trust, the Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. NHS England collects some information on the staffing expenditure of NHS bodies, but this information has not been centrally validated.

**■ Surgery: Waiting Lists****James Wild:**[\[22984\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of patients waiting over 52 weeks for elective care in (a) England, (b) Norfolk and Waveney ICB area and (c) Queen Elizabeth King's Lynn Hospital Trust; and what his target is for eliminating waits of over a year.

**Karin Smyth:**

Across England, at the end of November 2024, over 221,000 patient pathways involved waits of more than 52 weeks for elective treatment, which is down by over 80,000 since June 2024.

At the Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Board, at the end of November 2024, over 6,800 patient pathways involved waits of more than 52 weeks for elective treatment, down by over 3,600 since June 2024. At the Queen Elizabeth King's Lynn

Hospital Trust, at the end of November 2024, 585 patient pathways involved waits of more than 52 weeks for elective treatment, down from 609 in June 2024.

We have committed to achieving the NHS Constitutional standard that 92% of patients should wait no longer than 18 weeks from Referral to Treatment (RTT) by March 2029. The Elective Reform Plan, published on 6 January 2025, sets out how we will achieve this and the interim targets we will meet in doing so.

Whilst our focus is on achieving the RTT constitutional standard, it is unacceptable that patients are waiting over a year for care. Tackling the longest waits will be a key part of achieving our commitment and we will continue to review and treat the patients who have waited the longest, as well as monitoring progress on the 18-week standard.

### ■ **Urinary Tract Infections: Analgesics**

**Luke Taylor:**

[\[22157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the NHS is taking to provide better pain relief for people suffering from chronic urinary tract infections.

**Karin Smyth:**

Treating clinicians use National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidance, which helps practitioners and commissioners get the best care to patients, when assessing, signposting to, and prescribing pain relief medications.

It is a prescriber's duty when providing clinical care for conditions, such as urinary tract infections, to prescribe medicines, including pain relief, when they have adequate knowledge of the patient's health and are satisfied that the medicine is clinically suitable for the patient.

## HOME OFFICE

### ■ **Animal Experiments: Animal Welfare**

**Neil Duncan-Jordan:**

[\[22859\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to page 24 of the Animals in Science Regulation Unit's annual report for 2023, published on 17 December 2024, what steps her Department is taking to improve the ability of the inspection regime to detect animal welfare failings.

**Dan Jarvis:**

The Regulator's annual report details the range of ways in which it detects non-compliance and seeks to drive greater compliance.

Through a current regulatory reform programme, the Regulator is presently recruiting to have more Inspectors for compliance related activities and will be reviewing its compliance regime for continuous improvement.

To provide assurance of compliance with the Regulations, the Regulator provides clear and accessible guidance and conducts regular on-site audits. The published framework for audit is based on clear benchmarks and assessing compliance through organisational governance to encourage greater commitment to compliance.

**Neil Duncan-Jordan:**

[\[22860\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Animals in Science Regulation Unit's Annual Report for 2023, published on 17 December 2024, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of (a) letters of reprimand and (b) other sanctions in response to (i) animals dying after being left without food or water and (ii) other animal welfare failings.

**Dan Jarvis:**

The Home Office takes non-compliance with the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 very seriously .

The Regulator applies proportionate sanctions in cases of non-compliance in accordance with its published compliance policy, which aims to reduce the risk of future non-compliance.

More rigorous sanctions are used in cases where animal welfare is impacted or there are significant systems failures.

For cases of non-compliance where animals experienced adverse welfare outcomes there was a 48% reduction in 2023 compared to 2022.

## ■ Anti-social Behaviour

**James Asser:**

[\[22480\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to tackle anti-social behaviour in (a) England, (b) London, and (c) West Ham & Beckton constituency.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

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

The Government's Plan for Change, announced by the Prime Minister on 5 December, committed to a zero-tolerance approach to ASB. This will include a dedicated lead officer in every force working with communities to develop a local anti-social behaviour action plan. We will also put 13,000 neighbourhood police and community support officers into local communities so that residents have a named officer they can turn to when things go wrong.

This Government will strengthen the powers available to relevant agencies to tackle ASB. We recently announced Respect Orders, which will be introduced in the forthcoming Crime and Policing Bill. Respect Orders can be applied for by police and local councils and are issued by the courts. They will enable courts to place wide-ranging restrictions on the behaviour of the most persistent and disruptive ASB offenders. Breach will be a criminal offence meaning officers can arrest and take

action quickly to disrupt ongoing ASB. Breaches will be heard in the criminal courts who will have a wide range of sentencing options, including community orders, unlimited fines and, for the most severe cases, up to two years' imprisonment.

## ■ **British Nationality (Irish Citizens) Act 2024**

**Mr Gregory Campbell:**

[\[23129\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 18 November 2024 to Question 14029 on British Nationality (Irish Citizens) Act 2024, when the operational changes to implement the new route will be completed.

**Seema Malhotra:**

The British Nationality (Irish Citizens) Act 2024 will come into force on a date that is set out in future regulations made by the Secretary of State, as allowed for by Clause 2(3) of the Act. We continue to work on the operational changes for implementation, and the Home Office will notify interested Members once a prospective timeline for commencement has been agreed.

## ■ **Cybersecurity**

**James McMurdock:**

[\[22874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made with Cabinet colleagues of the UK's vulnerability to cyber-terrorism.

**Dan Jarvis:**

The UK is becoming increasingly digital, connected and online. This increases our exposure to a range of cyber threats from a variety of actors.

As set out in the UK's counter-terrorism strategy, CONTEST 2023, the threat from terrorism is enduring and evolving, with the threat we see today and in the coming years becoming more diverse, dynamic and complex.

Cyber terrorism was part of the threat landscape used to inform the CONTEST 2023 strategy and we remain constantly vigilant to new terrorist and cyber tactics.

This government is committed to maintaining investment in critical threat assessment capabilities, including through the world-class Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre (JTAC) and the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC).

We continue to use all of HMG's available levers to disrupt cyber threats and to keep the public safe.

## ■ **Domestic Abuse: Homicide**

**Paula Barker:**

[\[22712\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate her Department has made of the number of women murdered by domestic abusers in (a) England and Wales and (b) Merseyside in each of the last five years.

**Jess Phillips:**

The latest published data on the number domestic homicides between 2018/19 and 2022/23 in (a) England and Wales and (b) Merseyside can be found in the table below.

**Table: Number of domestic homicides of women aged 16 and over, Merseyside and England and Wales, 2018/19 to 2022/23**

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
<b>Merseyside</b>	3	3	3	2	4
<b>England and Wales</b>	110	88	78	83	70

The scale of violence against women and girls is intolerable and this Government will treat it as the national emergency that it is. The Government has made it our mission to halve violence against women and girls in a decade, and tackling domestic homicide is a key part of that mission.

Domestic homicide is a horrific crime that disproportionately impacts women. Every death linked to domestic abuse should be considered for a Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) to ensure that national and local agencies, local communities and society as a whole continues to learn lessons from domestic abuse related deaths and treats every death as preventable.

### ■ **Electric Scooters**

**David Smith:**

[\[22482\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to improve enforcement on people riding e-scooters illegally.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

Tackling anti-social behaviour is a top priority for this Government, and a key part of our Safer Streets Mission. The Government will give police the powers they need to take illegal, dangerous and antisocial vehicles off the streets for good by more quickly seizing vehicles from offenders. We will set out more information in due course.

Enforcement of road traffic law, including in relation to the illegal use of e-scooters, is an operational matter for Chief Constables and Police and Crime Commissioners to decide how to deploy available resources, taking into account any specific local problems and demands.

### ■ **Fire and Rescue Services: Stoke-on-Trent South**

**Dr Allison Gardner:**

[\[22522\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to increase recruitment of firefighters in Stoke-on-Trent South.



**Dame Diana Johnson:**

Firefighters play a vital role in keeping the public safe and we are grateful for the work undertaken by fire and rescue services across the country in support of their local communities.

The Government is committed to ensuring fire and rescue services have the resources they need to do their important work. Overall, fire and rescue authorities will receive around £2.87 billion during 2024/25. Standalone FRAs will see an increase in core spending power of £95.4m during 2024/25. This is an increase of 5.6 per cent in cash terms compared to 2023/24.

Individual fire and rescue authorities are responsible for ensuring that fire and rescue services are meeting the needs of their local community and will direct resources where they are needed most.

**■ Fraud: Crime Prevention****James McMurdock:**[\[22866\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to protect vulnerable people from falling victim to fraud.

**James McMurdock:**[\[22868\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what preventative steps she is taking to reduce the number of fraud cases.

**Dan Jarvis:**

The Home Office has supported the rollout of the National Economic Crime Victim Care Unit (NECVCU) to all 43 forces in England and Wales. The aim of NECVCU is to support victims by building their confidence, helping them recover finances, and significantly reducing 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.

Additionally, the Home Office has provided funding to City of London Police to create a coordinated police Fraud Protect Network. The network is made up of local, regional and national law enforcement officers and is designed to reduce the threat of fraud and revictimisation by providing consistent fraud prevention advice to the public.

The Home Office continues to engage with banks, trade organisations and third sector organisations to ensure proper advice and support for victims of fraud. Our “Stop! Think Fraud” campaign helps people spot and avoid fraud, and provides fraud prevention and recovery advice. [Stop! Think Fraud - How to stay safe from scams.](#)

We are also continuing to work with individual sectors to support industry in disrupting attempts at fraud before they reach the public.

We launched the Insurance Fraud Charter in November 2024 with key insurance firms to reduce insurance fraud.

We are also developing a second telecommunications Charter to ensure the telecommunications sector takes additional steps to identify, prevent and disrupt fraud. Additionally, we are considering legislative action to ban “SIM farms”, technical devices that allow criminals to send scam texts to thousands of people at the same time.

The Online Safety Act codes of practice, which will require social media companies to take proactive measures to stop fraud originating on their platforms, will come into effect in March. The Chancellor and the Home Secretary have made clear that if insufficient action is taken in this area by those companies, the Government will consider what further steps need to be taken

Later this year, we will also publish an expanded Fraud Strategy that covers the full range of threats that our society faces from this crime.

## ■ Fraud: Prosecutions

**James McMurdock:**

[\[22867\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with her international counterparts about (a) policing fraud and (b) convicting perpetrators of fraud.

**Dan Jarvis:**

The Home Office continues to work closely with a range of partners, both bilaterally and through a range of multilateral fora, to tackle the fraud threat following the UK hosted Global Fraud Summit.

We also work closely with key overseas partners to target fraud at its source. By collaborating with governments across the world, we are making it harder for organised crime groups to operate across borders and to target prospective victims in the UK.

## ■ Hate Crime

**Abtisam Mohamed:**

[\[22795\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to bring forward legislation to make all hate crime an aggravated offence.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

This Government is determined to tackle all forms of hate crime. We have committed to changing hate crime legislation to bring parity of protection for LGBT+ and disabled people under the aggravated offences and we are currently considering how best to implement this.

## ■ Immigration

**Adam Jogee:**

[\[22447\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential implications for her policies of the level of net migration in the last five years.

**Seema Malhotra:**

Under the previous government, between 2019 and 2023, net migration more than quadrupled, heavily driven by a big increase in overseas recruitment.

This Government is clear that net migration must come down and is committed to tackling skills shortages and labour market failures here in the UK.

We have already set out a new approach to end the over reliance on international recruitment and boost economic growth to link the UK's immigration, labour market, and skills systems to train up our homegrown workforce

We have also commissioned the independent Migration Advisory Committee to review key sectors, and our long-term plan will see departments working across government, alongside other agencies and experts, to build our skills base and reduce our reliance on migration.

Furthermore, following the [Prime Minister's speech on migration on 28th November 2024](#) - the Government will publish a White Paper later this year setting out measures to reduce net migration and link the points-based system with requirements for training in the UK.

## ■ Migrant Workers: Sponsorship

**Neil O'Brien:**

[\[23166\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many (a) workers and (b) temporary workers each of the sponsors on the register of licensed sponsors sponsored in each year for which data is available.

**Seema Malhotra:**

The Home Office does not routinely publish data on sponsorship numbers broken down by each individual sponsor.

## ■ Mistreatment of Detainees at Brook House Immigration Removal Centre Inquiry

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:**

[\[23170\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 9 January 2025 to Question 21024 on Migrants: Detainees, if she will specify whether each Brook House Inquiry recommendation has been (a) accepted, (b) partially accepted, (c) rejected; which are (i) open and (ii) closed; and the date of closure for each closed recommendation.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

30 out of the 33 recommendations made by the Brook House Inquiry have been accepted or partially accepted. Following full consideration three recommendations (recommendations 7, 19 and 30) have been rejected.

Positive progress continues to be made against the accepted recommendations, with 12 recommendations (recommendations 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 14, 18, 22, 23, 24, 25 and 26) met and closed as of October 2024, 5 (recommendations 5, 11, 27, 28 and 29) due for closure by the end of January 2025, and the remaining 13 (recommendations 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 20, 21, 31, 32 and 33) on track for closure by summer 2025.

### ■ National Economic Crime Victim Care Unit: Finance

**James McMurdock:**[\[22869\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much funding the National Economic Crime Victim Care Unit has received in each of the last three years.

**Dan Jarvis:**

Home Office investment in the National Economic Crime Victim Care Unit (NECVCU) for each of the last three financial years (FY) is set out below.

The table sets out actual spend in financial years 2022/23 and 2023/24, and the indicative budget allocation for financial year 2024/25. All figures are provided to 1 decimal place:

	FY 2022/23 ACTUAL SPEND	FY 2023/24 ACTUAL SPEND	FY 2024/25 INDICATIVE BUDGET
<b>Home Office Investment</b>	£2.2m	£3.2m	£3.5m

### ■ Offences against Children

**Rupert Lowe:**[\[22427\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many foreign national offenders convicted for their involvement in the grooming gangs scandal were deported; how many deportation orders failed; and for what reason.

**Jess Phillips:**

The crimes committed by child sexual offenders, who prey on the young and vulnerable, are appalling. It is well-documented that some of those involved in grooming in the UK have been foreign nationals and others have been dual nationals against whom action has been taken to deprive them of their British citizenship in accordance with the British Nationality Act 1981.

One of the Home Office's key objectives is to protect the public by ensuring that foreign nationals who commit criminal offences are deported from the UK wherever it is lawful and practical to do so. We do this by pursuing deportation against foreign

offenders (FNOs) who have committed criminal offences, managing each case through the legal process, and negotiating barriers to removal.

The Home Office published statistics on immigration enforcement activity between 05 July 2024 and 07 December 2024. This can be accessed on GOV.UK on this link: [Returns from the UK and illegal working activity since 5 July 2024 - GOV.UK](#)

The Home Office often faces significant and complex challenges when seeking to return those individuals to their country of origin or lawful place of return. Despite these barriers, we are fully committed to making our communities safer by deporting those who break our laws.

The Government will continue to pursue all legal options to act against the perpetrators of these appalling crimes, and to deliver justice for their victims.

**Rupert Lowe:**

**[22428]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of establishing a police task force to (a) identify and (b) investigate (i) local and (ii) national officials that had knowledge of and failed to act against Pakistani heritage grooming gangs.

**Jess Phillips:**

This Government is focused on delivering meaningful change for victims and survivors impacted by these horrendous crimes, safeguarding children, and ensuring law enforcement have the tools and capabilities to pursue and bring offenders to justice.

This includes continuing to fund the work of the Child Sexual Exploitation Police Taskforce, which is working 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. The Taskforce has brought together the best police data that is available on group-based offending which was published in November 2024. In this context group-based offending includes any offence with two or more perpetrators. That data is available publicly online via

<https://www.hydrantprogramme.co.uk/publications/hydrant-publications#LatestNews>

). We will work further with the Taskforce to improve the accuracy and robustness of the data and analysis.

The Home Office also collects and publishes data annually on police misconduct cases finalised during a financial year period in the '[Police misconduct, England and Wales](#)' statistical bulletin. This data is broken down by allegation category but does not cover the specific circumstances of individual allegations such as those described.

Launching any investigation is a decision for the police to make. But the Government will continue to ensure that all institutions and individuals remain responsible and accountable for protecting children against this vile abuse. An important part of this includes delivering on the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse

recommendation of a mandatory reporting duty, which we will deliver through the upcoming Crime and Policing Bill.

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 already protects workers who wish to make disclosures about child protection or welfare concerns. In 2015 the Home Office commissioned the NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line, which serves as a national single point of contact for child abuse-related whistleblowing reports.

## ■ Offences against Children: Girls

**Rupert Lowe:**

[22417]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent estimate her Department has made of how many girls have been victims of Pakistani heritage grooming gangs.

**Jess Phillips:**

The Government is working to ensure that perpetrators are pursued and brought to justice, and victims and survivors of all forms of child sexual abuse are protected and supported.

The Government continues to fund the Child Sexual Exploitation Police Taskforce, which has brought together the best police data that is available on group-based offending and was published in November 2024. In this context group-based offending includes any offence with two or more perpetrators. That data is available publicly online via: <https://www.hydrantprogramme.co.uk/publications/hydrant-publications#LatestNews>. We will work further with the Taskforce to improve the accuracy and robustness of the data and analysis.

Investigation and prosecution decisions are independent matters for the police and the Crown Prosecution Service. Anyone who has been incorrectly reprimanded as a result of blowing the whistle should be raising their concerns with the appropriate authority for consideration and action. Under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA), workers who blow the whistle are entitled to certain protections, including protection from detriment or dismissal as a result of blowing the whistle, and a route of redress through the Employment Tribunals if these protections are infringed.

## ■ Offences against Children: Rochdale

**Paul Waugh:**

[22399]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she expects (a) Adil Khan and (b) Qari Abdul Rauf, convicted for their part in a Rochdale grooming gang, to be deported.

**Jess Phillips:**

The crimes committed by the Rochdale child sexual exploitation group are appalling and this Government is determined to take whatever action is available to us within the law to act against the perpetrators and protect the victims of their crimes.

As part of our commitment to deliver justice for victims and safer streets for our communities, we have also made clear that any foreign nationals who commit these kinds of appalling crimes should be in no doubt that the law will be enforced and, where it is lawful and possible to do so, we will always pursue their deportation with the upmost vigour.

The Hon Member will be aware that it is a longstanding Government policy not to comment publicly on individual cases, but I am happy to meet with him to discuss the action being taken in these and other cases related to the Rochdale child exploitation group.

### ■ **Passports: Biometrics**

**Clive Efford:**

[\[22245\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will take steps to update the technology required to read (a) diacritical characters and (b) accents marks in the biographical information of UK passport holders.

**Seema Malhotra:**

British passports meet the standards set by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO). While these standards permit the use of either diacritic marks or their transliteration, the number of countries that have adopted use of diacritics in their passport is very low.

There are currently no plans to introduce the inclusion of diacritic marks in the British passport. However, this will remain a consideration ahead of any future system developments.

### ■ **Pornography: Artificial Intelligence**

**Ben Obese-Jecty:**

[\[22133\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps the Government is taking to tackle the use of artificial intelligence in the creation of images for online child sexual exploitation.

**Jess Phillips:**

The Government remains firmly committed to tackling all forms of child sexual abuse online and in our communities across the UK and internationally. This includes working to safeguard children, provide support to victims and survivors, and pursuing offenders and bringing them to justice.

UK law is crystal clear – AI generated child sexual abuse images are illegal material. It is an offence to produce, store or share any material that contains or depicts child sexual abuse, regardless of whether the material depicts a “real” child or not.

We are committed to continuing to make sure law enforcement have the right powers to tackle this crime. That is why we will be bringing forward new legislative measures to tackle AI generated child sexual abuse material in this parliament.

Home Office investment also supports the National Crime Agency to use its unique capabilities to disrupt the highest harm offenders, safeguard children and remove the most horrific child sexual abuse material from the internet, including on the dark web.

The Online Safety Act places new duties on these services to address priority illegal content, which includes child sexual exploitation and abuse, whether it is AI generated or not. The Act applies to companies that provide user-to-user services and search services.

This Government is fully committed to tackling the creation of child sexual abuse online and will use every lever possible to continue to do so.

## ■ Undocumented Migrants

**Mr Richard Holden:** [\[22990\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 8 January 2025 to Question 16332 on Undocumented Migrants, whether she plans to make an estimate of the number of people in the UK illegally.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

By its very nature, it is not possible to know the exact size of the illegal migrant population, and so the Home Office under successive governments has not published any official estimates of the illegal migrant population. In June 2019, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) published a note on [‘Measuring illegal migration: our current view’](#).

Official statistics published by the Home Office are kept under review in line with the code of practice for statistics, taking into account a number of factors including user needs, the resources required to compile the statistics, as well as quality and availability of data.

## ■ Undocumented Migrants: English Channel

**Sir John Hayes:** [\[21967\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people arriving on small boats died in the English channel in each of the last three years.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

A total of 138 people are known to have died since August 2019 as a result of attempting to cross the Channel by small boat.

Almost all of these fatalities have occurred in French territorial waters, and the records of these held by the Home Office are primarily from information shared by the French authorities. The numbers of fatalities known to have occurred in the past three calendar years are as follows:

2022 – 4

2023 – 12

2024 – 78



## ■ Visas

**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:**

[\[22970\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to increase awareness of e-visas in other countries.

**Seema Malhotra:**

The Home Office is developing a border and immigration system that is more digital and streamlined. eVisas - which over 6 million people have been successfully using for several years - are a key part of this transformation and will enhance people's experience and increase the immigration system's security and efficiency.

We continue to deliver a wide range of communications activity to raise awareness of eVisas, both in the UK and overseas.

We have undertaken extensive engagement with foreign governments in conjunction with the FCDO to raise awareness of the transition to eVisas and the phasing out of physical immigration documents. Our Engagement Team have met with Embassies and High Commissions and produced communication materials to assist with this transition.

We have also delivered a significant eVisa communications campaign, which has encouraged holders of physical immigration documents to take action to access their eVisa, and key elements of this have sought to reach an international audience. At key points in eVisa delivery throughout 2024, the Home Office communications team issued eVisa announcement press notices to diaspora media and international journalists, and held three press briefings to which international media were invited. This activity resulted in wide-ranging international eVisa media coverage.

We recognise that the transition to eVisas may affect some countries' internal processes where verification of UK immigration status may be required. We have informed other Governments that a person can do this through a share code, a physical document confirming their UK status or permission, a screen from a person's UKVI account, or a copy of a letter or email sent to the person when their status or permission was granted. It is a matter for individual countries to set their own policies but we have engaged with them, through FCDO, about what the transition to eVisa means, and continue to do so. We advise that people check what individual countries' requirements are before travelling or applying for a visa.

## ■ Visas: Migrant Workers

**Ian Roome:**

[\[22416\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when the Migration Advisory Committee will conduct the next review of the Skilled Worker visa: immigration salary list.

**Seema Malhotra:**

The Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) are currently undertaking a number of reviews. Their current review of shortages in IT and engineering occupations includes

scope to consider whether the Immigration Salary List should remain in its current form. We will consider future reviews of the list once this review has been concluded.

#### ■ **Visas: Pakistan**

**Rupert Lowe:** [\[22431\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many visa applications from people with Pakistani nationality have been rejected because of their criminal record in each of the last five years.

**Seema Malhotra:**

Individuals with criminal records may automatically be denied a visa, depending on the circumstances of each case. All guidance on the use of criminality on the grounds for release can be found at: [Grounds for refusal: criminality \(accessible\) - GOV.UK](#).

#### ■ **Youth Work: Accident and Emergency Departments**

**Nadia Whittome:** [\[22371\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will embed youth work in A&Es.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

Halving knife crime over the next decade is a key part of the Government's Safe Streets mission. We are taking a range of steps to realise this ambition, including creating a new Young Futures Programme to intervene earlier to stop young people being drawn into violent crime. It is vital we have a system that can identify and support those young people who need it most.

As part of this, the Government's manifesto committed to offering young people a pathway out of violence by placing youth workers and mentors in A&E units and Alternative Provision Schools (formally called Pupil Referral units).

A&E navigator programmes are currently funded in all 20 VRU areas. These programmes place navigators, such as youth workers, in hospital emergency rooms to support children and young people with a violence-related injury and offer a pathway out of violence. The proposed Police Settlement for 2025/26 includes £49.7m for the continuation of the VRU programme. We will continue to build on, and learn from, the work already underway.

### HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

#### ■ **Antisemitism and Islamophobia**

**Kevin Hollinrake:** [\[22338\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps the Government has taken to tackle (a) anti-semitism and (b) anti-Muslim hatred since 5 July 2024.

**Alex Norris:**

Rooting out these abhorrent forms of hatred is an absolute priority for this Government, and we have already taken a number of steps to achieve this.

In July, the Prime Minister reappointed Lord John Mann as the Government's Independent Adviser on Antisemitism to continue providing advice on the most effective methods to tackle antisemitism.

In response to public disorder in August which targeted Muslims and mosques, the Government introduced a rapid protective security response process for places of worship. We have provided security to more than 700 additional places of worship during this period. Protective security continues to be a priority, with up to £29.4 million per year being made available for protective security at mosques and Muslim faith schools from 2024/25 to 2027/28. Further, we have committed £1 million this year to support Tell MAMA to continue their work of monitoring and tackling Islamophobia. We have also committed to reversing the previous government's decision to downgrade the recording and monitoring of antisemitic and Islamophobic non-crime hate incidents – capturing this data will aid the prevention of more serious crimes.

We are finalising our renewed, more strategic approach to tackling antisemitism and Islamophobia, working in partnership with communities, and will provide further updates shortly.

**■ Buildings: Repairs and Maintenance****Mr Calvin Bailey:**[\[22393\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the time taken between developers signing the remediation contract and cases reaching the works contract signing stage on leaseholders.

**Alex Norris:**

Living in or owning an unsafe home without knowing when and how it will be made safe can have significant impact on the lives of residents and leaseholders. That is why we expect developers and owners to sign works contracts and make buildings safe as quickly as reasonably practicable, and to keep residents and leaseholders informed throughout in line with guidance in the Code of Practice for the Remediation of Residential Buildings. As part of the joint plan that we published in December 2024, developers committed to accelerate this work and government committed to support them in overcoming barriers such as disputes between developers and building owners over access license agreements and scope of remedial works.

**■ Business Rates: Tax Yields****Kevin Hollinrake:**[\[22332\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the written statement of 28 November 2024 on Local Government Finance,

HCWS265, what estimate her Department has made of what business rate receipts will be in absolute terms in the (a) 2024-25 and (b) 2025-26 financial year on which the settlement is based.

**Jim McMahon:**

For 2024-25, English local authorities estimate business rates receipts will be £26.3 billion, of which £16.2 billion is retained locally. Local authorities have not yet submitted their estimates of business rates income for 2025-26. In addition, authorities receive income from Section 31 grant as part of the business rates retention system.

Core Spending Power, published alongside the settlement, includes Settlement Funding Assessment which is comprised of Revenue Support Grant and a component linked to business rates - Baseline Funding Levels. Baseline Funding Levels represent an authority's need that is funded via business rates.

■ **Chinese Embassy: Planning Permission**

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

[\[22046\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will publish her response to the letter from the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China of 4 December 2024 on the consultation process for the Chinese Embassy planning application.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

The Department does not routinely publish ministerial responses to representations.

■ **Faith Matters and Tell MAMA: Finance**

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

[\[22336\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Answer of 31 July 2024 to Question HL46 on Faith Matters, what payments have been made to (a) Faith Matters and (b) Tell MAMA since 4 July 2024; and what the progress she has made on renewal of the grant funding agreement for 2025 onwards in relation to monitoring and supporting victims of anti-Muslim hatred.

**Alex Norris:**

The Government works closely with police and community partners, including Tell MAMA, to monitor and support victims of Islamophobia. Tell MAMA has been funded by government since 2012 to deliver a reporting service and provide support for victims of Islamophobia. In 2024/25, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has made up to £1 million of funding available to Tell MAMA via Faith Matters to continue this work.

All relationships with government-funded partners are kept under constant review and subject to regular monitoring and evaluation. The Government is actively considering its approach to tackling Islamophobia more broadly. We will provide further details on this soon.

## ■ Housing: Bricks

**Daisy Cooper:**

[22080]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 12 September 2024 to Question 4279 on Housing: Bricks, what steps she plans to take to increase rates of swift brick installation in new build properties.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

The revised National Planning Policy Framework we published on 12 December 2024 expects developments to provide net gains for biodiversity, including through incorporating features which support priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs.

The National Model Design Code and Natural England's Green Infrastructure Framework set out how development can incorporate a range of nature friendly features including swift bricks.

We will continue to consider what action may be appropriate to drive up rates of swift brick installation in new build properties.

## ■ Housing: Pylons

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

[22322]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what guidance her Department issues on whether the erection of an electricity pylon close to a dwelling is a material consideration in relation to the current valuation and council tax dwelling of a property.

**Jim McMahon:**

The erection of a new electricity pylon close to a dwelling (property) will give the owner or occupier the right to submit a proposal (formal challenge) to alter the Council Tax list. The proposal can be made if they believe there has been a "material reduction" in the value of the dwelling due to "any change in the physical state of the dwelling's locality". Material reduction is defined in [section 87 part 10 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992](#).

Forms and guidance for making a proposal can be found on gov.uk [here](#).

## ■ Internal Drainage Boards: Finance

**James Naish:**

[22389]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to take steps to reform funding arrangements for Internal Drainage Board levies.

**Jim McMahon:**

MHCLG recognises the need for a long-term solution and are working with Defra to explore potential approaches.

In line with the previous two years, at the 2025-26 provisional Local Government Finance Settlement the government announced that it will provide £3 million in funding for authorities most impacted by Internal Drainage Board Levies.

MHCLG and Defra will ensure that all potential long-term solutions are given careful consideration.

## ■ Islamophobia

**Kevin Hollinrake:** [\[22340\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she has made an assessment of the potential effect of the APPG on British Muslims definition of Islamophobia on (a) free speech and (b) the ability to criticise criminal practices such as grooming gangs.

**Alex Norris:**

The Government has been clear that our approach to tackling religious hatred will never inhibit free speech or allow cultural or religious sensitivities to get in the way of delivering justice. We have been focused on a more integrated and cohesive approach to tackling religious hatred. While we are carefully looking at the issue of a definition for Islamophobia as part of this approach, this would not be legislative and would be used as a guidance tool for institutions.

## ■ Local Government Finance: Devolution

**David Simmonds:** [\[22379\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Written Ministerial Statement of 16 December 2024 on the Devolution White Paper, HCWS316, what steps her Department is taking to end the use of (a) competitive funding applications and (b) ring-fenced funding.

**Jim McMahon:**

The Government has committed to simplifying the wider local funding landscape, reviewing and reducing the number of grants (and ringfences), and consolidating grants into the Local Government Finance Settlement wherever possible. This will support local authorities to plan budgets more effectively and have greater freedom to deliver local priorities. We will also end wasteful competitive bidding processes and cut burdensome reporting requirements for government grants - allowing local authorities to focus on delivering services for their residents. We are inviting views (until 12 February 2025) on our principles and objectives for local government funding reform through a consultation.

## ■ Local Government Services: Finance

**David Simmonds:** [\[22380\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 27 December 2024 to Question 20641 on Local Government Services: Rural Area, what the (a) cash (b) real terms and (c) proportional change in core spending

power will be in each individual type of (i) rural and (ii) urban area according to the classification methodology used by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in the (A) 2024-25 and (B) 2025-26 financial year.

**David Simmonds:**

[\[22384\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the change in grant is in (a) cash and (b) real terms in areas with a significant rural population between 2024-25 and 2025-26.

**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.

This government is absolutely committed to tackling the issues that matter to rural communities. Places with a significant rural population (encompassing both authorities classed as predominantly Rural, and Urban with Significant Rural) will on average receive around a 5% increase in their Core Spending Power next year, which is a real terms increase. No council will see a reduction – and new funding will be available to rural areas in 2025-26 through guaranteed EPR payments.

The cash, percentage, and real terms changes in Core Spending Power for rural and urban authorities, according to the classification methodology used by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, and published by the Office for National Statistics, are found in the table below (please see below the table for further explanatory information).

*Table 1. Provisional local government finance settlement 2025-26, core spending power by Rural/Urban classification*

RURAL/URBAN CLASSIFICATION 2011	CORE SPENDING POWER 2024-25 (£ MILLION)	CORE SPENDING POWER 2025-26 (£ MILLION)	CASH INCREASE (£ MILLION)	% CHANGE CSP 2023-24 TO 2024-25	% REAL CHANGE CSP 2024-25 TO 2025-26
Predominantly Rural	8,725	9,151	426	4.9%	2.4%
Urban with Significant Rural	11,194	11,844	650	5.8%	3.3%
Predominantly Urban	36,067	38,564	2497	6.9%	4.4%
Unclassified - no Rural/Urban classification	8,996	9,326	330	3.7%	1.2%



RURAL/URBAN CLASSIFICATION 2011	CORE SPENDING POWER 2024-25 (£ MILLION)	CORE SPENDING POWER 2025-26 (£ MILLION)	CASH INCREASE (£ MILLION)	% CHANGE CSP 2023-24 TO 2024-25	% REAL CHANGE CSP 2024-25 TO 2025-26
available					
<b>Total England</b>	<b>64,982</b>	<b>68,884</b>	<b>3902</b>	<b>6.0%</b>	<b>3.5%</b>

### Explanatory information and sources

- Core Spending Power has been grouped using DEFRA's Rural/Urban Classification (RUC) 2011 dataset, further information can be found here: [2011 Rural Urban Classification - GOV.UK](#). There are 43 unclassified authorities which are not included in the RUC dataset. Of these, 32 are fire authorities or the GLA and 11 are authorities which have undergone restructuring since the latest available RUC publication.
- Core Spending Power data: [Provisional local government finance settlement: England, 2025 to 2026 - GOV.UK](#).
- For the financial year 2025-26 real-terms calculation we use the GDP deflator: [Gross Domestic Product \(GDP\) - Office for National Statistics](#).

Further information on the provisional local government finance settlement, including the increases in grant for rural and urban areas can be found in the provisional local government finance settlement core spending power publications. These have now been updated to include local authority Rural/Urban classifications and can be accessed via the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/core-spending-power-table-provisional-local-government-finance-settlement-2025-to-2026>.

### Local Government: Codes of Practice

**David Simmonds:**

**[22386]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make it her policy to amend the guidance entitled Illustrative text for local code of conduct, last updated on 20 September 2013, to include a free speech protection clause.

**Jim McMahon:**

I refer the hon Member to the answer given to Question UIN [20985](#) on 9 January 2025, which states that government has launched a consultation on a range of proposals to strengthen the local government standards regime. This includes proposals for the possible introduction of a mandatory minimum code of conduct for local authorities in England.

The results of this consultation will help to inform any policy or legislative change with respect to local government codes of conduct.

## ■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Cost Effectiveness

**David Simmonds:**

[22385]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will publish a breakdown of efficiency savings made by her Department in (a) 2024-25 and (b) 2025-26.

**Alex Norris:**

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has already outlined savings found as part of the [Fixing the Foundations: Public Spending Audit 2024-25](#). This included an agreement to £154 million in savings in response to the HM Treasury (HMT) Savings Commission. As part of this, MHCLG has stopped non-essential consultancy spend.

As set out in the [English Devolution White Paper](#) and [Local Government Finance Policy Statement](#), it is our aim that local government reorganisation will lead to further efficiencies.

The department will also work closely with HM Treasury as part of the Spending Review 2025 Phase 2 to identify where these should be pursued for 2025-26 and onwards.

## ■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Procurement

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

[22333]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the transparency data entitled Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: procurement pipeline, published on 3 December 2024, what Project Heart is.

**Alex Norris:**

Project Heart was an internal term previously used by officials to describe the anticipated works associated with the Grenfell Memorial. This term is no longer in use.

The final design for a fitting and lasting memorial will be determined by the Grenfell community. The government is committed to supporting the independent Grenfell Tower Memorial Commission in delivering a memorial to honour those who lost their lives and those whose lives were forever changed by the tragedy.

The Commission launched the process, in July 2024, to appoint a Multi-Disciplinary Design Team to work with the community to design the memorial.

## ■ Mo Baines

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

[22321]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 3 December 2024 to Question 15805 on Mo Baines, for what reason Mo

Baines' declaration of political activity was not published when her appointment as Lead Non-Executive Director was announced on 23 October 2024.

**Alex Norris:**

Non-Executive Board Members' relevant interests are updated and published bi-annually as part of an established process as set out on the following gov.uk page: [Non-Executive Board Member declaration of interests process - GOV.UK](#).

■ **Pedestrian Areas: Greater London**

**David Simmonds:**

[22381]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what representations she has received from (a) Westminster City Council and (b) business representatives on proposals to (i) create a Mayoral Development Corporation for and (ii) pedestrianise Oxford Street.

**Alex Norris:**

An open letter from the Leader of Westminster City Council was published on 18 September 2024, a copy of which can be found [here](#).

Responsibility for designating any area of land in Greater London as a Mayoral development area rests with the Mayor of London. Any future proposal for Oxford Street would be subject to a statutory consultation in line with the requirements of the Localism Act 2011. The Government remains supportive of locally-led plans to revitalise Oxford Street and looks forward to working with the Mayor of London, local leaders and businesses to ensure Oxford Street remains a world-class retail destination .

■ **Political Parties: Finance**

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

[22320]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps the Government plans to take to amend the rules on (a) donations to political parties and (b) the permissibility of donations from foreign business owners through UK-registered businesses.

**Rushanara Ali:**

I refer the hon Member to the answer given to Question UIN [HL3289](#) on 20 December 2024.

■ **Prisoners' Release: Homelessness**

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

[22325]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 4 December 2024 to Question 16197 on Prisoners' Release: Homelessness, what steps she is taking with the Secretary of State for Justice to monitor levels of homelessness of people released under the SDS40 early release scheme.

**Rushanara Ali:**

Data on the number of prisoners released under SDS40 who were released homeless is retained locally at each prison. Ministry of Justice is currently collating data relating to the September and October SDS40 release dates and this will be published in due course.

MHCLG collects and regularly publishes management information from local authorities on rough sleeping. The most recent data, for September, was published [here](#) on 28 November. The management information includes the number of people seen sleeping rough following release from prison.

MHCLG collect information on duties owed to those have been in custody through the homelessness case level collection (H-CLIC) on a quarterly basis and the figures for April to June are published [here](#). This data will be used to monitor the impact of the SDS release scheme on homelessness levels, once received.

**Public Buildings: Energy Performance Certificates****Kevin Hollinrake:**[\[22324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential implications for her policies of the compliance rate of public sector buildings with requirements to display energy certificates.

**Alex Norris:**

The Government does not routinely hold or collect data to identify public buildings that are frequently visited by the public. Therefore, we have not made an assessment of the current levels of non-compliance in relation to Display Energy Certificates (DECs).

We are currently consulting on the [Reforms to the Energy Performance of Buildings regime](#) which includes proposals to support compliance with the requirements of the regulations includes those for DECs.

**Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre****Kevin Hollinrake:**[\[22326\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 4 December 2024 to Question 16198 on Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre, if she will make it her policy to facilitate use of the QE2 Conference Centre for Parliament to assist any partial decant under the Restoration and Renewal programme.

**Alex Norris:**

There is no formal agreement with the Houses of Parliament or the Restoration and Renewal Programme regarding the use of the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre. Therefore, there is no policy in place. Nevertheless, the Department continues to collaborate with the Houses of Parliament ahead of Restoration and Renewal proposals coming to the House in 2025.

**■ Rented Housing: Pets****Kevin Hollinrake:** [22916]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to page 3 of the Renters' Rights Bill Impact Assessment, published in November 2024, what her Department's evidential basis is that tenants wanting to own a pet will incur approximately £7 in discretionary costs annually per household.

**Kevin Hollinrake:** [22917]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to page 3 of the Renters' Rights Bill Impact Assessment, published in November 2024, what discussions she has had with insurers on the conclusion that tenants wanting to own a pet will incur approximately £7 in discretionary costs annually per household.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

The government published its Impact Assessment for the Renters' Rights Bill on 22 November 2024, following scrutiny from the Regulatory Policy Committee. The Impact Assessment received a 'green' rating, indicating it is 'fit for purpose'.

Throughout the development of the Impact Assessment, we have used evidence from a range of sources. In relation to pets, we have drawn on information from the English Housing Survey, insurance comparison websites, a number of animal organisations and discussions with industry trade bodies. All evidence and assumption underpinning the costs and benefits are detailed in the Impact Assessment, which can be found on gov.uk [here](#).

**■ Social Media: National Security and Politics and Government****David Simmonds:** [22383]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 18 December 2024 to Question 18514 on Social Media: National Security and Politics and Government, whether her Department has issued guidance on whether a social media company adjusting network algorithms to favour a specific political candidate or party would be a donation in kind for the purposes of election finance requirements.

**Rushanara Ali:**

The Government does not issue guidance on political finance matters. The Electoral Commission, as the independent body responsible for regulating political finance, has a statutory duty to provide guidance on donations.

**■ Social Services: Council Tax****David Simmonds:** [22377]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to make changes to the council tax social care precept prior to the conclusions of the Casey Commission on social care.

**Jim McMahon:**

The government has no plans to change the adult social care precept. However, on 8 January, the government laid regulations which will change how billing authorities include information on the Adult Social Care precept on council tax bills from 2025/26. This is a presentational change to council tax bills and has no effect on the overall operation of the precept.

**UK Shared Prosperity Fund****Tracy Gilbert:**[\[22471\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when her Department will confirm allocations for the £900 million Shared Prosperity Funding announced in the Autumn budget.

**Alex Norris:**

Allocations for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund in 2025-26 were published on GOV.UK on 13 December and can be found [here](#).

**JUSTICE****Administration of Justice: Wales****Liz Saville Roberts:**[\[23158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent assessment she has made of the potential merits of routinely publishing disaggregated data for Wales.

**Alex Davies-Jones:**

The Ministry of Justice recognises the value of routinely publishing disaggregated data for Wales. This is important for the effective delivery of justice.

The Ministry of Justice already collects, disaggregates and routinely publishes a wealth of data for Wales, including headline data on prison population (for example by age, offence group and ethnicity, and whether on remand or sentenced) and headline safety in custody data (for example deaths, self-harm and assaults on staff). We routinely publish a variety of probation data too, for example numbers of offenders starting community orders, accommodation, and employment activity. In addition, nearly all published courts and tribunals data is available for England and Wales separately.

In line with our approach to all our statistical publications, we continue to keep the content under review.

**First-tier Tribunal: Property****Kevin Hollinrake:**[\[22918\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the average time is between a complaint being (a) received and (b) logged at the First Tier Tribunal (Property Chamber – Residential Property).

**Sarah Sackman:**

Administrative complaints uploaded into the HMCTS complaints handling system direct from the gov.uk online complaints portal are logged immediately automatically. These constitute the vast majority of administrative complaints received by the tribunal. Complaints received by other methods (e.g. phone, email, post) require manual entry and we do not hold timeliness information on the logging of these. The target for the first response to administrative complaints is ten working days.

**Human Trafficking: Convictions**

**James McMurdock:** [22876]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people have been convicted for offences related to human trafficking since January 2020.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

The Ministry of Justice publishes data on the number of convictions for human trafficking offences at criminal courts in England and Wales in the Outcomes by Offences data tool, that can be downloaded from the Criminal Justice Statistics landing page here: [Criminal Justice Statistics Quarterly: June 2024](#).

**Ministry of Justice: Cultural Heritage**

**Nick Timothy:** [22745]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether she plans to decolonise the (a) artwork and (b) heritage assets in (i) her Department, (ii) the (A) courts and (B) prison estates and (iii) each of her Department's arm's length bodies.

**Alex Davies-Jones:**

There has been no change in the Ministry of Justice's management of artwork or heritage assets across our estate since the previous administration.

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

**Offences against Children: Convictions**

**Rupert Lowe:** [22419]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will publish the nationality of people convicted for their involvement in grooming gangs.

**Rupert Lowe:** [22420]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of people convicted for their involvement in Pakistani heritage grooming gangs (a) had previous convictions and (b) have reoffended.

**Rupert Lowe:** [22426]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many of those convicted for their involvement in Pakistani heritage grooming gangs (a) are still in prison, (b) have been



deported, (c) have been released back into the same community and (d) did not serve a custodial sentence.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

Information on whether individuals are part of 'Pakistani heritage grooming gangs' is not centrally identified in the data systems relevant to these questions. Therefore, it is not possible to provide the specific information requested.

It is also not possible to identify an offender's nationality from the centrally collated convictions data. This information may be held on court records: however, to identify the nationality of people convicted of specific crimes would require the examination of individual court records. This would incur disproportionate costs.

■ **Offences against Children: Prosecutions**

**Rupert Lowe:**

[\[22434\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if the Minister will make an assessment of the potential merits of immediately releasing of all court transcripts related to the Pakistani heritage grooming gangs.

**Sarah Sackman:**

The release of court transcripts to interested parties in relation to individual court cases is a matter for the trial judge to consider. There is a standard process all applicants must follow to request and access a Crown Court transcript. An application form must be submitted to the court where the trial took place, and it is then considered by the judge. The provision of transcripts is also subject to payment of the relevant charge to cover the cost of transcription. Additionally, in certain high-profile cases, the judge's sentencing remarks are published online on judiciary.uk.

■ **Offences against Children: Pupils**

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[22261\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Education on support for victims of rape and sexual assault who are under 18 and in the education system.

**Alex Davies-Jones:**

This Government is committed to ensuring that all victims of crime, including child victims of rape and sexual assault, have the support that they need to cope with their experiences and move forward with their lives. My Department provides funding to over 60 specialist support organisations through the Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Fund. This supports the delivery of tailored support programmes for all victims and survivors, including child victims.

I regularly meet with the Minister for Children and Families (DfE). This includes a recent joint meeting with her and the Minister for Safeguarding and Violence Against Women and Girls (HO) where we discussed matters relating to Violence Against Women and Girls.

**■ Prisoners' Release****Mr Richard Holden:** [\[22706\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prisoners have been (a) released in error and (b) released in error and not re-apprehended under the Early Release scheme as of 8 January 2025.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

On 10 September 2024, the Government took the necessary and unavoidable step to move certain release points from 50% to 40%, with an initial tranche of eligible offenders released on this date, and a second tranche released on 22 October 2024.

There was an issue with a repealed Breach of Restraining Order offence, which meant that 37 offenders were released in error in the first tranche because they were incorrectly sentenced. This specific cohort were all returned to custody. All prisoners in custody with this offence recorded against them were reviewed to ensure there were no further releases in error.

We have published data on how many offenders were released on the first day of both initial SDS40 release tranches (1,889 prisoners for Tranche 1, and 1,223 prisoners for Tranche 2). The number of people who have been released in error since September 2024 forms a subset of releases in error data which is scheduled for future publication. In accordance with the requirements of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, we may not give any early indication of the contents of these statistical reports. Annual totals for releases in error are published each July in the HMPPS Annual Digest, available via [Prison and Probation Performance Statistics - GOV.UK](#).

**■ Prisoners' Release: Reoffenders****Dr Allison Gardner:** [\[22520\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps her Department is taking to help reduce levels of reoffending among people released on licence.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

This Government is committed to reducing reoffending by giving prison leavers, including those released early on licence, the tools they need to turn their backs on crime. To do that, we will increase prisoners' access to purposeful activity, such as education, deliver pre-release plans for all those leaving custody and ensure that people leave prison with a job and the skills needed to lead law abiding lives.

We are determined to help ensure our hard-working probation staff can continue to deliver high-quality supervision, including to those released on licence, and focus their time on those cases which need most attention. We need to increase the size of the workforce and are committed to bringing in at least 1,000 new trainee probation officers across the 2024/25 financial year.

## ■ Prisoners: Braille

**Luke Taylor:**

[\[22409\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, which prisons offer the provision of braille transcription services for prisoners with visual impairments.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

Braille translation services are available in publicly operated prisons through the national translation and transcription contract, which is currently held by thebigword Group Limited. Privately managed prisons must have arrangements in place using either this national contract or equivalent arrangements.

## ■ Prisoners: Pregnancy

**Dr Allison Gardner:**

[\[22519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment she has made of the appropriacy of custodial sentences for pregnant women.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

Sentencing in individual cases is a matter for our independent courts. The sentencing framework, maximum penalties and the Sentencing Council's sentencing guidelines apply to all offenders.

Sentencing guidelines are clear that there are factors that sentencers should take into account to reflect personal mitigation, including pregnancy, or the impact on dependent relatives. Guidance makes clear that where an offender is on the cusp of custody, imprisonment should not be imposed where there would be an impact on dependents, that would make a custodial sentence disproportionate to achieving the aims of sentencing. However, in some circumstances, custody would be the only appropriate punishment for the most dangerous and violent offenders.

This Government has delivered on a manifesto commitment by launching an Independent Review of Sentencing, chaired by former Lord Chancellor, David Gauke. The Review will assess whether the sentencing framework appropriately considers the specific needs or vulnerabilities of women, including pregnant women. Additionally, we are establishing a Women's Justice Board with a clear ambition to reduce the number of women in prison and to address their distinct needs within the Criminal Justice System.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### ■ Casement Park: Regeneration

**Mr Gregory Campbell:**

[\[23127\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what recent discussions he has had with relevant stakeholders on the cost of developing Casement Park.

**Hilary Benn:**

Regrettably, given the amount of time wasted by the previous Government, Casement Park could not be built in time for the Euros. The risks of not completing it on time were unacceptably high. While the redevelopment of Casement Park is a devolved policy matter, we are continuing to engage with all partners involved in the project, including the Northern Ireland Executive and the GAA, and assessing the options available.

**■ Northern Ireland Office: Cultural Heritage****Nick Timothy:**[\[22755\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, whether he plans to decolonise the (a) artwork and (b) heritage assets in (i) her Department and (ii) each of its arm's length bodies.

**Hilary Benn:**

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

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

**■ Small Businesses: Northern Ireland****Jim Shannon:**[\[902102\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what steps he is taking with Cabinet colleagues to ensure small businesses can post parcels from Great Britain to Northern Ireland without completing customs declarations.

**Hilary Benn:**

The Windsor Framework removes the need for customs declarations for the overwhelming majority of parcels sent by businesses in Great Britain to consumers in Northern Ireland and instead, parcel carriers will continue to collect standard commercial data required.

There are, of course, no customs declarations requirements for parcels sent between private individuals within the UK.

**SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY****■ Artificial Intelligence: Regulation****Sir John Hayes:**[\[22249\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if he will bring forward legislative proposals on the use of artificial intelligence to (a) address safety concerns and (b) ensure its responsible (i) development and (ii) deployment in the UK.

**Feryal Clark:**

The Government has set out its intention to deliver on the manifesto commitment to introduce new, binding requirements on the handful of companies developing the most powerful AI models.

These proposals will build on the voluntary commitments secured at the Seoul and Bletchley AI Summits and will place the AI Safety Institute on a permanent footing, strengthening its role in advancing AI Safety.

The government recognises how important safety and trust is to capture AI opportunities. The AI Opportunities Action Plan recommends supporting AISI, strengthening regulators' AI capabilities and supporting the AI assurance ecosystem to increase trust in AI.

**■ Cybersecurity: Northern Ireland****Robin Swann:****[23241]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, which Northern Irish companies received funding from the £1.8m for regional cyber skills projects.

**Feryal Clark:**

Cyber Local is a UK government scheme to deliver tailored support for the cyber security sector. It is part of the government's work to make the UK more resilient against cyber threats, support economic growth and develop digital skills.

£1.9 million of funding will be shared by 31 projects, details of which can be found here <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cyber-local-projects-2025>. The downloadable spreadsheet indicates the project location and whether the project focuses on skills, resilience or innovation.

**■ Digital Technology: Forest of Dean****Matt Bishop:****[22509]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he is taking to help tackle digital exclusion in Forest of Dean constituency.

**Chris Bryant:**

Digital inclusion is a priority for me and for Government. It means everyone has the access, skills, support and confidence to participate in a modern digital society, whatever their circumstances. Work is ongoing to develop our approach to tackling digital exclusion and we hope to announce more on this soon. We look forward to working closely with the third sector, business and local authorities across the UK, including Gloucestershire, to ensure interventions are targeted to and based on individual needs.

## ■ Social Media: Radicalism

**Dr Allison Gardner:**

[\[22527\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he is taking with social media platforms to help tackle the spread of extremism online.

**Feryal Clark:**

Under the Online Safety Act, companies must act against illegal mis- and disinformation or hateful content, including illegal content that stirs up racial or religious hatred, and direct incitement to violence. The illegal content duty Codes of Practice are currently being scrutinised by Parliament, and Ofcom is anticipated to begin enforcing them in the Spring.

Social media platforms are responsible for ensuring that those seeking to spread hate online are not facilitated by their service. DSIT engages constructively with social media platforms, whilst being clear about that responsibility. DSIT also engages with major platforms on their responses to emerging risks relating to national security and public safety.

## SCOTLAND

### ■ Scotland Office: Cultural Heritage

**Nick Timothy:**

[\[22756\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, whether he plans to decolonise the (a) artwork and (b) heritage assets in (i) her Department and (ii) each of its arm's length bodies.

**Kirsty McNeill:**

There has been no change in the Scotland Office's management of artwork or heritage assets since the previous administration. The Scotland Office is pleased to showcase the best of Scottish art in partnership with the Fleming Collection and the Government Art Collection. Last year, the Government also announced that works of art by five contemporary artists from across Scotland would be displayed in embassies and government buildings around the world as part of a Government Art Collection project; I am delighted to see these contemporary artists having their work promoted by the UK Government.

### ■ Scotland Office: Media

**John Cooper:**

[\[23110\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to the Answer of 19 December 2024 to Question 20496 on Scotland Office: Media, which contractors were used for the spending on media training; and which Ministers received the training.

**Ian Murray:**

Media training in the Scotland Office has been provided by Morrison Media. Both the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State and I have received such training.

**TRANSPORT**■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Mr Richard Holden:**[\[902095\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking with Cabinet colleagues to improve trade links between Northern Ireland and the channel ports.

**Mike Kane:**

The Department for Transport is supporting Great Britain–Northern Ireland maritime freight connectivity through implementation of the Windsor Framework to streamline goods movement.

■ **Avanti West Coast: Strikes****Dr Luke Evans:**[\[22693\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to resolve the strike action by the RMT on Avanti West Coast.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The Secretary of State expects the operator and RMT to do everything they can to avoid further industrial action, and to minimise disruption to passengers in the meantime.

As part of our plans to reform the railways, we are determined to move towards a seven-day working week and end the overreliance on rest day working, giving passengers the certainty and reliability they deserve.

■ **Bus Services: Concessions****Siân Berry:**[\[23099\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Independent report by the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee entitled DPTAC position on the eligibility criteria for concessionary bus travel, published on 17 August 2022, whether she plans to carry out a review of the eligibility criteria for bus passes for disabled people.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) provides free off-peak bus travel to those with eligible disabilities and those of state pension age, currently sixty-six. The ENCTS costs around £700 million annually and, while the Department keeps the scheme under review, any changes to the statutory obligations, such as extending the eligibility criteria, would need to be carefully considered for their impact on the scheme's financial sustainability.



### ■ Bus Services: ICT

**Alex Mayer:** [\[23559\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 19 December 2024 to Question 20346 on Bus Services: ICT, if she will take steps to ensure all new buses include charging points.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The government is committed to delivering better bus services, and wants to make them a strong choice for passengers. Local bus operators have responsibility for managing and maintaining their bus fleets, and we expect them to consider how best to improve the experience for passengers when making decisions about their fleet, including considering making charging points available to passengers on their buses.

### ■ Buses: Licensing

**Alex Mayer:** [\[23557\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many Public Service Vehicle operator licences were issued in each of the last five years for which data is available.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

The Traffic Commissioners for Great Britain collect annual data on the number of active and newly issued public service vehicle (PSV) operator licences and the vehicles authorised to operate under these licences. The number of new PSV operator licences issued in each of the last five years is as follows. Data for the reporting year '2024 – January 2025' is accurate as of 14 January 2025.

REPORTING YEAR (APRIL – MARCH)	NUMBER OF NEW PSV OPERATOR LICENCES GRANTED	NUMBER OF VEHICLES AUTHORISED AS A RESULT OF A NEW APPLICATION
2019/20	474	2810
2020/21	317	1323
2021/22	264	2292
2022/23	310	1463
2023/24	368	1451
2024 – January 2025	273	1401

### ■ Buses: Sales

**Euan Stainbank:** [\[23040\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on supporting transport providers to buy British buses.

**Simon Lightwood:**

On 8 October 2024, the Department announced plans to create a new UK Bus Manufacturing Expert Panel. This panel will bring together industry experts and local leaders to explore ways to ensure the UK remains a leader in bus manufacturing. The Department continues to work with officials across Government to engage with British bus manufacturing stakeholders and more details on this will be set out in due course.

UK-based bus manufacturers have benefited the most from the Department's funding programmes, such as Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA). It is estimated that 60% of ZEBRA-supported buses will be procured from UK-based manufacturers, supporting economic growth and jobs across the zero-carbon transport industry. We want to see domestic manufacturers build on this foundation and stimulate innovation and skills development to ensure the UK remains a leader in bus manufacturing.

**■ Cycling and Motorcycles: Safety****Munira Wilson:**[\[23174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of requiring cyclists and motorcyclists to wear high visibility attire after dark.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The safety of vulnerable road users is a priority for the Government. Cyclists and motorcyclists should make every effort to ensure that they can be clearly seen by other road users, both for their own safety and for that of others. Rule 59 of The Highway Code recommends that people who cycle should wear light-coloured or fluorescent clothing to help other road users to see them in daylight and poor light, with reflective clothing and/or accessories in the dark. Rules 86 and 87 of The Highway Code provide similar guidance on visibility for motorcyclists riding in daylight and at night.

Any change to these rules would need to be carefully considered to ensure that it was proportionate and enforceable, and that it did not have unintended consequences such as putting people off cycling. The Government has no current plans to mandate the wearing of high visibility clothing for cyclists or motorcyclists.

**■ East Coast Main Line: Fares****David Smith:**[\[22483\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate she has made of the potential impact of public ownership on rail fares on the East Coast mainline.

**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.

## ■ East West Rail Line: Construction

**Blake Stephenson:**

[\[22408\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate her Department has made of the cost of constructing East-West Rail in 2024 prices.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

£1.3bn has been provided towards the delivery of East West Rail Connection Stage 1 (CS1) which will provide services from Oxford to Bletchley and Milton Keynes.

The capital cost estimate for Connection Stages 2 (Oxford-Bedford) and 3 (Oxford-Cambridge) is £5bn-£6bn in 2021 prices. Final costs for the project will be driven by scope and design choices.

## ■ Electric Bicycles and Electric Scooters

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:**

[\[23171\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the use of (a) e-scooters and (b) e-bikes on pavements on pedestrians.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The use of e-scooters and e-bikes on pavements is unacceptable and can have serious impacts on pedestrians, both by causing injuries and by making it much harder for pedestrians to get about.

Privately owned e-scooters cannot be legally ridden either on roads or on pavements, and in the e-scooter rental trial schemes, the use of e-scooters on pavements is not allowed. Enforcement is a matter for the police.

The Highway Code makes clear that cyclists, including those riding e-bikes, must not cycle on the pavement. The only exception to this is on pavements that are designated as shared use routes, where the Highway Code says that cyclists should always take care when passing pedestrians, especially children, older or disabled people, and should allow them plenty of room. As above, enforcement is a matter for the police.

E-cycles or e-scooters parked obstructively on the pavement also present a safety risk to pedestrians, and particularly so for vulnerable pavement users such as those with visual impairments or mobility issues. Guidance for those operating the e-scooter trials makes clear that appropriate parking provision should be provided to ensure e-scooters do not cause an obstruction. Operators also use geofencing, parking incentives and penalties to prevent pavement riding and obstructive parking. The Government recently announced plans in the English Devolution White Paper to empower local leaders to regulate shared hire bike schemes to tackle issues such as obstructive pavement parking and antisocial behaviour.

## ■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points

**Dr Luke Evans:**

[\[22687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the National Audit Office report entitled Public chargepoints for electric vehicles, published on 13 December 2024, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of ensuring compliance with the electric chargepoint accessibility standard on (a) industry and (b) local authorities.

**Dr Luke Evans:**

[\[22688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the National Audit Office report entitled Public chargepoints for electric vehicles, published on 13 December 2024, what discussions her Department has had with (a) industry leaders and (b) local authorities on compliance with the chargepoint accessibility standard for electric car chargepoints.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

Publicly Available Standard 1899 was co-sponsored by the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles and the national disability charity Motability. The standard was developed in close collaboration with industry, disabled users, accessibility experts, charities, consumer groups and the devolved administrations. PAS 1899 provides specifications on designing and installing accessible public EV chargepoints, meeting the industry need for standardised guidance on what accessible public chargepoint design consists of and how it can be deployed.

Whilst compliance with PAS 1899 is voluntary, legal obligations pertaining to the Equality Act 2010 have to be adhered to.

The Government, in collaboration with the British Standards Institute and Motability, is spearheading the Technical Working Group conducting the two-year review of PAS 1899, with results anticipated by the end of the first quarter of 2025.

## ■ Eurostar: Kent

**Marie Goldman:**

[\[22400\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she plans to review the (a) Ebbsfleet and (b) Ashford services of the Eurostar line.

**Simon Lightwood:**

Whilst it is a commercial decision for Eurostar to make on the reinstatement of these services, I recognise the continued disappointment felt by local communities and businesses and I too am keen to see the reinstatement of these services. Officials regularly engage with Kent stakeholders, including MPs, councillors and representatives to discuss this and are committed to continue explore potential solutions.

## ■ Fuels: Prices

**David Chadwick:**

[\[23086\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the potential implications for her policies of varying fuel prices at nation-wide service station providers; and what steps she is taking to ensure equity for customers.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

The local pricing of fuel at forecourts is a commercial matter for retailers. The Competition and Markets Authority has powers to monitor competition in the road fuel retail market. The government has committed to introduce legislation to implement Fuel Finder which will increase price transparency and enable drivers to compare prices. Additionally, recognising that pump prices are significantly higher in some rural locations, the Rural Fuel Duty Relief scheme supports motorists by providing a 5 pence per litre reduction to the standard rate of fuel duty in designated areas.

Policies introduced by the Department for Transport impacting road fuel prices tend to apply UK wide, for example the Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation (RTFO). The RTFO does not give rise to price pressures which would necessitate regional or geographical variations in pricing at forecourts.

## ■ Public Transport: Wheelchairs

**Michael Payne:**

[\[23203\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to help ensure the adequacy of the number of wheelchair spaces on (a) buses and (b) other public transport.

**Simon Lightwood:**

99% of buses providing local services comply with accessibility regulations that cover the design of vehicles and incorporate a designated space to accommodate at least one wheelchair user. We recognise that in some circumstances such provision may be inadequate, and we welcome efforts by individual operators to provide a second wheelchair space. We also continue to consider the efficacy of existing bus and coach accessibility regulation, and will announce our next steps in due course.

Trains are required to have at least two wheelchair spaces, to meet legal requirements, and each train operator must ensure they are kept clear for wheelchair users. Light rail vehicles (including trams, metros and London Underground) also have wheelchair spaces in compliance with similar legal requirements. The current refurbishment of London Underground's oldest Tube trains includes the creation of wheelchair spaces where these do not already exist.

## ■ Railways: Disability

**Connor Naismith:**

[\[23084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to improve the accessibility of the railways for disabled people.

**Simon Lightwood:**

We are carefully considering the best approach to the Access for All programme. Since April 2024, 13 stations have been completed with a further 18 due to be completed by April 2025. This will be the most stations completed in one year since the programme started in 2006. This Government is committed to improving the accessibility of the railway and recognises the social and economic benefits this brings to communities.

**■ Railways: Gender Based Violence****Kirsty Blackman:**[\[22273\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her Department has a strategy for tackling violence against women and girls on trains after the passage of the Passenger Railway Services (Public Ownership) Bill.

**Simon Lightwood:**

Tackling violence against women and girls is a priority for the Government. We have set the ambitious target to halve this figure in the next decade using every lever available to us. The Department is working closely with the central mission delivery unit in the Cabinet Office to achieve the aims set out in the Government's Safer Streets mission.

The British Transport Police will continue to police the rail network following the transition of passenger services into public ownership to prevent and investigate crime, and in particular to tackle violence against women and girls.

**Kirsty Blackman:**[\[22274\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of lighting on trains on the levels of violence against women and girls travelling on the network.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The National Travel Attitudes Survey on perceptions of safety when walking, cycling and using public transport, found that a 'poorly lit vehicle or carriage' was the joint seventh most popular reason for feeling unsafe when travelling on a public transport vehicle. The Rail Safety and Standards Board sets requirements around lighting for new rolling stock. We continue to work with the rail industry including the Rail Delivery Group and the British Transport Police to ensure the rail network remains a safe environment for the travelling public.

**■ Railways: Safety****Kirsty Blackman:**[\[22271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her Department will have responsibility for safety on trains following passage of the Passenger Railway Services (Public Ownership Bill).

**Simon Lightwood:**

The Passenger Railway Services (Public Ownership) Act 2024 makes no changes to existing roles and responsibilities regarding safety or tackling crime and anti-social behaviour. Tackling crime is the responsibility of the British Transport Police, who will continue to police the rail network following the transition of passenger services into public ownership. Safety regulation will remain the responsibility of the independent regulator, the Office of Rail and Road.

**Kirsty Blackman:**[\[22272\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has made an assessment of the impact of the Passenger Railway Services (Public Ownership) Bill on safety on trains.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The Passenger Railway Services (Public Ownership) Act 2024 makes no changes to existing roles and responsibilities regarding safety or tackling crime and anti-social behaviour. As such, there is no reason to expect any adverse impacts. The Government expects publicly owned train operators to focus relentlessly on the interests of passengers rather than shareholders, resulting in better outcomes for passengers across a range of areas, which will include personal security on trains.

**Roads: Cameras****Ian Roome:**[\[R\] \[22792\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment her Department has made of the effectiveness of AI road cameras at reducing road accidents in high risk areas.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

The Department for Transport has not made an assessment of the effectiveness of AI road cameras at reducing road crashes in high-risk areas.

However, trials of new technology including the use of AI cameras in small scale operational activity has been carried out under the Roads Policing Review. Evidence from these is being considered.

National Highways has also worked with police forces to understand the role of technology to detect and enforce mobile phone and seatbelt violations.

**Train Operating Companies: Nationalisation****Dr Luke Evans:**[\[22694\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she plans to take to ensure that (a) rising mobilisation, (b) due diligence and (c) general programme delivery costs are (i) monitored and (ii) restrained during the transfer of train operator services to public ownership; and whether she plans to publish those costs.

**Simon Lightwood:**

In line with established Departmental arrangements, a robust governance framework and spending controls have been put in place for the Public Ownership Programme. The Programme will also be included in the Government Major Projects Portfolio.



**Dr Luke Evans:**

[\[22695\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answers of 9 December 2024 to Question 17895 on South Western Railway: Nationalisation, Question 17896 on C2C: Nationalisation and Question 17897 on Abellio Greater Anglia: Nationalisation, what the evidential basis is for the expectation that transfer costs will be less than the fees provided to private operators.

**Simon Lightwood:**

Based on previous mobilisations undertaken by the Department and DfT Operator (DfTO), we have an understanding of the base level costs associated with transfer from a private sector operator to public ownership. For example, as set out in the Explanatory Note to the Passenger Railway Services (Public Ownership) Act 2024, mobilisation and due diligence costs are estimated at £1m to £1.5m per transaction. However, the exact costs of each transfer cannot be determined until engagement with each operator has commenced.

For comparison, savings in fees no longer payable to private operators are expected to be between £110m and £150m per annum, once all services have transferred into public ownership from the ten current private-sector operators.

## ■ Transport: Northern Ireland

**Jamie Stone:**

[\[902098\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking with Cabinet colleagues to improve transport links between Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

**Simon Lightwood:**

Whilst transport is devolved, the Department for Transport is committed to enhancing links between Northern Ireland and Great Britain. The Department is providing funding for Transport Scotland's feasibility study to explore options to bypass the villages of Springholm and Crocketford on the A75 and is supporting the Windsor Framework to streamline transport and customs processes. The Government is also supporting key aviation routes, including the Public Service Obligation between City of Derry Airport and London Heathrow Airport.

## TREASURY

### ■ Arms Length Bodies

**Charlie Dewhirst:**

[\[22455\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 4 December 2024 to Question 14108 on Arm's Length Bodies, on what statutory basis Permanent Secretaries rather than Ministers approve framework agreements.

**Darren Jones:**

Permanent Secretaries are appointed as Accounting Officers for their departments by the Treasury under section 5 of the *Government Resources and Accounts Act 2000*.

They are directly responsible to Parliament for ensuring that their department's use of public resources are regular and in line with parliamentary expectations. This includes compliance with the wider framework of authorities, which include the various rules and guidance set out in *Managing Public Money*.

As part of these requirements, Accounting Officers are required to have appropriate structures and systems in place to ensure effective governance of the public bodies that they sponsor. These include the Accounting Officer System Statement, and the need for a framework document for each public body sponsored. As such, in general, the requirement for a framework document is not statutory, but does form part of the Accounting Officer's duties, meaning that the Accounting Officer is responsible for ensuring that a framework document is in place.

Framework documents, while not legal documents, set out the terms of the relationship between the arms-length body and the sponsor, including the sponsorship processes by which public bodies align with and deliver on public policy objectives set by Ministers and, in some cases, legislation. They codify a combination of policy decisions made by ministers, parliamentary expectations and general principles of good governance. The processes for approval are not set out in statute, and can vary from department to department, and from arms-length body to arms-length body.

## ■ Charities: Employers' Contributions

**Paula Barker:**

[\[23181\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what actions is her Department taking to mitigate the rise in employer NI contributions on the homelessness charities.

**James Murray:**

In order to repair the public finances and help raise the revenue required to increase funding for public services, the government has taken the difficult decision to increase employer National Insurance contributions (NICs).

HMRC published on 13 November a Tax Information and Impact Note that covers the impact on charities as employers of the changes.

The Government has protected the smallest businesses and charities from the impact of the increase to employer National Insurance by increasing the Employment Allowance from £5,000 to £10,500, which means that 865,000 employers will pay no NICs at all next year, more than half of employers will see no change or will gain overall from this package, and all eligible employers will be able to employ up to four full-time workers on the National Living Wage and pay no NICs.

More broadly, within the tax system, we provide support to charities through a range of reliefs and exemptions, including reliefs for charitable giving, with more than £6 billion in charitable reliefs provided to charities, CASCs and their donors in 2023 -24.

## ■ Domicil: Taxation

**Charlie Dewhirst:**

[\[22464\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of proposed changes to the non-domiciled tax regime on the number of non-domiciled people who will relocate to other European countries.

**James Murray:**

The Government's priority is improving the UK's competitiveness internationally and securing economic growth. The reforms to the tax treatment of non-domiciled individuals have been specifically designed to make the UK competitive, with a modern, simple tax regime that is also fair. The reforms establish a tax regime for new residents which is more attractive to new arrivals than the current rules.

The OBR have certified that the non-dom reforms the Government is legislating will raise £33.8bn in total revenue over the five-year forecast period. Evidence from the 2017 reforms shows that the vast majority of former non-doms who became liable for tax on their worldwide income and gains remained UK resident and continued to contribute to the UK economy.

The Government published a Tax Information and Impact Note for this policy on 30 October. This can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tax-changes-for-non-uk-domiciled-individuals/reforming-the-taxation-of-non-uk-domiciled-individuals>.

## ■ Government Departments: Cost Effectiveness

**Bobby Dean:**

[\[22402\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to Q36 of the oral evidence given by the Office for Value for Money to the Treasury Select Committee on 11 December 2024, HC 521, which Departments have not (a) defined and (b) commenced their zero-based reviews.

**Darren Jones:**

Phase 2 of the Spending Review launched on the 10<sup>th</sup> December 2024. At launch, I asked each department to carry out a line-by-line review of existing day-to-day budgets to identify where spending is no longer aligned with this government's priorities or is poor value for money.

Departments are working with HM Treasury on an ongoing basis to define and agree their zero-based reviews. The findings of these reviews will inform Departments' Spending Review submissions and the allocation of departmental budgets in Phase 2 of the Spending Review, which will conclude later this year.

## ■ Investment Returns: Mortgages

**Saqib Bhatti:**

[\[22708\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of higher bond yields on mortgage repayments.

**Darren Jones:**

The government does not comment on specific financial market movements. Gilt yields are determined by a wide range of international and domestic factors, and it is normal for the price and yields of gilts to vary when there are wider movements in global financial markets.

The Chancellor has commissioned the Office for Budget Responsibility for an updated economic and fiscal forecast for the 26th of March, which will incorporate the latest data.

The pricing of mortgages, which is influenced by a number of factors, is a commercial decision for lenders in which the Government does not intervene. It is worth noting that, at present, average mortgage rates are well below the recent peaks seen in Summer 2023 and Autumn 2022.

**Members: Correspondence****Seamus Logan:**[\[22496\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when she plans to respond to the correspondence of 17 October 2024 from the hon. Member for Aberdeenshire North and Moray East, reference number MC2024/14787.

**James Murray:**

A response has been sent to the Member for Aberdeenshire North and Moray East regarding his correspondence of 18 October 2024 about VAT on private school fees.

**National Wealth Fund Taskforce: Pay****James Wild:**[\[22355\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether members of the National Wealth Fund Taskforce are remunerated.

**James Murray:**

The NWF Taskforce was established by the Chancellor before the 2024 general election to fulfil an independent advisory role on the design of the National Wealth Fund. Members have not been remunerated for their roles on the NWF Taskforce.

**Pensions: Fraud****James McMurdock:**[\[22555\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many individuals suspected of being victims of pension fraud have been investigated for tax penalties by HMRC in the last 12 months.

**James Murray:**

Registered pension schemes in the UK benefit from generous tax reliefs, estimated to be £70.6 billion in 2022-23. HMRC's role is to administer these reliefs as well as undertake compliance checks to ensure that taxpayers are paying the correct amount of tax at the right time. HMRC charges penalties to encourage compliance with tax obligations and does not open investigations with a view to charging penalties. Where

inaccuracies are identified as part of a compliance check, penalties may be charged under Schedule 24 of Finance Act 2007.

HMRC does not hold the data requested, HMRC consider the correct response for each taxpayer's case based on the unique set of facts they present.

## ■ Public Buildings: Red Diesel

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

[\[22323\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of permitting community owned facilities to use red diesel for the purposes of (a) heating and (b) electricity generation.

**James Murray:**

In 2020, the previous Government announced that the red diesel entitlement would be withdrawn from most sectors from April 2022. Following consultation in 2020-21, the previous Government confirmed that some sectors would retain the entitlement to use red diesel, including non-commercial heat and power generation, and domestic heating. A machine or appliance may use red diesel where 75% or more of the electricity or heat generated is for premises, or parts of premises, that are not used for commercial purposes.

The Chancellor makes decisions on tax policy at fiscal events in the context of public finances.

## ■ Revenue and Customs: Disciplinary Proceedings

**James McMurdock:**

[\[22552\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions her Department has had with HMRC on taking steps to ensure that advisers who behave dishonestly are removed from their positions.

**James Murray:**

HMRC has robust processes and controls for investigating any concerns of potential dishonesty and deciding on appropriate action where conduct issues are proven.

Possible breaches of our conduct policies are always investigated. This involves considering whether the case is misconduct, or whether it meets the criteria for gross misconduct, which can lead to dismissal for the first offence. In the latter cases, independent and specialist trained investigators from our Internal Investigations team normally investigate the case and make recommendations on whether there is a case to answer based on the evidence.

For potential gross misconduct allegations an independent trained Decision Manager determines the disciplinary outcome, following HMRC policy which aligns with ACAS Code of Practice assisted by expert advice and support from specialist HR caseworkers.

Proven fraud and other serious dishonest activity that results in a breach of trust would normally be gross misconduct and result in dismissal.

**James McMurdock:**[\[22553\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many advisers in HMRC have been accused of (a) behaving dishonestly and (b) committing tax fraud in each of the last three years.

**James Murray:**

HMRC's conduct and behaviour policy is explained to all new recruits as part of their induction and is accessible on the internal intranet site for all HMRC employees.

Information for the last three years regarding HMRC employees who have been found to have acted contrary to HMRC internal policies on "Conduct and Behaviour" are listed in the table below.

Details regarding "tax fraud" are not available as HMRC do not hold specific records that relate to that element of the question.

HMRC categorise 'dishonest' behaviour under the following areas: -

- Fraud and Theft
- Bribery and Corruption
- Misuse of Computer and data breaches
- Conditions of Service

Our HR systems capture the first two (Fraud and Theft & Bribery and Corruption) under the same category for recording purposes.

CATEGORY	2022	2023	2024
Fraud, Theft, Bribery & Corruption	12	17	9
Misuse of Computer and data breaches	128	110	84
Conditions of Service	92	87	123

HMRC headcount was 65,781 as of 31 December 2024.

## ■ Shipping: Tonnage Tax

**John McDonnell:**[\[23115\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the update to Non-structural tax relief statistics, published on 5 December 2024, if she will provide an annual breakdown of the relief from Corporation Tax received by qualifying shipowners in the Tonnage Tax between 2000-01 and 2023-24; and if she will make an estimate of Corporation Tax relief from Tonnage Tax in the 2024-25 tax year.

**John McDonnell:**

[\[23116\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she plans to discuss the Tonnage Tax scheme with (a) Cabinet colleagues, (b) shipowners and (c) maritime trade unions as part of the current Spending Review.

**James Murray:**

Tonnage Tax is an advantageous corporation tax regime for shipping companies. It was introduced in 2000 to improve the competitiveness of the UK's shipping industry. As set out on GOV.UK, the Government forecasts that the cost of the regime in 2024-25 will be £185m: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/main-tax-expenditures-and-structural-reliefs>. However, this assumes that shipping companies would remain in the UK without a globally competitive UK Tonnage Tax regime; in its absence, there is a significant risk that shipping companies could leave the UK to join tonnage tax regimes in other countries, so this amount of revenue would not be collected. The UK would also not benefit from shipping companies (i) strategically and commercially managing their vessels in the UK and (ii) fulfilling the regime's cadet training commitment. Annual cost figures dating back to 2000 are not available

As with all taxes, the Government keeps Tonnage Tax under review. Phase 2 of the Spending Review will set departmental budgets for the rest of this Parliament – from 2026-27 until 2028-29 for day-to-day spending and 2029-30 for capital spending.

[Non-structural tax reliefs - GOV.UK](#)

■ **Treasury: Ministers' Private Offices**

**Charlie Dewhirst:**

[\[22465\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 12 November 2024 to Question 9057 on Treasury: Minister's Private Offices, what was spent on each item.

**James Murray:**

The below table shows the costs incurred.

INSTILLATION OF AN EXHIBITION IN NO. 11 DOWNING STREET FROM THE NATIONAL MARITIME MUSEUM.	£2,155
Office furniture and fittings	£160
Maintenance	£330



**WALES****■ Wales Office: Industrial Disputes**

**Nick Timothy:** [\[23027\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what industrial disputes are ongoing within (a) their Department and (b) each of the arm's length bodies connected to their Department; how many (i) staff and (ii) contractors are involved in each dispute; what the form of industrial action is in each dispute; which recognised trade union is involved in each dispute; what the substantive matter is that is being disputed in each case; and what steps he plans to take to end each dispute.

**Jo Stevens:**

There are no ongoing industrial disputes in my Department and the Wales Office has no arm's length bodies.

**WOMEN AND EQUALITIES****■ Equal Pay: Social Class**

**Kirsty Blackman:** [\[22270\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps her Department is taking to measure links between differences in pay and the socioeconomic background of employees.

**Anneliese Dodds:**

We are committed to delivering better life chances for all - breaking the link between background and success.

At the Budget, the Chancellor announced increases to both the National Minimum Wage (16.3% for those aged 18-20) and the National Living Wage (6.7% for those 21 and over), as well as a £240 million Get Britain Working package to improve support for people who want to develop their careers (as well as for those who are economically inactive or unemployed). Through our Mission-driven Government, we will build the skills people need for opportunity and growth.

The Government will continue to draw on the work of the Office for National Statistics and others, such as the independent Social Mobility Commission, to understand the links between pay and socio-economic background.

**■ Gender: Public Consultation**

**Claire Coutinho:** [\[22987\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, pursuant to the Answer of 7 January 2025 to Question 21052 on Gender: Public Consultation, if she will publish the submissions to the call for input on single-sex spaces which were determined to have met the submission criteria.

**Claire Coutinho:** [\[22988\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, pursuant to the Answer of 7 January 2025 to Question 21052 on Gender: Public Consultation, if she will publish the submissions to the call for input on single-sex spaces which were determined not to meet the criteria because they contained text which was irrelevant to the request.

**Anneliese Dodds:**

The Government has written to the EHRC to confirm that we will share all the submissions with them which met the criteria of the previous Government's call for input on single-sex spaces guidance in due course.

**Claire Coutinho:** [\[23178\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, if she will direct her Department to share all submissions received for the call for input on single-sex spaces with the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

**Anneliese Dodds:**

The Government has written to the EHRC to confirm that we will share all the submissions which met the criteria of the previous Government's call for input on single-sex spaces guidance.

## ■ Recruitment: Boys

**Mims Davies:** [\[22943\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of section 159 of the Equality Act 2010 in the context of access to recruitment opportunities for white, working-class boys.

**Mims Davies:** [\[22944\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of section 159 of the Equality Act 2010 in the context of access to training opportunities for white, working-class boys.

**Mims Davies:** [\[22945\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of Section 158 of the Equality Act 2010 in the context of providing white, working-class boys with access to targeted outreach programmes.

**Mims Davies:** [\[22946\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of section 158 of the Equality Act 2010 in the context of providing white, working-class boys with access to vocational training.

**Mims Davies:** [\[22947\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of section 158 of the Equality Act 2010 in the context of access to internship opportunities for white, working-class boys.

**Anneliese Dodds:**

Section 158 of the Equality Act 2010 permits the use of positive action measures to alleviate disadvantage experienced by people who share a protected characteristic, reduce their under-representation in relation to particular activities, and meet their particular needs. It allows measures to be targeted to particular groups, including internships and training, to enable them to gain employment.

Section 159 permits an employer to take a protected characteristic into consideration when deciding whom to recruit or promote, where people who hold the protected characteristic are at a disadvantage or are under-represented. This can only be done where the candidates are as qualified as each other. The question of whether one person is as qualified as another is not a matter only of academic qualification, but a judgement based on the criteria the employer uses to establish who is best for the job. This could include matters such as suitability, competence and professional performance. Section 159 does not allow employers to have a policy or practice of automatically treating people who share a protected characteristic more favourably than those who do not have it in these circumstances; each case must be considered on its merits.

Any action taken in light of either Section 158 or 159 must be a proportionate means of addressing such disadvantage or under-representation. The Equality Act 2010 provides protections for people from discrimination in the workplace and in society which make it unlawful to treat someone unfairly or discriminate against anyone based on certain personal characteristics. This includes race and ethnicity. Guidance to help employers understand the difference between positive action and positive discrimination is available on gov.uk at [www.gov.uk/government/publications/positive-action-in-the-workplace-guidance-for-employers](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/positive-action-in-the-workplace-guidance-for-employers). There are currently no plans to issue further guidance on positive action.

The Department for Education is working on a number of initiatives and schemes to provide young people with a clear progression into further work-based training and employment.

## WORK AND PENSIONS

### ■ Employment

**Helen Whately:**

[22658]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 6 January 2025 to Question 20687 on Employment, when she expects the Labour Market Advisory Board to finish their work.

**Alison McGovern:**

The Labour Market Advisory Board, announced on the 23 July 2024, ensures that we listen and engage with a wide range of external views to design and deliver reforms to help drive the Government's growth mission. The Board, chaired by Paul Gregg (former Director of the Centre for Analysis of Social Policy at the University of Bath),

has expertise across the labour market and are working with officials on key priority areas.

The role of the Board, set out in the Terms of Reference ( [Labour Market Advisory Board: Terms of Reference](#)), is to provide ongoing insight, support and challenge to the Department across a range of priorities, including inactivity, youth employment, employer engagement and progression. As set out the Department will undertake a review of the membership and remit of the board after 12 months.

#### ■ **Medical Certificates: Reform**

**Helen Whately:**

**[23159]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she plans to publish a summary of findings from the call for evidence on fit note reform.

**Alison McGovern:**

The call for evidence was launched under the previous government to seek views on how the current fit note process works and the support required to facilitate meaningful work and health conversations. It closed on the 8 July 2024 and received around 1,900 responses. Insights and responses gathered will play an important role in shaping ongoing policy development.

#### ■ **Universal Credit: Council Tax**

**Jess Asato:**

**[22803]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of an application for Universal Credit automatically triggering a claim for Council Tax Support.

**Sir Stephen Timms:**

Council Tax Support is administered by the Local Authority and is not a DWP benefit, therefore before we have determined entitlement to Universal credit, it is not appropriate for the department to trigger a claim for Council Tax Support automatically. A significant number of UC claims do not have an entitlement so notifying Councils before entitlement is established would present a number of risks to Councils.

## MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

### HOME OFFICE

#### ■ Fraud: Crime Prevention

**James McMurdock:**

[\[22868\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what preventative steps she is taking to reduce the number of fraud cases.

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 15 January 2025. The correct answer should have been:**

**Dan Jarvis:**

The Home Office has supported the rollout of the National Economic Crime Victim Care Unit (NECVCU) to all 43 forces in England and Wales. The aim of NECVCU is to support victims by building their confidence, helping them recover finances, and significantly reducing 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.

Additionally, the Home Office has provided funding to City of London Police to create a coordinated police Fraud Protect Network. The network is made up of local, regional and national law enforcement officers and is designed to reduce the threat of fraud and revictimisation by providing consistent fraud prevention advice to the public.

The Home Office continues to engage with banks, trade organisations and third sector organisations to ensure proper advice and support for victims of fraud. Our “Stop! Think Fraud” campaign helps people spot and avoid fraud, and provides fraud prevention and recovery advice. Stop! Think Fraud – How to stay safe from scams.

We are also continuing to work with individual sectors to support industry in disrupting attempts at fraud before they reach the public.

We launched the Insurance Fraud Charter in November 2024 with key insurance firms to reduce insurance fraud.

We are also developing a second telecommunications Charter to ensure the telecommunications sector takes additional steps to identify, prevent and disrupt fraud. Additionally, we are considering legislative action to ban “SIM farms”, technical devices that allow criminals to send scam texts to thousands of people at the same time.

The Online Safety Act codes of practice, which will require social media companies to take proactive measures to stop fraud originating on their platforms, will come into effect in March. The Chancellor and the Home Secretary have made clear that if insufficient action is taken in this area by those companies, the Government will consider what further steps need to be taken.

Later this year, we will also publish an expanded Fraud Strategy that covers the full range of threats that our society faces from this crime.

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## WRITTEN STATEMENTS

### HOME OFFICE

#### ■ Firearms Licensing Fees

**The Minister of State for Policing, Fire and Crime Prevention (Dame Diana Johnson):**

[\[HCWS366\]](#)

The Government is today laying a statutory instrument before Parliament which will increase firearms licensing fees to provide full-cost recovery for police forces, giving effect to a commitment in the Government's manifesto.

The fees for firearms licensing applications administered by police forces were last increased in 2015 and they no longer meet the cost of the service provided. It is essential for both public safety and police efficiency that full cost recovery fees are introduced so that service improvements can be made. The need to increase fees to help address shortcomings in firearms licensing was highlighted as essential for public safety by the Senior Coroner in his Preventing Future Deaths reports into the fatal shootings in Plymouth in August 2021.

As well as supporting public safety, the increased fees will support police forces to provide an improved service to firearms applicants, through better resourced and trained licensing teams.

The Home Office will conduct more regular reviews of firearms licensing fees in the future, to ensure they keep pace with police costs.

The Government's manifesto commitment refers to the money raised by full cost recovery fees being used to support youth interventions to prevent serious violence. However, we have decided instead that firearms fees income must be retained by police forces to support improvements in police firearms licensing. Delivering the youth interventions element of the manifesto commitment remains a priority and will be funded by the Home Office.