



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 16 January 2025 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:53 P.M., 16 January 2025). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

CONTENTS

ANSWERS	7	■ Cabinet Office: Directors	12
BUSINESS AND TRADE	7	■ Cabinet Office: Training	12
■ Batteries: Recycling	7	■ Child Poverty Taskforce: Operating Costs	13
■ Broadband: Rural Areas	7	■ Civil Servants: Recruitment	13
■ Business: Government Assistance	8	■ Disposable Income: Council Tax and Indirect Taxation	13
■ Business: Regulation	8	■ Ed Miliband	14
■ Construction: Fraud	8	■ Government Departments: Procurement	14
■ Consumer Goods: Safety	9	■ Government Departments: Recruitment	15
■ Department for Business and Trade: Cultural Heritage	9	■ Ministers: Questionnaires	15
■ Department for Business and Trade: Lost Property	9	■ Special Advisers: Pay	15
■ Employers' Associations: Political Levy	10	CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT	16
■ Help to Grow Schemes: Universities	10	■ BBC: Finance	16
■ Living Wage: Income Tax	10	■ Department for Culture, Media and Sport: Queen Elizabeth Memorial Committee	16
■ Regulation: Costs	11	■ Rugby: Dementia and Motor Neurone Disease	16
■ Trade Agreements: India	11	■ Tourism	17
CABINET OFFICE	11	DEFENCE	17
■ 10 Downing Street: Ownership	11	■ Armed Forces and Civilians: Injuries	17
■ 10 Downing Street: Shops	11	■ Armed Forces: Equality	18
■ 11 Downing Street: Council Tax	12		
■ 9 Downing Street: Media	12		

■ Armed Forces: Health and Safety	18	■ Pupils: Qualifications	33
■ Armed Forces: Labour Turnover	19	■ Schools: Air Pollution	33
■ Armed Forces: Training	19	■ Schools: Attendance	34
■ Bahrain: Military Bases	20	■ Schools: Mental Health Services	35
■ Defence: Expenditure	20	■ Schools: Uniforms	36
■ Hawk Aircraft	20	■ Special Educational Needs	36
■ HMS Albion and HMS Bulwark	22	■ Special Educational Needs: Absenteeism	37
■ Ministry of Defence: Industrial Disputes	22	■ Supply Teachers	38
■ Official Secrets: Disclosure of Information	23	■ Teachers: Essex	38
■ Reserve Forces: Training	23	■ Water: Safety	39
■ Rifles	23	ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO	40
EDUCATION	24	■ Batteries: Lithium	40
■ Academies: Complaints	24	■ Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: Cultural Heritage	40
■ Academies: Off-payroll Working	24	■ Drax Power Station: Subsidies	41
■ Basic Skills	25	■ Electric Vehicles: Batteries	41
■ Breakfast Clubs: Secondary Education	25	■ Energy: International Cooperation	41
■ Care Leavers: Stoke-on-Trent South	26	■ Liquefied Natural Gas	42
■ Carers	26	■ Minerals: Renewable Energy	42
■ Defence: Vocational Guidance	27	■ Mission Control for Clean Power: Operating Costs	43
■ Free Schools: Bolsover	27	■ National Energy System Operator: Operating Costs	43
■ Headteachers: Pay	28	■ National Grid: Construction	43
■ Holiday Activities and Food Programme	28	■ Renewable Energy: Government Assistance	44
■ Media and Politics: Curriculum	28	■ Rented Housing: Energy Performance Certificates	44
■ Non-teaching Staff: Conditions of Employment	29	■ Solar Taskforce: Operating Costs	44
■ Private Education: Fees and Charges	30		
■ Pupils: Absenteeism	30		

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS	45	■ China: Foreign Relations	55
■ African Swine Fever	45	■ China: Human Rights	56
■ Air Pollution: Monitoring	45	■ China: Tibet	56
■ Bathing Water Regulations 2013	45	■ Chinese Embassy: Planning Permission	57
■ Car Washes: Chemicals	46	■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Cost Effectiveness	57
■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Unpaid Work	46	■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Media	57
■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Written Questions	47	■ Gaza: Humanitarian Aid	57
■ Environment Protection	47	■ Georgia: Democracy	58
■ Flood Control: Bolton West	47	■ Georgia: Elections	58
■ Flood Control: Leicestershire	48	■ Georgia: Politics and Government	59
■ Floods: Lincolnshire	49	■ Haiti: Diplomatic Service	59
■ Foot and Mouth Disease: Disease Control	50	■ Israel: F-35 Aircraft	60
■ Inland Waterways: Environment Protection	50	■ Myanmar: Armed Conflict	60
■ Land Drainage	51	■ Russia: Shipping	60
■ Land Use	52	HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	61
■ National Landscapes: Finance	52	■ Addison's Disease: Health Services	61
■ Noise: Nuisance	52	■ Arthritis: Health Services	62
■ Property Development: Land Drainage	52	■ Autism: Diagnosis	63
■ Seas and Oceans: Conferences	53	■ Autism: Health Services	63
■ Sewage: Waste Disposal	53	■ Blood: Donors	63
■ Water Treatment: Southampton	54	■ Brain Cancer: Research	64
■ Zoonoses: Furs	55	■ Breast Cancer: Health Education	65
FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE	55	■ Breast Cancer: Hormone Treatments	65
■ Beijing: Embassies	55	■ Cancer: Health Services	65
		■ Cannabis: Medical Treatments	66
		■ Care Homes: Fees and Charges	66
		■ Carers	67

■ Dementia: Patients	68	■ Radiotherapy	82
■ Dental Services: Fees and Charges	68	■ Radiotherapy: Finance	82
■ Dental Services: Finance	69	■ Radiotherapy: Medical Equipment	83
■ Dental Services: Norfolk	69	■ Social Services: Standards	83
■ Department of Health and Social Care: British Society for Genetic Medicine	70	■ Social Services: Winchester	83
■ Disabled Facilities Grants: Standards	70	■ Speech and Language Therapy: Merseyside	84
■ Electronic Cigarettes: Advertising	70	■ Sunburn: Children and Young People	84
■ General Practitioners: South Holland and the Deepings	71	HOME OFFICE	85
■ Health Services: Research	71	■ Elections: USA	85
■ Health: Men	72	■ Electronic Travel Authorisations	85
■ Heart Diseases: Young People	72	■ Home Office: Media	85
■ Hospitals: Construction	73	■ Muslim Brotherhood	86
■ Hospitals: Telephone Services	73	■ Protection From Sex-based Harassment in Public Act 2023	86
■ Influenza: Vaccination	73	■ Repatriation	86
■ Mental Health Services	76	■ Terrorism	87
■ Mental Health Services and Speech and Language Therapy: Waiting Lists	77	■ Undocumented Migrants	87
■ Mental Health Services: Finance	77	■ Undocumented Workers: Fines	88
■ Mental Health Services: Waiting Lists	78	HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT	89
■ Methylphenidate: Norfolk	78	■ Affordable Housing	89
■ Midwives: Age	80	■ Buildings: Insurance	89
■ NHS North East and North Cumbria: Finance	80	■ Energy Performance Certificates	90
■ Oral Cancer and Throat Cancer: Diagnosis	80	■ Housing: Construction	90
■ Organs: Donors	81	■ Housing: Foreign Nationals	91
■ Prostate Cancer: Medical Treatments	81	■ Local Government Finance	91
		■ Local Government: Devolution	92
		■ Local Government: Reorganisation	92
		■ National Parks: Planning	92

■ Planning: Conservation	93	■ Electric Vehicles: Repairs and Maintenance	103
■ Political Parties: Finance	93	■ Fares: Non-payment	104
■ Poverty: Children	93	■ Roads: Infrastructure	104
■ Renters Rights Bill: First-tier Tribunal	94	■ Transport: Infrastructure	106
■ Second Homes: Planning Permission	94	TREASURY	107
■ Social Rented Housing: Rents	94	■ Agriculture: Inheritance Tax	107
JUSTICE	95	■ Business Rates: Reform	108
■ Council Tax: Non-payment	95	■ Charities: Employers' Contributions	108
■ Demonstrations: Sentencing	97	■ Electronic Cigarettes: Imports	109
■ Hampshire Police and Crime Commissioner	98	■ Financial Services: Disadvantaged	109
■ Offences against Children: Prisoners' Release	98	■ Money Lenders: Victims	110
■ Sexual Offences: Prisoners' Release	98	■ Music Venues: Business Rates	110
NORTHERN IRELAND	99	■ Orchestras: Tax Allowances	111
■ Windsor Framework: Northern Ireland	99	■ Special Educational Needs: Employers' Contributions	112
SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY	99	WOMEN AND EQUALITIES	112
■ Artificial Intelligence	99	■ Police: Equality	112
■ Artificial Intelligence: Devolution	100	WORK AND PENSIONS	113
■ Artificial Intelligence: Regulation	100	■ Bereavement Support Payment	113
TRANSPORT	100	■ Department for Work and Pensions: Industrial Disputes	113
■ Bus Services: Disability	100	■ Employment: Disability	113
■ Bus Services: Franchises	101	■ Universal Credit: Migrants	114
■ Bus Services: Lincolnshire	101	MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS	115
■ Bus Services: Timetables	102	HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	115
■ Buses: Accidents	102	■ Respiratory Diseases	115
■ Cycling and Walking: Investment	103	WRITTEN STATEMENTS	116
		ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO	116
		■ Gas Shipper Obligation Consultation	116

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

■ Batteries: Recycling

Munira Wilson:

[\[22678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of recycling lithium iron phosphate batteries.

Sarah Jones:

The UK currently has an emerging capacity to recycle lithium-ion batteries, with most EV batteries being dismantled and shipped to Europe.

Recyclus Group, based in Wolverhampton, is the country's first and only industrial-scale recycling facility. It is licenced to turn 22,000 tonnes of spent lithium-ion batteries, taken from a range of sources including electric cars, each year into black mass without using water, and has a low carbon footprint.

Munira Wilson:

[\[23172\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of increasing the use of hydrometallurgical separation in the recycling of electric vehicle batteries to help facilitate the recovery of lithium.

Sarah Jones:

The Government seeks to encourage sustainable critical mineral production and processing. As electric vehicle batteries reach the end of their economic life, there will be an opportunity and necessity to repair, repurpose, reuse, and recycle them. The chemicals sector will play an important role in recovering valuable materials like lithium, enhancing environmental sustainability, and alleviating pressure on primary supply

To this end, the Automotive Transformation Fund (ATF) aims to support the creation of an internationally competitive electric vehicle supply chain in the UK. It provides support to late-stage R&D and capital investments in strategically important technologies. This includes unlocking strategic investments in battery recycling.

■ Broadband: Rural Areas

Sam Carling:

[\[23096\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what role rural digital connectivity will have in the industrial strategy.

Sarah Jones:

As set out in the Industrial Strategy Green Paper, access to fast, secure, and reliable digital connectivity is essential to enabling economic growth and to reap the transformational productivity benefits of digitalisation and the adoption of AI. Improvements in infrastructure, including digital infrastructure, will be foundational to

success across our growth-driving sectors and to addressing place-specific constraints to growth across the country.

■ **Business: Government Assistance**

Alison Griffiths: [\[23620\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what discussions he has had with businesses on the subsidy control regime.

Justin Madders:

To date I have not met with business representatives directly to discuss the subsidy control regime, however my department would welcome the views of businesses in response to the current public consultation on refinements to the UK's subsidy control regime. The consultation closes on 21 January 2025 and can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/refining-the-uk-subsidy-control-regime>.

■ **Business: Regulation**

Alison Griffiths: [\[23619\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what the net monetary value to business was of the removal of regulation in each year from 2010 to 2024.

Justin Madders:

The Business Impact Target BIT, which was repealed by the previous government through the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Act, was the principal mechanism through which government made an estimate of the change in the total annual cost of regulation to business. The total impact of regulatory changes between 2011-2022 measured by equivalent annual net direct cost to business is estimated to be an increase of £6.2bn. This data is taken from annual BIT reports and for the period 2011-2015 the data also includes calculations by the National Audit Office of some regulatory changes outside the BIT's remit.

■ **Construction: Fraud**

Munira Wilson: [\[23175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing (a) licencing for builders and (b) affordable recourse for people impacted by rogue builders.

Justin Madders:

This Government is working to ensure we have a high-quality and professional construction industry, which delivers safe work and has consumer protection at the heart of this. Any licencing scheme would need to be robust, proportionate and evidence based.

The Consumer Rights Act 2015 sets out the standards consumers can expect from traders and remedies if these rights are breached. Consumers can seek redress through the Small Claims Court, where they can pursue claims of up to £10,000

against a rogue builder. Citizens Advice provides information on making claims and can refer complaints on to Trading Standards for appropriate enforcement action.

■ **Consumer Goods: Safety**

Claire Hanna:

[\[23490\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department has taken to monitor the application of the General Product Safety Regulations in Northern Ireland and Great Britain.

Justin Madders:

The updated GPSR largely formalises the reality of how many businesses are already operating and the measures are therefore likely to have limited impact in practice. However, we understand that for some businesses, the regulation will require changes, and we take any concerns extremely seriously.

We have issued guidance, will keep this under review and continue to engage businesses directly to ensure we are supporting them to trade freely within the UK and with the EU. We have regular discussions with businesses and consumer representatives from across the UK to hear their concerns.

■ **Department for Business and Trade: Cultural Heritage**

Nick Timothy:

[\[22746\]](#)

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

Justin Madders:

There has been no change in the Department for Business and Trade'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.

■ **Department for Business and Trade: Lost Property**

Alison Griffiths:

[\[23622\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how many laptop computers procured for his Department have been (a) lost and (b) stolen in each of the last 12 months.

Justin Madders:

The Department for Business and Trade figures for (a) lost and (b) stolen between start Jan 2024 and end Dec 2024 are:

(a) Lost = 31

(b) Stolen = 25

■ Employers' Associations: Political Levy**Laurence Turner:** [\[23639\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to Section 132 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992, whether any employers' associations maintain a political fund.

Justin Madders:

Unincorporated employers' associations are able to maintain a political fund in accordance with the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992. None currently maintain a political fund.

■ Help to Grow Schemes: Universities**Dame Caroline Dinenge:** [\[23304\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, when the next phase of Help to Grow Management Programme funds will be available to universities.

Gareth Thomas:

In the Autumn Budget, 2024 the Chancellor demonstrated the government's commitment to continue the Help to Grow: Management Course throughout 2025-26, maintaining its existing scale and reach as part of our growth strategy. Help to Grow: Management will continue to help thousands of small businesses across the UK to improve their productivity and drive small business growth. Funding for 2025-26 will continue to be made available to university business schools through the Chartered Association of Business Schools from April 2025.

Help to Grow: Management is delivered by the UK's leading business schools. DBT provides annual grant funding to the Chartered Association of Business Schools (CABS). DBT will extend its existing grant agreement with CABS once the business planning round is completed in March 2025. CABS will then contract with individual business schools to deliver the training to SMEs, allowing the programme to continue without a break in funding.

■ Living Wage: Income Tax**Mr Gregory Campbell:** [\[23269\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if she will make an estimate of the number of people on the National Living Wage who will become liable for income tax from 6 April 2025.

Justin Madders:

The department will publish a comprehensive impact assessment on the impacts of the 2025 National Minimum Wage uprating in line with the requirements of the Better Regulation Framework shortly. However, this will not provide an estimate of the number of National Living Wage earners who will become income taxpayers from April 2025.

■ Regulation: Costs

Richard Tice:

[\[23069\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make an estimate of the annual cost of regulatory compliance for businesses in each of the last five years; and if she will make a comparative estimate of the cost of regulatory compliance (a) in the UK and (b) across the G7.

Justin Madders:

The Business Impact Target, which was repealed by the previous government through the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Act, was the principal mechanism through which government made an estimate of the total annual cost of regulation to business. In its place, the reformed Better Regulation Framework encourages an earlier and more thorough assessment of impacts of individual regulatory proposals. This government will use the framework to ensure that new regulations achieve their objectives, with the lowest possible cost to businesses and households.

■ Trade Agreements: India

Alison Griffiths:

[\[23621\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 17 January 2024 to Question 19287 on Trade Agreements: India, whether talks have begun.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

UK-India trade talks will relaunch early this year, and work is underway across government to prepare for negotiations.

CABINET OFFICE

■ 10 Downing Street: Ownership

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[21385\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, which Minister is the legal owner of 10 Downing Street.

Georgia Gould:

The registered legal title of 10 Downing Street is held in the name of the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, as has been the case under successive governments.

■ 10 Downing Street: Shops

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[23475\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether any products originating from China are stocked by the 10 Downing Street gift shop.

Georgia Gould:

Most suppliers of the 10 Downing Street gift shop are British companies, and many of the items are made in the UK. A very small number of items are manufactured overseas, including China. This was the case under the previous government.

■ **11 Downing Street: Council Tax**

Mr Richard Holden: [23482]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Ministerial residence in 11 Downing Street pays council tax as a (a) sole or main residence, (b) single person discount and (c) second home.

Georgia Gould:

The Prime Minister is allocated the flat in 11 Downing Street and personally pays full council tax.

■ **9 Downing Street: Media**

Mr Richard Holden: [22995]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 25 November 2024 to Question 13808 on 9 Downing Street: Media, whether refurbishment works had been commissioned when this Answer was given.

Georgia Gould:

No refurbishment works had been commissioned.

■ **Cabinet Office: Directors**

Mr Richard Holden: [22993]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether Baroness Casey made a declaration of political activity following her appointment as Lead Non-Executive Director.

Georgia Gould:

Baroness Casey followed the published process for declaring any interests.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/non-executive-board-member-declaration-of-interests-process/non-executive-board-member-declaration-of-interests-process#context>

Interests will be published in due course on the department's website.

■ **Cabinet Office: Training**

Mr Richard Holden: [21690]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Answer of 2 May 2023 to Question 182119 on Cabinet Office: Training, if he will take steps to encourage other public sector employers to phase out unconscious bias training.

Georgia Gould:

The government is committed to an evidence based approach to training. In 2021 the previous administration published a report on the efficacy of unconscious bias training with recommendations on alternative approaches to support workforce equality. At the time other public sector organisations were encouraged to take account of this.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/unconscious-bias-and-diversity-training-what-the-evidence-says>

There has been no change in the approach under this government

■ Child Poverty Taskforce: Operating Costs**Sir John Hayes:**[\[22566\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what estimate he has made of the annual running costs of the Child Poverty Taskforce.

Ellie Reeves:

Due to the cross-cutting nature of the Taskforce's work to develop an ambitious Child Poverty Strategy, the Taskforce is funded from existing departmental budgets.

■ Civil Servants: Recruitment**Rupert Lowe:**[\[20299\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many and what proportion of civil service job opportunities restricted applications through positive action schemes based on (a) race and (b) sex or gender in the last financial year.

Georgia Gould:

Cabinet Office recruitment policy and practice is conducted in accordance with UK law, including the Equality Act 2010, as well as the Civil Service Commission's Recruitment Principles and the Civil Service Nationality rules (available on GOV.UK).

Non-Ministerial departments and Executive Agencies are responsible for managing their own recruitment processes and ensuring they are also compliant with UK law.

■ Disposable Income: Council Tax and Indirect Taxation**Kevin Hollinrake:**[\[22924\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Office for National Statistics' Higher Real Household Disposable Income per head measure takes into account changes to (a) council tax bills and (b) indirect taxation.

Georgia Gould:

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

A response to the Hon. Gentleman's Parliamentary Question of 9 January is attached.

Attachments:

1. Letter from the National Statistician [PQ22924.pdf]

■ Ed Miliband

Mr Richard Holden: [\[22997\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 6 January 2025 to Question 19415 on Ed Miliband, whether the Rt Hon Member for Islington North (a) made an application for and (b) received a severance payment.

Georgia Gould:

Ministers and certain office-holders are entitled to a severance payment when they leave office under the Ministerial and other Pensions and Salaries Act 1991.

As set out in the Act, to be eligible to receive the payment ministers and office-holders must be under the age of 65 when they leave office. Under this provision, the Rt Hon Member for Islington North was not eligible to receive a severance payment when he left the role of Leader of the Opposition in 2020.

■ Government Departments: Procurement

Andrew Rosindell: [\[22583\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what discussions he has had with the Institution of Civil Engineers on releasing a new edition of the Construction Playbook.

Andrew Rosindell: [\[22584\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Institution of Civil Engineers' Roundtable Discussion on the Construction Playbook, published on 15 May 2024, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of aligning other initiatives with the Playbook.

Georgia Gould:

Cabinet Office officials regularly engage with the ICE and other industry leading organisations, many of which are signatories to our 'Compact with Industry'. The Construction Playbook is regularly refreshed in collaboration with industry and the public sector, ensuring it remains relevant and effective. The revised version of the Construction Playbook is expected to be published in Q2 2025.

The Construction Playbook brings together best practice from across the public and private sectors. This includes highlighting the importance of a wide range of programmes and initiatives that the sector is taking forward. As part of any future iteration of the playbook, the Cabinet Office will review and assess the potential merits of highlighting or aligning any other initiatives that can drive value for the taxpayer.

■ Government Departments: Recruitment

Charlie Dewhirst:

[22811]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether guidance has been issued to Government Departments on the difference between (a) positive action and (b) positive discrimination in recruitment processes.

Georgia Gould:

Under the previous administration, [guidance for employers was published in regards to positive action in the workplace](#) which highlights the difference between positive action and positive discrimination.

It is the responsibility of each department to ensure their recruitment practices align fully with all relevant legislation, including the Equality Act 2010. Managers and vacancy holders are accountable to their HR Director for ensuring that vacancies are filled in accordance with departmental processes and legislation. HR Directors are responsible for assurance of the process.

■ Ministers: Questionnaires

Mr Richard Holden:

[22996]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish of the questionnaire form that incoming Ministers are asked to provide to the Propriety and Ethics Team.

Georgia Gould:

The established process for the declaration and management of ministers' private interests is set out in Part B Chapter 3 of the Ministerial Code. Details of the categories ministers are asked to declare their interests in can be found in the List of Ministers' Interests, along with more information on the interests process. The last list was published in November 2024 and is available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67407bad53373262c0d825f6/List_of_Ministers_Interests.pdf

■ Special Advisers: Pay

Mr Richard Holden:

[22994]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the answer of 27 December 2024 to Question 20832 on Special Advisers: Pay, if he will ensure that the list of special advisers is published by 31 March 2025.

Georgia Gould:

I refer the Rt Hon Member to my response to PQ 20832 and PQ 22188.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT■ **BBC: Finance****James McMurdock:**[\[22237\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions her Department has had with the BBC on the potential merits of introducing an alternative funding scheme to the licence fee.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Government remains committed to the licence fee for the remainder of the current Charter period.

Ministers and officials in the Department for Culture, Media and Sport have regular discussions with the BBC, and the Secretary of State had her first formal meeting on the Charter Review process with the Director General in November 2024. As part of the next Charter Review, discussions with the BBC will continue to focus on how to ensure the BBC thrives well into the next decade and beyond. This will include ongoing discussions on a range of important issues, including future funding models. Funding the BBC through general taxation is not being considered.

We will work closely with the BBC, and engage with other broadcasters, stakeholders across the creative industries as well as the British public to inform our thinking. This will include the opportunity for stakeholders and audiences across the country to respond to the Charter Review public consultation before the new Charter comes into effect in 2028.

■ **Department for Culture, Media and Sport: Queen Elizabeth Memorial Committee****Adam Jogee:**[\[22446\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions (a) she and (b) her Department has had with the Queen Elizabeth Memorial Committee since July 2024.

Stephanie Peacock:

The work of the Queen Elizabeth Memorial Committee is delivered by the Cabinet Office, not by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. While my officials are in regular contact with the Secretariat team in the Cabinet Office and offer their support, any questions relating to the activity of, and approach taken by, the Committee should be addressed by the Cabinet Office.

■ **Rugby: Dementia and Motor Neurone Disease****Ben Obese-Jecty:**[\[22137\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to help reduce (a) motor neurone disease, b) Alzheimer's and c) chronic traumatic encephalopathy in retired professional rugby union players.

Stephanie Peacock:

The safety, wellbeing and welfare of everyone taking part in sport is absolutely paramount. National Governing Bodies are responsible for the regulation of their sports, and for ensuring that appropriate measures are in place to protect participants from harm.

The Government takes the issue of head injuries very seriously. National guidance for concussion in grassroots sport was introduced in 2023, developed by international experts on concussion and acquired brain injury to better identify, manage and prevent the issue. We continue to encourage National Governing Bodies to adapt the guidance to their own sport where appropriate.

The Government remains committed to working with all relevant stakeholders to build on the positive work that is already taking place to ensure that everyone can take part in sport as safely as possible.

■ Tourism**Sir Ashley Fox:**[\[902188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to support the tourism sector.

Chris Bryant:

The Visitor Economy is a key sector in all of our constituencies.

DCMS continues to deliver a generational change in how we develop visitor destinations in England through the Local Visitor Economy Partnership Programme.

VisitBritain's upcoming 'Starring GREAT Britain' campaign will invite the world to come to visit the UK's iconic film and TV locations.

I am chairing the inaugural meeting of the Government's new Visitor Economy Advisory Council next week, which will play a pivotal role in co-creating and delivering a growth strategy which I hope to publish later this year.

DEFENCE**■ Armed Forces and Civilians: Injuries****James Cartlidge:**[\[22966\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to avoid underreporting of incidents relating to injuries of civilian and military personnel.

Al Carns:

The Ministry of Defence is committed to the health and safety of our people.

We recognise the importance of reporting all safety occurrences. We have specific safety occurrence reporting policy. This mandates the reporting of all safety occurrences relating to Defence personnel, visitors and contractors that are

undertaking Defence activities, using Defence equipment or on the Defence estate. We regularly review our policies to ensure they remain in line with good practice.

The continued development and rollout of the pan-Defence safety occurrence reporting system, MySafety, will further strengthen the capture of data by streamlining the reporting process for users. With MySafety, personnel will benefit from a standardised, more accessible, single safety occurrence reporting platform, and be able to raise timely occurrences from the occurrence location.

■ **Armed Forces: Equality**

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[21390\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 5 December 2024 to Question HL1878 on Armed Forces: Equality, if he will publish the report of the review into equality, diversity and inclusion spending in the Armed Forces.

Al Carns:

The review into equality, diversity and inclusion spending in Government Departments, including Civil Service expenditure on behalf of the Armed Forces, was conducted between June 2023 and May 2024 at the request of the then Chancellor of the Exchequer. This work was collated by the Cabinet Office and the release of the associated information is therefore a matter for them.

■ **Armed Forces: Health and Safety**

James Cartlidge:

[\[22967\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the MySafety (DURALS) system in recording incidents involving defence personnel.

Al Carns:

MySafety is the new pan-Defence safety occurrence reporting system which is being rolled out across Defence.

Once complete, the introduction of MySafety will provide a standardised, more accessible, single safety occurrence reporting platform to Defence personnel, that focuses heavily on the user experience and offers greater functionality than current reporting systems.

With MySafety, personnel are able to raise timely occurrences from the occurrence location using mobile electronic devices. It also offers improved data exploitation and analysis, enabling Defence to build a greater understanding of safety occurrences and learn lessons more quickly, thus enhancing safety in Defence.

MySafety has already rolled out to the Army, RAF and UK Strategic Command. The majority of Defence organisations are expected to transition to MySafety during 2025.

Early indications suggest the system is likely increasing reporting rates, however, comparisons with data from previous years should be avoided due to varying levels of operational and training activity.

■ Armed Forces: Labour Turnover

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[22593\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he has taken to improve retention of officers in the (a) Royal Navy, (b) Army and (c) Royal Air Force.

AI Carns:

The new Government's work in improving retention and recruitment is part of a package of measures aimed to renew the contract between the nation and those who serve. We are modernising and refining our policies and processes to attract, and then retain the best possible talent, highlighting that Defence is a modern, forward-facing employer which offers a valuable and rewarding career. Our aim is to attract and recruit more, as well as maximise the number of applicants that successfully enter and remain in Armed Forces employment.

The retention measures we have introduced and in development are aimed at the widest possible audience where possible, whether that be Officer or Enlisted ranks, unless directed towards protecting specific operational capabilities. As part of this inclusive approach to retention we have already awarded the largest Armed Forces pay increase in 22 years, providing appropriate financial recognition to all personnel and additionally supporting the retention of key skills.

The Ministry of Defence and Ministers recognise the significant sacrifices that our military families make in serving our nation, and more retention-positive measures have been introduced. As part of this we have protected the integrity of the Continuity of Education Allowance; the Secretary of State for Defence directed that the cap on current rates be lifted to support the means of mitigating the disruption to Service children's education, caused by Service commitments involving frequent moves of the family home. The recent repurchase of the SFA estate from Annington Homes will enable the Ministry of Defence the freedom to embark on a substantive programme of redevelopment and improvement of our housing estate to provide quality homes for Service Families.

Furthermore, we have extended Wraparound Childcare to families serving overseas which will potentially save up to £3,400 annually for Service families.

■ Armed Forces: Training

James Cartlidge:

[\[22964\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to help mitigate injury rates among armed forces personnel during training exercises.

James Cartlidge:

[\[22965\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to help protect untrained military personnel from injury during training exercises.

AI Carns:

The Ministry of Defence is committed to the health and safety of our people and we have robust policies and processes in place to safely manage our training activities.

Defence activity can be inherently hazardous. This risk to our people is rendered as low as reasonably practicable and tolerable during training by ensuring that its design and delivery are subject to strict safety procedures, rigorous risk assessment and assurance.

All Defence training is risk assessed and conducted within a Safe System of Training (SST), which sets the conditions under which training is delivered.

Like a Safe System of Work, a SST puts in place control measures arising from a risk assessment, in order to manage identified hazards, which are broken down into four elements; safe person, safe equipment, safe place and safe practice. The SST also recognises that those undergoing training cannot be assumed to be competent until they have successfully completed their training and gained the necessary experience.

■ Bahrain: Military Bases

Andrew Rosindell: [\[22592\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will increase funding to the UK Maritime Component Command based at the Naval Support Facility in Bahrain.

Luke Pollard:

Future funding decisions are subject to the ongoing Spending Review, and the outcome of the Strategic Defence Review.

■ Defence: Expenditure

James Cartlidge: [\[23386\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has reached agreement with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the financial year when defence spending will reach 2.5% of GDP.

Luke Pollard:

The Government is committed to setting a path to spend 2.5% of GDP on defence in the spring and the Department engages regularly with His Majesty's Treasury on the issue.

■ Hawk Aircraft

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[23534\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Hawk T1 aircraft are in service with the (a) RAF and (b) Fleet Air Arm.

Luke Pollard:

There are 26 Hawk T1 aircraft in service. The Fleet Air Arm Hawk T1 went out of service on 31 March 2022.

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[23535\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the finite fatigue index is of each remaining Hawk T1 aircraft.

Maria Eagle:

The fatigue index value of each remaining Hawk T1 aircraft is contained in the table below.

Across all airframes we have retained more than sufficient overall remaining available fatigue life to ensure all Red Arrow tasking until 2030 as planned.

Hawk T1 Fatigue Index

TAIL NUMBER	FATIGUE INDEX USED	MAXIMUM PERCENTAGE	
		FATIGUE INDEX	OF FATIGUE INDEX USED
XX177	133.650	154.09	86.74%
XX202	167.816	198.46	84.56%
XX219	163.636	191.60	85.41%
XX221	168.659	203.76	82.78%
XX232	130.940	154.48	84.76%
XX239	123.861	164.78	75.17%
XX242	146.188	154.45	94.65%
XX278	151.623	187.22	80.99%
XX295	106.590	155.31	68.63%
XX310	133.658	166.80	80.13%
XX319	176.021	193.41	91.01%
XX321	154.067	190.50	80.88%
XX322	154.811	185.67	83.38%
XX323	171.772	193.27	88.88%
Sustainment Fleet			
XX159	137.555	194.27	70.81%
XX198	161.614	202.23	79.91%
XX217	140.460	195.11	71.99%
XX230	140.803	191.50	73.53%
XX255	145.777	189.47	76.94%
XX261	148.660	194.57	76.40%

TAIL NUMBER	FATIGUE INDEX USED	MAXIMUM PERCENTAGE	
		FATIGUE INDEX	OF FATIGUE INDEX USED
XX281	146.154	201.26	72.62%
XX284	115.669	169.32	68.31%
XX301	127.277	184.50	68.98%
XX303	156.256	196.23	79.63%
XX345	145.217	202.61	71.67%
XX350	141.363	200.88	70.37%

■ HMS Albion and HMS Bulwark

James Cartlidge:

[\[22952\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the Defence Recycling and Disposals Team have commenced commercial negotiations with potential buyers for (a) HMS Bulwark and (b) HMS Albion.

Maria Eagle:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 13 January 2025 to question 22653.

Attachments:

1. HMS Albion and HMS Bulwark [22653 - HMS Albion and HMS Bulwark.docx]

■ Ministry of Defence: Industrial Disputes

Nick Timothy:

[\[23022\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, 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.

Al Carns:

The Ministry of Defence and its Arms Length Bodies have no ongoing industrial disputes with Trades Unions.

■ Official Secrets: Disclosure of Information

James Cartlidge: [\[22954\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what information his Department holds on the number of occasions classified military secrets have been leaked on the online war simulation entitled War Thunder.

Luke Pollard:

It has been the long-standing policy of the current and previous Governments that we do not comment on operational security matters. The Ministry of Defence takes the security of our assets extremely seriously and we have robust measures in place to assure the integrity of these arrangements. When any type of security incident is raised, it is reviewed by security personnel and subjected to an initial security risk assessment, with further action taken on a proportionate basis.

■ Reserve Forces: Training

Mr Calvin Bailey: [\[R\] \[23018\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with refence to the Council of Reserve Forces and Cadets' Associations' Annual Statutory Report 2024, published on 17 December 2024, what steps he has taken to ensure training courses are adapted to take account of the needs of reservists.

Al Carns:

We are very grateful for the work of the External Scrutiny Team in producing their Council of Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Associations Annual Statutory Report 2024.

All Ministry of Defence (MOD) training courses are delivered in accordance with Defence Systems Approach to Training, including for Reservists; this is a formal iterative process to continually improve course delivery, integrate learning technologies and formally record student feedback, resulting in improved changes to Course Programmes.

Many Defence courses now offer a modular approach to completion via the Defence Learning Environment which tracks and accurately records student progress. This has provided significant flexibility, allowing Reservists to complete courses in a way that fits around their employment needs and family commitments.

Adaptations include tailoring to deliver training locally at weekends or in blocks of time that are accessible, allowing Reservists to balance their civilian and military commitments effectively.

■ Rifles

Rebecca Paul: [\[23095\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent progress his Department has made on designating a successor to the standard issue L85A3 service rifle.

Maria Eagle:

The L85 rifle ('SA80') will be replaced over the coming decade through Project GRAYBURN.

The project has entered the concept phase, where the capability requirements are being identified and understood in depth.

EDUCATION■ **Academies: Complaints****James McMurdock:****[23111]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to introduce a standardised complaints process for academy schools.

Catherine McKinnell:

All academies are required to have a complaints process which adheres to Part 7 of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. This sets out that it is the academy's responsibility to handle and resolve any complaints. If a complainant has concerns that an academy did not handle a complaint in line with the regulations, they can then escalate to the department, whose role it is to consider whether the academy followed the correct process.

The department's 'Best practice guidance for academies complaints procedures' can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/setting-up-an-academies-complaints-procedure/best-practice-guidance-for-academies-complaints-procedures>.

■ **Academies: Off-payroll Working****Antonia Bance:****[23013]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what information her Department holds on the number of academy trusts that have reported off-payroll arrangements for staff who are also trustees in each of the last five years.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department collates and publishes data annually in the academies sector annual report and accounts on off-payroll arrangements in academy trusts. This includes arrangements with trustees, and is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/academies-sector-annual-reports-and-accounts>.

The academies sector annual report and accounts is drawn from academy trusts' accounts data. The report for 2022 to 2023 will be published shortly and the deadline for academy trusts to submit data to the department for 2023 to 2024 is 28 January 2025.

■ Basic Skills

James McMurdock:

[\[22878\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that young people leave school equipped with relevant skills for working life.

Catherine McKinnell:

The government has established an independent Curriculum and Assessment Review, covering ages 5 to 18, chaired by Professor Becky Francis CBE.

The review will seek to deliver a curriculum that ensures children and young people leave compulsory education ready for life and ready for work, and one that builds the knowledge, skills and attributes young people need to seize opportunity and to thrive in the changing workplace. This includes weaving speaking and listening skills, as well as digital and other life skills, into their learning.

The review group will publish an interim report in early spring setting out its initial findings and confirming the key areas for further work. Its final report, with recommendations, will be published this autumn. We will take decisions on what changes to make in light of these recommendations.

■ Breakfast Clubs: Secondary Education

Damian Hinds:

[\[22898\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of free breakfast provision in secondary schools on levels of school attendance.

Stephen Morgan:

Breakfast clubs remove barriers to opportunity, supporting pupils' attendance and attainment, enabling them to thrive academically and socially and helping families with the cost of childcare around the school day.

Compared to studies of programmes targeted at primary-aged pupils, there are comparatively few high-quality experimental studies on the impact of breakfast clubs on secondary-aged pupils. Typically, primary school breakfast clubs have higher take-up than secondaries and more studies report their positive effects on attainment and attendance, such as the Magic Breakfast evaluation which reported that attendance improved for children at breakfast club schools, equivalent to 26 fewer half-days of absence per year for a class of 30.

The government is committed to offering a free breakfast club in every state-funded school with primary-aged pupils in England. With limited resources, the evidence we do have shows it is right for the government to focus this provision on primary-aged pupils where there is greatest evidence of gains to children's learning and development.

■ Care Leavers: Stoke-on-Trent South

Dr Allison Gardner:

[\[22852\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to improve support for care leavers in Stoke-on-Trent South constituency.

Janet Daby:

The government recognises that care leavers have some of the worst outcomes in society and is committed to ensuring that children leaving care have stable homes, access to health services, support to build lifelong loving relationships and are engaged in education, employment and training (EET).

To address the challenges care leavers face, the department has established a care leaver Ministerial Board, chaired by my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education and my right hon. Friend, the Deputy Prime Minister, which brings together Ministers from key departments to improve support for care leavers across government. We have also introduced the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill, to drive forward our commitments on children's social care, including placing new duties on local authorities to provide 'Staying Close' support to care leavers up to the age of 25, where their welfare requires it, and requiring each local authority to publish information about the arrangements it has in place to support care leavers in their transition to adulthood and independent living.

To support care leavers to engage in EET, those who start an apprenticeship are entitled to a £3,000 bursary. Further, local authorities must provide a £2,000 bursary for care leavers who go to university, and care leavers are a priority group for the 16 to 19 bursary if they are studying in further education.

To help care leavers secure and maintain safe and affordable housing, the department is funding local authorities to support care leavers who wish to stay living with their foster families up to the age of 21, and have increased support for young people leaving residential care, with move-on accommodation and ongoing support from a keyworker provided through the 'Staying Close' programme.

The department knows that a stable support network and loving relationships are crucial to supporting care leavers to thrive. We are funding family finding, befriending and mentoring programmes across 45 local authority areas, including Stoke-on-Trent, to help care leavers to identify and reconnect with important people in their lives and create safe, stable, loving relationships.

To enable better access to mental health services, the department committed to recruit 8,500 new mental health staff and we are also updating the statutory guidance on promoting the health and wellbeing of children in care and care leavers.

■ Carers

Ian Byrne:

[\[22714\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking with local authorities to help support kinship carers in (a) Liverpool and (b) other areas.

Janet Daby:

The government recognises the important role that kinship carers play in caring for some of the most vulnerable children. In October 2024, the department published the new Kinship Care statutory guidance for local authorities, which sets 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.

Alongside this, as part of her role as the National Kinship Care Ambassador, Jahnine Davis will work alongside all local authorities to help them improve their kinship practice and local policies and ensure they are following national guidance. She will share learning nationally so that more local authorities can benefit from evidence of best practice. In turn, this will help to improve outcomes for children and families across England.

In October 2024, the government also announced a £40 million package to trial a new Kinship Allowance in some local authorities in England, to test whether paying an allowance to cover the additional costs of supporting a child can help increase the number of children taken in by family members and friends. This is the single biggest investment made by government in kinship care to date and could transform the lives of vulnerable children who can no longer live at home.

The department will share further details on the process for selecting local authorities in due course.

■ Defence: Vocational Guidance**Derek Twigg:**[\[22576\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has had recent discussions with universities on allowing defence companies to attend university (a) careers fairs and (b) events.

Janet Daby:

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education has not had recent discussions with universities regarding the attendance of defence companies at career fairs and events. As autonomous institutions, universities have the discretion to decide which companies they invite to such events.

■ Free Schools: Bolsover**Natalie Fleet:**[\[23186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate she has made of when the review into the proposed North Derbyshire University Academy free school project in Bolsover will be completed.

Stephen Morgan:

The mainstream free schools review is ongoing and departmental officials are reviewing the latest information from Redhill Academy Trust and Derbyshire County Council. No decisions have been made yet and the department will not take decisions without considering the key evidence and data.

The department will update all trusts and local authorities on next steps shortly. We will also provide an update on the overall review in due course.

■ **Headteachers: Pay**

Cat Smith: [22908]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the average pay was for headteachers in (a) primary and (b) secondary school in the maintained sector in each of the last five years.

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 following link provides the full-time equivalent median average salary for head teachers in local authority maintained primary schools, local authority maintained secondary schools and total state-funded schools in England, as at November each year, for the academic years 2019/20 to 2023/24: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/1a07b1b4-e474-4cf7-1e4d-08dd2d8a762c>.

■ **Holiday Activities and Food Programme**

Dame Caroline Dinenage: [23308]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions she has had with local councils on the future funding of the Holiday Activities and Food programme.

Stephen Morgan:

I refer the hon. Member for Gosport to the answer of 5 December 2024 to Question [17058](#).

■ **Media and Politics: Curriculum**

Dr AI Pinkerton: [23087]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the integration of (a) political and (b) media literacy into school curriculums.

Dr AI Pinkerton: [23088]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of strengthening media literacy programmes in the ongoing Curriculum and Assessment Review.

Catherine McKinnell:

Political and media literacy are currently taught through the national curriculum for citizenship at key stages 3 and 4, which covers parliamentary democracy, the power of government, and how citizens and Parliament hold government to account. It also equips young people to distinguish between fact and opinion and understand the role of a free press. Primary schools can choose to teach citizenship, using non-statutory

programmes of study at key stages 1 and 2. Complementary aspects of media literacy are also taught through relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) and computing, which together equip pupils to evaluate and apply information technology and to be a discerning consumer of information online.

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 this autumn. Oak resources are available here: <https://www.thenational.academy/>.

The Educate against Hate website also hosts a series of online media literacy resources, which seek to help young people evaluate the validity of information. These resources can be accessed here: <https://www.educateagainsthate.com/>.

The government has established an independent Curriculum and Assessment Review, conducted by a group of education leaders (the Review group) and chaired by Professor Becky Francis CBE. The terms of reference were published last July and can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/curriculum-and-assessment-review>.

The Review will seek to deliver a curriculum that is rich and broad, which ensures children and young people are equipped with the essential knowledge and skills to enable them to adapt and thrive in the world and workplace of the future. The Review will consider the skills needed to ensure that children are resilient to misinformation and can distinguish fact from fiction.

The role of the Review group is to consider the evidence, the responses to the call for evidence and widespread engagement with the sector, and then make recommendations for the government to consider. The Review group will publish an interim report in early spring setting out its interim findings and confirming the key areas for further work, and will publish its final report with recommendations this autumn. The department will take decisions on what changes to make in light of these recommendations.

■ Non-teaching Staff: Conditions of Employment

Laurence Turner:

[R] [21253]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what information her Department holds on the (a) number and (b) proportion of school support staff in state-funded schools in England who are employed on (i) zero-hour and (ii) term time-only contracts.

Catherine McKinnell:

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

The school workforce census does not collect figures on zero-hour contracts and does not directly identify term time-only contracts. In November 2023, the latest

information available, there were 71,000 school support staff contracts for between 37 and 40 weeks, the likely duration of term time-only contracts, in state-funded schools in England. This equates to 13% of support staff contracts where a duration was reported.

Support staff may have more than one contract, so individuals may be counted more than once.

■ Private Education: Fees and Charges

Damian Hinds:

[\[21577\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what information her Department holds on the average fees charged by independent schools for the term starting in (a) January 2024, (b) September 2024 and (c) January 2025.

Stephen Morgan:

The school level annual school census collects information each January from all registered independent schools in England. This collection includes information from each school on the lowest and highest fees charged for day and boarding pupils, before the application of any bursaries or other forms of fee reduction.

Using the average of the reported lowest and highest fees charged for each school from the latest information available, from the January 2024 collection, shows that across independent schools that charge fees:

- The mean annual day fee charged was £27,642
- The median annual day fee was £15,371
- The mean annual boarding fee was £52,399
- The median annual boarding fee was £32,310.

Data from the 2025 January collection will be available late June 2025.

■ Pupils: Absenteeism

Andrew Cooper:

[\[22815\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment she has made of trends in the level of persistent school absences in (a) primary and (b) secondary schools in (i) Mid Cheshire constituency, (ii) Cheshire and (iii) England; and what steps her Department is taking to improve school attendance in those areas.

Stephen Morgan:

Detailed pupil absence data is collected as part of the school census and published on a termly basis. All absence data for England, including data at regional and local authority level, is available via the National Statistics releases.

The department does not publish attendance data at the constituency level, so we are unable to provide data specifically for the Mid Cheshire constituency. However, local authority, regional, and national absence data can be found here:

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/pupil-absence-in->

[schools-in-england](#). Additionally, the department publishes more frequent experimental attendance data on a fortnightly basis, which you can access here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/pupil-attendance-in-schools>, or via the dashboard here: <https://department-for-education.shinyapps.io/pupil-attendance-in-schools/>.

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 sector's efforts, although around 1.6 million children remain persistently absent and miss 10% or more of lessons.

Central to the department's approach 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 and can be accessed here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>. The guidance promotes a 'support first' approach, and sets out clear expectations on how schools, trusts, local authorities and wider services, including across the Mid Cheshire constituency, 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, including in Cheshire, and shared their strategies and resources for improving attendance. Bringing together best practice from the hubs, we have also published an attendance toolkit which aims to support schools to identify the drivers of absence in their setting and address these. This toolkit is available here: <https://attendancetoolkit.blob.core.windows.net/toolkit-doc/Attendance%20toolkit%20for%20schools.pdf>.

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 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 a range of measures, including access to specialist mental health professionals in every school, new Young Futures hubs which include access to mental health support workers, and an additional 8,500 new mental health staff to treat children and adults. The department will also initiate new annual Ofsted reviews focusing on safeguarding, attendance and off-rolling.

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.

Uma Kumaran:

[22833]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what (a) training and (b) support local authorities will receive to ensure the Children Not In School register does not inadvertently disadvantage parents of children with special educational needs.

Catherine McKinnell:

The measures in the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill for statutory Children Not in School registers in every local authority in England, and the accompanying duties on parents and out-of-school education providers to provide information for these registers, will support local authorities in identifying all children not in school in their areas, including those with special educational needs (SEN). By identifying these children, local authorities will be better able to support them and their families so they can achieve and thrive.

In order to make sure that these measures are implemented appropriately, the department has established stakeholder implementation forums to enable us to engage with a wide group of stakeholders at regular intervals during the progress of the Bill and subsequently after. This includes a group of home educating representatives and families, some of whom have children with SEN, and we are factoring their views into our delivery and the planned support offer to local authorities.

The department will be issuing statutory guidance to support local authorities to carry out their new duties proportionately. As part of our planned engagement with stakeholders, we will consider whether additional support is required, such as training for local authority staff.

■ Pupils: Qualifications

Luke Murphy:

[23642]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the (a) retention and (b) pass rate is for 16 to 19 year olds studying three A level-equivalent (i) applied general and (ii) tech level qualifications.

Janet Daby:

The department does not publish retention and pass rate data for 16 to 19-year-olds for applied general and tech level qualifications equivalent in size to three A levels.

However, the department does publish data on pass rates and the proportion of students who are retained to the end of their 'core aim' (or main learning aim) of their study programme at a school or college in the 'A level and other 16 to 18 results' statistical release, which is available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/a-level-and-other-16-to-18-results/2022-23>.

The data covers students at the end of 16 to 18 study in the reporting year attending state-funded schools and colleges. This includes all applied general and tech level qualifications approved for reporting in school and college performance data in that year, irrespective of the size of the qualification. For retention, the data relates to qualifications where it is the student's core aim. This means that if a student studied both applied general and tech level qualifications, the statistics only refer to the learning aim recognised as their core aim. For pass rates, data reflects their best result if students enter multiple applied general (or tech level) qualifications, but students that enter both applied general and tech level qualifications will report outcomes for both unless they are in the same subject. The most recent published data is for the cohort of students at the end of 16 to 18 study in 2022/23 and is available for pass rates, available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/e869e68e-85ab-4cf7-595d-08dd3479441b>, and retention which is available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/e09faf66-b348-4839-5950-08dd3479441b>.

Additionally, in 2024 the department included in the T Level Action Plan a retention rate for 16-year-olds starting a large vocational and technical qualification (VTQ) equivalent in size to three A levels in academic year 2021/22, which found that 80% of 16-year-olds were retained within two years of starting their large VTQ. This is based on all relevant aims, and not just each student's core aim. The T Level Action Plan is available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66290c86b0ace32985a7e6d6/T_Level_action_plan_-_analytical_annex.pdf.

■ Schools: Air Pollution

Laurence Turner:

[R] [21862]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what progress her Department has made on the guidance for schools on mitigating poor air quality.

Laurence Turner:

[R] [21863]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of extending the provision of air cleaning units to education facilities.

Stephen Morgan:

The department regularly reviews its guidance to ensure that it aligns with best practice and industry standards, to deliver high-quality school environments.

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

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

The department also publishes non-statutory guidance on indoor and outdoor air quality in 'Building Bulletin 101: Guidelines on ventilation, thermal comfort and indoor air quality in schools' (BB101), which can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/building-bulletin-101-ventilation-for-school-buildings>.

■ Schools: Attendance

Andrew Rosindell:

[22590]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she has taken with relevant authorities to improve school attendance in Romford constituency.

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 schools, although around 1.6 million children remain persistently absent and miss 10% or more of lessons.

Central to the department's approach 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. This guidance can be accessed at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66bf300da44f1c4c23e5bd1b/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance_-_August_2024.pdf.

Every state school, including across Romford, 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 identify patterns and 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 we have set up a network of 31 attendance hubs, including a lead hub school in Romford, who, collectively, have offered support to 2000 primary, secondary and alternative provision schools and shared their strategies and resources for improving attendance. Bringing together best practice from the hubs, we have also published an attendance toolkit which aims to support schools to identify the drivers of absence in their setting and address these. This toolkit is available here:

<https://attendancetoolkit.blob.core.windows.net/toolkit-doc/Attendance%20toolkit%20for%20schools.pdf>.

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 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 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 and challenge, 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, including access to mental health support workers, and an additional 8,500 new mental health staff to treat children and adults. The department will also initiate new annual Ofsted reviews focusing on safeguarding, attendance, and off-rolling.

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: Mental Health Services

Damian Hinds:

[21575]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to her Department's press release entitled One of the largest mental health trials launches in schools, published on 4 February 2019, what the results of those trials were.

Stephen Morgan:

In September 2017, the department commissioned a series of trials in schools across England testing five different approaches to supporting and promoting young people's mental health and wellbeing. The aim of these trials was to improve the evidence available to schools in choosing how they support their pupils' mental health and wellbeing.

As part of these trials, children received mindfulness exercises, relaxation techniques and breathing exercises to help them regulate their emotions, alongside lessons on mental health and wellbeing led by teachers and mental health experts.

The randomised control trials have now concluded. The government will publish the findings in the coming months.

Schools: Uniforms**Damian Hinds:****[22901]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what guidance her Department provides on schools making second hand uniform available.

Catherine McKinnell:

The government's statutory guidance requires schools to ensure that arrangements are in place for parents to acquire second-hand school uniforms, for example through periodic second-hand uniform sales or swap shops, and to make these arrangements clear on their website. This guidance is available here:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/cost-of-school-uniforms.

Too many families tell us that the cost of providing school uniform remains a financial burden. That is why we are introducing legislation to limit the number of expensive branded items of uniform and PE kit that schools can require.

Special Educational Needs**Jo Platt:****[22672]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans her Department has to mandate local authorities to collect information on special educational needs disaggregated by primary need.

Catherine McKinnell:

Information on the primary and secondary need of pupils in school with both an education, health and care (EHC) plan and who have special educational needs (SEN) support is collected via the school census.

The school census is a statutory return and collects information on school characteristics and pupil records three times a year. This includes information on the pupil's SEN provision, whether they have an EHC plan or SEN support without an EHC plan and also what their primary and secondary need is.

This information is published each year as part of the statistical release 'Special education needs in England', which can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england/2023-24>.

Information is also collected from local authorities for all EHC plans maintained by the local authority, including those educated other than at school. SEN2 is also a statutory return and includes information on: requests for assessment for an EHC plan made to each local authority and the outcome of that request, the assessments for an EHC plan made by each local authority, and the outcome of that assessment as well as information on the EHC plans maintained by the authority.

This includes information on the primary and secondary SEN need for each child and young person with an EHC plan. This individual level SEN2 collection was introduced in 2022 and the department is currently developing the publication to include primary needs in 2025.

■ Special Educational Needs: Absenteeism

Jo Platt:

[22673]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what (a) statutory requirements and (b) guidance exist for (i) local authorities and (ii) schools to prevent children with special education needs becoming Children Missing Education.

Stephen Morgan:

The department recognises that barriers to attendance are wide and complex, and this is particularly true for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Addressing these requires a support-first approach and strong relationships between families, schools, local authorities and other relevant local services.

The department has published the 'Working together to improve school attendance' guidance, which is statutory for both schools and local authorities. The guidance promotes a 'support-first' approach and sets out attendance expectations for schools, local authorities and parents. The guidance also provides detail on additional support for pupils with SEND. Where a pupil is not attending due to unmet or additional needs, it requires schools, local authorities and wider services to work together to access and provide the right support to improve attendance.

For pupils registered at a special school, the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 outline that schools must not delete the names of children from the school roll unless they receive approval from the local authority who made the initial arrangements for their education.

The department has also published statutory guidance for local authorities on children missing education (CME). This guidance sets out key principles to enable local authorities in England to implement their legal duty to identify CME, as far as it is possible to do so, and get them back into education. The guidance outlines that local authorities should consider the reasons why children go missing from education, and the circumstances that can lead to this happening, when developing policies and procedures. Moreover, the guidance highlights that schools do have a safeguarding

duty in respect of their pupils, and as part of this, should investigate any unexplained absences.

■ Supply Teachers

Nadia Whittome: [\[21704\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential impact of supporting the expansion of (a) local authority supply pools and (b) not-for-profit supply provision on (i) supply teachers and (ii) schools.

Catherine McKinnell:

Supply teachers perform a valuable role and the department is grateful for their important contribution to schools across the country.

Schools and local authorities are responsible for the recruitment of their supply teachers. Local authority supply pools are one of the approaches to providing supply teachers and local authorities have the autonomy to decide whether to operate these supply teacher pools.

Supply teachers employed directly by a state-maintained school or local authority must be paid in accordance with the statutory arrangements for teachers laid down in the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document.

The department, in conjunction with the Crown Commercial Service, has established the agency supply deal, which supports schools in obtaining value for money when hiring agency supply teachers and other temporary school staff. Details of this can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/deal-for-schools-hiring-supply-teachers-and-agency-workers>.

■ Teachers: Essex

James McMurdock: [\[22861\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to improve teacher (a) recruitment and (b) retention in (i) Essex and (ii) South Basildon and East Thurrock constituency.

Catherine McKinnell:

Delivering the government's mission to break down the barriers to opportunity for every child relies on a highly skilled workforce in schools, with evidence demonstrating that high-quality teaching is the in-school factor that makes the biggest difference to a child's outcomes.

There are now 468,693 full-time equivalent (FTE) teachers in state-funded schools in England, but numbers have not kept pace with demand. This is why the government has set out the ambition to recruit 6,500 new expert teachers across our schools, both mainstream and specialist, and our colleges over the course of this Parliament.

The department has made good early progress towards this key pledge by ensuring teaching is once again an attractive and respected profession, key to which is ensuring teachers receive the pay they deserve. We have accepted in full the School

Teachers' Review Body's recommendation of a 5.5% pay award for teachers and leaders in maintained schools for 2024/25. Alongside teacher pay, we have made £233 million available from the 2025/26 recruitment cycle to support teacher trainees with tax-free bursaries of up to £29,000 and scholarships of up to £31,000 in shortage subjects. The department has also expanded its school teacher recruitment campaign, 'Every Lesson Shapes a Life', and the further education teacher recruitment campaign 'Share your Skills'.

A successful recruitment strategy starts with a strong retention strategy, and new teachers of mathematics, physics, chemistry and computing in the first five years of their careers will now receive a Targeted Retention Incentive of up to £6,000, after-tax, if working in disadvantaged schools. There are four schools in South Basildon and East Thurrock that are eligible for Targeted Retention Incentives.

The department is also working closely with teachers and school leaders to improve workload and wellbeing. This includes introducing a new school report card to in place of Ofsted's single headline grades, to provide a clearer picture of schools' strengths and weaknesses for parents and more proportionate accountability for staff. It also includes promoting flexible working, such as allowing planning, preparation and assessment time to be taken from home, and making key resources to support wellbeing, developed with school leaders, available to teachers.

The department is also funding bespoke support provided by flexible working ambassador schools and multi-academy trusts, to ensure schools are able to capture the benefits of flexible working whilst protecting pupils' face-to-face teacher time. The named flexible working ambassador for schools in South Basildon and East Thurrock is Thomas Gainsborough school, part of Unity Schools Partnership.

High-quality continuous professional development is also key to ensuring we have and retain an effective teaching workforce. The department has established Teaching School Hubs across the country, which provide approved high-quality professional development to teachers at all stages of their careers. These Hubs play a significant role in delivering Initial Teacher Training, the Early Career Framework, National Professional Qualifications and Appropriate Body services. Chafford Hundred South Essex Teaching School Hub is a centre of excellence supporting teacher training and development across Basildon, Brentwood, Castle Point, Maldon, Rochford, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock.

■ Water: Safety

Saqib Bhatti:

[\[23489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will take steps to ensure that the risks of (a) cold water, (b) open water and (c) drowning are covered in the national curriculum.

Catherine McKinnell:

Swimming and water safety is a vital life skill and that is why pupils are taught to swim and how to be safe in and around water at primary school. Swimming and water safety are compulsory elements of the primary physical education (PE) curriculum at

key stages 1 and 2. It includes teaching on how to perform safe-self rescue in different water-based situations.

The department also supports schools to provide swimming and water safety lessons through teacher training and resources and the PE and Sport Premium for top-up lessons.

Schools also have the flexibility to include content on water safety as part of relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) or personal, social, health and economic education, to equip pupils with an understanding of the risks and enable them to make informed decisions. The department is currently reviewing the statutory RSHE curriculum, including looking at whether additional content on water safety should be added.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

■ Batteries: Lithium

James Naish:

[\[21513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of taking (a) legislative and (b) regulatory steps to help improve lithium-ion battery safety; including in the planning application process for new battery energy storage systems.

Michael Shanks:

Battery energy storage systems (BESS) are regulated by the Health and Safety Executive within a robust framework which requires battery designers, installers, and operators to take the necessary measures to ensure health and safety through all stages of the system's deployment.

Government has updated planning practice guidance to encourage BESS developers to engage with local fire services and for local planning authorities to refer to guidance published by the National Fire Chiefs Council.

Government has considered the merits of taking further steps, and in the Clean Power 2030 Action Plan committed that Defra will consult by June 2025 on including BESS within the Environmental Permitting Regulations.

■ Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: Cultural Heritage

Nick Timothy:

[\[22744\]](#)

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

Michael Shanks:

The Department is a customer of the Government Property Agency (GPA) in its office locations. Artwork that is displayed in these locations is owned by Government Art

Collection which is part of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. GPA is responsible for any heritage assets.

As separate entities, arm's-length body are responsible for artwork and heritage items that sit within their office locations, rather than with the Department.

■ **Drax Power Station: Subsidies**

Lee Anderson: [\[22980\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether the Government plans to continue providing subsidy payments to the Drax power station.

Michael Shanks:

A consultation was held under the previous administration on whether a transitional support mechanism should be introduced for large-scale biomass generators when their current support ends. Government is considering the responses to that consultation and no final decision has been taken as to whether alternate future support arrangements will be introduced.

■ **Electric Vehicles: Batteries**

Munira Wilson: [\[22677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to the Government Office for Science's research entitled What are the technical and policy barriers to increasing EV battery recycling capacity in the UK?, updated on 21 November 2023, what progress he has made in researching (a) water miscible binders, (b) binderless electrodes and (c) methods of recycling polyvinylidene difluoride.

Michael Shanks:

The £610m Faraday Battery Challenge, delivered by Innovate UK, supports mission-led academic research on battery recycling technologies through the Faraday Institution's (FI's) ReLiB project. ReLiB researchers at the University of Leicester have recently demonstrated algae-derived water miscible anode binders that can be fully recovered at the end of the batteries life, and are looking to demonstrate an "all" water-soluble binder system that will simplifying battery recycling by the Summer 2025.

ReLiB researchers at the University of Birmingham have also been collaborating with a leading supplier of polyvinylidene difluoride (PVDF) binder on the use of "green" solvents for binder recovery from used batteries. They have also recently demonstrated a new process to recover and reuse PVDF binders in new cells.

■ **Energy: International Cooperation**

Sir John Hayes: [\[22563\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what estimate he has made of the annual running costs of the Global Clean Power Alliance.

Michael Shanks:

The Global Clean Power Alliance aims to accelerate the delivery of the global clean power transition, bringing together a coalition of countries who share ambition and are ready to take action to overcome the biggest challenges in delivering clean power globally. The initiative is being delivered through existing resources, including by streamlining existing efforts, in collaboration with other countries and international organisations.

The running costs of the Global Clean Power Alliance are met within the Department's resource spending, as set out in the recent Spending Review. The Department accounts for its spending in its annual report and accounts.

■ Liquefied Natural Gas**Mr Gregory Campbell:**[\[23267\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of supplies of Liquefied Natural Gas between January and April 2025.

Michael Shanks:

We are confident that we will attract sufficient supplies of Liquefied Natural Gas between January and April 2025. In their 2024/25 Winter Outlook, National Gas, the Gas System Operator, noted that they expect the market to deliver LNG supplies to the UK when needed, evidenced in previous years, as prices shift to attract necessary cargoes. We have seen this occur over the first half of winter 2024/25 and expect this to continue over the second half.

■ Minerals: Renewable Energy**Richard Tice:**[\[22806\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of (a) mining and (b) processing rare earth minerals required for renewable technologies including (i) wind turbines and (ii) solar panels on the environment.

Michael Shanks:

The criticality of minerals, including Rare Earth Elements (REEs), are evaluated through the Critical Minerals Intelligence Centre (CMIC), led by the British Geological Survey. CMIC determines criticality on the basis of economic vulnerability and supply risk, through indicators including Environmental, Social and Governance standards.

Building on this assessment, the Department for Business and Trade will work with industry to publish a new Critical Minerals Strategy this year. This will help secure our supply chains, including for Rare Earth Elements, for the long term and support the green industries of the future.

■ Mission Control for Clean Power: Operating Costs

Sir John Hayes: [\[22564\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what estimate he has made of the annual running costs of Mission Control.

Michael Shanks:

The running costs of Mission control are met within the Department's resource spending, as set out in the recent Spending Review. The Department accounts for its spending in its annual report and accounts.

■ National Energy System Operator: Operating Costs

Sir John Hayes: [\[22565\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what estimate he has made of the annual running costs of the National Energy System Operator.

Michael Shanks:

The National Energy System Operator (NESO), established on 1 October 2024, is regulated by Ofgem which has responsibility for scrutinising and approving NESO's operational costs.

NESO recently launched a consultation on its regulatory [Business Plan for Financial Year 2025/26](#) which sets out forecasted costs of £690m. Note that this includes NESO's set up costs, therefore will be higher than normal.

■ National Grid: Construction

James Cartlidge: [\[23388\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, pursuant to the Answer of 5 December 2024 to Question 17189 on National Grid: Costs of the Western and Eastern Links, if he will make an estimate of the time for delivering the onshore option for Eastern Green Link 1 and 2.

Michael Shanks:

At the time of Ofgem's decision for Eastern Green Link (EGL) 1&2 Final Need Case, an onshore option was expected to be delivered by 2036, based on information provided by the Transmission Owner, National Grid Electricity Transmission. It was not included as part of the Final Need Case,^[1] as analysis conducted by the Electricity System Operator found that the reinforcement was needed earlier than the onshore option could be delivered.^[2]

[1] <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-11/EGL1%20Project%20Assessment%20Decision%20Final.pdf>

[2] <https://www.neso.energy/document/162356/download>

■ Renewable Energy: Government Assistance**Laurence Turner:** [\[23638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to the Answer of 3 November 2020 to Question 110812 on Renewable Energy: Government Assistance, if he will publish the same information for each year since 2019-20.

Michael Shanks:

Yes, I will be happy to publish this information. The information will take time to research and collate. I will place the information you have requested in the Libraries of the House as soon as it is available.

■ Rented Housing: Energy Performance Certificates**Dr Simon Opher:** [\[23501\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what support is available for landlords of traditional pre-1919 buildings to (a) conduct detailed retrofit assessments and (b) ensure compliance with EPC requirements.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

Support is available to landlords to improve their properties. An eligibility tool is available on our 'Help for Households' GOV.UK page that will help landlords find the support available to them. Guidance for how to comply with EPC requirements can be found on gov.uk via the following links:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/energy-performance-certificates> and <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/domestic-private-rented-property-minimum-energy-efficiency-standard-landlord-guidance>.

Dr Simon Opher: [\[23503\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether his Department plans to introduce (a) exemptions and (b) alternative pathways for landlords unable to meet the EPC C rating requirement due to structural limitation.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

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. In this consultation, we will set out proposals on the exemptions regime for properties that cannot meet the proposed increased standard. We encourage landlords and other key stakeholders to feed into this consultation when it is published.

■ Solar Taskforce: Operating Costs**Sir John Hayes:** [\[22560\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what estimate he has made of the annual running costs of the Solar Taskforce.

Michael Shanks:

There is no dedicated funding stream for the Solar Taskforce, and external Taskforce members participate without financial reimbursement. As a result, the costs of the Solar Taskforce are negligible.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS■ **African Swine Fever**

Harriet Cross: [23683]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 28 October 2024 to Question 10798 on African Swine Fever, what uncertainty is there around the human mediated pathways for African swine fever.

Daniel Zeichner:

Defra and its agencies regularly review the spread of ASF when new outbreaks occur internationally and publishes risk assessments on GOV.UK at: [African swine fever in pigs and wild boars in Europe - GOV.UK](#).

Since the latest risk assessment of July 2024, the risk of ASF entering Great Britain through a human-mediated pathway is considered to be **high**, though there is considerable uncertainty around this, particularly around the illegal movement of pig products from regions of the EU affected by ASF. Defra and its agencies keep this under regular review and will reassess the risk level and corresponding controls as further information becomes available.

■ **Air Pollution: Monitoring**

Siân Berry: [23101]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he will publish the (a) interim and (b) final report from the Air Quality Information System Review.

Emma Hardy:

The Air Quality Information System Review has now concluded. The final report and accompanying reports will be published shortly.

■ **Bathing Water Regulations 2013**

Jayne Kirkham: [22216]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what his timetable is for proposed reforms to the Bathing Water Regulations 2013.

Emma Hardy:

Defra and the Welsh Government have concluded a six-week consultation on proposed reforms to the Bathing Water Regulations 2013, which closed on 23 December. In this consultation, we asked for responses to three core reforms and nine technical amendments and called for evidence on two wider reforms for potential future development. We encouraged all parties to respond to the consultation to

ensure a balanced and representative response. A Government response, outlining next steps, will be issued in due course following the analysis of responses.

■ Car Washes: Chemicals

Stuart Anderson:

[22676]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to prevent hand carwash operators from disposing of chemicals illegally down public storm drains.

Emma Hardy:

It is the responsibility of hand car wash businesses to ensure that they are not polluting the environment as a result of their activities. This is set out in guidance on [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk).

Chemicals in car wash products may become classed as waste (including containers with residual chemicals in them). A site operator will need to establish if this is the case and ensure that Hazardous Waste Regulations are followed in respect of correct disposal.

For discharges to water and sewerage company networks, a site operator may need to apply for a trade effluent consent from the water and sewerage company. If a discharge is to surface water drain/sewer, or the ground, a permit under Environmental Permitting Regulations may be required.

If a hand car wash business were to cause an environmental incident, the Environment Agency would respond to the incident as it would any other environmental incident. The Environment Agency responds to substantiated reports of environmental incidents and will take appropriate action under the enforcement and sanctions policy dependent on the nature and severity of any offence. The Environment Agency enforcement and sanctions policy can be found on [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk).

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

Mr Richard Holden:

[22359]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if the Environment Agency plans to run an internship programme which is open to people from white British backgrounds in 2025.

Emma Hardy:

The Environment Agency offers several career entry opportunities open to people from all ethnic backgrounds (including White British backgrounds) who meet the criteria of the specific programme. In 2025 these programmes include:

- Industry Placements (temporary position) – paid 12-month placement in environmental science, engineering and business and communications disciplines)
- Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) Quest Scholarship programme (temporary position) - paid 8-week summer placement for engineering students

- Entry level apprenticeships (permanent position) – various entry level apprenticeships usually attached to a permanent role lasting between 12 and 24 months
- Doctoral Training Partnerships (work placement) – University PhD funded short term (4 weeks to 3 months) placements working on collaborative science projects

Further information about career entry opportunities is publicly available on the Environment Agency's careers website: [Early careers - Environment Agency](#).

■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Written Questions

Helen Morgan:

[\[23497\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to respond to Question 20371 on Sewers: Private Sector, tabled on 16 December 2024.

Emma Hardy:

A response to Question 20371 is being prepared and will be provided as soon as possible. I apologise for the delay in responding to the Honourable Member.

■ Environment Protection

Siân Berry:

[\[23102\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to his Department's press release entitled, Government launches rapid review to meet Environment Act targets, published on 30 July 2024, whether the rapid review of the Environment Improvement Plan was completed by the end of 2024; and what his planned timetable is to publish the new statutory plan.

Mary Creagh:

The Government has concluded the review of Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) which is informing the development of a revised EIP. The Government will publish a statement of rapid review key findings in early 2025, to be followed by publication of a revised EIP.

■ Flood Control: Bolton West

Phil Brickell:

[\[22790\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of levels of flood preparedness in communities along the (a) Middle Brook, (b) Bessy Brook and (c) Douglas rivers in Bolton West constituency.

Emma Hardy:

Flood Alerts and Flood Warnings are issued by the Environment Agency (EA) to warn residents that flood is possible, and then expected, to ensure that communities are prepared take action to reduce impacts to homes and properties. 315 properties are registered to receive the Flood Warnings in the stated areas.

For the Bessy Brook area, flood Alerts and one Flood Warning were issued during the heavy rainfall over New Year. The Flood warning warned 34 properties.

The EA and Bolton Council engage with communities at risk, including a resident's group at Bessy Brook, to raise awareness of flood risk and support their preparedness, signposting The Flood Hub website for information.

Operational teams from the EA and Bolton council attend areas before rain is expected to clear debris from screens and grids, which minimises flooding impacts to over 220 properties.

■ Flood Control: Leicestershire

Edward Argar:

[\[22296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what additional (a) funding and (b) support his Department has provided to (i) communities and (ii) local authorities in Leicestershire to help tackle the impact of recent flooding.

Emma Hardy:

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

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

In addition, the Government's new Floods Resilience Taskforce sets out a new approach to preparing for flooding by working cross-government and with external stakeholders. It plans to meet again in January 2025 and will discuss the recent flooding.

During the flooding incident, the Environment Agency (EA) has informed the public about flood risk; operated flood risk assets to prevent or reduce the severity of flooding; supported authorities to pump flood water away from properties and infrastructure; and worked with partners to coordinate the emergency response.

Going forward, the EA will contribute to the Leicester, Leicestershire, and Rutland Recovery Cell; continue to deploy officers to affected communities to assess the impacts of flooding to properties and businesses; and continue to work with others to identify further opportunities to reduce flood risk in Leicestershire and support the resilience of communities to flooding.

Edward Argar:

[\[22297\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of trends in the number of developments on flood risks in Leicestershire.

Emma Hardy:

The Government has committed to ensure we are building more high-quality, well-designed and sustainable homes, and creating places that increase climate resilience and promote nature recovery. Flood risk is an important consideration in the planning system.

The Environment Agency (EA) is a statutory consultee in the planning process on flood risk matters, in particular flooding from rivers.

On a strategic level, the EA actively engages with Local Planning Authorities' (LPAs) Local Plan making process to ensure that new developments will be in line with the National Planning Policy Framework's requirements on flood risk.

The EA ensures the LPA has the most up-to-date flooding information and data to make informed decisions regarding which locations they choose for significantly sized new development, using the principle that those areas at least risk of flooding should be chosen first.

■ Floods: Lincolnshire

Sir John Hayes:

[\[22559\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what additional funding his Department has provided to (a) communities and (b) local authorities affected by recent flooding in Lincolnshire.

Emma Hardy:

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

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

In addition, the Government's new Floods Resilience Taskforce sets out a new approach to preparing for flooding by working cross-Government and with external stakeholders. It plans to meet again in January 2025 and will discuss the recent flooding.

During the recent flooding the Environment Agency has focussed on warning and informing communities of risks, liaising with Local Resilience Forum partners and undertaking initial investigations into the causes and impacts of the flooding.

The list of projects to receive Government funding in 2025/26 will be consented over the coming months in the usual way through Regional Flood and Coastal Committees with local representation.

Sir John Hayes:

[\[23117\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many incidents of flooding have been reported in (a) South Holland and the Deepings constituency and (b) Lincolnshire in the last five years.

Emma Hardy:

Lead Local Flood Authorities are required to conduct formal Section 19 investigations when flood incidents meet specific criteria, such as the number of properties internally flooded, the nature and frequency of flooding, and the impact on critical infrastructure. However, not every flooding incident qualifies for this investigation

threshold. The Environment Agency collaborates closely with Lincolnshire County Council to gather evidence that supports their recommendations.

Over the past five years, communities in Lincolnshire, particularly in the South Holland and the Deepings constituency, have faced some significant flooding, affecting residential and commercial properties, as well as essential infrastructure. Since early 2019, there have been 1,860 properties flooded across Lincolnshire, with 135 of those in South Holland and the Deepings. In response, the Environment Agency partners with the Local Resilience Forum and engages with affected communities to build resilience against future flooding events. Notable areas experiencing severe impacts include Surfleet Sluice, where residential properties lie within a flood storage area, complicating the Environment Agency's ability to manage floodwaters. Additionally, the Crowland and Cowbit Flood Storage Reservoir has suffered from high River Welland flows, which damaged embankments and led to flooding. Fortunately, repairs to this damage have now been completed.

■ **Foot and Mouth Disease: Disease Control**

Alicia Kearns:

[23461]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to (a) protect the livestock sector from the confirmed outbreak of foot and mouth disease in Germany and (b) prevent the disease entering the UK.

Daniel Zeichner:

The UK is currently free from foot and mouth disease (FMD) and has a robust contingency plan in place to manage risk as set out in the [Foot and Mouth Disease Control Strategy for Great Britain](#). Controls include strict prohibitions on the imports of animals and products of animal origin from countries in which FMD is present; a comprehensive veterinary surveillance system to detect new and emerging disease threats; and active follow up and veterinary investigation of any suspect reports of notifiable disease.

Following confirmation of FMD in Germany, Defra has taken rapid action to protect the UK. This includes, suspending the commercial import of susceptible animals from Germany and restricting personal imports of animal products from across the European Union. The need for further controls is being kept under review as further information on the situation in Germany becomes available.

[FMD guidance](#) is available on GOV.UK and livestock farmers are urged to be extra vigilant and report any suspect disease immediately.

■ **Inland Waterways: Environment Protection**

Helen Maguire:

[21105]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with Ofwat on the enforcement of existing laws to protect waterways.

Emma Hardy:

Ofwat regularly meet with Defra, other Government departments and regulators to discuss enforcement policy and activities. As part of their investigation into all water companies, earlier this year Ofwat proposed fines of £168 million for three companies (Thames, Yorkshire and Northumbria Water) for failing to manage their wastewater treatment works and networks, as part of the first batch of outcomes from its biggest ever investigation. These fines are alongside proposed enforcement orders, which require each company to rectify issues to bring them into compliance. Ofwat has also recently announced four more enforcement cases in relation to management of wastewater treatment works and networks.

Furthermore, the Water (Special Measures) Bill will provide the most significant increase in enforcement powers to the regulators in a decade, giving them the teeth they need to take tougher action against water companies in the next investment period, which is due to start in April next year. The Bill will provide Ofwat with legal powers to ban bonuses, where currently they can only set expectations, and ensure that imprisonment will always be available to the courts as a sentencing option where investigations by the environmental regulators have been obstructed.

On 23 October 2024, the UK and Welsh Governments launched an independent commission, led by Sir Jon Cunliffe, to recommend reforms to reset the water sector regulatory system. The Commission will publish a report in Q2 2025, with recommendations for actionable solutions to the sector's problems.

■ Land Drainage**Mike Amesbury:**[\[22667\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps to improve the resilience of drainage systems.

Emma Hardy:

The Government recognises the importance of having a robust drainage and wastewater system both now and for future demand and expects water companies to plan their infrastructure appropriately to meet new growth.

As part of the Environment Act 2021, water companies in England are required to produce Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans (DWMPs). DWMPs set out how a water company intends to improve their drainage and wastewater systems over the next 25 years, accounting for factors including growing population and changing environmental circumstances. These plans will help sewerage companies to fully assess the capacity of the drainage and wastewater network and develop collaborative solutions to current problems and future issues.

Taking a strategic approach to drainage and wastewater management, will help to identify and mitigate issues related to insufficient network capacity or damaged infrastructure.

■ Land Use**Dr Roz Savage:** [\[23107\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when his Department plans to publish its land use framework.

Mary Creagh:

The Government plans to publish the first steps of its land use strategy in due course.

■ National Landscapes: Finance**Jayne Kirkham:** [\[23670\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure the financial viability of National Landscapes.

Mary Creagh:

This Government is committed to empowering Protected Landscapes to become greener, wilder, and more accessible to all. We understand the uncertainty around resourcing remains a challenge for Protected Landscapes bodies like National Landscapes. Defra business planning is ongoing and we will communicate the outcomes of this as soon as possible.

■ Noise: Nuisance**Rachel Blake:** [\[22829\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of noise regulation enforcement in residential areas.

Emma Hardy:

Local authorities are responsible for investigating noise brought to their attention under Section 79 of the Environmental Protection Act, 1990. If they agree that a statutory nuisance is happening, has happened or will happen in the future, councils must serve an abatement notice.

No assessment has been made of the adequacy of noise regulation enforcement in residential areas.

■ Property Development: Land Drainage**Helen Morgan:** [\[23498\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of making it compulsory for developers to form agreements with water companies for the adoption of new-build drainage systems.

Emma Hardy:

Section 42 of the Flood and Water Management Act has not yet been implemented in England. Should it be implemented, all new sewerage will be built to an agreed standard and automatically adopted. The powers to adopt existing sewerage have

now expired. Therefore, new legislation will be required to enable mandatory adoption of this sewerage. Water companies can currently adopt sewerage voluntarily.

The Government has included private sewerage in the terms of reference for the forthcoming review of the water sector and will examine how best to address the problems caused by unadopted sewerage. The Government is committed to using legislation to reform the water sector and will continue to do so where necessary.

As set out in the [written ministerial statement](#) by the Housing Minister, this Government is determined to end the injustice of 'fleecehold' estates. We will consult on the best way to achieve this in 2025 and we will include options to reduce the prevalence of private management of these estates - which are the root cause of the problems faced by homeowners.

■ Seas and Oceans: Conferences

Barry Gardiner:

[\[23250\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he will attend the UN Oceans Conference in June 2025.

Emma Hardy:

The third UN Ocean Conference (UNOC3), co-hosted by France and Costa Rica in June, will be at a critical time for the ocean and a stocktake of progress towards UN Sustainable Development Goal 14: Life Below Water.

The UK is supportive of an action-orientated UNOC and looks forward to the event. Defra are leading on the planning for UK attendance at the Conference and formal invitations from the co-hosts are expected to be shared soon after which Defra will confirm Ministerial attendance.

■ Sewage: Waste Disposal

Mr Lee Dillon:

[\[21896\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of increasing penalties for water companies that discharge sewage into (a) watercourses and (b) coastal waters.

Emma Hardy:

For too long, water companies have pumped record levels of sewage into our rivers, lakes and seas.

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

The Bill will provide the most significant increase in enforcement powers for the regulators in a decade, giving them the teeth they need to take tougher action against water companies in the next investment period. This includes giving environmental

regulators powers to impose penalties on the civil standard of proof, in addition to new automatic penalties. The regulators will also be able to recover costs for a much greater range of enforcement activities.

In October 2024, the Secretary of State, in conjunction with the Welsh Government, launched an Independent Commission on the water sector regulatory system, to fundamentally transform how our water system works and clean up our rivers, lakes and seas for good.

In August 2024, Ofwat proposed that Thames, Yorkshire and Northumbrian Water be fined a total of £168 million for failing to manage their wastewater treatment works and networks. These proposed fines were subject to a public consultation and so are currently draft; Ofwat are reviewing responses before making their final decisions.

■ Water Treatment: Southampton

Darren Paffey:

[\[21550\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the wastewater licence at Portswood Wastewater Treatment Works in Southampton.

Emma Hardy:

The adequacy of the Environmental Permit at Portswood Wastewater Treatment Works (WwTW) in Southampton has been assessed through various modelling investigations and regulatory reviews. These have resulted in several improvements at Portswood including the most recent permit variation issued on 28 June 2023, when a modern consolidated Environmental Permit was issued which included statutory driver improvements to be delivered by 2025. The Environment Agency (EA) is currently assessing an application by Southern Water, who operate the site, to vary operations to help further improve odour control at the site. As with all bespoke permit applications for water discharge the EA consults with the public and relevant organisations,

Additionally, the EA's comprehensive assessments to monitor and manage nutrient levels in the region help ensure the Environmental Permit for the Portswood WwTW remains adequate and compliant with environmental standards, while future improvements planned for the 2025-30 period will further enhance its environmental performance through meeting nitrogen neutrality requirements

The Government is committed to taking action to give regulators the teeth they need to take tougher action against water companies who fail to meet their obligations. The Water (Special Measures) Bill will provide the most significant increase in enforcement powers to the regulators in a decade. The Bill will drive meaningful improvements in the performance and culture of the water industry as a first important step in enabling wider, transformative change across the water sector.

On 23 October 2024 the UK and Welsh governments launched an independent commission, led by Sir Jon Cunliffe, to recommend reforms to reset the water sector

regulatory system. The Commission will publish a report in Q2 2025, with recommendations for actionable solutions to the sector's problems.

■ Zoonoses: Furs

Rosie Duffield:

[\[23406\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential implications for his policies of the publication entitled *Farmed fur animals harbour viruses with zoonotic spillover potential*, published by Nature on 4 September 2024.

Daniel Zeichner:

This paper has been discussed at the Human Animal Infections and Risk Surveillance group, the cross-Government risk assessment group, where it was recognised that there are several novel viruses detected in fur farmed animals as well as other species farmed for other uses (rabbits and nutria). Further work is now taking place to analyse the risk these viruses may pose to public health as well as animal health, bearing in mind that fur farming is not permitted in the UK but that such "exotic" animals (raccoon dogs, mink, squirrels) may be kept as pets.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Beijing: Embassies

Kevin Hollinrake:

[\[22931\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to his Department's tender note entitled *Procurement of a Contractor to build new British Embassy, Beijing*, published on 2 October 2024, what the (a) timetable and (b) budget is for construction of the new Embassy; what consents are required from Chinese authorities, and what the status is of each consent.

Catherine West:

We continue to work on the details of the timetable and budget for the new British Embassy in Beijing. We have submitted our planning application for the new embassy and as with any project, this would be subject to due consideration by Chinese authorities.

■ China: Foreign Relations

Wendy Morton:

[\[22628\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Business and Trade on the potential impact of accession by China to the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership on his Department's policies on UK-China relations.

Catherine West:

The Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) membership is open to all economies able to satisfy the Auckland Principles: preparedness to meet the agreement's high standards; a demonstrated pattern of complying with trade commitments; and recognition that decisions are dependent on the consensus of the CPTPP membership. Discussion among CPTPP members is progressing on how to take forward accessions. Until a decision is reached by CPTPP members on this, it would be inappropriate to comment on the specifics of any other economies' interest in the agreement.

China: Human Rights**Priti Patel:**[\[22598\]](#)

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 China; and if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of such instances on civilians.

Catherine West:

People across China face widespread restrictions and violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms. China continues to persecute and arbitrarily detain Uyghurs and Tibetans, restrict civil society and independent media, and target human rights defenders and lawyers. We provided this assessment at the UN General Assembly last October, and the Human Rights Council in September. In addition, we joined a statement led by Australia on Xinjiang and Tibet at the UN General Assembly and a statement led by the USA on Xinjiang at the Human Rights Council, both of which provided further assessments of the human rights situations in the respective geographies.

China: Tibet**Luke Akehurst:**[\[23546\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of China's Kamtok Dam project on the (a) environment, (b) society and (c) economy in Tibet.

Catherine West:

The Government would refer to credible external sources, including those from the United Nations, in relation to the impact of China's Kamtok Dam project. For example, in July 2024 a letter was issued from 13 UN Special Rapporteurs finding the project risked the "forced displacement" of Tibetans from their ancestral villages, with "irreversible destruction of important cultural and religious sites" alongside "irreversible or significant environmental impacts." It also noted the widespread crackdown on Tibetan individuals peacefully expressing their opposition to the project.

■ Chinese Embassy: Planning Permission

Kevin Hollinrake: [\[22636\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will publish any (a) electronic and (b) written communication from Downing Street to his Department on the Chinese Embassy before the decision was made to call in the planning application.

Catherine West:

The planning application has been called in by the Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and she will make this decision independent from the rest of Government corresponding to her quasi-judicial role. Other Government departments have separately worked through considerations of the application. We have no plans to publish information relating to these conversations due to their sensitive nature.

■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Cost Effectiveness

Priti Patel: [\[22600\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 20 December 2024 to Question 18362 on Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Cost Effectiveness, when he expects to be in a position to provide details of departmental budget savings.

Catherine West:

The Department expects to have finalised savings plans by April 2025.

■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Media

John Cooper: [\[23109\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 3 January 2025 to Question 20491 on Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Media, which contractors were used for the spending on media training; which Ministers received the media training; and whether voice training was included as part of the training.

Catherine West:

The contractor used for media training was Robert Taylor Communications Ltd. As Minister for Indo-Pacific at the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development I received the media training. No voice training was conducted as part of the media training.

■ Gaza: Humanitarian Aid

Colum Eastwood: [\[23183\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on attacks on (a) international aid agencies and (b) their (i) facilities and (ii) staff in northern Gaza.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

We welcome the agreement to end the fighting in Gaza. It is the first step in ensuring long-term peace and security for Israelis, Palestinians and the wider region, bringing much-needed stability. The Foreign Secretary met Israeli Foreign Minister Sa'ar in Israel on 13 January. He urged Israel not to endanger United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East's (UNRWA) ability to operate, and to prevent the collapse of the humanitarian response. I have also raised my concerns about the situation in northern Gaza with both the Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister and the Israeli Ambassador, including the safety of civilians and medical workers. At the UN Security Council earlier this month, we shared our horror at the deterioration of healthcare in Gaza and urged Israel to abide by its international obligations, including those set out in UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2286.

Israel must do much more to ensure that civilians are protected, that much more aid can be delivered and that the UN and humanitarian partners can work safely and effectively. This includes ensuring effective deconfliction mechanisms and visa processes for international non-governmental organisations (INGOs).

■ Georgia: Democracy**Mark Ferguson:**[\[23007\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support democracy in Georgia.

Stephen Doughty:

On 16 December I spoke with Georgian Dream's Foreign Minister, Maka Bochorishvili, about recent events in Georgia, and about Georgia's negative democratic trajectory. I stressed that police violence targeting peaceful demonstrators, opposition figures and journalists was unacceptable. On 19 December, the UK implemented sanctions against the Minister and Deputy Minister of Internal affairs and three police officials responsible for these violent actions. We have also suspended all programme support to the Georgian government, restricted defence cooperation, and limited engagement with Georgian Dream representatives. We continue to call on Georgia to realign itself with European values.

■ Georgia: Elections**Wendy Morton:**[\[22002\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 17 December 2024 to Question 19695 on Foreign Relations: Elections, what recent discussions has he had with his counterpart in Georgia; and if he will make an assessment of the effectiveness of those discussions at reducing political tensions in that country.

Stephen Doughty:

On 16 December I spoke with Georgian Dream's Foreign Minister, Maka Bochorishvili, about the instability we were seeing in Georgia, and about Georgia's

negative democratic trajectory. I stressed that police violence targeting peaceful demonstrators, opposition figures and journalists was unacceptable. On 19 December, the UK implemented sanctions against the Minister and Deputy Minister of Internal affairs and three police officials responsible for these violent actions. We continue to assess the impact of our actions, and to call on Georgia to realign itself with European values.

■ Georgia: Politics and Government

Wendy Morton: [\[22285\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of (a) the parliamentary election, (b) the inauguration of a new president and (c) other recent events in Georgia.

Wendy Morton: [\[22286\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Georgian counterpart since the parliamentary election in that country.

Stephen Doughty:

In response to recent events in Georgia, the Foreign Secretary announced on 9 December that the UK would suspend all programme support to the Georgian government, restricted defence cooperation, and limited engagement with representatives of Georgian Dream. On 16 December I spoke to Georgian Dream representative, Foreign Minister Bochorishvili, and on 23 December the Foreign Secretary spoke to the Georgian President, Zourabichvili. Both the Foreign Secretary and I expressed our concerns at the instability we were seeing in Georgia. I was clear that Georgia's negative democratic trajectory, including violence targeting peaceful demonstrators, opposition figures and journalists was unacceptable. On 19 December, the UK implemented sanctions against the Minister and Deputy Minister of Internal affairs and three police officials responsible for these violent actions. We will continue to keep our policies under close review.

■ Haiti: Diplomatic Service

Andrew Rosindell: [\[23274\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many British nationals have requested consular assistance in Haiti since July 2024.

Catherine West:

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) has not been approached for consular assistance in relation to British nationals in Haiti since July 2024. The FCDO advises against all travel to Haiti due to the volatile security situation there. There are currently no British consular officials in Haiti and our ability to provide consular assistance is severely limited. Consular assistance cannot currently be delivered in person in Haiti, however British nationals may access

consular assistance via the British Embassy Santo Domingo. British nationals in Haiti are encouraged to read our travel advice and sign up for alerts.

■ Israel: F-35 Aircraft

Tracy Gilbert: [\[22813\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of suspending export licences for F-35 components to Israel.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

On day one in office, the Foreign Secretary commissioned a thorough review into Israel's compliance with International Humanitarian Law (IHL), given the grave concerns about the conduct and consequences of the war in Gaza for civilians. The UK's robust export licensing criteria state that the Government will not issue export licences if there is a *clear risk* that the items might be used to commit or facilitate serious violations of IHL. Given the conclusions of the review, on 2 September the Government suspended around 30 export licences to Israel, effectively covering all arms exports for use in the current conflict in Gaza, exempting components for F-35 aircraft which, for reasons outlined in the Foreign Secretary's Statement and the Business and Trade Secretary's Written Ministerial Statement, have been excluded from the suspension.

■ Myanmar: Armed Conflict

Luke Akehurst: [\[23197\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what information his Department holds on whether drones have been used by the military regime against civilians in Myanmar.

Catherine West:

We continue to monitor the escalation of the conflict in Myanmar closely, including the use of drones by the Myanmar military. The UK strongly condemns the military's use of airstrikes on civilians and civilian infrastructure, including schools, hospitals, and places of worship. The UK is exploring a range of measures to disrupt the military's ability to use air capabilities to target civilians. In October 2024, the UK announced sanctions targeting companies involved in the procurement of aviation fuel and equipment for the Myanmar Armed Forces.

■ Russia: Shipping

Graeme Downie: [\[21876\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help tackle the threat from the Russian shadow fleet.

Stephen Doughty:

Our oil-related sanctions are having a significant impact, with Russia forced to shoulder a 25 percent reduction in oil and gas revenues from January to October

2024, compared to the same period in 2022. Where Russia has sought to circumvent those sanctions, we have taken robust action. We have now sanctioned 93 shadow fleet oil tankers; and we are exposing malign maritime practices by requesting proof of insurance from suspected shadow vessels passing through the English Channel - an approach partners along the Baltic route will now replicate. We continue to step up our efforts, working closely with Nordic-Baltic partners and others, to ensure our sanctions' effectiveness and impact. We continue to keep further measures on oil and gas under active review.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Addison's Disease: Health Services

Michael Payne:

[23199]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve the care of people with Addison's disease including (a) providing clearer information and (b) ensuring timely access to (i) treatment and (ii) support.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Government is committed to improving the lives of those living with rare diseases, such as Addison's disease. The UK Rare Diseases Framework sets out four priorities collaboratively developed with the rare disease community, which include increasing awareness of rare diseases among healthcare professionals and improving access to specialist care, treatments, and drugs. We remain committed to delivering under the framework and will publish an annual England action plan in 2025.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's (NICE) Clinical Knowledge Summaries (CKS) provide primary care practitioners with a readily accessible summary of the current evidence base and practical advice on best practice. Currently, the NICE has a CKS on Addison's disease. This includes when to suspect Addison's disease, a management section, and a self-care advice section to support both patients and family members or carers. Further information on the NICE's CKS on Addison's disease is available at the following link:

<https://cks.nice.org.uk/topics/addisons-disease/management/>

NHS England has previously published a National Patient Safety Alert on Steroid Emergency Card to support the early recognition and treatment of an adrenal crisis in adults. These alerts require action to be taken by healthcare providers, to reduce the risk of death or disability. Further information on the alert is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/national-patient-safety-alert-steroid-emergency-card-to-support-early-recognition-and-treatment-of-adrenal-crisis-in-adults/>

■ Arthritis: Health Services

Matt Bishop:

[\[23686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve access to (a) treatment and (b) support services for people with arthritis; and what steps he is taking to increase awareness of the condition.

Andrew Gwynne:

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

As announced in the Get Britain Working white paper, we are delivering the joint Department for Work and Pensions, Department of Health and Social Care, and NHS England, Getting It Right First-Time (GIRFT) MSK Community Delivery Programme. With a £3.5 million funding boost, GIRFT teams will deploy their proven Further Faster model to work with ICB leaders to further reduce MSK community waiting times, including for those with arthritis, and improve data and metrics and referral pathways to wider support services.

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

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

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

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

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

In order to improve awareness and understanding of arthritis amongst primary care professionals, including general practitioners, the Royal College of General Practitioners has produced an e-learning module on inflammatory arthritis, in partnership with the British Society of Rheumatology.

■ **Autism: Diagnosis**

Sarah Owen:

[\[23176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce waiting times for autism diagnoses.

Stephen Kinnock:

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

On 5 April 2023, NHS England published a national framework and operational guidance to help ICBs and the National Health Service to deliver improved outcomes for children, young people and adults referred to an autism assessment service.

In 2024/25, £4.3 million is available nationally to improve services for autistic children and young people, including autism assessment services.

■ **Autism: Health Services**

Michael Payne:

[\[23200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help (a) provide timely (i) diagnosis and (ii) treatment and (b) improve other support for adults with autism.

Stephen Kinnock:

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

On 5 April 2023, NHS England published a national framework and operational guidance to help ICBs and the National Health Service to deliver improved outcomes for children, young people, and adults referred to an autism assessment service. The guidance also sets out what support should be available before an assessment and what support should follow a recent diagnosis of autism based on the available evidence.

■ **Blood: Donors**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[22663\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many times people have been called more than twice per day by NHS Blood and Transplant seeking blood

donations in the last 12 months; and whether he is taking steps to ensure that the frequency of calls from NHS Blood and Transplant is not excessive.

Andrew Gwynne:

In 2024, NHS Blood and Transplant (NHSBT) attempted 8,532,133 outbound calls to all donors across whole blood, platelets, and plasma for medicine. Of this total figure, 37.5%, or 3,199,031, call attempts resulted in a donor receiving up to three call attempts in a single day. Multiple attempts in a single day are generally to offer last minute appointments to eligible donors, or to ensure a session has a suitable blood mix ahead of sessions taking place.

NHSBT recently launched a new automated system to better target donors and reduce the number of calls needed to fill appointments and collect the appropriate mix of blood needed while meeting donor preferences for contact.

The NHSBT National Contact Centre will call a phone number up to three times a day, or three times within a five-day period, before resting the record, with no further call attempts, for a minimum of 21 days. Occasionally, NHSBT will make additional calls to priority donors, breaking the 21 day 'rest' period. This is often where particular blood group stocks are low, or demand exceeds supply.

■ **Brain Cancer: Research**

Edward Morello:

[\[23243\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will provide a breakdown of spending on brain cancer research in 2023-24.

Andrew Gwynne:

Research is crucial in tackling cancer, which is why the Department invests over £1.5 billion per year in health research through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). NIHR research expenditure for all cancers was £133 million in 2023/24. Cancer is a major area of NIHR spend, reflecting its high priority.

In the financial year 2023/24, total NIHR spending on direct research awards on brain cancer was £2.1 million spent across 22 active studies, with a total lifetime value of £11.8 million. In the same year, our wider infrastructure investments, which enable the country's leading experts to develop and deliver high-quality translational, clinical, and applied research funded by ourselves, charities, and industry partners, allowed an additional 1,107 people to participate in potentially life-changing brain cancer research in the National Health Service.

In addition to direct research awards, NIHR infrastructure funding enables the country's leading experts to develop and deliver high-quality translational, clinical, and applied research supported by other funders. These investments allowed an additional 1,107 people to participate in potentially life-changing brain cancer research in in the NHS in the same period.

■ Breast Cancer: Health Education

Jim Shannon:

[23323]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase awareness of the warning signs of lobular breast cancer.

Andrew Gwynne:

NHS England runs Help Us Help You campaigns to increase the knowledge of cancer symptoms and address barriers to acting on them, to encourage people to come forward as soon as possible to see their general practitioner. The campaigns focus on a range of symptoms, including symptoms of lobular breast cancer, as well as encouraging body awareness, to help people spot symptoms across a wide range of cancers at an early point.

NHS England and other National Health Service organisations, nationally and locally, also publish information on the signs and symptoms of many different types of cancer, including lobular breast cancer. Further information can be found on the NHS.UK website.

■ Breast Cancer: Hormone Treatments

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:

[23287]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on the number of people who developed secondary breast cancer after completing the 10-year recommended hormone therapy in the latest period for which data is available.

Andrew Gwynne:

The National Disease Registration Service (NDRS) in NHS England, as the national cancer registry, collects diagnosis and treatment data on cancer patients in England. The NDRS does not hold data on the number of people who developed secondary breast cancer after completing the 10-year recommended hormone therapy. Further information on the NDRS is available at the following link:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/ndrs>

■ Cancer: Health Services

John McDonnell:

[23255]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of requiring NHS trusts to develop long-term plans for the (a) cancer and (b) diagnostic workforce including (i) training and (ii) consultant posts.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Government recognises that a cancer-specific approach is needed to meet the challenges in cancer care, and to improve outcomes for people living with cancer. Following publication of the 10-Year Health Plan, we will publish a new national cancer plan, which will include further details on how we will improve outcomes for cancer patients. We will continue to ensure that we train the staff we need to ensure

patients are cared for by the right professional, when and where they need it, and the cancer plan will reflect this.

In summer 2025, we will publish a refreshed Long Term Workforce Plan to deliver the transformed health service we will build over the next decade and treat patients on time again. We will ensure the National Health Service has the right people, in the right places, with the right skills to deliver the care patients need when they need it.

■ Cannabis: Medical Treatments

Joani Reid:

[\[23194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the availability of Bedrocan oil.

Karin Smyth:

Bedrocan oils are a range of unlicensed cannabis-based products for medicinal use. These products have not been assessed by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) for safety, quality, or efficacy, or assessed by National Institute of Health and Care Excellence (NICE) for clinical and cost effectiveness.

Bedrocan, and other unlicensed cannabis-based products for medicinal use, are available from independent providers across the United Kingdom, regulated by the Care Quality Commission. Unlicensed cannabis-based products for medicinal use can only be prescribed by, or under the direction of, a clinician on the General Medical Council Specialist Register. Prescribers of unlicensed medicines have increase medico-legal responsibilities and are responsible for the quality and availability of the medicine prescribed.

These products are not routinely prescribed on the National Health Service, as clinical guidelines from the NICE demonstrate a clear need for further evidence on the safety and effectiveness of unlicensed cannabis-based medicines to support prescribing decisions.

The National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) has issued two calls for research proposals and a highlight notice on medicinal cannabis. Manufacturers, including those for Bedrocan oils, are responsible for generating evidence to support the use of these products and to seek regulatory approval. The Government encourages manufacturers to do so and offers scientific and research advice from the MHRA and the NIHR.

■ Care Homes: Fees and Charges

James Naish:

[\[22116\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a weekly cap on domiciliary care costs.

Stephen Kinnock:

We announced on 3 January 2025 that we are launching an independent commission into adult social care as part of our critical first steps towards delivering a National Care Service.

Chaired by Baroness Louise Casey and reporting to the Prime Minister, the Commission will work with people who draw on care and their families, staff, politicians, and the public, private and third sector to make clear recommendations for how to rebuild the adult social care system to meet the current and future needs of the population.

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

■ Carers**Jo Platt:**[\[21358\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to implement the fresh approach to supporting unpaid carers recommended by the Darzi Review.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Government is committed to ensuring that families have the support that they need. We want to ensure that people who care for family and friends are better able to look after their own health and wellbeing.

We have already taken action to support unpaid carers. From April 2025 we will increase the Carer's Allowance weekly earnings limit from £151 a week to £196, the equivalent of 16 hours at the National Living Wage. This means carers can earn up to £10,000 a year whilst still retaining Carer's Allowance, which is approximately an additional £2,000 a year.

Lord Darzi's independent review of the National Health Service is clear that a fresh approach to supporting and involving unpaid carers is required to improve outcomes for carers, people needing care, and the NHS.

We are carefully considering these findings as part of our 10-year plan for reforming and modernising the NHS, and as we develop plans to reform adult social care, including through the National Care Service.

All unpaid carers can have their say on the future of the NHS to ensure their voice is heard by sharing their views at the following link:

<https://change.nhs.uk/en-GB/projects/start-here>

■ Dementia: Patients**Rebecca Smith:** [\[23678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the dementia diagnosis rate was for people aged under 65 who had developed symptoms on 13 January 2025; and if he will publish a monthly estimate of this rate within national primary care dementia data.

Stephen Kinnock:

The dementia diagnosis rate is not calculated for patients aged under 65 years old. This is because the numbers of patients known to have dementia in the sample population age groups comprising the zero- to 64-year-old age range is not large enough for reliable estimates to be made.

The Primary Care Dementia Data publication includes a monthly count of the number of patients aged 65 years old and under who do have a dementia diagnosis on their patient record, which is expressed as a raw count, and as a percentage of registered patients aged zero to 64 years old.

■ Dental Services: Fees and Charges**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:** [\[23160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to make dentistry more affordable.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Government is committed to National Health Service dental services being available for all those who need them. Free NHS dental care is available to people who meet one of the following criteria:

- under 18 years old, or under 19 years old and in full-time education;
- pregnant or had a baby in the previous 12 months;
- being treated in an NHS hospital and the treatment is carried out by the hospital dentist, although patients may have to pay for any dentures or bridges; and
- receiving low-income benefits, or under 20 years old and a dependant of someone receiving low-income benefits.

Support is also available through the NHS Low Income Scheme for those patients who are not eligible for exemption or full remission of dental patient charges. Further information is available at the following link:

<https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/dentists/who-is-entitled-to-free-nhs-dental-treatment-in-england/>

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan: [\[23161\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of increasing the regulation of private dental charges.

Stephen Kinnock:

The National Health Service contracts independent dental providers to deliver NHS dental treatment. Dentists must make clear which treatments can be provided on the NHS and which can only be provided on a private basis, and the costs associated for each. If a patient decides to choose alternative private options, this should be included in their treatment plan.

The Department and NHS England do not control the cost of private dental or orthodontic treatment.

■ Dental Services: Finance**Rebecca Paul:**[\[21893\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether any funding previously allocated to the Dental Recovery Plan has been withdrawn.

Stephen Kinnock:

We are currently reviewing the Dental Recovery Plan that was published on 7 February 2024 and the policies that can be taken forward effectively and within National Health Service budgets. It is clear the plan did not go far enough and so we are also working on further measures, prioritising initiatives that will see the biggest impact on access to NHS dental care.

Dental budgets remain ringfenced as per the 2024/25 revenue and contracting guidance, and integrated care boards should continue to seek to invest the full amount in dental activity.

■ Dental Services: Norfolk**Ben Goldsborough:**[\[24024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve access to NHS dentistry in (a) South Norfolk constituency and (b) Norfolk.

Stephen Kinnock:

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

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

■ Department of Health and Social Care: British Society for Genetic Medicine**Mr Richard Holden:** [\[23180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether (a) Ministers and (b) officials in his Department have had meetings with representatives of the British Society for Genetic Medicine in the last 30 years.

Andrew Gwynne:

[Holding answer 16 January 2025]: In the last 30 years, officials in the Department of Health and, later, the Department of Health and Social Care, have had meetings with representatives of the British Society for Genetic Medicine. As far as can be determined, ministers have also had meetings with representatives of the British Society for Genetic Medicine.

■ Disabled Facilities Grants: Standards**Adam Jogee:** [\[21796\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the adequacy of the Disabled Facilities Grant.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 14 January 2025]: My rt. Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, has meetings with Cabinet colleagues on a range of health and social care issues.

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

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

■ Electronic Cigarettes: Advertising**Jo Platt:** [\[23430\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is taking steps to regulate the advertising of vapes in local vape shops on high streets so that they do not appeal to children.

Andrew Gwynne:

We know that vapes and other nicotine products are being deliberately branded and advertised to appeal to children. This must be stopped to protect future generations from being hooked on nicotine. The Tobacco and Vapes Bill has been introduced to Parliament, and bans vapes and nicotine products from being deliberately promoted and advertised to children to stop the next generation from becoming hooked on

nicotine. The bill will ban all forms of advertising of vaping and other nicotine products, including in local vape shops, as well as sponsorship agreements which promote them.

We must also reduce the visibility and accessibility of vapes to protect children and non-smokers from getting hooked on nicotine. The Tobacco and Vapes Bill will provide powers to introduce future regulations on where and how vapes and other nicotine products can be displayed, including in the windows and inside local vape shops.

■ **General Practitioners: South Holland and the Deepings**

Sir John Hayes:

[\[21964\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve the availability of GP appointments in South Holland and the Deepings constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

We are committed to improving capacity and access to local services across the country, including in South Holland and Deepings. That is why, in October 2024, we provided an £82 million boost to the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme, enabling the recruitment of 1,000 newly qualified general practitioners (GPs) across England. This will increase the number of appointments delivered in general practice, which will benefit thousands of patients that are struggling to care the care they desperately need. This will also secure the future supply of GPs and take pressure off those currently working in the system.

We will bring back the family doctor for those who would benefit from seeing the same clinician regularly, improving continuity of care, which is associated with better health outcomes and fewer A&E attendances.

Additionally, we have announced a proposed £889 million uplift to the GP contract for 2025/26, the largest uplift in years, with a rising share of total National Health Service resources going to general practice. We are currently consulting the profession on key proposals to improve access, continuity of care and GP recruitment.

■ **Health Services: Research**

Martin Wrigley:

[\[22783\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the incoming US presidency on healthcare research in the UK.

Andrew Gwynne:

The United Kingdom's world-class health research ecosystem makes us a natural and leading partner for the United States' research community and life sciences. The United States ranks the highest in the number of co-authorships, between UK researchers and researchers in international organisations, of peer reviewed biomedical journal papers. The Government will continue to encourage close working

between our respective research funders to support cutting-edge, collaborative research between the UK and the United States.

■ Health: Men

Dr Luke Evans: [\[23844\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to publish the call for evidence for the men's health strategy; and what estimate he has made of when the men's health strategy will be published.

Andrew Gwynne:

On 28 November 2024, my Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care announced plans for England's first Men's Health Strategy, to be delivered this year.

The strategy will be informed by a call for evidence which will be launched shortly. The call for evidence will seek views on what is currently working and what more needs to be done to support the health of all men.

■ Heart Diseases: Young People

Chris Coghlan: [\[24007\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve access to cardiac screening for young people who take part in sports and exercise.

Andrew Gwynne:

The UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC) last reviewed screening for sudden cardiac death (SCD) in people under the age of 39 years old in 2019, and concluded that screening should not be offered. Further information is available at the following link:

<https://view-health-screening-recommendations.service.gov.uk/sudden-cardiac-death/>

Research showed that current tests are not accurate enough to use in young people without symptoms, and that treatments and interventions were not based on good scientific evidence to prevent SCD.

To stop SCDs in young people, the current consensus is to focus on rapid identification and care of people who are likely to be at risk of SCD due to a family link or because they have had symptoms, and to train people to carry out cardiopulmonary resuscitation and to use defibrillators.

NHS England has published guidance for inherited cardiac conditions which requires services to investigate patients with previously undiagnosed cardiac disease, suggestive symptoms, or patients from families with sudden unexplained deaths. Where a genetic variation is identified, cascade testing is offered to relatives based on risk.

We are aware that the UK NSC has received a submission via its annual call process to consider SCD screening in young people aged 14 to 35 years old engaging in sport. The UK NSC is currently reviewing all annual call proposals. Further information on the annual call process is available at the following link:

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

■ **Hospitals: Construction**

Ian Roome:

[\[23554\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the New Hospital Programme Review has been completed; and when he plans to announce the results of the review.

Karin Smyth:

The review is complete, and we will publish the outcome of the review, including a new and realistic delivery schedule for the New Hospital Programme, shortly.

■ **Hospitals: Telephone Services**

Mike Martin:

[\[23628\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of issuing guidance to hospitals on using withheld numbers to contact patients about appointments.

Karin Smyth:

National Health Services may sometimes choose to use withheld numbers when contacting patients, including to protect patient privacy and confidentiality, but we appreciate the frustration that patients can feel when they are unable to contact clinical staff, especially following a call from a withheld number, and recognise the importance of patients being able to establish channels of two-way communication.

The Elective Reform Plan, launched as part of the Government's Plan for Change, sets out the reform and productivity efforts needed to ensure patients are seen on time, but also to improve their experience of care, which includes enhancing and improving two-way communication between patients and NHS services, whether through digital options such as an enhanced NHS App or non-digital routes.

■ **Influenza: Vaccination**

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[22683\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the levels of the uptake of the flu vaccine.

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[22684\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of the level of uptake for the flu vaccine in each of the last four years for which data is available.

Dr Luke Evans: [\[22685\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase the level of flu vaccine uptake.

Dr Luke Evans: [\[22686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has had recent discussions with NHS England on flu vaccine uptake among staff working in (a) the NHS and (b) social care settings.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Department works closely with the UK Health Security Agency and NHS England to encourage everyone who is eligible to get their flu vaccine. This is supported by a national Get Winter Strong marketing campaign to encourage uptake of the flu vaccine.

For the autumn 2024 flu vaccination programme, NHS England has provided a range of resources and tools to support the vaccination offer to frontline health and social care workers. For example, National Health Service payslips were used to encourage eligible colleagues to get their vaccines, as were NHS social media channels, which included videos from spokespeople, including the Chief Nursing Officer for England, and resources and messages have been shared through established frontline health and care worker networks, including unions and representative bodies.

There is also a comprehensive range of information leaflets, promotional materials, and other resources to inform members of the public and health care professionals. This includes leaflets translated into over 30 languages, and available in easy read and large print formats, braille, and British Sign Language. These are available at the following link:

<https://www.healthpublications.gov.uk/Home.html>

In addition, improved reporting via NHS England's Federated Data Platform is providing more detailed regional and integrated care board (ICB) level uptake intelligence than has been possible in previous campaigns. ICBs are being encouraged to work with the highest performing trusts in their region to share best practice and lessons learned, and to provide additional support for those providers where uptake is low. The UKHSA publishes weekly data on flu vaccine uptake in eligible groups, which is available at the following link:

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

The following table shows the latest data covering vaccination from 2021/22 up to 5 January 2025, as a percentage and broken down by patient group, and the comparative periods in previous years:

PATIENT GROUP	2024/25	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22
65-year-olds and	73.8%	77.1%	78.7%	82.5%

PATIENT GROUP	2024/25	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22
over				
At risk	38.6%	40.4%	46.7%	53.0%
Pregnant women	33.8%	31.0%	33.6%	39.8%
Two-year-olds	40.9%	43.2%	40.4%	48.7%
Three-year-olds	42.5%	43.5%	42.9%	50.7%

The data for school aged children and health care worker vaccine uptake is published monthly, and is available, respectively, at the following two links:

www.gov.uk/government/statistics/seasonal-influenza-vaccine-uptake-in-children-of-school-age-monthly-data-2024-to-2025 www.gov.uk/government/statistics/seasonal-influenza-and-covid-19-vaccine-uptake-in-frontline-healthcare-workers-monthly-data-2024-to-2025

The following table summarises the latest data on vaccination from 2021/22 up to 30 November 2024, for children in primary and secondary school and for health care workers:

COHORT	2024/25	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22
Primary school	49.1%	48.1%	48.0%	39.5%
Secondary school	32.6%	29.5%	N/A	26.2%
Health care workers	32.2%	38.5%	41.8%	52.5%

Adult social care setting vaccine uptake is published monthly, and is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/monthly-statistics-for-adult-social-care-england#latest-report>

This year there was less time to complete vaccinations as the campaign for all adults, apart from pregnant women, started in early October 2024 rather than in September, as in previous years. This was based on the advice of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation, that it is better to vaccinate closer to when flu circulates because of waning vaccine effectiveness.

It should be noted that for most eligible groups, flu vaccination reached the highest levels of uptake ever achieved in the programme during the pandemic, but has dropped back since then in adults.

Kim Leadbeater:[\[23496\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 9 January 2025 to Question 21525 on Influenza: Vaccination, whether he plans to expand the eligibility criteria for winter flu vaccinations in the context of trends in the number of people with flu in winter 2024-25.

Andrew Gwynne:

Eligibility for the seasonal influenza vaccination programme is based on the advice and recommendations of the independent Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI). This advice is kept under regular review.

Trends in influenza activity varies across the season, and from season to season. The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) publishes weekly flu surveillance reports, which are available at the following link:

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

The UKHSA has confirmed that during this season so far, flu activity has been higher than in the winter of 2023/24, but similar to levels seen in the 2022/23 season.

■ Mental Health Services**Matt Bishop:**[\[21095\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase the availability of mental health support for winter 2024-25.

Stephen Kinnock:

We do not underestimate how challenging winter will be again this year for the National Health Service. The national approach on priorities for winter planning was issued on 16 September 2024. As part of this, maintaining patient safety and experience will continue to be an overriding priority.

Building on what we know works, this winter the NHS is implementing a range of initiatives to support those who need care, including that patients will be assessed at the front door of accident and emergency units so that they can then be directed to the most appropriate place to get care, including mental health care.

People with common mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety can self-refer to NHS Talking Therapies Services or be referred by their general practitioner. The Autumn Budget prioritised the funding to deliver expansions of NHS Talking Therapies, demonstrating our commitment to addressing the root cause of mental health issues.

Anyone in England experiencing a mental health crisis can now speak to a trained NHS professional at any time through a new mental health option on NHS 111. Trained NHS staff will assess patients over the phone and guide callers with next steps such as organising face-to-face community support or facilitating access to alternatives services, such as crisis cafés or safe havens which provide a place for people to stay as an alternative to accident and emergency or a hospital admission.

■ Mental Health Services and Speech and Language Therapy: Waiting Lists

James Wild:

[\[22985\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress his Department has made in reducing waiting times for (a) speech and language therapy services and (b) neurodevelopmental services.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Department and NHS England are committed to reducing long waits and improving timely access to community health services. This includes improving access to Speech and Language Therapy through the Early Language and Support for Every Child (ELSEC) pathfinder project within the Department for Education's existing £70 million Change Programme in partnership with NHS England. The ELSEC programme provides training and support to education settings to increase their ability to support speech, language, and communication development.

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

On 5 April 2023, NHS England published a national framework and operational guidance to help ICBs and the National Health Service to deliver improved outcomes for children, young people, and adults referred to an autism assessment service. The guidance also sets out what support should be available before an assessment and what support should follow a recent diagnosis of autism. In 2024/25, £4.3 million is available nationally to improve services for autistic children and young people, including autism assessment services.

In respect of ADHD, we are supporting a cross-sector taskforce that NHS England has launched into challenges in ADHD service provision and its impact on patient experience. The taskforce is bringing together expertise from across a broad range of sectors, including the National Health Service, education, and justice, to better understand the challenges affecting people with ADHD, including timely access to services and support.

■ Mental Health Services: Finance

Joe Robertson:

[\[22822\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent progress his Department has made on meeting the Mental Health Investment Standard; and how this is reflected in the funding allocated to mental health services in the NHS.

Joe Robertson:

[\[22823\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that increased funding for mental health services is (a) improving patient outcomes and (b) reducing waiting times.

Joe Robertson:

[\[22826\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to measure the potential impact of the (a) amount and (b) distribution of funding for mental health services on the (i) quality and (ii) accessibility of those services for patients.

Stephen Kinnock:

All integrated care boards met the Mental Health Investment Standard for 2023/24, meaning that their investment in mental health services increased in line with their overall increase in funding for the year. Information for 2024/25 is expected to become available later this year.

NHS England publishes new waiting time metrics in line with the clinical review of mental health access standards. These are published monthly via the mental health services data set, which delivers robust, comprehensive, nationally consistent, and comparable person-based information for children, young people, and adults who are in contact with mental health services.

This dataset is also used to inform the NHS Mental Health Dashboard and provides transparency in assessing how National Health Service mental health services in England are performing, alongside technical details explaining how mental health services are funded and delivered.

■ **Mental Health Services: Waiting Lists**

Ian Byrne:

[\[22713\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the time taken for people on mental health waiting lists to be (a) assessed and (b) treated.

Stephen Kinnock:

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

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

■ **Methylphenidate: Norfolk**

Steff Aquarone:

[\[23598\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 8 January 2025 to Question 21526 on Methylphenidate: Norfolk, how many prescriptions for methylphenidate were dispensed by Norfolk and Waveney (a) integrated care board and (b) clinical commissioning group in each year between 2019 and 2024.

Karin Smyth:

The Prescription Cost Analysis (PCA) from the NHS Business Services Authority provides the total number of prescription items of each medicine dispensed in the community in England. The following table shows the total number of National Health Service prescription items for the chemical substance methylphenidate that were dispensed in the Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Board (ICB) area from January 2019 to October 2024, latest data available, regardless of where prescribed:

TOTAL PRESCRIPTION ITEMS DISPENSED IN NORFOLK AND WAVENEY ICB

2019	33,733
2020	30,723
2021	31,320
2022	31,267
2023	32,138
2024	28,249

Note: data for 2024 is from January to October. In addition, the following table shows the total number of NHS prescription items for the chemical substance methylphenidate that were prescribed by cost centres linked to the Sub ICB Location (SICBL), or prior to 2020, the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) area of Norfolk and Waveney, from January 2019 to October 2024:

TOTAL PRESCRIPTION ITEMS PRESCRIBED IN NORFOLK AND WAVENEY SICBL

2019	31,751
2020	29,665
2021	30,334
2022	30,431
2023	31,233
2024	27,086

Notes:

1. data for 2024 is from January to October; and
2. historical data has been re-presented using the latest NHS organisation structure.

The CCG relates to the prescribing organisation, so the statistics are consistent with the English prescribing datasets rather than the dispensing organisation shown in PCA.

■ Midwives: Age**Dr Simon Opher:** [\[23499\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the age profile is of the NHS midwifery workforce for each Agenda for Change pay band in each region of England in the most recent month for which figures are available.

Karin Smyth:

The table attached shows the age profile of the National Health Service midwifery workforce for each Agenda for Change pay band, in each region of England.

Attachments:

1. Tables for PQ23499 [Age Profile of NHS Midwifery by Pay Band and Region.xlsx]

Dr Simon Opher: [\[23500\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the age profile is of the NHS midwifery workforce in (a) the most recent month for which figures are available and (b) the same month in each year since 2015.

Karin Smyth:

The tables attached show the age profile of the National Health Service midwifery workforce in the most recent month for which figures are available, and in the same month in each year since 2015.

Attachments:

1. Tables for PQ23500 [Age Profile of NHS Midwifery Workforce Since 2015.xlsx]

■ NHS North East and North Cumbria: Finance**Luke Akehurst:** [\[23042\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to his Department's press release entitled Biggest investment into hospices in a generation, dated 19 December 2024, how much of the £100 million funding will be allocated to the North East and North Cumbria integrated care board area.

Stephen Kinnock:

We are working closely, and at pace, with NHS England on this once in a generation funding boost. We will set out the details of the funding allocation and dissemination in the coming weeks.

■ Oral Cancer and Throat Cancer: Diagnosis**Jim Shannon:** [\[23318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the time taken to diagnose (a) mouth and (b) throat cancer.

Andrew Gwynne:

No specific assessment has been made on the adequacy of mouth and throat cancer diagnosis waiting times.

However, it is a priority for the Government to support the National Health Service to diagnose cancer as early and quickly as possible, to treat it faster, and ultimately to improve outcomes.

The Department is committing to improving waiting times for cancer treatment, starting by delivering an extra 40,000 operations, scans, and appointments each week, to support faster diagnosis and access to treatment.

■ **Organs: Donors**

Jim Shannon:

[\[23316\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many organs were donated for transplant in 2024.

Andrew Gwynne:

The following table shows the number of organs donated, the number of donors, and the number and percentage of organs donated that were transplanted, from the UK Transplant Registry, between 1 January 2024 and 31 December 2024, as of 10 January 2025:

UNITED KINGDOM SOLID ORGAN DONOR TYPE	NUMBER OF DONORS	ORGANS DONATED	ORGANS TRANSPLANTED
Living donors	938	938	938 (100%)
Deceased donors	1,385	4,513	3,787 (84%)

Note: there are many reasons why organs cannot be transplanted, including the organ being clinically unsuitable.

Figures are subject to change due to the delayed notification of living organ donor transplants and the current proximity to the end of 2024.

■ **Prostate Cancer: Medical Treatments**

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[\[23954\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to provide increased access to high-intensity focused ultrasound laser therapy for the treatment of prostate cancer.

Andrew Gwynne:

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has developed interventional procedures guidance on high-intensity focused ultrasound (HIFU) treatment for prostate cancer and focal therapy using HIFU for localised prostate cancer. This type of guidance considers if interventional procedures are safe and work well enough for wider use in the National Health Service, and both pieces of guidance acknowledge that there is a lack of evidence on quality-of-life benefits and long-term survival.

The NICE's guidelines recommend that HIFU should not be offered to people with localised or locally advanced prostate cancer, other than in the context of controlled clinical trials comparing their use with established interventions.

■ Radiotherapy

Tim Farron: [\[23291\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the radiotherapy tariff was last updated; and whether he has made an assessment of the potential need for further updates.

Andrew Gwynne:

The NHS Payment Scheme (NHSPS) replaced the national tariff from 1 April 2023. Following consultation, some amendments have been made for 2024/25, which came into effect on 1 April 2024. The amendments in the 2024/25 NHSPS included specialist radiotherapy services. In September 2024, a revised set of 2024/25 prices was published, which includes radiotherapy services and workforce tariffs. These prices have been updated to reflect a revised cost uplift factor for 2024/25.

NHS England held a series of workshops in October 2024 to set out, and seek feedback on, potential proposals for the 2025/26 NHS Payment Scheme, and other aspects of the NHS finance system expected to come into effect from 1 April 2025.

■ Radiotherapy: Finance

Tim Farron: [\[23297\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that funding for radiotherapy cancer treatments addresses regional inequalities in access to (a) advanced radiotherapy techniques and (b) radiotherapy satellite centres; and if he will include an assessment the potential implications for his policies of such inequalities in the NHS 10 year plan.

Andrew Gwynne:

NHS England and the integrated care boards are responsible for ensuring healthcare needs of local communities are met. These responsibilities include considering adequate healthcare provision, care, and wider support for local populations, including in remote and rural areas. This includes radiotherapy treatment. The Government will work to ensure that the best standard of healthcare is available no matter where people live.

Addressing healthcare inequity is a core focus of the 10-Year Health Plan, to ensure the National Health Service is there for anyone who needs it whenever they need it. We have established 11 working groups to take forward policy development that will feed into the plan. This includes working groups focused on how care should be designed and delivered to improve healthcare equity, alongside ensuring that access to healthcare services is effective and responsive.

■ Radiotherapy: Medical Equipment

Tim Farron:

[\[23294\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many radiotherapy machines are (a) over the 10-year recommended age and (b) at risk of being out of date by the end of 2025; and how many of such machines he plans to replaced with funding announced in paragraph 2.71 of the Autumn Budget 2024.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Government will continue to support the provision of radiotherapy machines, however, since April 2022 the responsibility for investing in new radiotherapy machines has been with local systems. 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.

The number of radiotherapy machines in use which are over the 10-year recommended age is not published by NHS England.

■ Social Services: Standards

Sarah Olney:

[\[22051\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will work with the care sector to establish a (a) National Care Agency to (i) set minimum standards of care and (ii) act as a regulator and (b) Royal College of Careworkers to (A) improve recognition, (B) deliver training and development and (C) ensure the highest professional standards.

Stephen Kinnock:

We are launching an independent commission into adult social care as part of delivering a National Care Service and adult social care reform. The Secretary of State has invited representatives of the Conservatives, the Liberal Democrats, Reform UK and the Green Party to take part in cross-party talks on this to build consensus regarding the commission and what it will achieve. This will start a national conversation about what care and support working age adults, older people, and their families should expect from adult social care. The Commission will look at all aspects of the adult social care system, identifying the biggest challenges in adult social care and recommending practical changes to best meet the current and future needs of the population over the coming decades.

■ Social Services: Winchester

Dr Danny Chambers:

[\[23237\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to tackle the shortage of social care packages in (a) Royal Hampshire County Hospital and (b) Winchester.

Stephen Kinnock:

Local authorities are best placed to understand and plan for the needs of their population, which is why, under the Care Act 2014, local authorities are tasked with

the duty to shape their care market and to commission services to meet the diverse needs of all local people. In performing that duty, a local authority must have regard to current and likely future demand for such services and consider how providers might meet that demand.

The Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund includes grant conditions which require each local authority to submit an adult social care capacity plan. These were submitted to the Department in June 2024.

The Government is supporting local authorities by making available up to £3.7 billion of additional funding for social care authorities in 2025/26, which includes an £880 million increase in the Social Care Grant.

■ **Speech and Language Therapy: Merseyside**

Anneliese Midgley:

[23008]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of access to specialist speech and language therapy services for children in (a) Merseyside and (b) Knowsley constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Department regularly monitors waiting lists for community services, including speech and language therapy, and is committed to reducing long waits and improving timely access to community health services, including for speech and language therapy services for children. Community health services, including speech and language therapy, are locally commissioned to enable systems to best meet the needs of their communities.

■ **Sunburn: Children and Young People**

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:

[23724]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of the frequency of sunburn in children and young people under 18.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Department continues to advise patients to follow National Health Service guidance on sun protection. This advice is available publicly on the NHS.UK website, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/seasonal-health/sunscreen-and-sun-safety/>

It includes guidance on the extra care that should be taken for babies and children.

HOME OFFICE**■ Elections: USA**

Nick Timothy: [\[23030\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has issued guidance to political parties on the United States of America's Foreign Agents Registration Scheme for campaigning overseas.

Dan Jarvis:

Guidance on other country's regulations is a matter for the country concerned. Information on the U.S. Foreign Agents Registration Act can be found on the U.S. Department of Justice website.

■ Electronic Travel Authorisations

Alex Sobel: [\[22665\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what guidance her Department has issued on whether transport carriers can accept (a) an expired British passport and (b) other evidence of British citizenship as proof of exemption from the electronic travel authorisation requirement.

Alex Sobel: [\[22666\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether dual citizens with British or Irish nationality are required to apply for electronic travel authorisation to travel to the UK in instances where their British or Irish passport has expired.

Seema Malhotra:

We recommend that all dual nationals travel on a valid British or Irish citizen passport (or Irish passport card) or with a passport containing a Certificate of Entitlement to the Right of Abode to minimise any potential delay during their journey; or at the border.

Carriers bringing passengers to the UK routinely carry out checks to ensure passengers hold genuine, valid documents, so, it is likely that passengers seeking to rely on an expired passport to establish a permission to travel may be delayed or even denied travel.

British and Irish citizens do not need an ETA to enter the UK and should not apply for one.

■ Home Office: Media

Uma Kumaran: [\[23668\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much their Department spent on (a) media and (b) voice training for Ministers between 4 July 2022 and 4 July 2024.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Between 4 July 2022 and 4 July 2024, the Department has spent £0 on media and voice training for Ministers.

■ **Muslim Brotherhood****Nigel Farage:**[\[23538\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to prescribe Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organisation.

Dan Jarvis:

I refer the Hon. member to the answer provided to question UIN 23462.

■ **Protection From Sex-based Harassment in Public Act 2023****Mike Martin:**[\[23630\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her planned timetable is for the implementation of the Protection from Sex-based Harassment in Public Act 2023.

Jess Phillips:

The Government is committed to halving levels of violence against women and girls in a decade. An important part of this ambition is tackling public sexual harassment which often leaves people, disproportionately women, feeling very unsafe. The Protection from Sex-Based Harassment in Public Act 2023 is intended to make this type of harassment a specific offence.

As with any new criminal justice legislation, an implementation period is necessary to ensure all processes, systems and guidance are updated - including drawing up statutory guidance. We will confirm next steps on implementation of the Act at the earliest opportunity.

■ **Repatriation****Rupert Lowe:**[\[22432\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the cost to the public purse of her Department's Reintegration Programme was in the last ten years; and how many people of what countries of origin benefited from that Programme in that period.

Rupert Lowe:[\[22433\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people deported as a result of a conviction for involvement in a Pakistani heritage grooming gang benefited from her Department's Reintegration Programme.

Dame Angela Eagle:

Any foreign national who commits serious crimes in our country should be in no doubt that we will do everything possible to ensure their deportation from the UK, so that they can no longer represent an ongoing risk to our communities or an ongoing burden to our taxpayers.

The specific information requested is not readily available from published statistics, and could only be obtained for the purpose of answering this question at disproportionate cost.

■ Terrorism

Alicia Kearns: [\[23462\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential implications for her policies of the United Arab Emirates proscribing (a) Cambridge Education and Training Centre Ltd, (b) IMA6INE Ltd, (c) Wembley Tree Ltd, (d) Waslaforall, (e) Future Graduates Ltd, (f) Yas for Investment and Real Estate, (g) Holdco UK Properties Limited and (h) Nafel Capital as terror groups.

Alicia Kearns: [\[23463\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department considers the Muslim Association of Britain an extremist entity.

Alicia Kearns: [\[23464\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department considers the Muslim Brotherhood and its international offshoots to be extremist entities.

Dan Jarvis:

The Government does not routinely comment on individual groups or cases and Home Office officials continually seek to build and refresh their knowledge of the threat from extremism, as the landscape is constantly evolving. This includes disrupting the activities of those who seek to radicalise others but operate – often intentionally – below legal thresholds.

While the Government keeps the list of proscribed organisations in the UK under review, we do not routinely comment on whether or not an organisation is under consideration for proscription.

■ Undocumented Migrants

Nick Timothy: [\[23522\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to her Department's transparency data entitled Breakdown of Home Office costs associated with the MEDP with Rwanda and the Illegal Migration Act 2023, Table 1: Home Office spend on the MEDP and the IMA, published on 2 December 2024, if she will provide a breakdown of the Other fixed costs referenced in that table.

Dame Angela Eagle:

In reference to this published document [Breakdown of Home Office costs associated with the MEDP with Rwanda and the Illegal Migration Act 2023](#), a further breakdown of row 4 of Table 1 'other fixed costs' is as follows:

OTHER FIXED COSTS (£M)*	2022/23	2023/24	24/25 (TO JUNE 24)	TOTAL
Costs incurred to design and develop the digital, IT and data systems required to operationalise the MEDP and IMA	0	122	12	134
Programme and legal costs	0	50	7	57
Cost of staff working directly on MEDP & IMA policies	0	61	26	87
Total	0	233	45	278

* Figures are to the nearest £1 million

Please note the figures in Table 1 of the referenced publication on gov.uk were rounded to the nearest £5 million either way for technical reasons.

■ Undocumented Workers: Fines

Neil O'Brien:

[\[21664\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the value of penalties issued in illegal working civil penalties was in each quarter for which data is available; and how many and what proportion of the penalties issued in each quarter have been paid.

Dame Angela Eagle:

Information on illegal working civil penalty statistics has been published since 2016 as part of the Home Office Immigration Transparency Data and can be found at [Immigration Enforcement data: Q3 2024 - GOV.UK](#) on tab CPO2.

Please note the figures are for penalties levied at the initial decision stage which may be reduced, cancelled or increased at the objection or appeal stage, or whose collection may be affected by any subsequent decision by business in question to cease operations or declare bankruptcy as a result of the enforcement action taken against them.

We do not hold cohort data on how many and what proportion of the penalties issued in each quarter have been paid.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**■ Affordable Housing**

Kevin Hollinrake: [\[20650\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she has an affordable housing target for this Parliament.

Matthew Pennycook:

The government has not set an affordable housing target to date, but we are committed to delivering the biggest increase in social and affordable housebuilding in a generation.

With regard to grant funded affordable housing, the government will set out details of new investment to succeed the 2021-26 Affordable Homes Programme at the Spending Review. This new investment will deliver a mix of homes for sub-market rent and homeownership, with a particular focus on delivering homes for Social Rent.

In addition, the provision of affordable homes will be supported by our 'Golden Rules' for Green Belt development. Prior to development plan policies for affordable housing being updated in accordance with the revised NPPF, the affordable housing contribution required to satisfy the 'Golden Rules' is 15 percentage points above the highest existing affordable housing requirement that would otherwise apply to the development, subject to a cap of 50%. We estimate that under this model, the median Green Belt local planning authority affordable housing requirement will be 50%.

■ Buildings: Insurance

Dame Meg Hillier: [\[R\] \[21979\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if her Department will take steps to encourage insurance companies to insure buildings with a PAS 9980 assessment of (a) low and (b) medium tolerable that do not require remediation.

Alex Norris:

Building owners are responsible for ensuring that buildings have appropriate buildings insurance in place.

The government encourages insurance companies to provide suitable, fairly-priced insurance for all blocks of flats, whatever the conclusion of the Fire Risk Appraisal of External Walls.

Insurers make commercial decisions about the price and terms of cover they offer following their assessment of the relevant risks. Government is determined that insurance companies treat customers fairly and the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) requires firms to ensure their products offer fair value. The FCA has been clear it will be monitoring firms and, where necessary, it will take action.

My officials would be happy to speak to the insurance industry about any building brought to our attention, which is unable to obtain any buildings insurance cover.

For buildings that do require remediation, the Fire Safety Reinsurance Facility, led by the Association of British Insurers (ABI) and reinsurance broker McGill and Partners, may reduce high premiums for some of the most affected multi-occupancy buildings with fire safety issues.

■ Energy Performance Certificates

Dr Simon Opher: [\[23502\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment her Department has made of the consistency in EPC ratings provided by different assessors; and whether she plans to improve that consistency through changes to (a) methodology, (b) training and (c) regulation.

Alex Norris:

The Energy Performance of Buildings Regulations 2012 place a duty on accreditation schemes to ensure that Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) are produced in a consistent and accurate manner and the energy assessors are suitably qualified and experienced to carry out their duties. Government regularly audits accreditation schemes to assess whether they are fulfilling their duties and takes action to address any issues found.

■ Housing: Construction

Samantha Niblett: [\[21751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to prevent new housing developments being left (a) uncompleted and (b) unadopted by the local authority following developer bankruptcy.

Samantha Niblett: [\[21753\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will take steps to ensure that local authorities hold a legally binding bond to ensure new housing developments are completed if the developer declares bankruptcy.

Matthew Pennycook:

Local planning authorities already have powers to issue a completion notice which requires a developer to complete their development if it is left uncompleted. If they fail to do so, the planning permission for the development will no longer be valid.

In our recent response to the NPPF consultation, which can be found on gov.uk [here](#), we made clear we are also taking steps to implement build out reporting, including bringing in a new requirement for housing developers to submit annual progress reports.

Where developers face financial difficulties before development is completed, we would expect local authorities to work with administrators to help unblock sites and restart housing delivery to complete the development. As part of their responsibilities

local authorities should consider how to mitigate risks around infrastructure delivery including looking at the timing of infrastructure completion on site and considering whether it is appropriate to require developers to set aside bonds which can be used to complete infrastructure should the developer be unable to do so.

■ **Housing: Foreign Nationals**

David Simmonds: [\[22720\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 3 January 2025 to Question 19776 on Affordable Housing, in what circumstances foreign nationals who are not eligible for social housing are eligible for taxpayer-funded (a) temporary and (b) permanent accommodation.

David Simmonds: [\[23914\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, in what circumstances foreign nationals not eligible for social housing are eligible for Government funded (a) temporary and (b) permanent accommodation.

Rushanara Ali:

Eligibility for social housing and statutory homelessness assistance are both determined by immigration status. If a person's visa means that they cannot access state benefits or local authority housing assistance, they will not be eligible for statutory homelessness assistance, and therefore unable to obtain temporary or permanent accommodation.

As the eligibility rules for social housing and homelessness assistance are the same, an applicant who is not eligible for social housing will almost always also not be eligible for homelessness assistance. A small number of EU nationals with pre-settled status (PSS) may be able to access statutory homelessness assistance in a very specific set of circumstances should a 'not eligible' decision lead to a breach of their right to dignity under Article 1 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights which has direct effect as a result of the Court of Appeal ruling in *SSWP v AT*.

■ **Local Government Finance**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[23419\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of funding provided by the Government to local councils.

Jim McMahon:

We are providing a significant boost to local authorities in England. Taken together, the additional funding announced by the Chancellor at the Autumn Budget and at the 2025-26 provisional Local Government Finance Settlement will provide over £5 billion of new funding for local services over and above local council tax. This includes an additional £2 billion of grant through the Settlement in addition to a guarantee that local authorities in England will receive at least £1.1 billion in total in 2025-26 from the

new Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging (pEPR) scheme, and a further £233 million of additional funding for homelessness services.

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

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

■ Local Government: Devolution

Steff Aquarone: [R] [\[23599\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when she plans to announce which local authorities have been selected for the devolution priority programme.

Jim McMahon:

We received proposals from a number of local authorities on 10 January expressing interest in joining the Devolution Priority Programme. We are reviewing these at pace, and we hope to announce places on the Programme in the coming weeks.

■ Local Government: Reorganisation

Kevin Hollinrake: [\[22334\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to mandate local government restructuring as part of her plan for devolution.

Jim McMahon:

The English Devolution White Paper announced that we will facilitate a programme of local government reorganisation for two-tier areas, and for unitary councils where there is evidence of failure or where their size or boundaries may be hindering their ability to deliver sustainable and high-quality public services. The White Paper was clear that reorganisation should not delay devolution and plans for both should be complementary, also that we will deliver this process as quickly as possible, including through legislation where it becomes necessary to ensure progress.

All levels of local government have a part to play in bringing improved structures to their area through reorganisation, and we expect all councils in an area to work together to develop unitary proposals that are in the best interests of the whole area.

■ National Parks: Planning

James MacCleary: [\[23659\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether the local government reorganisation plans will include provision on (a) planning

responsibilities held by the South Downs National Park Authority for Lewes and (b) other National Parks.

Matthew Pennycook:

The government's proposals for local government reorganisation will not change the planning responsibilities held by the South Downs Park Authority or any other national park. National Park authorities will remain the local planning authority for their areas.

■ **Planning: Conservation**

James Naish:

[\[22119\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department is encouraging developers to make provisions for (a) hedgehogs and (b) other wildlife.

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.

Hedgehog highways are identified in the National Model Design Code and Planning Practice Guidance as a feature to enable movement between development sites, and Natural England's Green Infrastructure Framework sets out how development can incorporate a range of nature friendly features including bricks with a hole which can benefit sparrows, tree sparrows, swifts, starling, and bats.

■ **Political Parties: Finance**

Kevin Hollinrake:

[\[22912\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department has issued guidance on foreign donors from which donations including via (a) third parties and (b) corporate companies may be accepted by political parties.

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.

■ **Poverty: Children**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[23420\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent steps she has taken with Cabinet colleagues to help alleviate child poverty in (a) Slough and (b) the Thames Valley region.

Rushanara Ali:

In the Labour manifesto we committed to developing an ambitious strategy to reduce child Poverty. I am part of the ministerial Child Poverty Taskforce which has since been established to drive this forward, aiming to publish a Child Poverty Strategy in Spring 2025. On 23 October we published our framework 'Tackling Child Poverty: Developing Our Strategy' and are exploring all available levers to drive forward short and long-term actions across government to reduce child poverty. Local authorities are key partners in tackling child poverty and we will continue to engage with them to ensure the Strategy supports and enables shared solutions.

Renters Rights Bill: First-tier Tribunal**Kevin Hollinrake:**[\[22915\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she has had discussions with the President of the First-tier Tribunal (Property Chamber) on the Renters Rights Bill.

Matthew Pennycook:

Officials in my department hold regular discussions with colleagues at HM Court Tribunal Service (HMCTS) and the Ministry of Justice, as well as members of the judiciary, in respect of ongoing work to ensure that the First-tier Tribunal (Property Chamber) is prepared for the introduction of the measures in the Renters' Rights Bill.

Second Homes: Planning Permission**James Naish:**[\[22111\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will amend planning regulations to facilitate converting holiday lodges into permanent primary homes.

Matthew Pennycook:

It is for local planning authorities to consider whether holiday lodges would be suitable to become permanent primary homes. Where a holiday lodge is judged to be unsuitable for use as a permanent home, for example due to its size, location or access to amenities, a local planning authority can attach conditions to the grant of planning permission which restricts the use of the property.

Social Rented Housing: Rents**Adam Dance:**[\[23607\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of requiring social housing providers to refer tenants to a local debt advice service before serving them with an eviction notice for rent arrears.

Matthew Pennycook:

The government is clear that social landlords should seek to sustain tenancies and should only evict as a last resort.

Landlords will, when managing their social housing schemes, provide advice and assistance to those struggling financially, including signposting to support services.

The Pre-Action Protocol for Possession Claims by Social Landlords sets out the actions social landlords should take to support the tenant before they consider taking legal action for rent arrears. These actions include making early contact with tenants to discuss the cause of the arrears, checking eligibility for housing benefit, assisting with any claim, and agreeing affordable repayment terms for the arrears. The protocol can be found on the justice website [here](#).

JUSTICE

■ Council Tax: Non-payment

Phil Brickell: [\[23550\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people have (a) been committed to prison and (b) been given suspended committal orders for non-payment of council tax in each year since 2019.

Phil Brickell: [\[23551\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether her Department holds a demographic breakdown of people (a) sent to prison and (b) given suspended committal orders for non-payment of council tax in each year between 2019 and 2024.

Sarah Sackman:

Non-payment of council tax is not a criminal offence and cannot attract a custodial sentence. However, under the committal to prison process, a court order can provide for someone to be jailed for failing to pay a debt.

Committal to prison can only ever be the last resort for non-payment of council tax. Before a magistrates' court commits someone to prison for failure to pay their council tax, it must have issued a "liability order" and the local authority must have (at least) tried and failed to take control of the debtor's goods and sell them to recover the debt. Councils have additional powers of enforcement under a liability order, including deduction from earnings, deduction from benefit, charging orders on the property, and bankruptcy. If a council applies for committal to prison, the court must inquire into the debtor's means, and the council must satisfy the court that there is no other effective method of collection and that failure to pay is due to wilful refusal or culpable neglect. This is to prevent persons who are genuinely unable to pay their council tax from being committed to prison. Where that is the case courts have the power to remit the debt.

Individuals in cases where there has been a committal to prison will not necessarily go to prison where payment is made. No individual has been admitted to prison for non-payment of council tax between 2019 and 2023. This can be viewed in Table 2.A.16: at the following link:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/662909f33b0122a378a7e602/Prison-receptions-2023.ods>.

Data on the number of committals to prison and suspended committals to prison for council tax non-payment since 2019 can be found in the table below:

NATIONAL	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	JAN - SEPT 2024 *
Number cases of Committals to Prison for non-payment of council tax	11	1	1	0	2	0
Number Cases of Suspended Committal Orders for non-payment of council tax	395	66	15	24	19	13

SOURCE: HMCTS MANAGEMENT INFORMATION LIBRA MIS

The count is based upon a case completion date falling between the reporting period 1st January 2019 and the 30th September 2024 where the offence codes **CT92501 "Complaint for council tax liability order"** ; **CT92502 "Complaints for Council Tax Liability Order (Multiple Cases)"** ; **CT92511 "Complaint for Council Tax Committal Application"** and result codes **CDIMPS "Suspended Committal Order"** ; **CDIMPSF "Suspended Committal order further suspended"** ; **CDLTI "Civil Debt etc Committal to Prison, Imprisonment (Effective Sentence)"** ; **CW "UPD - Imprisonment in Default Subsequent to Imposition"** ; **IMP "Imprisonment Effective"** ; and **SC "UPD - Suspended imprisonment to enforce money owed"** were applied. The data supplied is a count of cases. Libra is a case centric management system and as such the count is not a count of the number of defendants.

* Data for 2024 in line with the official statistics.

Although care is taken when processing and analysing the data, the details are subject to inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale case management system and is the best data that is available.

Data are management information and are not subject to the same level of checks as official

SOURCE: HMCTS MANAGEMENT INFORMATION LIBRA MIS

statistics.

Data are taken from a live management information system and can change over time and for that reason might differ slightly from any previously published information.

Data has not been cross referenced with case files.

In 2018, the High Court issued a judgment in a case relating to imprisonment for non-payment of council tax. Following that judgment there has been a significant reduction in the number of committals and the number of suspended committals since 2019.

Wales abolished power to commit to prison on 1 April 2019, subject to some transitional provisions.

In the data held centrally, we do not have data on the demographics of the people who are the subject of these cases.

■ Demonstrations: Sentencing

Calum Miller:

[\[23244\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of revising sentencing guidelines to protect the right to protest.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The right to peacefully protest is a cornerstone of our democracy. It is a long-standing tradition in this country that people are able to gather together and to express a point of view, provided that they do so within the law. The Government is fully committed to protecting and preserving that right.

Sentencing guidelines are developed by the independent Sentencing Council for England and Wales, in fulfilment of its statutory duty to do so. The guidelines produced provide the Court with guidance on factors that should be considered, which may affect the sentence given. They set out different levels of sentence based on the harm caused and how culpable the offender is.

As an independent body, the Council decides its own work plan and priorities. The Lord Chancellor or the Court of Appeal can ask the Council to consider producing or revising guidelines in a particular area, but the Council is not required to agree to any such requests.

The definitive guidelines on the sentencing of public order offences were issued by the Council on 25 September 2019 and came into force on 1 January 2020. The Council is currently developing guidelines for additional public order offences.

■ Hampshire Police and Crime Commissioner**Luke Murphy:** [\[23643\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how much funding has been allocated to the Hampshire Police and Crime Commissioner (a) in total and (b) for support services for survivors of sexual assault and abuse since 2012.

Alex Davies-Jones:

The 42 Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) in England and Wales receive annual grant funding from the Ministry of Justice's victim and witness budget to commission local practical, emotional, and therapeutic support services for victims of all crime types.

My Department has committed £154 million per annum on a multi-year basis across this spending review period, up to the end of March 2025. For 2024/25 we provided £41 million of ringfenced funding for the recruitment of Independent Sexual and Domestic Violence Advisors, and £21 million of ringfenced funding for community-based domestic abuse and sexual violence services. These funding commitments have enabled us to provide tailored support to enable victims of sexual violence to cope and recover from the devastating effect of their crimes. Funding amounts for individual PCC areas are not routinely published.

The PCC for Hampshire publishes details on services commissioned in their annual reports available at: [Money - Hampshire Police and Crime Commissioner](#).

■ Offences against Children: Prisoners' Release**Robert Jenrick:** [\[23328\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether any offenders convicted of a grooming gang offence were released under the SDS40.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

There is no single 'grooming gang' offence defined in legislation.

All sex offences are automatically excluded from SDS40.

■ Sexual Offences: Prisoners' Release**Alicia Kearns:** [\[23460\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether any offenders convicted of gang rape have been released early from prison in the last six months.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

There is no single offence for gang rape defined in legislation.

All sex offences are automatically excluded from the SDS40 scheme.

NORTHERN IRELAND**■ Windsor Framework: Northern Ireland**

Robin Swann: [\[23685\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, whether the Independent Review of the Windsor Framework will consider the (a) operation and (b) output of the Northern Ireland Assembly Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee.

Hilary Benn:

It will be a matter for Lord Murphy to consider the programme of work of the Review. In line with the Terms of Reference, the Review will be obliged to consult with a range of stakeholders, including Northern Ireland political parties, and can engage with the Assembly and its committee functions as it considers appropriate.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY**■ Artificial Intelligence**

Ben Lake: [\[23414\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he is taking to ensure that that the skills needed for the implementation of the AI Opportunity Action Plan are developed across all four nations of the UK.

Feryal Clark:

The AI Opportunities Action Plan will ensure the UK builds a strong and diverse talent pipeline, realising AI benefits across all UK nations.

Skills England will build highly trained workforces to meet national, regional and local skills needs of the next decade. Skills England will collaborate with devolved administrations, regional partners, the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government, and the Department for Education, aligning with devolution agreements and the Government's commitment to simplify and devolve adult skills funding to Combined Authorities. Cross-UK collaboration will spread best practices and equip the four nations in boosting growth and spreading opportunity.

Ben Lake: [\[23415\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what discussion he has had with (a) Skills England and (b) the equivalent agencies in the devolved nations on the AI Opportunity Action Plan.

Feryal Clark:

The AI Opportunities Action Plan government response commits to working with Skills England, as well as devolved and local governments, to assess the country's AI and digital skills. This will expand education pathways into AI, ensure lifelong skills programmes are prepared for AI, and identify AI adoption opportunities to drive growth.

The Secretary of State engaged with all devolved administrations and key departments on the Action Plan. Skills England will collaborate with devolved administrations to boost growth and spread opportunities across the UK, addressing challenges within the UK skills system and establishing cross-border linkages to facilitate investment in skills.

■ Artificial Intelligence: Devolution

Ben Lake: [\[23413\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what discussions he has had with the devolved Administrations on the AI Opportunity Action Plan.

Feryal Clark:

We are committed to building an AI sector that can scale and win globally, ensuring global AI companies want to call the UK home, and boosting the responsible adoption of AI across all parts of the economy.

The plan sets out our intention to deliver growth across the entire UK via collaboration with devolved and local governments, regional businesses and trade bodies to devise strategies best suited to the context of these regions. I have spoken with ministers from all the Devolved Administrations about the Action Plan, emphasising how important it is for the whole of the UK to benefit.

■ Artificial Intelligence: Regulation

Charlotte Cane: [\[21804\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps his Department is taking to regulate Artificial Intelligence.

Feryal Clark:

The vast majority of AI systems should be regulated at the point of use, and the UK's existing expert regulators are best placed to do this. The government is committed to ensuring that regulators have the right expertise and resources to make proportionate and effective decisions about AI.

The Government also intends to introduce targeted requirements on the handful of companies developing the most powerful AI systems. These proposals will build on the voluntary commitments secured at the Seoul and Bletchley AI Summits and will strengthen the role of the AI Safety Institute.

TRANSPORT

■ Bus Services: Disability

Graham Leadbitter: [\[23665\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the provision of audio-visual announcements by bus operators under the Bus Services Act 2017.

Simon Lightwood:

We recognise the importance of audible and visible route and destination information in helping disabled people and other passengers to use bus services with confidence. On 1st October 2024 the first phase of the Public Service Vehicles (Accessible Information) Regulations 2023 (“Accessible Information Regulations”) came into force, requiring vehicles first used on local services since October 2019 to comply. The majority of local services should be compliant by October 2026.

The most recent annual bus statistics indicate that 37.2% of buses in Great Britain incorporated audible and visible route and next stop information provision as at 31st March 2024, but these statistics do not yet reflect the implementation of the Accessible Information Regulations.

■ Bus Services: Franchises**Alex Mayer:**[\[23560\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of local authorities franchising bus services on smaller bus operators.

Simon Lightwood:

The Bus Services Act 2017 contains a duty for local authorities to make a statement on how they will facilitate participation from small and medium sized operators in service provision as part of the franchising process.

The Department, as part of the Impact Assessment for the Bus Services (No.2) Bill, has considered the potential effects of franchising; this includes the effect on small-to-medium-sized operators.

The Department is also providing support and guidance to authorities considering franchising and we will continue working with local authorities to develop different franchising models that could be smaller scale, require less financial commitment and support participation from a range of operators.

■ Bus Services: Lincolnshire**Sir John Hayes:**[\[23256\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to improve the accessibility of bus services for disabled people in Lincolnshire.

Simon Lightwood:

The government is committed to improving bus services right across the country, including in Lincolnshire, so they are more inclusive and enable disabled people to travel safely, confidently and with dignity. On 1st October 2024, the first phase of the Public Service Vehicles (Accessible Information) Regulations 2023 came into force, meaning that newer vehicles providing local services must provide audible and visible information on stops, destinations and diversions. The majority of services will need to comply by October 2026.

On 17th December, the government introduced a new Bus Services Bill that will give local leaders the freedom to take decisions to deliver their local transport priorities and ensure networks meet the needs of the communities who rely on them, including for disabled people. The Bill includes measures which will make bus travel more accessible and inclusive.

■ Bus Services: Timetables

Alex Mayer: [\[23555\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment her Department has made of the effectiveness of the roll out of the Bus Open Data Service.

Alex Mayer: [\[23556\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of removing (a) home-to-school and (b) home-to-work transport from the registration of local services requirements of the Bus Open Data Service.

Simon Lightwood:

The Bus Open Data Service (BODS) was launched in 2020 and requires all bus operators of local services in England to provide passengers with high-quality, accurate and up-to-date passenger information including timetables, fares, tickets and vehicle location information. 85% of bus operators in England have provided timetable, vehicle location and fares data to BODS.

The government is committed to delivering better bus services, and part of this work is improving the information available to passengers about their bus services.

Regulations like those for Bus Open Data therefore form an important part of the Department's efforts to ensure passengers have access to high quality bus services, including up to date, reliable information on where services are.

Publishing this data openly provides choice to parents, students and commuters in which apps they use for bus tracking, causing passengers to spend less time waiting at bus stops and helping to ensure they arrive at school or their workplace on time.

Local authorities and bus operators also have better information on the punctuality and reliability of buses operating to provide school transport or home to work transport in their areas.

■ Buses: Accidents

Alex Mayer: [\[23564\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what data her Department holds on the number of bus incidents where driver fatigue was identified as an issue in (a) 2024 and (b) the last five years for which data is available.

Simon Lightwood:

The Department publishes statistics on road collisions and casualties involving personal injury reported by police via the data collection system known as STATS19.

Within this system, reporting police officers can assign up to 6 factors which, in their opinion, may have contributed to the collision. Please note that this does not assign blame for the collision to any specific road user but gives an indication of which factors the attending officer thought contributed to the collision.

The number of buses or coaches involved in collisions where the contributory factor 'fatigue' was assigned to the driver in each of the last 5 years for which data is available are shown in the table. Figures for 2024 are scheduled for publication in September 2025.

YEAR	BUS/COACH IN REPORTED ROAD INJURY COLLISION WITH CONTRIBUTORY FACTOR 'FATIGUE' ASSIGNED TO DRIVER
2019	13
2020	7
2021	5
2022	12
2023	18

■ Cycling and Walking: Investment

Laurence Turner: [\[23640\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent progress her Department has made on the preparation of a third cycling and walking investment strategy.

Simon Lightwood:

The Department's officials are scoping out options for the third Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy, and the Department will say more on this in due course. The Department will also consult stakeholders before the publication of the Strategy, as required by the 2015 Infrastructure Act, and will report to Parliament later this year on the delivery of the second Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy.

■ Electric Vehicles: Repairs and Maintenance

Munira Wilson: [\[23173\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the potential implications for her policies of the Institute of the Motor Industry's survey entitled EV TechSafe Technician Forecasts - Jan 2024.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Government is committed to working with the Institute of the Motor Industry (IMI) to ensure mechanics across the UK are equipped with the skills needed to safely repair electric vehicles (EVs). Currently over 58,000 technicians, 24% of the

workforce, are qualified to work on EVs. This aligns with the 2.8% of licensed vehicles on UK roads that are zero emission.

By endorsing the IMI TechSafe Standards, the Government aims to strengthen trust within the industry and among consumers, supporting the transition to electric vehicles and fostering the development of a highly skilled workforce.

■ Fares: Non-payment

Lewis Cocking: [\[23512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking with Transport for London to reduce fare evasion.

Simon Lightwood:

Ministers and officials have regular conversations with Transport for London on a variety of issues including fare evasion on their network. Transport in London is devolved to the Mayor and TfL is responsible for operational decisions to support reduced fare evasion.

■ Roads: Infrastructure

Mark Ferguson: [\[23005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what comparative estimate she has made of the cost to the public purse of spending on road infrastructure in (a) the North East and (b) England over the last 15 years by (i) percentage of total Departmental spend and (ii) per head.

Lilian Greenwood:

Figures on public sector expenditure at national and regional levels are published as part of HM Treasury's Country and Regional Analysis (CRA) statistics (available here for current and previous publications:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/country-and-regional-analysis>). In the most recent publication, figures are provided from 2019/20 to 2023/24.

The figures included below are in 2023/24 prices.

In 2023/24, capital expenditure for the Department of Transport and its partner bodies on national and local roads was £284m in the North East of England and £3,754m in England. Capital expenditure on national and local roads in the North East of England was 0.94% of total Department for Transport expenditure. Capital expenditure on national and local roads in England was 12.39% of total Department for Transport expenditure.

DEPARTMENT FOR TRANSPORT EXPENDITURE AND CAPITAL EXPENDITURE ON NATIONAL AND LOCAL ROADS BY SELECTED REGIONS, 2023/24 PRICES, £M (2019/20 TO 2023/24)

Expenditure	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Total DfT	25,010	35,113	32,393	30,039	30,306

DEPARTMENT FOR TRANSPORT EXPENDITURE AND CAPITAL EXPENDITURE ON NATIONAL AND LOCAL ROADS BY SELECTED REGIONS, 2023/24 PRICES, £M (2019/20 TO 2023/24)

Expenditure

Capital Expenditure in North East England: national roads and local roads	193	315	301	369	284
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As a Proportion of Total DfT Expenditure	0.77%	0.90%	0.93%	1.23%	0.94%
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Capital Expenditure in England: national roads and local roads	4,049	4,176	3,563	3,641	3,754
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As a Proportion of Total DfT Expenditure	16.19%	11.89%	11.00%	12.12%	12.39%
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Applying regional population estimates from the ONS to HMT's Country and Regional Analysis data allows for a view of per capita spend by region. In 2023/24, capital expenditure per capita on national and local roads was £105 in the North East of England and £65 in England.

DEPARTMENT FOR TRANSPORT CAPITAL EXPENDITURE ON NATIONAL ROADS AND LOCAL ROADS BY SELECTED REGIONS £ PER CAPITA, 2023/24 PRICES, (2019/20 TO 2023/24)

Region	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
North East England	73	119	114	138	105
England	72	74	63	64	65

The Government remains committed to driving prosperity across the United Kingdom, ensuring that growth is felt at both a regional and national level.

■ Transport: Infrastructure

Mark Ferguson:

[23006]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate she has made of the (a) total cost to the public purse for, (b) proportion of her Department's total expenditure that was spent on and (c) spend per head for transport infrastructure in (a) the North East and (b) England the last 15 years.

Mike Kane:

Figures on public sector expenditure at national and regional levels are published as part of HM Treasury's Country and Regional Analysis (CRA) statistics (Available here for current and previous publications: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/country-and-regional-analysis>). In the most recent publication, figures are provided from 2019/20 to 2023/24.

In 2023/24, capital expenditure from the Department for Transport and its partner bodies was £489m in the North East of England and £17,298m in England. Capital expenditure in the North East of England was 1.6% as a proportion of total Department for Transport expenditure. Capital expenditure in England was 57.1% as a proportion of total Department for Transport expenditure.

DEPARTMENT FOR TRANSPORT EXPENDITURE BY SELECTED REGIONS, 2023/24 PRICES, £M
(2019/20 TO 2023/24)

Expenditure	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Total	25,010	35,113	32,393	30,039	30,306
Expenditure					
Capital	336	480	511	549	489
Expenditure in					
North East					
England					
As a	1.3%	1.4%	1.6%	1.8%	1.6%
Proportion of					
Total					
Expenditure					
Capital	13,186	14,485	16,675	16,959	17,298
Expenditure in					
England					
As a	52.7%	41.3%	51.5%	56.5%	57.1%
Proportion of					
Total					
Expenditure					

Applying regional population estimates from the ONS to HMT's Country and Regional Analysis data allows for a view of per capita spend by region. In 2023/24, capital expenditure per capita from the Department for Transport was £180 in the North East of England and £300 in England.

DEPARTMENT FOR TRANSPORT CAPITAL EXPENDITURE BY SELECTED REGIONS PER CAPITA, 2023/24 PRICES, £ (2019/20 TO 2023/24)

Region	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
North East	127	182	193	205	180
England	234	257	295	297	300

The Government remains committed to driving prosperity across the United Kingdom, ensuring that growth is felt at both a regional and national level.

TREASURY

■ Agriculture: Inheritance Tax

Mike Martin:

[\[23629\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the planned reforms to agricultural property relief, what steps her Department will take to support farmers who have lost their exemption because their (a) spouse or (b) civil partner has died.

James Murray:

The Government published information about the reforms to agricultural property relief at www.gov.uk/government/publications/agricultural-property-relief-and-business-property-relief-reforms.

The reforms mean that individuals can access 100% relief for the first £1 million of combined business and agricultural assets, and 50% relief thereafter - meaning an effective tax rate of up to 20% – regardless of their relationship status. Any liability can also be paid over 10 years interest free – a benefit that is not seen anywhere else in the inheritance tax system.

It is expected that up to around 2,000 estates will be affected by the changes to APR and BPR in 2026-27, with around half of those being claims that involve AIM shares. Almost three-quarters of estates claiming agricultural property relief (or those claiming agricultural property relief and business property relief together) are expected to be unaffected by these reforms.

■ Business Rates: Reform

Mike Amesbury:

[\[22670\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what her planned timetable is for permanent reform of business rates.

James Murray:

Over the Parliament, we will create a fairer business rates system that protects the high street, supports investment, and is fit for the 21st century.

At Autumn Budget 2024, the Government announced that it intends to introduce permanently lower tax rates for retail, hospitality, and leisure (RHL) properties from 2026-27 for properties with Rateable Values below £500,000. Ahead of these changes being made, we have prevented RHL relief from ending in April 2025 by extending it for one year at 40 per cent up to a cash cap of £110,000 per business and frozen the small business multiplier.

These announcements reflect the Government's first steps to support the high street. We want to go further to modernise the system, and so, we have published a Discussion Paper setting out priority areas for reform. This paper invites industry to help co-design a fairer business rates system over the course of this Parliament.

■ Charities: Employers' Contributions

Sir Julian Lewis:

[\[23246\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of changes made to employer's National Insurance contributions at the Autumn Budget 2024 on the (a) staffing levels of and (b) level of (i) economic and (ii) social contributions to charities; and if she will make it her policy to exempt the charitable sector from these changes.

James Murray:

In order to repair the public finances and help raise the revenue required to support 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 of the changes on charities as employers.

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. All charities are eligible for the Employment Allowance, even if they are wholly or mainly carrying out functions of a public nature.

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.

■ Electronic Cigarettes: Imports

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[23421\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate she has made of the number of imported disposable vapes manufactured in China in (a) 2024 and (b) 2023.

James Murray:

HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) is responsible for the collection and publication of data on imports and exports of goods to and from the UK. HMRC releases this information monthly, as a National Statistic called the Overseas Trade in Goods Statistics (OTS), which is available via their dedicated website (www.uktradeinfo.com). From this website, it is possible to [build your own data tables](#) based upon bespoke search criteria.

Classification codes (according to the Harmonised System) are available to assist you in accessing published trade statistics data in the [UK Global Tariff](#). Goods moving to and from the UK are identified by commodity codes. These are publicly available from the UK Trade Tariff at <https://www.gov.uk/trade-tariff>. Disposable vapes are most likely classified as commodity code 2404 12 00 90. HMRC does not collect the number of units imported for vapes.

The data we do have on the import of these items, can be obtained from the build your own interactive tables on www.uktradeinfo.com. These tables include country of dispatch (CoD) which gives information on the country of export. If specifically wanting information on country of manufacture/ country of origin (CoO) this is available in the [bulk datasets archive](#). The data available includes value and weight (kg) of imports.

Published data for 2024 covers January – October only

If you need help or support in constructing a table from the data on uktradeinfo, please contact uktradeinfo@hmrc.gov.uk.

■ Financial Services: Disadvantaged

Joe Morris: [\[23531\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of which regions are most impacted by financial exclusion.

Emma Reynolds:

On 5 December, the Government convened a Financial Inclusion Committee which has been established to tackle the problems of financial exclusion. Through this committee, I will work with consumer groups and industry on the development of a Financial Inclusion Strategy.

I recognise the different impact of financial exclusion across regions, particularly when comparing urban and rural areas. As such, we will be working closely with organisations from across the UK to fully understand the barriers individuals are facing and ensure that the development of the strategy is informed by a range of perspectives and expertise.

■ Money Lenders: Victims

Joe Morris:

[\[23532\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what data her Department holds on the number of adults who are victims of illegal money lending each year.

Emma Reynolds:

Illegal money lenders — more commonly known as loan sharks — are dangerous criminals capable of inflicting terrible harm on their victims. To combat this, the Government funds specialist Illegal Money Lending Teams (IMLTs) operating across the UK. These teams investigate and prosecute illegal money lenders and offer support to their victims.

Because of the underground nature of illegal money lending, HM Treasury does not have data on the number of victims of illegal money lending each year. However, HM Treasury officials regularly engage with the IMLTs to receive updates on their work, including on prosecutions, support provided to victims, and any key trends. To learn more about the work of the IMLTs, visit the Stop Loan Sharks website: <https://www.stoploansharks.co.uk/>.

■ Music Venues: Business Rates

Saqib Bhatti:

[\[22710\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of permanently reducing business rates for grassroots music venues.

James Murray:

As set out at Autumn Budget 2024, the Government intends to introduce permanently lower tax rates for retail, hospitality, and leisure (RHL) properties from 2026-27 for properties with rateable values below £500,00. This permanent tax cut will ensure that they benefit from much-needed certainty and support. The Government intends to fund this by introducing a higher multiplier on all properties with a rateable value (RV) of £500,000 and above.

In the interim period, for 2025-26, we have prevented the current RHL relief from ending in April 2025, extending it for one year at 40% up to a cash cap of £110,000 per business.

The Culture, Media and Sport (CMS) Committee's report on grassroots music venues recommended that RHL relief should not be wholly withdrawn in April 2025. The Committee's report also highlighted the sector's desire for certainty and long-term stability. That is why the Government intends to introduce permanently lower tax rates for high street RHL properties from 2026-27.

The Government's full response to the CMS Committee's report was published on 14 November 2024 and is available online:

<https://committees.parliament.uk/work/8227/grassroots-music-venues/publications/>.

Saqib Bhatti:

[22711]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she plans to take steps with the Valuation Office Agency to introduce new valuation methods for business rates for grassroots music venues.

James Murray:

As set out at Autumn Budget 2024, the Government intends to introduce permanently lower tax rates for retail, hospitality, and leisure (RHL) properties, including those on the high street, from 2026-27. This permanent tax cut will ensure that they benefit from much-needed certainty and support.

In the interim period, for 2025-26, we have prevented the current RHL relief from ending in April 2025, extending it for one year at 40% up to a cash cap of £110,000 per business.

Music venues are valued in the same way as any other class of non-domestic property; through applying the statutory and common law principles that apply across non-domestic rating. The valuation approach adopted by the Valuation Office Agency follows one of the established three methods of valuation for rating - rentals, receipts and expenditure, or contractors (cost based). In most cases, the method adopted will be derived from rental evidence directly from the property, or from similar properties that share comparable physical characteristics.

■ **Orchestras: Tax Allowances**

Rachel Blake:

[22830]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of changes to Orchestra Tax Relief from 1 April 2024 on the promotion of UK orchestras.

James Murray:

The government recognises the value of the UK's world-leading creative industries and arts sectors.

On 1 April 2024, several administrative changes to Orchestra Tax Relief took effect, following legislation being passed in Finance Act 2024.

In accordance with standard practice, HMRC published a tax information and impact note about the legislation, which can be accessed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/creative-industry-tax-reliefs-administrative-changes/administrative-changes-to-the-creative-industry-tax-reliefs>

As set out in the note, the administrative changes are expected to have a negligible impact on businesses claiming the creative tax reliefs.

■ Special Educational Needs: Employers' Contributions

Sir Julian Lewis:

[\[23248\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent representations she has received (a) directly and (b) via other Departments from the Special Educational Needs and Disability Transport Operators Group on the potential inclusion of (i) drivers and (ii) passenger assistants in any (A) grant and (B) compensation scheme to offset the impact of changes in employer national insurance contributions; and if she will include this cohort in any such scheme.

James Murray:

The government will provide support for departments and other public sector employers for additional employer National Insurance contributions (NICs) costs only. This funding will be allocated to departments, with the Barnett formula applying in the usual way. This is the usual approach the Government takes to supporting the public sector with additional employer NICs costs, as was the case with the previous Government's Health and Social Care Levy.

This does not include support for the private sector, including private sector firms contracted by central/local government. For private sector organisations that contract with local or central government, the impact of tax changes would be taken into account along with all other changes to their cost base in the usual way through contract negotiations.

The definition of who is in scope as a public sector employee is based on Office of National Statistics classification of the entity paying employer NICs. This applies to employees who are directly employed by the public sector, but not, for example, where services are contracted out. The public sector comprises central government, local government and public corporations.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ Police: Equality

Nick Timothy:

[\[23033\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, pursuant to the Answer of 6 September 2024 to Question 2316 on Equality, whether the socio-economic duty will apply to (a) Police and Crime Commissioners and (b) Police Constables.

Anneliese Dodds:

The Government is committed to commencing the socio-economic duty in the Equality Act 2010. The duty will require specified public bodies, when making strategic decisions, to consider actively how their decisions might help to reduce the inequalities associated with socio-economic disadvantage. Public bodies specified by the duty include police and crime commissioners established for an area in England. We will consider whether the list of public authorities to which the duty will apply requires updating as part of our research programme and evidence gathering.

WORK AND PENSIONS**■ Bereavement Support Payment**

Harriet Cross: [\[22839\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending the time frame in which bereavement support can be claimed.

Andrew Western:

Bereavement Support Payment (BSP) helps people with short-term bereavement costs, by way of a lump sum followed by up to 18 monthly instalments. The lump sum has a 12 -month, and each instalment a 3- month, time limit for claiming. A person would need to claim BSP 21 months late to forfeit the entire benefit. So, for example, if someone was 6 months late in claiming BSP they would still get the lump sum and over a years' worth of monthly payments.

The 3-month time limit for the monthly payments is consistent with most social security benefits. This rule is absolute, does not allow for discretionary backdating and is set out in legislation.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Industrial Disputes

Nick Timothy: [\[23021\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, 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.

Andrew Western:

There are currently no ongoing disputes within DWP or arm's length bodies connected to the Department.

■ Employment: Disability

Adam Dance: [\[23608\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to consult with organisations that advocate for deaf and disabled people on employment support reforms; and what recent discussions she has had with those organisations on supporting deaf and disabled people in the workplace.

Alison McGovern:

This Government is committed to championing the rights of disabled people and to working with disabled people to design our reforms.

The Get Britain Working White Paper announced that DWP will establish a panel to consult disabled people as part of our wider efforts to ensure that the views and

voices of disabled people are at the heart of the design and delivery of the reforms set out in the White Paper. We will expand our engagement with Deaf and Disabled people's organisations and disabled people, and work collaboratively to ensure their voices are heard.

The Minister for Social Security and Disability regularly meets with disabled people and Disabled People's Organisations, including through the Disability Unit's Regional Stakeholder Network and the Disabled People's Organisation Forum England.

■ Universal Credit: Migrants

Richard Tice:

[23066]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of migrants that have been granted (a) asylum and (b) leave to remain in the last five years are receiving Universal Credit; and what estimate she has made of the projected expenditure for these claimants over the next five years.

Andrew Western:

The Department is exploring the feasibility of developing suitable Official Statistics related to the immigration status of non-UK/ Irish Universal Credit customers. The Department will ensure that this work is done in line with the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#).

The Department has not made a projection of Universal Credit spend on the migrant groups requested. The Department's published forecast of Universal Credit expenditure at Autumn Budget 2024 can be found [here](#).

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ 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.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 15 January 2025. The correct answer should have been:

Karin Smyth:

A table showing the information requested is attached.

Attachments:

1. [PQ22251 Table.xlsx](#)

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

■ Gas Shipper Obligation Consultation

Minister of State (Minister for Industry) (Sarah Jones):

[\[HCWS367\]](#)

Today the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero is publishing a consultation on the design of a Gas Shipper Obligation. The Government intends for the Gas Shipper Obligation to be the long-term funding mechanism for hydrogen production business model payments to initial hydrogen production projects and related costs. Decisions on funding for future hydrogen production business model projects will consider consumer affordability, value for money and fairness.

We are working to rapidly increase the rollout of homegrown, clean energy. Publication of this consultation demonstrates this government's commitment to developing a thriving and world-leading UK hydrogen sector. Low carbon hydrogen will play an important role in supporting the delivery of our Clean Energy Superpower and Growth missions, as a key enabler of a low carbon and renewables-based energy system. It can make our energy system more flexible, resilient, and independent, and could lead to billions of pounds of savings by 2050. The Government is committed to leaving no community behind by investing in a new era for the clean energy industry and supporting good, skilled jobs as the sector matures. Low carbon hydrogen provides opportunities for UK companies and workers, reigniting our industrial heartlands by investing in the industries of the future.

I will deposit a copy of "Funding mechanism for the Hydrogen Production Business Model" in the Libraries of the House.