



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 11 February 2025 and the information is correct at the time of publication (07:02 P.M., 11 February 2025). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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**Notes:**

Questions marked thus [R] indicate that a relevant interest has been declared.

Questions with identification numbers of **900000 or greater** indicate that the question was originally tabled as an oral question and has since been unstarred.



## ANSWERS

### BUSINESS AND TRADE

#### ■ Bereavement Leave

**Terry Jermy:** [\[28809\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether his Department plans to bring forward legislative proposals to increase access to bereavement leave.

**Terry Jermy:** [\[29215\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether his Department plans to bring forward legislative proposals to increase the amount of bereavement leave.

**Justin Madders:**

The Employment Rights Bill establishes a new day one statutory right to bereavement leave for employees who have experienced the loss of a loved one. The measures in the bill set a framework for the entitlement, including providing for a minimum of one week leave, with details to be set out in secondary legislation.

Due to the sensitive and personal nature of bereavement, we will be consulting stakeholders on the specifics of the entitlement to ensure that Bereavement Leave properly reflects the needs of employees and employers.

#### ■ Cars: Manufacturing Industries

**Mark Pritchard:** [\[27999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what estimate his Department has made of the number of jobs lost in the car manufacturing sector between July and December 2024.

**Sarah Jones:**

The government produces estimates of the levels of employee and self-employed jobs by industry sector on a quarterly basis (Mar, Jun, September and Dec). Data on the number of jobs by industry sector in December 2024 will be published on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2025.

#### ■ Consumers: Protection

**Mark Swards:** [\[28184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether his Department is taking steps to improve consumer rights protections.

**Justin Madders:**

The Department for Business and Trade is implementing the new consumer rights introduced by the Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act 2024. The new consumer enforcement regime – which we will commence in April – gives the CMA new direct enforcement powers and introduces monetary penalties of up to 10% of

global turnover for businesses that exploit their customers. The Act also updates consumers protections from unfair commercial practices and introduces new rights in relation to subscription traps and prepayments to savings schemes.

Furthermore, amid a concerning feedback from consumers struggling to access tickets for popular events, the government has launched a public consultation on a range of measures in the ticket resale market that aim to better protect consumers and support the growth of the UK's live events sector.

## ■ Energy: Investment

**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[27846\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, pursuant of the Answer of 20 January 2025 to Question 23276 on Energy: Investment, what steps his Department is taking to help support British companies with investments in Mexico during the period of regulatory change.

**Mr Douglas Alexander:**

My Department is following this period of regulatory change in Mexico closely. We are utilising all tools available, through the British Embassy and through dialogue with our respective counterparts within the Mexican government, including encouraging engagement on the reforms with businesses.

## ■ Forced Labour: Uyghurs

**Sarah Champion:** [\[28049\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the oral contribution of the Minister for Trade Policy and Economic Security of 6 November 2024, Official Report, col 71WH, whether his Department has made an assessment of the effectiveness of the US Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act in tackling the use of forced labour in supply chains.

**Mr Douglas Alexander:**

We will continue to assess and monitor the effectiveness of the UK's existing measures alongside other policy tools to tackle forced labour in supply chains. The Government views import bans as one of a range of tools that could be used to tackle forced labour in global supply chains. The UK continues to raise issues on human rights, including China's repression of the peoples of Xinjiang.

## ■ Help to Grow Programme

**Dame Harriett Baldwin:** [\[28025\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Help to Grow Programme; and if he will publish the outcome for business growth broken down by the gender of business owners.

**Gareth Thomas:**

Longer term impacts on productivity can take 3-7 years to be measurable, however early findings show promising impacts. Over 90% of participants are satisfied with the programme and within 6 months of completion, most participants surveyed reported enhanced firm resilience, sales and cost savings. Early impact analysis on productivity is underway and future reports will address variations in productivity impacts by gender, should these arise.

Evaluation findings on the early impacts of Help to Grow: Management are available on GOV.UK and the next release will be later this year.

**■ Horizon Shortfall Scheme**

**Rebecca Long Bailey:** [\[28061\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what progress his Department has made on establishing the new independent appeals process for postmasters in the Horizon Shortfall Scheme; and when the process will start accepting applications.

**Gareth Thomas:**

We are currently engaging with the Horizon Compensation Advisory Board and claimant representatives on a draft of the new appeals scheme's principles and guidance, including the eligibility criteria.

My statement of 30 January (HCWS399) announced that we are committed to covering postmasters' reasonable legal costs. Clarity about the principles of the scheme and support for appellants' legal costs will mean that legal representatives can begin to produce cases for appeal. We are expecting the submission of the first cases in the spring.

I will provide a further update to the House nearer to that time.

**■ Import Duties: USA**

**Martin Wrigley:** [\[28731\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will have discussions with his US counterpart on plans to impose tariffs on Canada.

**Mr Douglas Alexander:**

There are ongoing discussions between Canada and the US on their relationship and interests. It is not for the UK to comment on another country's trade relationships.

The UK deeply values its strong trading ties with both the US and Canada, and we will work to build on these relationships in the future.

**■ Nightclubs: Closures**

**David Simmonds:** [\[29623\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 19 December 2024 to Question 18963 on Nightclub: closures, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the increases in (a) business rates from the reduction in

rate relief and (b) National Insurance contributions for employers on the economic viability of nightclubs.

**Gareth Thomas:**

An assessment of the changes to Employers' National Insurance has been published by HMRC in their Tax Information and Impact Note, including impacts on the exchequer, the economy, individuals, households and families, equalities, and businesses including civil society organisations, alongside details on monitoring and evaluation.

The Government is creating a fairer business rate system, reducing alcohol duty on qualifying draught products and transforming the apprenticeship levy to support business and boost opportunities. This work will be supported by the publication of The Small Business Strategy Command Paper which will be published later this year. Through the Hospitality Sector Council, we are addressing strategic issues for the sector related to high street regeneration, skills, sustainability, and productivity.

■ **Parental Leave**

**Freddie van Mierlo:**

[\[29867\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment he has made of (a) the adequacy of uptake of Shared Parental Leave and (b) how this will inform future policies to support fathers in taking early parental leave.

**Justin Madders:**

Information provided by employers to HMRC shows that in 2023/24 (the latest year for which full year data is available), 17,200 individuals were in receipt of Statutory Shared Parental Pay.

The government is committed to supporting working families. The Employment Rights Bill will make Paternity Leave and Unpaid Parental Leave 'day one' rights. We have committed to review the parental leave system, ensuring it offers the best possible support to working families. Planning work is already underway.

■ **Post Offices: Franchises**

**Daisy Cooper:**

[\[29016\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether his Department has made representations with the Post Office to (a) proceed with moving all directly managed branches to a fully franchised model and (b) expedite the shift of directly managed branches that have previously been earmarked to be moved to a fully franchised model since 5 July 2024.

**Gareth Thomas:**

Nigel Railton, the Post Office Chair, has set out his ambitions for the future of the Post Office, which involves a reduction in central costs and other ways to deliver efficiencies, plus steps to improve the commercial future of the business in order to enable real term increases in postmaster pay. No decisions have yet been taken on the future of any individual Directly Managed Branches (DMBs) as part of this plan.

The Government will continue to work closely with Post Office as they develop their transformation plan. In the meantime, we expect the Post Office to fully engage and consult with the Unions and postmaster representative bodies about future options for the DMBs.

Decisions about franchising are an operational matter for Post Office Limited. The Government is broadly supportive of POL's transformation plan, including the aim of increasing postmaster pay, however neither the Department nor UKGI, acting as the Shareholder representative on the Board of Post Office Limited, have made the requests referred to in the question.

The Post Office will continue to deliver on the 11,500 minimum branch requirement set by Government.

**Daisy Cooper:**

[\[29017\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether UK Government Investments has made a request to Post Office Limited to (a) proceed with moving all directly managed branches to a fully franchised model and (b) expedite the shift of directly managed branches that have previously been earmarked to be moved to a fully franchised model since 5 July 2024.

**Gareth Thomas:**

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The Post Office will continue to deliver on the 11,500 minimum branch requirement set by Government.

■ **Public Sector: Holiday Leave**

**Mary Glendon:**

[\[28078\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will review the list of people granted the right to take time off work to perform public duties under section 50 of the Employment Right Act 1996.

**Justin Madders:**

The entitlement to time off for public duties helps to ensure that unpaid roles within our public services attract a broad range of people, including those who are in work, while breaking down a barrier to participation in civic life for people who need to work full time.

The initial legislation that introduced this entitlement is over 50 years old. I have asked my officials to consider how we can ensure this legislation remains effective.

**Retail Trade: Bromsgrove****Bradley Thomas:**[\[29674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to help promote retail entrepreneurship in Bromsgrove constituency.

**Gareth Thomas:**

The Government supports entrepreneurs, including those in Bromsgrove, through Start-up Loans via the British Business Bank and through programmes such as Growth Hubs in England and Help to Grow: Management across the UK. We will publish our Small Business Strategy later this year, which will signal a clear overarching ambition to promote entrepreneurship and articulate a new vision for business support, built around the new Business Growth Service. The strategy will enable scale-ups and other small businesses to grow, empowering entrepreneurs to innovate, export, and create new jobs.

Our Industrial Strategy is unreservedly pro-business, engaging on complex issues that are barriers to investment, like skills, recruitment of international talent, data, R&D, technology adoption, access to finance, competition, regulation, energy prices, grid connections, infrastructure, and planning – all through the lens of promoting investment.

**Small Businesses****Jim Shannon:**[\[28875\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will take steps to provide additional incentives to help encourage people to establish small businesses.

**Gareth Thomas:**

The Government supports entrepreneurs with funding and mentoring through, for example the British Business Bank, via Start-up Loans.

The recently announced Business Growth Service which is due to be landed later this year, will help businesses access the support they need to grow, whether they are starting out or looking to scale up. One aim is to ensure that businesses can access more targeted support that considers their particular needs.

We will publish our Small Business Strategy later this year, setting out how the Government will encourage entrepreneurship across the UK and enable small

businesses to grow, empowering entrepreneurs to innovate, export and create new jobs.

### ■ **Small Businesses: Cornwall**

**Ben Maguire:** [\[28766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what plans his Department has to support small-medium enterprises in Cornwall, in the context of the proposed rise in employers' National Insurance contributions.

**Gareth Thomas:**

The government is reforming business rates to offer permanent reductions for retail, hospitality, and leisure properties, which represent a significant portion of Cornwall's SMEs. We have also shielded the smallest businesses and charities from the impact of increased Employer National Insurance by raising the Employment Allowance from £5,000 to £10,500.

Looking ahead, the government has announced plans to launch a Business Growth Service, designed as a national initiative with local delivery at its core, and will publish a Small Business Strategy Command Paper later this year.

### ■ **Small Businesses: Rents**

**Lincoln Jopp:** [\[29365\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department plans to take to help small businesses with rent increases.

**Gareth Thomas:**

Small businesses are vital to our high streets and communities, and an essential part of the government's mission for economic growth.

Financial support for small businesses is available through the British Business Bank. Further advice and support are available through the Business Support Service, local Growth Hubs, and the Help to Grow: Management scheme. The Government is also taking forward a package of measures to tackle late payments, helping to improve the cash flow for small businesses across the UK.

### ■ **Trade Agreements: Southern African Development Community**

**Adam Jogee:** [\[28276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of a free trade agreement with the Southern African Development Community.

**Mr Douglas Alexander:**

None of our partner governments in Southern African Development Community (SADC) have requested a collective UK-SADC FTA. There are two customs unions within the SADC grouping, which our existing agreements aim to align with.

Our UK-Southern African Customs Union and Mozambique Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) is with Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia and South Africa, and our UK-Eastern and Southern African EPA is entered into force with Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles and Zimbabwe. The remaining SADC countries (Angola, Comoros, DRC, Malawi, Tanzania and Zambia) are not currently covered by our FTAs, but there are provisions available should they wish to join one of our existing agreements. These remaining countries are eligible for duty-free quota-free access to the UK (on nearly all goods) through our Developing Countries Trading Scheme.

## ■ USA: Trade

**Bradley Thomas:** [\[28379\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what discussions he has had with the United States State Department on trade.

**Mr Douglas Alexander:**

The UK looks forward to working with President Trump and his administration to deepen our trading relationship with the US. The Prime Minister had a warm call with President Trump on 26 January where they discussed trade and the economy, and agreed to meet soon for further discussions.

The US Government has clear rules that preclude other governments from formally engaging with members of the US Cabinet before they are officially confirmed by the Senate. We are still waiting for both the Commerce Secretary and the US Trade Representative to be confirmed by the Senate.

## CABINET OFFICE

### ■ Civil Servants: Bromsgrove

**Bradley Thomas:** [\[28390\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many civil servants funded by central government work in Bromsgrove constituency.

**Georgia Gould:**

The location of civil servants is mapped and published at International Territorial Levels (ITLs) and Local Administrative Units (LAUs) only, and not by parliamentary constituency. However, the boundary for the parliamentary constituency of Bromsgrove aligns with the LAU of Bromsgrove. As of 31 March 2024 there were approximately 590 civil servants (headcount) employed and based in Bromsgrove. This information has been sourced from Annual Civil Service Employment Survey (ACSES) 2024, Cabinet Office.



## ■ Government Departments: Artificial Intelligence

**Alicia Kearns:**

[\[28095\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of banning the use of the DeepSeek artificial intelligence model (a) on government devices, (b) in government buildings and (c) by government employees.

**Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:**

Everyone who works with government has a duty of confidentiality and a responsibility to safeguard any government information or data that they process, access or share, and all government departments are required to meet a range of mandatory security standards.

Government has a robust set of security policies in place to oversee how information is handled, within our buildings, on our IT and by our staff. We keep these policies under constant review to ensure they are applicable to new technologies.

In conjunction, the Government's Generative AI framework outlines that only corporately assured Generative AI tools should be used to process HMG information.

## ■ Government Departments: Cybersecurity

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[28465\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many government cyber security roles were vacant on 4 February 2025; and what steps he is taking to recruit more people into cyber security roles.

**Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:**

The Government Security Group gathers data from cyber security teams across government through planned bi-annual commissions, providing updates on vacant roles in our workforce. In 2023, 251 cyber roles were reported vacant.

The 2025 Government Security Workforce Commission, being undertaken currently, will provide updated data on current vacancy levels.

## ■ Government Departments: Digital Technology

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[28464\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to improve the cyber security of government digital infrastructure.

**Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:**

We are committed to strengthening security across all aspects of the Government digital estate.

The Government Cyber Security Strategy sets a clear target for all government organisations to be resilient to known vulnerabilities and common attack methods by 2030.

The recent report from the National Audit Office into Government Cyber Resilience showed that the response needs to be accelerated given the changing threat picture.

Its recommendations include development of a whole of government approach, addressing the long-standing shortage of cyber skills, strengthening accountability for cyber risk, and better managing the risks posed by legacy IT. We welcome this report and are taking immediate steps to address its recommendations.

#### ■ **Infected Blood Compensation Authority: Scotland**

**Dr Scott Arthur:** [\[28266\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he has made an assessment of the adequacy of the performance of the Infected Blood Compensation Authority in dealing with cases which involve the Scottish legal system.

**Nick Thomas-Symonds:**

I understand that the first group of claims included victims from England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Claimants who live in Scotland can receive legal support from firms with particular expertise in Scots law, if they wish, and I have been assured that as the scheme expands, the Authority will increase legal capability across all the UK.

#### ■ **Prime Minister: Aviation**

**Ben Obese-Jecty:** [\[29043\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many flights using Government (a) owned and (b) chartered helicopters the Prime Minister has taken.

**Georgia Gould:**

None.

#### ■ **Risk Assessment**

**Mr Richard Holden:** [\[29005\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to page 176 of the National Risk Register 2025 and page 180 of the National Risk Register 2023, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of the (a) repeal of the Trade Union Act 2016 and (b) Employment Rights Bill on the risk metrics for the National Risk Register 2025 edition.

**Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:**

All risks in the National Risk Register, which is the public-facing version of the internal, classified National Security Risk Assessment (NSRA) are kept under review to ensure that they are the most appropriate scenarios to inform emergency preparedness and resilience activity.

#### ■ **Small Businesses: Northern Ireland**

**Alex Easton:** [\[27778\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps the Government is taking to address additional (a) costs and (b) administration faced by small businesses in Northern

Ireland as a result of the Irish Sea border; and whether he plans to support local businesses to access supplies from the rest of the UK.

**Nick Thomas-Symonds:**

Small businesses are the backbone of our economy and the Government will ensure the interests of small businesses are embedded into our Industrial and Trade Strategies, as part of a comprehensive approach to delivering on our economic growth mission. The Windsor Framework established a broad set of arrangements to support Great Britain-based businesses to move goods to Northern Ireland, including to small businesses based in Northern Ireland.

The Northern Ireland Retail Movement Scheme reduces checks and administrative burdens on retail agrifood movements. The Northern Ireland Plant Health Label scheme removes unnecessary costs and enables previously prohibited goods to enter Northern Ireland. The first stage of the UK internal market scheme was implemented in 2023, and ensures thousands of businesses can move goods without being subject to customs duties. The Government works closely with industry stakeholders and trade associations on the implementation of these arrangements and will continue to do so.

## CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

### ■ BBC Media Action: Finance

**Mr Gregory Campbell:**

[\[28900\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department has funded the BBC Media Action charity in each of the last five years.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

The BBC Media Action charity has not received funding from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in any of the last five years. Sources of funding for BBC Media Action can be found in their annual reports.

### ■ Charities: Employers' Contributions

**Dr Roz Savage:**

[\[28763\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make an estimate of the number of charities that will pay increased employer National Insurance contributions in financial year (a) 2024-25 and (b) 2025-26 in South Cotswolds constituency.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

At the recent Budget, the government took a number of difficult decisions on tax, welfare, and spending to fix the foundations of the public finances, fund public services, and restore economic stability.

The government recognises the need to protect the smallest businesses and charities, which is why we have more than doubled the Employment Allowance to

£10,500. This means that more than half of businesses (including charities) with NICs liabilities will either gain or see no change next year, such as those in the South Cotswold constituency.

We are also expanding eligibility of the Employment Allowance by removing the £100,000 eligibility threshold, to simplify and reform employer NICs so that all eligible employers now benefit. Businesses and charities will still be able to claim employer NICs reliefs including those for under 21s and under 25 apprentices, where eligible.

Within the tax system, we provide support to charities through a range of reliefs and exemptions, including reliefs for charitable giving. More than £6 billion in charitable reliefs was provided to charities, Community Amateur Sports Clubs and their donors in 2023 to 2024. The biggest individual reliefs provided are Gift Aid at £1.6 billion and business rates relief at nearly £2.4 billion.

DCMS does not hold the specific regional financial impacts of this policy. A Tax Information and Impact Note (TIIN) has been published by HMRC, setting out the impact of the policy on the exchequer; the economic impacts of the policy; and the impacts on individuals, businesses, civil society organisations and equality impacts. The TIIN for the employer NICs changes was [published on 13 November 2024](#).

#### ■ Department for Culture, Media and Sport: Bidfood

**Laurence Turner:**

[R] [28706]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 3 February 2025 to Question 26736 on Department for Culture, Media and Sport: Bidfood, what contracts (a) under the value of £12,000 and (b) tendered before 2015 and subsequently extended (i) the BFS Group Limited and (ii) subsidiary companies of BFS Group Limited holds with (A) her Department and (B) agencies of her Department.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

**Core Department:** DCMS does not hold any active contracts, nor any contracts since 1st April 2015 with BFS Group Limited and its subsidiaries. To the best of our knowledge, we do not hold any information on Bidfood contracts tendered before 2015, noting that we do not hold consistent contract records before 2015, as this is prior to the migration to our previous electronic contract management software.

**Executive Agencies:** DCMS does not hold executive agency contractual information.

#### ■ Department for Culture, Media and Sport: Centre for Media Monitoring

**Nick Timothy:**

[28204]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, how many letters her Department has responded to from the Centre for Media Monitoring since 4 July 2024.

**Nick Timothy:**

[\[28205\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, how many times her Department has invited the Centre for Media Monitoring to official events since 4 July 2024.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

Ministers and officials engage with a range of stakeholders in the course of usual business. However, my department has found no record of responses to any letters from the Centre for Media Monitoring, or of the Centre for Media Monitoring being invited to DCMS-led official events, since 4 July 2024.

## ■ Film and Television: Recruitment

**Neil Duncan-Jordan:**

[\[28272\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of requiring that a minimum number of (a) local and (b) regional freelance professionals are hired by (i) TV and (ii) film companies when filming is taking place in their area.

**Chris Bryant:**

The Department has not made any assessment of the potential merits of the particular suggestion of per-production employment quotas. However, our public service broadcasters are already subject to regional production quotas set by the regulator Ofcom. One of the criteria through which public service broadcasters can meet their quotas is by ensuring at least 50% of the off-screen production talent (by cost) working on a given production is based outside of London. This ensures that creative job opportunities continue to be available to freelance professionals building their careers in the nations and regions of the UK.

We are also incentivising television and film production in every region through our tax reliefs and support for studios, including the £25 million investment for Crown Works Studios in Sunderland via the North East Combined Mayoral Authority.

## ■ Gambling: Addictions

**Ben Lake:**

[\[29052\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make a comparative assessment of the potential impact of (a) external lottery managers, (b) bookmakers and (c) other gambling providers on the (i) forms and (ii) levels of gambling harms.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

The Gambling Survey for Great Britain (GSGB) collects data from its respondents on the gambling activities they participate in and the types of consequences they experience. Rates of gambling harm, measured by the Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI), are reported by type of gambling activity (such as lotteries or betting), rather than by supplier (such as external lottery manager or bookmaker).

The PGSI nonetheless captures a range of harms experienced among those who gamble. The GSGB 2023 annual report found that 4.7% of respondents who had participated in society lotteries had a PGSI score of 8+ (representing 'problem gambling' by which a person will have experienced adverse consequences from gambling and may have lost control of their behaviour.) This captures society lotteries run by charities themselves and through external lottery managers. The equivalent rate for other gambling providers varies significantly, from 4.2% to 41.2%.

## ■ Leisure Centres: Sales

**Victoria Collins:**

[\[29214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what recent assessment her Department has made of the impact of the sale of local authority leisure facilities on public access to sports and recreation services.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

The Government recognises that leisure facilities are important to communities up and down the country. High quality, inclusive facilities help people get active. Everyone, no matter who they are or where they live, should have access to high quality facilities and opportunities to participate in sport and physical activity.

The ongoing responsibility for public leisure facilities lies at Local Authority level. Local Authorities work in partnership with operators who manage leisure services. The Government and Sport England continue to work closely with Local Authorities to monitor pressures in the sector.

Sport England's Moving Communities service provides insight which informs local authorities in making strategic decisions about the most effective investments to benefit local communities.

## ■ Leisure: Rural Areas

**Stuart Anderson:**

[\[28594\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to (a) protect and (b) improve access to leisure facilities in rural areas.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

The Government recognises that leisure facilities are important to communities up and down the country. High-quality, inclusive facilities help people get active. Everyone, no matter who they are or where they live, should have access to high quality facilities and opportunities to participate in sport and physical activity.

The ongoing responsibility for public leisure facilities lies at Local Authority level. Local Authorities work in partnership with operators who manage leisure services. The Government and Sport England continue to work closely with Local Authorities to monitor pressures in the sector.

The Government has committed to continued funding for grassroots facilities. £123 million will be invested UK-wide via the Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programme

throughout 2024/25. Grassroots sport is also funded through the Government's Arm's Length Body, Sport England, who invest over £250 million in Exchequer and Lottery funding each year.

## ■ Local Broadcasting: Radio

**Liz Jarvis:** [\[28072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to support access to spectrum for (a) new entrants and (b) underrepresented groups under the Community Radio Order 2025.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

The community radio sector is a key part of the UK radio landscape – there are now around 320 analogue (AM / FM) services, plus a further 75 unique community digital services that exclusively broadcast on small-scale DAB to local communities across the UK.

The changes made by the Community Radio Order 2025 will enable Ofcom to extend the duration of community radio licences for a fourth time and to remove restrictions that limit the amount of income a community radio licence can receive from advertisements and sponsorship, except for a small number community radio stations whose coverage area overlaps with small independent commercial stations.

The Order does not include measures that deal with access to spectrum for community groups wanting to establish new services. Ofcom has a wide range of powers to license new community radio stations on analogue or on DAB digital radio, including specific requirements to roll out new small-scale DAB services, which remains its stated priority for the time being. The timing of any new licence awards is a matter for Ofcom.

## ■ Sports: Women

**Rebecca Paul:** [\[28170\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment her Department has made of the effectiveness of the Code for Sports Governance in increasing female representation in sport.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

Sport England and UK Sport's Code for Sports Governance ensures bodies in receipt of substantial public funding have ambitious diversity and inclusion action plans. This includes a drive for greater diversity on boards, which has helped female representation on the boards of partners complying with the Code rise to 44% since its introduction in 2016.

**■ Video Games: Finance****Tristan Osborne:** [R] [28368]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department plans to provide (a) funding and (b) other support to the Tranzfuser programme.

**Chris Bryant:**

The Government recently announced £5.5 million funding for the UK Games Fund (UKGF) for the financial year 2025/26 to support early-stage games studios and talent. This funding will support all existing strands of the UKGF, including the Tranzfuser programme.

The UKGF is administered by UK Games Talent and Finance Community Interest Company which works closely with DCMS on the fund's design and delivery.

**DEFENCE****■ Armed Forces****Dr Neil Shastri-Hurst:** [29319]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the (a) workforce and (b) other costs are to maintain the (i) 4th Light Brigade Combat Team, (ii) 20th Armoured Brigade Combat Team, (iii) 102 Operational Sustainment Brigade and (iv) 1st Deep Reconnaissance Strike Brigade Combat Team at (A) routine levels of readiness and (B) full strength.

**Dr Neil Shastri-Hurst:** [29320]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the average annual workforce and activity cost is of the (a) Regular Army Infantry Battalion, (b) Army Reserve Infantry Battalion, (c) Royal Armoured Corps Regular Army Regiment and (d) Royal Armoured Corps Army Reserves Regiment.

**AI Carns:**

We do not hold a central record of detailed workforce costings and activity at the granular unit level requested.

**■ Armed Forces: Housing****Ian Roome:** [28340]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many armed forces personnel live in service accommodation.

**AI Carns:**

As of 6 February 2025, there was a total of 113,461 Armed Forces personnel living in Service accommodation. This figure includes both Single Living Accommodation occupancy and Service Family Accommodation occupancy.



**■ Armed Forces: Motor Vehicles**

**Luke Akehurst:** [\[29779\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what his policy is on procuring UK-made vehicles for his Department's White Fleet.

**Maria Eagle:**

The Department does not have a mechanism in the current lease vehicle procurement contract (Phoenix II) which would allow us to specify the country of manufacturer of our vehicles.

**■ Armed Forces: Pensions**

**Bradley Thomas:** [\[28750\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many military pensions are unclaimed; and what steps his Department is taking to increase the claimant rate of those pensions.

**Al Carns:**

The estimated number of unclaimed pensions as of March 2024, the end of the last financial year, was 14,797.

Tables on membership can be found at the following link:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66977e29a3c2a28abb50d0d1/Armed\\_Forces\\_Pension\\_Scheme\\_annual\\_accounts\\_2023\\_to\\_2024.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66977e29a3c2a28abb50d0d1/Armed_Forces_Pension_Scheme_annual_accounts_2023_to_2024.pdf)

Once a pension reaches 60 working days past the point of being due for payment, proactive attempts are made to trace the member and, on receiving a current address, an explanatory letter and application form is sent advising that a pension may be due. If returned, the deferred pension is put into payment.

Where there is information advising that the individual is deceased, the MOD engages to confirm whether there are any dependants and then process as normal.

In addition, in an aim to increase the claimant rate of those pensions, on receipt of their HM Armed Forces Veteran Card, individuals are advised to review the Deferred Pension Booklet on the gov.uk website to check their possible entitlement and submit a claim if appropriate.

**■ Armed Forces: Recruitment**

**Damien Egan:** [\[28123\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to tackle challenges in meeting military recruitment targets.

**Luke Pollard:**

The new Government is focused upon improving Armed Forces recruitment, modernising and refining our policies and processes to attract the best possible talent.

Recent policies have included a 35% pay increase for new recruits; one of the largest pay increases in the last 20 years for existing personnel; scrapping over 100 outdated

medical policies; a commitment to create a new military direct-entry cyber pathway; and setting an ambition to make a conditional offer of employment to candidates within 10 days, and a provisional training start date within 30 days.

These activities and their impacts will inform the development of the Armed Forces Recruitment Service which is being implemented to further improve the speed with which highly motivated and capable people can join our Armed Forces.

**Damien Egan:**

[\[28125\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to incorporate feedback from (a) military personnel and (b) applicants to improve the recruitment process managed by Capita.

**Luke Pollard:**

There are various mechanisms through which both Serving military personnel, and applicants, can provide feedback on the Army's recruitment process.

This includes an annual Recruit Training Survey and Officer Cadet Survey, which include a list of recruitment questions that are asked when Army recruits leave Basic Training. Army applicants are also asked for feedback at multiple points during the recruitment process via the 'Voice of the Candidate' surveys run by Capita Recruiting Group.

The feedback provided is regularly reviewed to improve processes, experiences, and ultimately conversion rates throughout the recruitment journey.

On 6 February 2025 we announced the award of the contract for the new tri-service Armed Forces Recruiting Service (AFRS). It will provide a streamlined, single-entry point for prospective recruits, with the aim of attracting the best talent from across the country into the Armed Forces. The service will launch in 2027, replacing the individual schemes run by the Royal Navy, British Army, and Royal Air Force.

**Damien Egan:**

[\[28572\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of Capita's performance in armed forces recruitment since March 2022.

**Luke Pollard:**

I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave on 17 December 2024 to Question 19640 to the right hon. Member for Rayleigh and Wickford (Mr Francois).

The new Government inherited a crisis in retention and recruitment. We have made it a priority to address this with a series of work streams designed to increase recruitment and renew the contract between the nation and those who serve to improve retention. Recruiting and retention remain one of our highest priorities - the Army/Capita Recruiting Partnering Project is completely focused on delivering a significant increase in recruitment in 2024-25.

Working in a collaborative partnership, the Army and Capita have robust contract management measures, including Key Performance Indicators (KPI) and penalty deductions where KPIs are not met, to monitor performance against contractual

requirements. However, as I am sure the right hon. Member will understand, detailed contractual arrangements, including performance measures, are not routinely disclosed by the Department in order to protect the commercial interests of all parties.

#### ■ **Armed Forces: Television Licences**

**Ian Roome:**

[\[28785\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has had discussions with the TV Licensing Agency on (a) discounts and (b) exemptions from the TV licence for armed forces personnel in service accommodation.

**Al Carns:**

The Ministry of Defence has neither held discussions, nor has any current plan to hold discussions, with the TV Licencing Agency regarding an Armed Forces discount to the TV Licence or an exemption for personnel living in Service accommodation.

#### ■ **Brunei: Armed Forces**

**James Cartlidge:**

[\[28544\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what his policy is on maintaining a military presence in the Kingdom of Brunei.

**Luke Pollard:**

This Government is committed to maintaining our unique defence relationship with Brunei. His Majesty, the Sultan of Brunei, and the Prime Minister signed the five-yearly renewal of the Garrison Agreement in December 2024, which signals His Majesty the Sultan's wish to maintain British military presence in Brunei.

#### ■ **Brunei: China**

**James Cartlidge:**

[\[28545\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs on the relationship between the Kingdom of Brunei and China.

**Luke Pollard:**

The Secretary of State for Defence has not had recent discussions with the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs on this matter. The Ministry of Defence has discussed matters relating to the Kingdom of Brunei and the People's Republic of China with other Government Departments including the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.

#### ■ **Defence: EU Countries**

**Manuela Perteghella:**

[\[28833\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will take steps with Cabinet colleagues to secure a UK-EU defence and security agreement.

**Luke Pollard:**

European security is this Government's foreign and defence policy priority, and whilst NATO remains the cornerstone of Europe's collective defence, we recognise the important role the EU plays in the security and prosperity of Europe.

At the informal European Council retreat on 3 February 2025, the Prime Minister reiterated our ambition to seek an ambitious UK-EU Security and Defence relationship, enhancing our collaboration in support of Ukraine and seeking opportunities for improved defence cooperation.

The Ministry of Defence will continue to work with the Cabinet Office and across Whitehall to progress this work.

**Defence: Public Expenditure****Sarah Gibson:**[\[28172\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on increasing levels of defence expenditure above 2.5% of GDP.

**Maria Eagle:**

The Government is committed to setting a path to spending 2.5% of GDP on defence in Spring. The Ministry of Defence remains closely engaged with His Majesty's Treasury on this matter.

**Defence: Recruitment****Mr Calvin Bailey:**[\[28104\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what outreach programmes are being conducted by (a) Defence Nuclear Enterprise, (b) Defence Equipment and Support and (c) other bodies responsible to his Department to engage with diverse and underrepresented groups to promote defence (i) apprenticeship and (ii) graduate schemes; how many such programmes were undertaken in the last 12 months; and where these programmes took place.

**Mr Calvin Bailey:**[\[28105\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what outreach programmes are being conducted by (a) Defence Nuclear Enterprise, (b) Defence Equipment and Support and (c) other bodies responsible to his Department to engage with diverse and underrepresented groups to promote defence (i) apprenticeship and (ii) graduate schemes in London; and how many such programmes were undertaken in the last 12 months.

**Al Carns:**

Defence is dedicated to recruiting and retaining the best talent, drawn from the broadest diversity of thought, skills, and background, to reflect the society we serve and ensure we maintain an advantage in a competitive age. It is mission critical to our operational effectiveness and to ensuring we continue to meet the threats we face

and safeguard the security, stability, and prosperity of our nation. We will only meet these threats if all our people, regardless of background, are confident that their efforts and skills are properly recognised, their individuality and experience respected and are able to achieve their full potential.

Defence is involved in a number of relationships that directly link to both apprenticeships and graduate opportunities, including national and multicultural apprenticeship awards; National Apprenticeship Week; Apprenticeship Ambassador Network; Universities and Colleges Admission Service; university careers fairs; the 5% Club and the Youth Futures Foundation. In the time available to answer this question it has not been possible to identify the number or location of all such interactions over the last 12 months, but given that most of these relationships operate nationwide, London is undoubtedly included.

**Mr Calvin Bailey:**

[\[28106\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what (a) relocation assistance and (b) other support for travel costs are provided by his Department for (i) prospective students and apprentices considering (A) defence apprenticeships, (B) university graduate schemes and (C) further education programmes and (ii) people accepted onto such schemes.

**Al Carns:**

The Ministry of Defence offers no specific entitlements to claim travel or subsistence costs for those attending interviews or events relating to a prospective apprenticeship or graduate scheme. However, business units have discretion to stipulate in recruitment adverts that receipted and necessary expenses may be claimed.

Civilian apprentices who necessarily live away from home are entitled to financial support with accommodation and the costs of a return journey home three times per year.

In some circumstances First Appointment Expenses (FAE) may be offered through an external recruitment advert. FAE is based upon a tax exemption which allows an employer to pay up to £8,000 towards the cost of certain expenses incurred when an individual moves home to take up a new job.

## ■ Defence: Supply Chains

**James Cartlidge:**

[\[28542\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to help improve the efficiency of procurement supply chains.

**Maria Eagle:**

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

Coupled with this, the Defence Supply Chain Capability Programme is starting to deliver on the Government's intent to create a bigger, better and more innovative and

resilient Defence industrial sector supporting UK security and driving economic growth.

## ■ Ministry of Defence: Billing

**Chris Evans:** [\[28010\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to help reduce late payment to SMEs (a) directly contracted by the Ministry of Defence and b) in the supply chain of firms contracted by the Ministry of Defence.

**Maria Eagle:**

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) aims to pay 90% of undisputed and valid invoices from small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) within five days. In the last quarter of this financial year, over 95% of invoices have been paid within this timescale. Additionally, 100% of all undisputed and valid invoices should be paid within 30 days. Information relating to the Department's supplier payment performance can be found at the gov.uk website.

Along with all major suppliers to Government, direct suppliers to the MOD are required to comply with the Government's prompt payment policy (PPN 10/23), and can be excluded from MOD procurements if they do not meet the standards of fair payment laid out in the policy. Suppliers must ensure that 95% of invoices in their supply chain are paid within 60 days and that they pay their invoices within an average of at least 55 days.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[28541\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to ensure that his Department pays contracted defence companies on time.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[28543\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the time taken for his Department to process invoices for contracted work by SMEs in the defence sector.

**Maria Eagle:**

The Ministry of Defence is committed to ensuring its suppliers of all sizes are paid what they are owed promptly. The department aims to pay 90% of undisputed and valid invoices from small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) within five days. We are exceeding this target, in the last quarter of this financial year, over 95% of invoices have been paid within this timescale. Additionally, 100% of all undisputed and valid invoices should be paid within 30 days.

Information relating to the department's supplier payment performance can be found at the gov.uk website.

**■ Ministry of Defence: Cost Effectiveness**

**James Cartlidge:** [\[29455\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has had discussions with the Cabinet Office on potential efficiency savings in his Department since 30 October 2024.

**Maria Eagle:**

There have been no discussions with Cabinet Office of potential efficiency savings since that date. However, this is an area that the Department takes extremely seriously. The Department is forecasting £3,376 million of efficiency savings this financial year, of which £171 million are new efficiencies and £3,205 million are in delivery.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[29456\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what efficiency savings targets does his Department have for financial year (a) 2024-25 and (b) 2025-26.

**Maria Eagle:**

The Ministry of Defence does not have a set efficiency target for 2024-25. However, the Department is forecasting £3,376 million of efficiency savings this financial year, of which £171 million are new efficiencies and £3,205 million are in delivery. His Majesty's Treasury have set all Departments a 2% productivity, efficiency and savings target for RDEL spending in 2025-26.

**■ Ministry of Defence: Edinburgh South West**

**Dr Scott Arthur:** [\[29323\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many homes his Department owns in Edinburgh South West constituency; and how many of those (a) have Ministry of Defence tenants, (b) have private tenants and (c) are vacant.

**Al Carns:**

As of 5 January 2025, there are 418 Service Family Accommodation (SFA) properties owned by the Ministry of Defence in the Edinburgh South West Constituency.

254 SFA properties are occupied by Serving Personnel (SP) and their families. 72 SFA properties are rented by private tenants and 92 are currently vacant.

**■ Ministry of Defence: Equality**

**Rupert Lowe:** [\[29151\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will publish the total cost to the public purse for the provision of diversity, equality and inclusion courses for staff in his Department in 2024.

**Al Carns:**

The Ministry of Defence remains committed to making the step changes required to create a more inclusive environment, enabling everyone, irrespective of background, to deliver our Defence outputs, enhance our operational effectiveness, and better

defend and represent the nation we serve. The requested information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

#### ■ Ministry of Defence: Procurement

**James Cartlidge:** [28540]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what proportion of his Department's expenditure was with SMEs in (a) 2022-23, (b) 2023-24 and (c) 2024-25 financial years.

**Maria Eagle:**

The proportion of the Ministry of Defence's (MOD) procurement expenditure that goes to Small And Medium-Sized Enterprises is published annually as part of the MOD Regional Expenditure Statistics [MOD regional expenditure with industry: index - GOV.UK](#) For Financial Year (FY) 2022-23 5% (£1.4 billion) of the Department's procurement spend went to SMEs. The figure for FY 2023-24 was 4% (£1.3 billion). Figures for FY 2024-25 are expected to be published in November 2025.

#### ■ Ministry of Defence: Senior Civil Servants

**James Cartlidge:** [29457]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he plans to take steps to increase the accountability of senior officials in his Department.

**James Cartlidge:** [29458]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he plans to introduce new performance standards for senior officials serving in his Department.

**Maria Eagle:**

Through the Defence Reform Programme we will improve procurement efficiency and secure better value for taxpayers, creating a simpler Defence focused on warfighting and deterrence.

A key facet of this programme is ongoing work to create a stronger Defence centre with clearer accountabilities through the Permanent Secretary, Chief of Defence Staff, National Armaments Director and Chief of Defence Nuclear.

Our work on reforming Defence also includes implementation of the renewed Senior Civil Service performance management framework which sets clear expectations of senior officials.

#### ■ Ministry of Defence: Written Questions

**James Cartlidge:** [29460]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he plans to respond to Question 23387 on the Strategic Defence Review, tabled on 13 January 2025 by the hon. Member for South Suffolk.

**Luke Pollard:**

I responded to the hon. Member on 7 February 2025.



**■ NATO: Finance****James Cartlidge:**[\[28546\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions he has had with the new US Administration on NATO defence spending levels.

**Luke Pollard:**

The Defence Secretary held an introductory call with the US Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth on 31 January 2025. The Defence Secretary welcomed that 23 Allies are now hitting the 2% target but both discussed the need for all Allies to do more – to support Ukraine, tackle shared threats and safeguard the Alliance’s future. The Defence Secretary looked forward to meeting Secretary Hegseth at NATO Defence Ministers.

**Mr Gregory Campbell:**[\[29418\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will hold discussions with his NATO counterparts on the potential merits of seeking financial contributions from non-NATO countries who are advantaged by their immediate proximity to NATO countries.

**AI Carns:**

NATO partnerships are key for the Alliance in helping promote and maintain global security. They are mutually beneficial and enable NATO and partners to develop and strengthen unity on key issues, including support to Ukraine, and uphold the rules-based international order. The UK has championed NATO’s global outlook and will continue to do so.

All NATO Allies have signed up to the Washington Treaty and the principle of collective defence. As part this commitment, Allies contribute to NATO’s common funding in support of the Alliance’s objectives, priorities and tasks. In line with NATO’s Defence Investment Pledge, all Allies agreed to spend at least 2% of their GDP on defence – a figure the UK has exceeded every year since 2006. We continue to encourage all Allies to do so.

**■ North Korea: Guided Weapons****Jim Shannon:**[\[28476\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of recent reports of missile tests in North Korea.

**Luke Pollard:**

The UK is monitoring the continued testing of ballistic missiles by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), including the short-range ballistic missile (SRBM) launches on 14 January 2025 - all of which violate UN Security Council resolutions (UNSCR). The UK remains committed to calling out all violations of UNSCRs and will continue to work with partners to enforce existing UN approved sanctions on DPRK.

## ■ Royal Fleet Auxiliary: Labour Turnover and Recruitment

**Mike Amesbury:** [\[28601\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking with the maritime trade unions to improve the (a) recruitment and (b) retention of merchant seafarers employed by the Royal Fleet Auxiliary.

**Al Carns:**

Through their crucial work with the Royal Navy and our allies, the Royal Fleet Auxiliary are vital to our national security, keeping us all safe. We thank the Maritime Trade Unions for their support in reaching a resolution to the recent pay dispute with RFA members which recognises their unique contribution to Defence.

The Ministry of Defence continues to work collaboratively with the Maritime Trade Unions to deliver a wider recovery programme for the Royal Fleet Auxiliary, including by addressing recruitment and retention challenges. These reforms will improve the wider employee offer for those serving to ensure that the Royal Fleet Auxiliary can continue to perform its vital role.

## ■ Type 83 Destroyers

**Luke Akehurst:** [\[29862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the (a) design, (b) manufacture and (c) support for Type 83 destroyers will be carried out by UK companies.

**Luke Akehurst:** [\[29863\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the Type 83 destroyer programme on (a) sovereign capabilities, (b) supply chain involvement and (c) social value.

**Maria Eagle:**

This Government is committed to delivering a thriving shipbuilding sector across the UK, supporting the whole supply chain, from design to repair, systems and integration. The Type 83 Destroyer is one element of the Future Air Dominance System (FADS) programme, which has commenced its concept phase. FADS will replace the UK's present Maritime Air Defence Capability vested in the Type 45 Destroyer Programme.

It is not yet possible to confirm where these ships will be built as it is subject to due commercial process, but the build of the Type 83 will secure work until at least the mid-2040s, depending on the number of platforms built. Analysis of supply chain involvement and social value will be conducted during this phase. Social value and sovereign considerations will inform any subsequent investment.

## ■ Ukraine: Eutelsat OneWeb

**Chi Onwurah:** [\[29468\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential strategic value of OneWeb for supporting Ukraine.

**Luke Pollard:**

The UK has provided a significant number of communication systems to Ukraine, including satellite-based systems, many of which have been integrated into a range of military capabilities. We have considered OneWeb as part of our support package, but, to date, we have not provided OneWeb systems to Ukraine.

The Armed Forces of Ukraine are specific on the communications systems they require, and their requests have focussed on different satellite systems. Our support remains agile, and we could switch towards more Satellite communications systems, including OneWeb, if that was deemed a higher priority.

## ■ Unmanned Air Systems

**Mr Mark Francois:** [\[28897\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what factors contributed to the Protector drone system's downgrade to a red rating in the IPA Annual Report 2023-24; what steps are being taken to mitigate significant cost increases and delays; and what the revised timeline is for the system's full operational capability.

**Maria Eagle:**

The downgrade of Protector to a red rating was primarily driven by a delay to the approval of the Review Note, which is being considered as part of the ongoing Strategic Defence Review. There are no anticipated cost increases, and all costs captured within the Review Note remain extant. The Full Operational Capability timelines have not yet been agreed and will be detailed in a future Review Note.

## ■ Veterans: Identity Cards

**Bradley Thomas:** [\[29135\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate his Department has made of the number of people who will use a digital veteran card.

**Al Carns:**

Based on census data and other sources, there are currently around two million Veterans, all of whom will be able to apply for a Virtual Veterans Card.

The Veterans Data Dashboard is publicly available at the following link:

<https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/office.for.veterans.affairs/viz/2024-07-29VeteransDataDashboardv2final/Story1>

## ■ Veterans: Radiation Exposure

**Rebecca Long Bailey:** [\[28038\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Written Statement of 21 May 2024 entitled Nuclear Test Veterans: Atomic Weapons Establishment Records, HCWS45, when he plans to publish the results of the review into the historic files in the ES and AB series relating to the UK's nuclear weapons programme.

### **Al Carns:**

Since the security review commenced in 2018, almost 70,000 of around 74,000 records withdrawn from public access have been released back to the National Archives. Updates on the progress of the review can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-nuclear-archive-records>

## EDUCATION

## ■ Adult Education: Finance

**Jo White:** [\[27625\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether any (a) devolved and (b) delegated responsibility agreements with devolved authorities prohibit them from setting up individual learning accounts within the Adults Skills Fund.

### **Janet Daby:**

The government has devolved approximately 60% of the Adult Skills Fund to the nine Mayoral Strategic Authorities of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, Greater Manchester, Liverpool City Region, North East, South Yorkshire, Tees Valley, West Midlands, West of England, and West Yorkshire, and delegated to the Greater London Authority.

Devolved authorities are responsible for ensuring learners have access to the training they require to progress in life. It is therefore at the discretion of devolved authorities on what training or funding their learners have access to.

## ■ Carers and Special Guardian Orders: Finance

**Melanie Onn:** [\[28087\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to help ensure that special guardianship and kinship carers receive adequate financial support.

### **Janet Daby:**

The government recognises the important role that kinship carers play in caring for some of the most vulnerable children. Kinship carers often take on this role at a time when they were least expecting to raise a family and we recognise the challenges they face, including financial.

In the Autumn Budget 2024, we announced £40 million to trial a new kinship allowance in some local authorities in England. The department will test whether

paying an allowance to cover the additional costs of caring for a child can help increase the number of children taken in by family members and friends. We will share further details and the process for selecting local authorities in due course.

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

## ■ Department for Education: Freedom of Information

**Richard Tice:** [\[27386\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many staff in her Department are responsible for (a) processing and (b) responding to Freedom of Information Act requests; and if she will make an estimate of the annual cost to the public purse of this work.

**Janet Daby:**

Answering requests under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 is part of the day-to-day work of all the department's officials. The costs of officials' time are not held in such a way that time spent on processing and responding to Freedom of Information requests can be estimated.

## ■ Department for Education: Staff

**Damian Hinds:** [\[28004\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the total staffing was of her Department's Regions Group in (a) fiscal and (b) academic year 2023-24; and if she will make an estimate of the number of staff anticipated for 2025-26.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

The average number of full-time equivalent (FTE) staff in the department's Regions Group was 790 in the 2023/24 financial year and 825 in the 2023/24 academic year.

On 1 October 2024, 172 FTE staff along with their functions transferred into Regions Group, in advance of the planned closure of the Education and Skills Funding Agency in March 2025.

Currently, the expected number of staff in Regions Group on 1 April 2025 is 996.9 FTE.

Workforce allocations for 2025/26 have not yet been set.

## ■ Families: Disadvantaged

**Sarah Champion:** [\[28046\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, which services she has distributed £500m to Family Help funding to.

**Janet Daby:**

'Keeping children safe, helping families thrive', published in November 2024, sets out this government's approach to reforming the system of support for children and families, including the national rollout of Family Help, multi-agency child protection and family group decision-making reforms through the Families First Partnership programme.

From April 2025, the government will make over £500 million available to local authorities to roll out the Families First Partnership programme. The funding, announced as part of the local government funding settlement (LGFS), will be allocated across all 153 local authorities in England in two grants:

- £253.5 million, previously for the Supporting Families programme, consolidated with other grants into a single Children and Families Grant.
- £270 million of additional investment in the Children's Social Care Prevention Grant.

The final LGFS for both of the grants, including grant determination letters and local authority by local authority allocations, can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/final-local-government-finance-settlement-england-2025-to-2026#grant-determinations-2025-to-2026>.

## ■ Higher Education: Mathematics

**Ian Sollom:** [28206]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the importance of maths provision at universities of all tariff levels.

**Ian Sollom:** [28207]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to maintain provision of maths at universities of all tariff levels.

**Ian Sollom:** [28208]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions she has had with universities on the importance maintaining the provision of maths.

**Janet Daby:**

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, recognises the critical importance of mathematics provision at universities. English universities are independent, autonomous institutions and are therefore free to choose which courses they run. The quality of these courses is assessed by the Office for Students, the regulator of higher education providers in England. The government acknowledges that robust mathematics education is essential for developing the skills needed in various sectors and for maintaining the UK's competitive edge in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics fields.

The government is committed to ensuring the provision of high-quality mathematics education across universities of all tariff levels. Measures include financial incentives

to attract talented individuals into teaching key shortage subjects, such as mathematics.

### ■ National Curriculum in England Review: Extracurricular Activities

**Shaun Davies:**

[28600]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to ensure enrichment activities for students in (a) school and (b) further education colleges are incorporated in the recommendations of the Curriculum Assessment Review.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

I refer my hon. friend, the Member for Telford to the answer of 24 January 2025 to Question [24528](#).

### ■ Ofqual: Artificial Intelligence

**Sir John Hayes:**

[27964]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for what purposes the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation has used artificial intelligence in the last 12 months.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

This is a matter for Ofqual, the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation. I have asked its Chief Regulator, Sir Ian Bauckham, to write to the hon. Member and a copy of his reply will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

### ■ Pupils: Absenteeism

**Anneliese Midgley:**

[27643]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to help reduce the rate of absenteeism in primary schools in Knowsley constituency.

**Anneliese Midgley:**

[27644]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to help reduce rates of secondary school absenteeism in Knowsley 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 sector's efforts, although around 1.6 million children remain persistently absent and miss 10% or more of lessons. In Knowsley, 27% of all pupils were persistently absent in the 2022/2023 academic year. At primary level, the rate of persistent absence is 21.6%, which is an improvement from 21.8% last year. At secondary level the rate of persistent absence is 36.3%, which represents an improvement from 40.9% last year.

The department has set out clear expectations of local authorities and schools in the 'Working together to improve school attendance' guidance, which was made statutory

on 19 August 2024. This guidance can be found here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66bf300da44f1c4c23e5bd1b/Working\\_together\\_to\\_improve\\_school\\_attendance\\_-\\_August\\_2024.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66bf300da44f1c4c23e5bd1b/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance_-_August_2024.pdf). 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.

It is now mandatory for every state school in England to share their daily attendance data with the department. Schools, local authorities and trusts can access this data through a secure, interactive dashboard which is maintained by the department, providing a seamless flow of data and allowing schools to target attendance interventions more effectively. Over 99% of state schools in England are sharing their daily data with the department.

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 set up a network of 31 attendance hubs, which are supporting 13 schools in Knowsley. These hubs have offered support to 2000 primary, secondary and alternative provision schools in total, and shared their strategies and resources for improving attendance.

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

We are also strengthening our tools for faster and more effective school improvement by launching the new Regional Improvement for Standards and Excellence (RISE) teams. Supported by over £20 million, these teams will offer both mandatory targeted intervention for schools identified by Ofsted as needing to improve and a universal service, acting as a catalyst for a self-improving system for all schools. The RISE teams are now beginning work with the first group of schools eligible for the targeted, bespoke service, with additional schools to begin in April.

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 is also committed to introducing 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.



**■ Pupils: Autism****Olly Glover:** [\[28218\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to support schools to (a) understand and (b) support autistic pupils.

**Olly Glover:** [\[28219\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she has taken to improve the inclusivity of mainstream schools for autistic and neurodivergent young people.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

The government is committed to taking a community-wide approach, improving inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools, as well as ensuring special schools cater to children and young people with the most complex needs. The special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) code of practice is clear that education settings should put in support to meet the needs of the child or young person when they are identified. All children and young people should be supported within their education setting. All teachers are teachers of SEND, including autism.

To increase understanding of autism the department has a contract with the National Association for Special Educational Needs. This contract funds SEND training and provides support for the school and further education workforce, with over 220,000 professionals having completed autism awareness training since May 2022.

In November 2024 the department brought together a group of leading neurodiversity experts to advise the department on improving inclusivity and expertise in mainstream settings in a way that works for neurodivergent children and young people.

The department has also introduced the Partnerships for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS) programme, alongside NHS England and the Department of Health and Social Care, backed by £13 million funding.

PINS deploys specialists from both health and education workforces to build teacher and staff capacity to identify and meet the needs of neurodiverse children in around 1,600 (10%) mainstream primary schools and supports neurodiverse children at the whole-school level. It is needs led, rather than diagnosis-led, therefore it includes children without a formal diagnosis.

The programme is being evaluated, and the learning will inform future policy development around how schools support neurodiverse children.

**■ Pupils: Mental Health****Neil Duncan-Jordan:** [\[28357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of implementing the Primary-Secondary School Transitions Emotional Wellbeing Scale being developed by the University of Manchester and the University of Dundee.

**Stephen Morgan:**

The government recognises the importance of monitoring and understanding trends in the emotional wellbeing of children and young people, including through means such as the Primary-Secondary School Transitions Emotional Wellbeing Scale developed at the University of Manchester and University of Dundee.

Schools are encouraged to measure pupil wellbeing to inform their whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing. It is for schools to decide how they do this to identify and meet the specific needs of pupils in their setting.

**Schools: Standards****Damian Hinds:** [\[28000\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the consultation entitled School accountability reform – school profiles, improvement and intervention, published on 3 February 2025, how much time she expects Regional Improvement for Standards and Excellence teams to spend on (a) universal service and (b) targeted intervention.

**Damian Hinds:** [\[28002\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the consultation entitled School accountability reform – school profiles, improvement and intervention, published on 3 February 2025, how many and what proportion of full-time equivalent Regional Improvement for Standards and Excellence teams will be (a) DfE-employed civil servants and (b) external advisers.

**Damian Hinds:** [\[28003\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what regional improvement for standards and excellence (RISE) staffing is (a) in place and (b) anticipated for the next (i) fiscal and (ii) academic year.

**Damian Hinds:** [\[28005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what progress her Department has made on the recruitment of external advisers for regional improvement for standards and excellence (RISE) teams.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

The department's new regional improvement for standards and excellence (RISE) teams will provide both mandatory targeted intervention to schools that Ofsted identifies as needing to improve, and a universal service for all schools, which will act as a catalyst for collaboration and improvement across all schools.

RISE teams will now begin engaging with the first schools eligible for the targeted, bespoke service, with more schools to begin in April.

The department's first 20 RISE advisers are now in post. They will work alongside the department to help support schools break down the barriers to opportunity and end the link between background and success. A full list of these advisers has been published on GOV.UK.

Expert RISE advisers will work with the department's Regions Group. Some Regions Group staff will work full-time delivering RISE work, others will deliver some RISE work alongside other roles. Workforce allocations for the 2025/26 fiscal and academic years have not yet been set.

In addition to the RISE advisers in post, the department launched a recruitment campaign for a full cohort of advisers to start in the spring and summer term. We will be informing candidates of the outcome of this campaign shortly.

**Damian Hinds:**

[\[28001\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the consultation entitled School accountability reform – school profiles, improvement and intervention, published on 3 February 2025, what are the differences in (a) role and function and (b) qualifications and experience required between (i) National Leaders in Education and (ii) external advisers in Regional Improvement for Standards and Excellence teams.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

Regional Improvement for Standards and Excellent (RISE) team advisers have an exceptional track record of school improvement and executive leadership. This includes individuals who are, or have recently been, headteachers, senior local authority officers or trust leaders. They have a much broader role in acting as the catalyst for driving a self-improving system, and designing bespoke, targeted interventions to under-performing schools, compared to National Leaders of Education (NLEs). Unlike NLEs, RISE advisors will not directly deliver these interventions but will draw on a range of high-quality organisations from curriculum hubs to high-performing trusts, to do so in line with evidence on driving improvements in school standards and outcomes.

The department's targeted, mandatory RISE intervention is backed initially by over £20 million of funding for school improvement, far more than was available under the optional Trust and School Improvement (TSI) offer of a basic £6,000 worth of support per school compared to RISE's of up to £100,000. In addition, the previous government had not planned to continue the TSI offer for schools which were newly eligible from September 2024, a decision this government has reversed.

**Juliet Campbell:**

[\[28155\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many schools (a) Broxtowe constituency, (b) Nottinghamshire, (c) England have been identified as stuck schools.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

In the 'School accountability reform – school profiles improvement and intervention' consultation, the department defined stuck school as a school that was graded requires improvement, or equivalent, at its most recent Ofsted inspection and was also graded below good at its previous inspection.

For this purpose, we have considered a sub-judgement of requires improvement for leadership and management and/or quality of education for a school inspected in the

2024/25 academic year as equivalent to a previous single headline grade of requires improvement.

Based on the latest published Ofsted inspection data, at the end of December 2024 there were:

- 0 stuck schools in Broxtowe.
- 12 stuck schools in Nottinghamshire.
- 664 stuck schools in England.

**Laura Trott:** [\[29071\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many staff her Department plans to recruit into the Regional Improvement for Standards and Excellent teams; and by what date the team will be fully operational.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

The department's first 20 RISE advisers are now in post and work has begun with the first RISE schools. The advisers will work alongside the department to help support schools break down the barriers to opportunity and end the link between background and success. A full list of these advisers has been published on GOV.UK.

In addition to the RISE advisers in post, the department launched a recruitment campaign for a full cohort of advisers to start in the spring and summer term. We will be informing candidates of the outcome of this campaign shortly. Workforce allocations for 2025/26 have not yet been set.

**Laura Trott:** [\[29072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to his Department's consultation entitled School Accountability Reform – school profiles, improvement and intervention, published on 3 February 2025, whether schools due to receive structural intervention in early 2025 will still do so.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

Schools that are still due to convert and join a high-quality multi-academy trust or are due to move into a new high-quality multi-academy trust in early 2025 will do so.

## ■ Schools: Uniforms

**Helen Grant:** [\[28008\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to ensure school uniform policies continue to promote school (a) identity, (b) pride and (c) inclusion, in the context of the proposed cap on branded items.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

Uniform, including a small number of branded uniform items, can play a key role in promoting the ethos of a school, providing a sense of belonging and identity, setting an appropriate tone for education, and reducing visible inequalities. However, too many schools require high numbers of costly branded uniform items and it is right

that legislation limits the number of branded items schools can require. School uniform should be affordable and no child should be stigmatised due to financial constraints.

In setting an appropriate numerical limit of branded items, the department has looked at the available evidence to ensure we are striking the right balance between reducing costs for parents and recognising the benefits that some branded items may bring to school life.

## ■ Sixth Form Colleges: Pay

**Dr Danny Chambers:**

[\[28784\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for what reason designated sixth form colleges are not receiving the same funding for staff pay awards as sixth form college academies.

**Janet Daby:**

The government is committed to ensuring there is a thriving post-16 sector, which is vital to our missions to break down the barriers to opportunity and boost economic growth.

Sixth form colleges (SFCs), rather than government, are responsible for setting and negotiating the pay of their staff. Colleges are not bound by the national pay and conditions framework for schoolteachers. Along with further education (FE) colleges, SFCs were incorporated under the terms of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, which gave them autonomy over the pay and contractual terms and conditions of their staff.

Maintained schools and academies are funded on an equivalent basis, meaning 16 to 19 academies received this funding, whilst SFCs that remain in the FE sector did not. All SFCs have been free to apply to convert to academy status since 2022.

At the Autumn Budget 2024, my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer set out an additional £300 million revenue funding for FE in the 2025/26 financial year to ensure young people are gaining the education and skills this country needs. The department has recently announced that it is making approximately £50 million of this funding available to statutory FE providers, including SFCs, for April to July 2025. This one-off grant will enable colleges and SFCs to respond to current priorities and challenges as they see fit, including workforce recruitment and retention.

The remaining funding will be made available in 16 to 19 funding rates for the 2025/26 academic year, with the aim of ensuring that all 16 to 19 providers are funded on an equitable basis from 2025 to 2026.

This builds on the department's investment to extend targeted retention incentive payments of up to £6,000 after tax to eligible early career FE teachers, including SFC teachers, in key subject areas. The department is also delivering funding to support those young people who do not pass mathematics and English GCSE at 16, who are predominantly studying in FE.

The department will continue to offer financial incentives for those undertaking teacher training for the FE sector in priority subject areas. We confirmed that FE teacher training bursaries will be offered for a further year, worth up to £31,000 each, tax free in the 2025/26 academic year.

## ■ Sixth Form Education

**Natalie Fleet:** **[28086]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of parliamentary constituencies in England do not have sixth form provision within their constituency boundaries.

**Janet Daby:**

Information on each educational establishment in England is available on the Get Information About Schools service, which is available here: <https://get-information-schools.service.gov.uk/>. In particular, the establishment fields download indicates which establishments have a sixth form and the parliamentary constituency they are in, available here: <https://get-information-schools.service.gov.uk/Downloads>.

## ■ Special Educational Needs

**Jim Shannon:** **[28031]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking with Cabinet colleagues to help ensure that there is adequate support for parents learning how to care for a child with special needs and disabilities.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

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

Under the Children Act 1989 local authorities must, in accordance with section 17ZD, assess and support the needs of parent carers who provide or intend to provide care for a disabled child and who meet the criteria set out. Services may include provision of short breaks or other support to assist parent carers.

The Law Commission are currently undertaking an independent review of social care legislation relating to disabled children. They are due to report their final recommendations to government in summer 2025, at which point we will consider proposals for reforms to the disabled children's social care system, including the adequacy of the legal framework supporting parents carers.

The government funds Parent Carer Forums (PCFs) who are representative local groups of parents and carers of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). They work alongside local authorities, education, health and other service providers to ensure the services they plan, commission, deliver and monitor, meet the needs of children and families locally.

The government also funds Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information and Support Services (SENDIASS) offer information, advice and support for parents,

carers children and young people with SEND. The department's contract funds the training of SENDIASS staff. Under the Children and Families Act (2014) it is a legal requirement that all local authorities have a SENDIASS.

This government's ambition is that all children and young people with SEND or in alternative provision receive the right support to succeed in their education and as they move into adult life. The department is working closely with experts on reforms, recently appointing a Strategic Advisor for SEND, who will play a key role in convening and engaging with the sector, including leaders, practitioners, children and families as we consider the next steps for the future of SEND reform.

### ■ Special Educational Needs: Appeals

**Adam Jogee:**

[\[28269\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential implications for her policies of the number of appeals against Special Educational Needs and Disabilities decisions in (a) Newcastle-under-Lyme constituency and (b) Staffordshire; and if she will meet the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme to discuss the impact of those appeals on families in Newcastle-under-Lyme.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

The last Ofsted/Care Quality Commission inspection of Staffordshire special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) services took place in February 2022 and identified two outstanding areas of weakness. An Accelerated Progress Plan is in place and progress is monitored regularly. The department has appointed a SEND Advisor along with a bespoke package of support from the Research and Improvement for SEND Excellence Consortium to support the Local Area Partnership.

The department knows that many parents struggle to get the right support for their children, particularly through what can be a long and difficult education, health and care (EHC) plan application and appeals process. We understand the urgency and the need to drive improvements but also are mindful that there are no quick fixes and want to take a considered approach to deliver sustainable system reform.

The department is working closely with experts on SEND reform, recently appointing a Strategic Advisor for SEND, who will play a key role in engaging the sector, including leaders, practitioners, children, and families, as we consider next steps.

We published independently commissioned insight, that suggests if the system is extensively improved through early intervention and better resourcing in mainstream schools, it could lead to many more needs being met without an EHC plan in a mainstream setting. This would remove the need for a Tribunal appeal.

As the Minister responsible for SEND and high needs, the hon. Member for Newcastle-Under-Lyme can contact my office and I would be pleased to meet with him to discuss these matters.

## ■ Special Educational Needs: Cost Effectiveness

**Olly Glover:**

[\[28423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to improve the value for money of education, health and care plans.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

For too long, the education system has not met the needs of all children, particularly those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), with parents struggling to get their children the support they need and deserve, particularly through long and difficult education, health and care (EHC) plan processes.

The department wants to drive a consistent and inclusive approach to supporting children and young people with SEND through early identification, effective support, high-quality teaching and effective allocation of resources. Our approach will support families and break down the barriers to opportunity for their children.

The department recognises the complex financial challenges facing the existing SEND system and the strain that the rising costs of SEND provision are putting on local government. But this government also understands that more money is not always the answer. What matters is how the money is spent and what behaviours we are incentivising within the system from funding allocations. The government wants to focus on meeting more children's needs in mainstream which enables children to thrive, provides high value and ensures more families have confidence that their children's needs will be met without having to pursue an EHC plan. Where EHC plans are needed we will consider what further can be done to deliver these through inclusive mainstream provision.

The Delivering Better Value in SEND programme worked with 51 local authorities to review and improve the way their services are structured so they can support children and young people with SEND more effectively and sustainably. The programme required local authorities to develop action plans that place greater emphasis on early intervention in order to meet children and young people's needs early.

The department has published an independently-commissioned insight report which showed that if the system improved, 65% of children and young people could have their needs met in a more effective way, and that this could lead to tens of thousands more children having their needs met without an EHC plan, in a mainstream setting, rather than a specialist placement.

The department has published a toolkit to help other local areas learn from the experience of those on the Delivering Better Value in SEND programme.

## ■ Special Educational Needs: Employers' Contributions

**Stuart Anderson:**

[\[28080\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to support SEND transport providers with the cost of increased employer's National Insurance contributions.



**Catherine McKinnell:**

Home-to-school travel is an integral part of the school system. It provides a valuable service on which many families rely. The department is grateful to the many transport operators for the crucial role they play in ensuring that children receive the education that they need to help them thrive.

Local authorities are responsible for arranging home-to-school travel for eligible children. It is for them to determine how best to do so, based on local circumstances and the needs of the children travelling. They might, for example, have an in-house fleet, provide passes for free travel on public transport or contract with private transport operators for the provision of buses, coaches, taxis and private hire vehicles. Where they contract with private operators, it is for the local authority and the operator to agree suitable terms.

The government recognises the need to protect the smallest employers. It has more than doubled the Employment Allowance to £10,500 which means that more than half of businesses with National Insurance liabilities will either gain or see no change next year. Businesses will still be able to claim employer National Insurance Contributions relief, where eligible.

**■ Special Educational Needs: Finance****Olly Glover:**[\[28220\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to make funding available for Local Authorities to clear the backlog of young people waiting for their EHCP to be implemented.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

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

The department recognises the challenges that families face in accessing support for children and young people as part of the education, health and care plan process and we are considering carefully how to address this situation. We have listened to many parents and those who advise them, local authority colleagues and partners across education, health and social care and we are reflecting on what practice could or should be made consistent nationally.

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

## ■ Special Educational Needs: Standards

**Alex Mayer:**

[\[28264\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of SEND provision in schools in (a) Bedfordshire and (b) the East of England.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

Bedford Borough was inspected by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) in November 2024 and received the strongest possible outcome: “the local area partnership’s special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) arrangements typically lead to positive experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND”.

In 2022, Ofsted and CQC revisited the area of Central Bedfordshire to decide whether sufficient progress had been made in addressing the areas of significant weakness detailed in its 2019 inspection. They found sufficient progress in three of six significant weaknesses.

The department and NHS England continue to support and challenge the local area by assessing progress and providing advice through a SEND expert advisor.

Since the introduction of the current Ofsted and CQC Area SEND inspection framework in January 2023, five local areas in the East of England have undergone inspections. Suffolk and Hertfordshire were found to have systemic failings, while Southend-on-Sea exhibited typically inconsistent outcomes. In contrast, Bedford Borough, as stated above, demonstrated generally positive outcomes. Cambridgeshire was inspected in January 2025, but the report has not yet been published.

The department issued improvement notices to Hertfordshire and Suffolk and is working with NHS England to continue to assess progress against priority and strategic action plans.

## ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

### ■ Climate Change Convention: Finance

**James McMurdock:**

[\[28440\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether his Department has plans to increase funding to the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

**Kerry McCarthy:**

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) budget is negotiated by parties on a biennium basis. The 2024-2025 budget was agreed in 2023, and this year parties will negotiate the budget for 2026-2027. The UK has historically advocated for a core budget that is in line with the needs of the UNFCCC

and reflects the increase in mandates from the parties. This position was reflected in the UK's 2024 contributions, and the recently delivered 2025 core and supplementary budget contributions. The Government is assessing our position for the upcoming biennium negotiations alongside our broader negotiating objectives.

### ■ **Coryton Energy Park: Construction**

**James McMurdock:** [\[28314\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether there was a public consultation period prior to the construction of the Coryton Energy Park.

**James McMurdock:** [\[28315\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what engagement he has had with local communities on the construction of the Coryton Energy Park.

**James McMurdock:** [\[28316\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what estimate he has made of the total construction costs of the Coryton Energy Park.

**James McMurdock:** [\[28317\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to help improve the sustainability of battery storage technology used at the Coryton Energy Park.

**James McMurdock:** [\[28318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he plans to take to help reduce fire risk at Coryton Energy Park.

**James McMurdock:** [\[28319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether an impact assessment has been conducted on the fire risk for residents living near Coryton Energy Park.

**James McMurdock:** [\[28433\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has plans to (a) increase awareness of fire risks for residents living near to Coryton Energy Park and (b) provide information to residents about what they can do to stay safe in the event of a fire.

**Michael Shanks:**

Planning applications for battery storage are determined by the local planning authority under the Town and Country Planning Act regime. The operation of this regime and the decisions made under it are the responsibility of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. The Health and Safety Executive regulates grid-scale batteries within a robust framework which requires industry to act at all stages of the battery's deployment to ensure safety. Of particular relevance to

fire safety, the Dangerous Substances and Explosive Atmospheres Regulations (2002) set out requirements to protect workers and others from fire risks.

■ **Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: Staff**

**Siân Berry:** [\[28370\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how many staff in his Department are working primarily on (a) fossil fuels, (b) renewables excluding biomass, (c) biomass, (d) carbon capture and storage, (e) nuclear energy, (f) energy networks, (g) energy storage, and (h) energy efficiency.

**Michael Shanks:**

The Department has around 4600 full time equivalents (FTE) working across multiple policy areas and programmes. These include renewables, biomass, carbon capture and storage, nuclear, energy networks, oil and gas, energy storage and energy efficiency, amongst others. The Department's resourcing is recorded and aligned to its organisation structure, rather than to portfolios. This means we are unable to provide a detailed breakdown for each of the areas mentioned.

■ **Energy Performance Certificates: Social Rented Housing**

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** [\[29515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to protect private renters from potential evictions and rent hikes as unintended consequences of mandating all private rented accommodation meets EPC C by 2030.

**Miatta Fahnbulleh:**

Government is consulting on increasing minimum energy efficiency standards in the domestic private rented sector. The Renters' Rights Bill will also put in place new regulations to protect tenants. This includes providing stronger protections to ensure that tenants are able to appeal excessive above-market rents, abolishing Section 21 'no fault evictions', and moving to a simpler tenancy structure where all assured tenancies are periodic. These measures provide more security for tenants and enable them to challenge poor practice and unfair rent increases without fear of eviction.

■ **Energy: Conservation**

**Alex Mayer:** [\[28262\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether his Department plans to include information on the benefits of updating circulator pumps in official energy efficiency guidance for consumers and businesses.

**Miatta Fahnbulleh:**

The Government will consider how circulator pumps alongside other technologies will support greater energy efficiency and the transition to Net Zero.

The Government provides advice on energy efficiency improvements at the following [Find ways to save energy in your home - GOV.UK.](#)

**Alex Mayer:** [28263]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of the widespread adoption of updated circulator pumps in the UK on energy savings.

**Miatta Fahnbulleh:**

The Government is continuing to monitor the UK circulator pump market and will consider how these, alongside other technologies could support greater energy efficiency and the transition to Net Zero.

#### ■ **Energy: Housing Associations**

**Neil Duncan-Jordan:** [28270]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to prevent housing associations levying commercial rated energy costs onto residents for domestic usage.

**Miatta Fahnbulleh:**

Under the maximum resale price direction landlords cannot directly profit from re-selling energy to their tenants. There should therefore be no advantage to landlords for their tenants to have high bills.

The previous Government ran a call for evidence on domestic consumers on non-domestic energy contracts. This showed that there is no single solution to address the multiple complex challenges faced by domestic consumers on non-domestic tariffs. The Government will continue to work with the regulator Ofgem and wider stakeholders on this issue.

#### ■ **EU Emissions Trading Scheme and UK Emissions Trading Scheme**

**Bradley Thomas:** [28372]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has had recent discussions with his EU counterparts on linking the UK and EU emissions trading schemes.

**Kerry McCarthy:**

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero engages regularly with international counterparts on a number of issues.

#### ■ **Fuel Poverty: Oxfordshire**

**Olly Glover:** [28222]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to tackle the proportion of people who die in fuel poverty in South Oxfordshire constituency.

**Miatta Fahnbulleh:**

The Government is committed to a preventative approach to public health. Keeping people warm and well at home and improving the quality of new and existing homes will play an essential part in enabling people to live longer and healthier lives.

The Government is reviewing the 2021 fuel poverty strategy for England, and has kickstarted delivery of the Warm Homes Plan, including an initial £1.8 billion to support fuel poverty schemes over the next 3 years.

Multiple energy efficiency schemes support fuel poor households. The Warm Home Discount provides bill support to eligible low-income households.

**■ Great British Energy: Aberdeen****Andrew Bowie:**[\[28117\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what estimate his Department has made of the number of jobs GB Energy will create in the (a) Aberdeen City Council and (b) Aberdeenshire Council areas in the next five years.

**Michael Shanks:**

Over the next five years, in the early stages of Great British Energy, we expect that the company will employ 200-300 people at its Aberdeen headquarters. Through its activities and investments, GBE will also support thousands of jobs across the country, including in Aberdeen.

Our ambition is to build GBE up to the size and scale of the world's leading publicly owned energy companies, creating significantly more jobs in the longer term.

**Andrew Bowie:**[\[28120\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will take steps to increase the amount of funding provided to GB Energy for increasing employment opportunities in Aberdeen for workers transitioning from the oil and gas sector.

**Michael Shanks:**

Great British Energy (GBE) will be capitalised with £8.3 billion over the parliament. GBE will begin its work with £125 million to spend in 2025, boosting jobs through its own investments, and by crowding in billions more from the private sector.

Government-backed training, and the Energy Skills Passport for oil and gas workers, that we delivered in collaboration with industry and Scottish Government, will ensure workers have the right skills to benefit from the thousands of jobs GBE creates.

**Andrew Bowie:**[\[28122\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has had recent discussions with private sector investors on the expansion of GB Energy's operations in Aberdeen.

**Michael Shanks:**

Details of Ministers' and Permanent Secretaries' meetings with external individuals and organisations are published quarterly in arrears on GOV.UK.

Published declarations include the purpose of the meeting and the names of any additional external organisations or individuals in attendance.

### ■ **Great British Energy: Job Creation**

**Andrew Bowie:** [\[28115\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the estimated timeline for the creation of new jobs by GB Energy on workers employed in the North Sea oil and gas industry.

**Michael Shanks:**

Our priority is a fair, orderly and prosperous transition in the North Sea, which drives towards our clean energy future of energy security, and good, long-term jobs.

Across this Parliament, we expect Great British Energy (GBE) will create 200-300 roles in Aberdeen. In the longer term, through its activities, GBE will support thousands of jobs across the country.

Government-backed training, and the Energy Skills Passport for oil and gas workers, that we delivered in collaboration with industry and Scottish Government, will ensure workers have the right skills to benefit from the jobs GBE creates.

**Andrew Bowie:** [\[28118\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what recent discussions he has had with representatives of the North Sea (a) energy sector and (b) trade unions on the estimated timeline for the creation of jobs by GB Energy.

**Michael Shanks:**

Details of Ministers' meetings with external individuals and organisations are published quarterly on gov.uk.

### ■ **Great British Energy: Scotland**

**Andrew Bowie:** [\[28116\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that GB Energy creates 1,000 jobs in North East Scotland within a reasonable timeframe.

**Michael Shanks:**

We have said that Great British Energy (GBE) will support thousands of jobs. This includes opportunities at its Aberdeen Headquarters, and through its activities and investments across the country.

As an operationally independent company, GBE will be responsible for its own workforce planning, to ensure the right skills, across the right locations, that enable GBE to deliver maximum impact for the whole of the UK.

The Department continues to work quickly to set GBE up for success and ensure the British people feel the benefits, including new jobs.

**Andrew Bowie:** [\[28140\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what criteria his Department will use to measure the success of GB Energy in delivering (a) employment and (b) investment in Scotland.

**Michael Shanks:**

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

GBE will be held accountable through regular reporting to the Department.

Parliament will also be presented with a copy of the annual report and accounts of Great British Energy which will include details of GBE's performance in delivering its mission, such as supporting jobs and projects across the country, including Scotland.

#### ■ National Grid: Farms

**Dr Roz Savage:** [\[28308\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on steps to ease the process by which farms connect to the national grid.

**Michael Shanks:**

The Government is working with Ofgem, NESO and the network companies to fundamentally reform the connections process and reduce unacceptable grid connection delays. These reforms, if approved by Ofgem, will remove stalled projects and accelerate connections for viable customers with viable projects, including those on farms.

#### ■ Nuclear Power

**Chi Onwurah:** [\[29469\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of using the UK's plutonium stockpile to generate electricity.

**Michael Shanks:**

The Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) conducted substantial technical, deliverability and economic analysis to identify a preferred option for a long-term disposition solution for the UK-owned plutonium, considering options for immobilisation and reuse of the material as fuel to generate electricity. The outcome of this work recommended immobilisation as the preferred way forward to put the material beyond reach soonest and with greatest delivery confidence.

The plutonium cannot be used as fuel in its current form: new infrastructure for Mixed Oxide (MOX) fuel production would be required, as well as new reprocessing



capabilities to sustain a closed fuel cycle. A proportion of the material is unsuitable for reuse in reactors and requires immobilisation in any scenario.

#### ■ **Renewable Energy: Landfill**

**Seamus Logan:** [\[28221\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to support the landfill gas to energy sector.

**Michael Shanks:**

Government recognises the benefits that Landfill Gas to Energy can offer, both as a form of baseload generation, and to capture and make use of methane in order to support our net zero goals. Government is aware that support under the Renewables Obligation Scheme, including for landfill gas generators, concludes from 2027 onwards.

Both DESNZ and DEFRA officials are speaking with key stakeholders to understand the impact that the conclusion of support will have on their future operations. This will inform any future decisions about whether further support for the sector is appropriate.

### ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

#### ■ **Aarhus Convention: Local Government**

**Alicia Kearns:** [\[27603\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what guidance his Department issues to local authorities on the Aarhus Convention.

**Mary Creagh:**

The Aarhus Convention concerns access by the public to environmental information, to participation in environmental decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters. Defra does not issue specific guidance to local authorities on the Convention.

#### ■ **Agriculture: East of England**

**Terry Jermy:** [\[29210\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that environment regulations are upheld on intensive livestock farms in (a) East Anglia and (b) South West Norfolk constituency.

**Emma Hardy:**

To ensure compliance with environmental regulations, permitted farms in East Anglia have routine inspections as an essential part of Environment Agency (EA) regulation. Within East Anglia there is a target of completing more than 80% of one hundred intensive farm site visits for the performance year 2024-2025. This target is on track to be met. Inspections incorporate permitting aspects linked to business plans as well

as environmental legislation, such as Farming Rules for Water and Nitrate Vulnerable Zones.

Farms with a high standard of compliance and within the Pig and Assurance Scheme are inspected once every three years by the EA and annually in the other two years by certified bodies. Farms not in the assurance scheme are inspected by the Environment Agency a minimum of once in every three years, depending on risk. Inspections are recorded on the National Compliance Assessment Database. Any permit condition breaches are given a Compliance Classification Scheme (CCS) score. CCS scores affect subsistence charges for farms that are not in the Pig and Poultry Assurance Scheme.

### ■ Agriculture: Floods

**Carla Lockhart:**

[\[28641\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of recent flooding on agricultural productivity; and whether he plans to provide funding to help farmers improve drainage management on their land.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

The 2023 to 2024 Autumn and winter season were the wettest in 30 years, this meant that many farms in affected areas experienced difficulty cultivating or grazing over that period. The primary impact of this on agricultural productivity is a shift from winter cropping to spring cropping. According to the [AHDB annual harvest insight](#) there was a shift in barley crops of 24% between winter and spring and much of this spring crop may get lower yields. To assist farmers with the impact of the extreme wet weather £57.5 million has been paid in farming recovery payments, to around 12,700 farmers.

The Government has invested £50 million to internal drainage boards (IDBs) as part of the one-off £75 million IDB Fund to support greater resilience for farmers and rural communities in the long term. The IDB Fund will accelerate IDBs' recovery from the winter 2023-24 storms and provide opportunities to modernise and upgrade assets that protect agricultural land and rural communities.

### ■ Agriculture: Manure

**Ellie Chowns:**

[\[28168\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make it his policy to bring the statutory guidance entitled Applying the farming rules for water, updated 16 June 2022, on the application of manure, in line with The Reduction and Prevention of Agricultural Diffuse Pollution (England) Regulations 2018.

**Emma Hardy:**

We have heard concerns regarding the statutory guidance, issued under the previous Government, on the Farming Rules for Water. In response, the Secretary of State have instructed officials to conduct a review to ensure that it is fit for purpose and effective in its objectives.

We are currently assessing the findings of this review. We will share the outcomes as soon as practicable.

## ■ **Birds of Prey: Forest of Dean**

**Matt Bishop:**

[\[29212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure the protection of birds of prey in the Forest of Dean.

**Mary Creagh:**

While Defra has not implemented any protections specific to the Forest of Dean, all birds of prey are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. It is an offence to kill or injure or take any wild bird; take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird (while that nest is in use or being built); and take or destroy an egg of any wild bird.

Bird of prey persecution is a UK wildlife crime priority and Defra supports the work of the national Bird of Prey Crime Priority Delivery Group, which brings together police, government and stakeholders from conservation and country sports organisations to tackle bird of prey persecution. Furthermore, Defra is a principal funder of the National Wildlife Crime Unit (NWCU), which helps prevent and detect wildlife crime (including bird of prey crime) by obtaining and disseminating intelligence, undertaking analysis which highlights local or national threats and directly assisting law enforcers in their investigations.

## ■ **Birds: Conservation**

**Martin Wrigley:**

[\[29263\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to support wild bird populations in the UK.

**Martin Wrigley:**

[\[29778\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to tackle the decline of wild bird populations.

**Mary Creagh:**

This Government remains committed to taking action to recover our threatened native species including wild birds. That is why, on the 30 July 2024 the Government announced a review of EIP 23 and the intention to develop a revised EIP to protect and restore the natural environment with delivery information to meet the Environment Act targets. This includes reversing the decline in species and reducing the risk of extinction.

Government actions to restore and create more than 500,000 hectares of wildlife-rich habitat by 2042 will support a wide range of native bird species. In addition, under ELM we have a number of offers to support the management, restoration and creation of grassland habitats that support a range of bird species.

**■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Conditions of Employment****Charlie Dewhirst:** [25859]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 12 December 2024 to Question 18221 on Supreme Court: Judgments, whether he plans to change his Department's workforce policies.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

While legal proceedings remain ongoing, and there will be a need to assess the position on an ongoing basis, there is currently no intention to change the Defra policy on the provision of the check-off facility.

**■ Domestic Waste: Recycling****Joe Robertson:** [26632]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 23 January 2025 to Question 24130, on Domestic Waste: Recycling, if he will publish the (a) equality impact assessment and (b) environmental principles assessment.

**Mary Creagh:**

These documents are used to support internal decision making and therefore are not routinely published. A full impact assessment of the Simpler Recycling project is published online here: [The Separation of Waste \(England\) Regulations 2025 - Impact Assessment](#).

**■ Domestic Waste: Waste Disposal****Joe Robertson:** [26633]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the answer of 17 January 2025 to Question 23655 on Domestic Waste: Waste Disposal, whether his Department has had discussions with the Local Government Ombudsman on the issuing of fixed penalty notices for householders who leave items (a) inside and (b) immediately outside the curtilage of their property.

**Joe Robertson:** [26636]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has issued guidance to local waste authorities on whether fixed penalty notices for fly-tipping can be issued in relation to domestic waste receptacles located within the curtilage of a dwelling.

**Mary Creagh:**

Local authorities have a range of enforcement powers to help tackle fly-tipping including fixed penalty notices and seizing vehicles. They can also prosecute which can lead to a significant fine, a community sentence or even imprisonment. It is for local authorities to determine what enforcement action, if any, is appropriate in the circumstances.

We are considering whether further guidance for local authorities is necessary with regards to fly-tipping enforcement. Any announcements on this will be made in the usual way.

#### ■ Environmental Information Regulations 2004

**James McMurdock:**

[\[27337\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 in relation to the transparency of private companies that perform public services.

**Mary Creagh:**

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

Defra will not be making the suggested assessment. The relevant provisions of the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIRs) already set out the legal tests which will determine whether or not a private company performing public services is subject to its transparency requirements.

#### ■ Flood Control: Cheadle

**Tom Morrison:**

[\[28359\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much the Environment Agency spent on flood defences in Cheadle constituency in the last Parliament.

**Emma Hardy:**

The Environment Agency (EA) undertook the following activities in Cheadle constituency over the course of the last parliament:

- Maintenance of 7 debris screens in Cheadle and Gatley. The screens prevent debris from blocking culverts or damaging infrastructure.
- Weekly maintenance of the debris screens in winter.
- Refurbishments of Chorlton Drive and Daylesford Road debris screens.
  - o Major refurbishments of Abney Hall and debris screens on Heald Green Brook are planned.
- Debris walk throughs on Micker Brook, Gatley Brook, Bruntwood Hall Brook twice yearly and on Chorlton Brook and Heald Green yearly.
- Yearly grass and weed cuts on Gatley Brook, Chorlton Brook and Bruntwood Hall Brook.
- Modelling to update flood risk mapping and flood warnings, covering Micker Brook and Chorlton Brook.
- Installation of gauge and flood warning area work for Micker Brook
- Initial appraisal work including of Micker Brook Flood Alleviation Scheme

- There are flood defences on sections of engineered high ground on Micker Brook near Councillor Lane, and the River Mersey near Manchester Road.

Many of these activities were undertaken across multiple constituencies, meaning that the cost of each cannot be solely attributed to Cheadle constituency.

Consequently, the EA cannot provide an exact number spent on flood defences in Cheadle Constituency.

## ■ Flood Control: Finance

**Adam Jogee:**

[\[24744\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what information his Department holds on the (a) number and (b) proportion of people impacted by flooding in homes who have accessed financial support through the (i) Property Flood Resilience grant and (ii) Flood Recovery Framework.

**Emma Hardy:**

The Flood Recovery Framework (FRF) has been activated four times since its publication in 2017. A total of 13,538 flooded residential properties have been reported by eligible local authorities across all four activations. Of the two MHCLG schemes that provide support to households, 11,689 community recovery grant payments and 9,967 council tax discount payments have been made to date.

The Property Flood Resilience (PFR) Grant Scheme is currently running for Babet (6/11/23 - 06/05/25) and Henk (08/01/24 - 08/07/25). Data for these will be available after each of the schemes close later this year.

## ■ Flood Control: Newcastle-under-Lyme

**Adam Jogee:**

[\[24745\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many people in Newcastle-under-Lyme have accessed financial support through the (a) Property Flood Resilience grant and (b) Flood Recovery Framework.

**Emma Hardy:**

Newcastle-under-Lyme has not been eligible for the Flood Recovery Framework or the Property Flood Resilience (PFR) Grant Scheme when they have been activated in recent years.

With localised flooding incidents, we expect Local Authorities to have well established contingency arrangements in place and to be able to respond and support their local communities.

## ■ Food

**Neil Duncan-Jordan:**

[\[29409\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to introduce a new Food Bill for England in this Parliament.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

Our ambitious food strategy will set and deliver clear long-term outcomes that create a healthier, fairer, and more resilient food system. We will consider the need for legislation as we develop the strategy and will seek to make space in the legislative timetable if needed.

■ **Horticulture****Neil Duncan-Jordan:**[\[29405\]](#)

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

**Daniel Zeichner:**

The Government appreciates and values the vital work of our agricultural sectors including the fundamental part played by horticulture growers.

As part of our mission-driven Government we are currently considering how we can achieve our ambitious, measurable and long-term goals for all of our farming sectors. This includes, as the Secretary of state announced at the CLA conference, developing a 25-year Farming Roadmap to create a robust and resilient agriculture sector, capable of meeting current challenges whilst future proofing the sector for generations to come.

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

■ **Incinerators: Licensing****Steve Barclay:**[\[25187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to his Department's press release entitled Government to crack down on waste incinerators with stricter standards for new builds, published on 30 December 2024, whether he plans to review environmental permits granted to schemes where construction has not started including the MVV Wisbech incinerator.

**Mary Creagh:**

The statement and analysis issued by my department sets out that any new waste incineration facilities should demonstrate a clearly defined domestic residual waste treatment capacity need, to facilitate the diversion of residual waste away from landfill or enable the replacement of older, less-efficient facilities. These matters are considered through the planning, rather than permitting process. It is worth noting that the analysis published identified that of the seven local authorities that sent more than 40% of collected residual waste to landfill in 2022-23 (the most recent data available), four are located in the East of England and East Midlands.

My department also set out that new facilities will have to maximise efficiency and support the delivery of economic growth, net zero and the move to a circular economy. To maintain confidence in the UK's regulatory system, as well as support

investment in UK infrastructure to support economic growth, it is important that modifications are not retrospectively imposed to environmental permits that have been granted in line with the established regulatory framework. However, those developing energy recovery facilities (at all stages in the process) are encouraged to consider forecast changes to future capacity, demand, and the Government's circular economy opportunities in light of the evidence we have published.

### ■ **Japanese Knotweed: Nottinghamshire**

**Juliet Campbell:** [\[28157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of increasing funding to help tackle the knotweed in Nottinghamshire.

**Mary Creagh:**

The Government recognises the impacts caused by invasive species, including Japanese knotweed.

Funding is available for control and management of Japanese knotweed and other invasive plant species through Defra's Environmental Land Management (ELM) Countryside Stewardship scheme. Furthermore, Defra funds research to identify cost and time effective ways of managing this species through biocontrol. Information about the research can be found on [CABI's website](#).

Additionally, the Government has developed guidance on how to prevent the spread of Japanese knotweed and other harmful weeds, as well as how to treat and dispose of them, which can be found on GOV.UK: [How to stop invasive non-native plants from spreading - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

### ■ **Lead: Contamination**

**Sir Julian Smith:** [\[27857\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 11 October 2024 to Question 6209 on Lead: Contamination, whether he has had recent discussions with the Environment Agency on the Water and Abandoned Metal Mines programme.

**Emma Hardy:**

Defra works closely with the Environment Agency to ensure it is equipped to carry out its functions effectively and deliver for the public and the environment; this includes its work to reduce pollution from abandoned metal mines.

### ■ **Local Government Services: Rural Areas**

**Terry Jermy:** [\[28819\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to improve services in rural isolated communities.



**Daniel Zeichner:**

This Government is committed to improving the quality of life for people living and working in rural areas, so that we can realise the full potential of rural communities. To achieve this, we are ensuring that the needs of people and businesses in rural areas are at the heart of our policymaking.

We recognise that there are significant challenges facing rural communities, and that the Government must play its part in overcoming them. We know that prosperous, thriving rural communities require improvements in rural transport and digital infrastructure, the availability of affordable housing and energy, and access to essential services such as healthcare and education.

That is why this Government is committed to rural proofing, ensuring that rural areas are not overlooked, that all intended outcomes of the missions are deliverable in rural areas, and all policy decision-making takes account of the issues facing rural communities. Defra leads on rural proofing, but individual departments are responsible for ensuring that their policy decision-making is rural proofed.

**■ Marine Environment: Environment Protection****Neil Duncan-Jordan:**[\[28248\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to help protect blue carbon habitats from damaging human activities.

**Emma Hardy:**

In England, we have established a comprehensive network of 181 Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), which cover the majority of our saltmarsh and seagrass habitats. While blue carbon habitats may not always be an explicitly designated feature, MPA protection may still yield benefits.

Our focus is now on ensuring that these MPAs are effectively protected to allow the designated features to achieve favourable condition. Three Highly Protected Marine Area (HPMAs) designations in English waters came into force in summer 2023. Two of the three designated sites, Allonby Bay and North East of Farnes Deep, contain blue carbon habitats.

Defra set up the UK Blue Carbon Evidence Partnership in partnership with DESNZ and the Devolved Administrations to address evidence gaps around these important habitats. We are funding a multi-year research project to increase our understanding of UK seabed sediment carbon storage and sequestration, the impact of human activities and to model potential management interventions. Initial outputs from this work were published in January 2025.

**Martin Wrigley:**[\[29265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to help protect blue carbon habitats.

**Emma Hardy:**

In England, we have established a comprehensive network of 181 Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), which cover the majority of our saltmarsh and seagrass habitats. While blue carbon habitats may not always be an explicitly designated feature, MPA protection may still yield benefits.

Our focus is now on ensuring that these MPAs are effectively protected to allow the designated features to achieve favourable condition. Three Highly Protected Marine Area (HPMAs) designations in English waters came into force in summer 2023. Two of the three designated sites, Allonby Bay and North East of Farnes Deep, contain blue carbon habitats.

**Marine Protected Areas**

**Neil Duncan-Jordan:** [\[28249\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to key recommendation 3 of the Office for Environmental Protection's report entitled Progress in improving the natural environment in England 2023 to 2024, published on 16 January 2025, if he will set out a timetable for improving management of Marine Protected Areas.

**Emma Hardy:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answers I gave to the hon. Member for Brent West on 10 December 2024 and 6 January 2025, PQs [17500](#) and [20559](#).

**National Fly-tipping Prevention Group**

**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[28467\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking through the National Fly-Tipping Prevention Group to reduce instances of fly-tipping in (a) Romford constituency and (b) England.

**Mary Creagh:**

Defra chairs the National Fly-Tipping Prevention Group (NFTPG), through which we work with a wide range of stakeholders such as local councils and the Environment Agency to promote good practice on preventing fly-tipping. Various practical tools, including case studies and 'how to' guides on key issues such as setting up effective local partnerships, are available from their webpage which is available at: <https://www.keepbritaintidy.org/national-fly-tipping-prevention-group>. We will continue to work with the NFTPG to expand upon these materials.

**National Trails UK: Finance**

**Freddie van Mierlo:** [\[25561\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential (a) merits of increasing funding for National Trails above 2012 levels and (b) impact of not increasing funding for National Trails on those trails.

**Mary Creagh:**

As part of the Defra business planning process, we assess the requirements, opportunities and impacts of all projects that we fund. These are carefully considered within the wider context of spending review before final decisions are made. Further details will be provided in due course.

**■ Ofwat: Artificial Intelligence****Sir John Hayes:**[\[26409\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, for what purposes OFWAT has used artificial intelligence in the last 12 months.

**Emma Hardy:**

Your question refers to the time before the current Government, but Artificial Intelligence (AI) is at the heart of the new Government's plan to kickstart an era of economic growth, transform how Britain delivers public services, and boost living standards for working people across the country.

Ofwat has conducted a trial of licenced generative AI, making sure it has considered and mitigated security concerns. Ofwat draws on a range of resources, published on GOV.UK, to inform AI usage.

Ofwat also has access to the Government Digital Service, part of the Department for Science, Innovation & Technology, for expert advice.

**■ Peat: Sales****Martin Wrigley:**[\[29267\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take legislative steps to prohibit the retail sales of horticultural peat.

**Mary Creagh:**

I refer the Hon. Member to the response given to [PQ 4272](#) on 12 September 2024.

**■ Peatlands: Conservation****Martin Wrigley:**[\[29266\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to help restore peatlands.

**Mary Creagh:**

The Government recognises the importance of England's peatlands, and in our manifesto, we committed to expanding nature-rich habitats such as peatlands. This will contribute to ensuring nature's recovery, one of Defra's five priorities.

We have ambitions to restore hundreds of thousands of hectares of peatlands across the country, and we are working to ensure that we have the most effective mechanisms in place to go further than we have before. Peatland restoration is currently funded via the Nature for Climate Peatland Grant Scheme, and going

forwards will be primarily funded through Environmental Land Management schemes, such as the Landscape Recovery and Countryside Stewardship schemes.

Private finance will also be vital if we are to meet our peatland restoration ambitions. To support peatland restoration, the Government is implementing a range of policies that will mobilise private investment. These include working with the IUCN to attract investment via carbon credits through the Peatland Code.

## ■ Peatlands: Environment Protection

**Olly Glover:**

[\[28224\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to (a) support the restoration of peatlands and (b) deliver the targets in the England Peat Action Plan.

**Mary Creagh:**

The Government recognises the importance of England's peatlands, and in our manifesto, we committed to expanding nature-rich habitats such as peatlands. This will contribute to ensuring nature's recovery, one of Defra's five priorities.

We have ambitions to restore hundreds of thousands of hectares of peatlands across the country, and we are working to ensure that we have the most effective mechanisms in place to go further than we have before. Peatland restoration is currently funded via the Nature for Climate Peatland Grant Scheme, and going forwards will be primarily funded through Environmental Land Management schemes, such as the Landscape Recovery and Countryside Stewardship schemes.

Private finance will also be vital if we are to meet our peatland restoration ambitions. To support peatland restoration, the Government is implementing a range of policies that will mobilise private investment. These include working with the IUCN to attract investment via carbon credits through the Peatland Code.

The England Peat Action Plan was published under the previous Government.

## ■ Plants: Disease Control

**Mark Pritchard:**

[\[24628\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to increase biosecurity against alien species located on imported (a) cut flowers and (b) ornamental plants.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

The Border Target Operating Model (BTOM) introduced a new risk-based approach to border controls. Goods have been categorised into the risk groups 'High, medium and low' and controls have been appropriately weighted against the risk.

Certain EU medium-risk cut flowers have been subject to pre-notification since 1st January 2022. EU medium-risk cut flowers have required a Phytosanitary Certificate (PC) since 31 January 2024, but there are now inspections for EU medium-risk goods at the border since 30 April 2024. EU plants for planting, including those used for

ornamental purposes, are already classified as high-risk goods, and subject to a pre-notification, a PC and inspections at Border Control Post or Control Points.

In relation to risks from invasive non-native species (INNS) more generally, in Great Britain horizon scanning is carried out by UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology every 5 years using expert judgement to identify species likely to arrive, become established and have an impact in the near future.

To reduce and prevent the introduction and establishment of INNS we have prioritised horticulture as one of the top 5 pathways of introduction. We have developed a Horticulture Pathway Action Plan (PAP), available here: <https://www.nonnativespecies.org/biosecurity/pathway-action-plans/horticulture-pap-for-great-britain/> which aims to address the most likely routes by which INNS can get into the country.

There are clearly continued issues with its execution in the field and the new Government will work with stakeholders and business to improve them.

#### ■ **Public Lavatories: Men**

**Daisy Cooper:** [\[28158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to require the provision of sanitary waste bins in men's bathrooms.

**Mary Creagh:**

The Government oversees policy and legislation with respect to the safe management of waste and litter as well as the protection of drains and sewers. It does not, however, have powers to compel the provision of sanitary bins in public toilets. The maintenance of public toilets is a matter for local authorities.

#### ■ **Rights of Way: Rivers**

**Uma Kumaran:** [\[28247\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of including shared (a) walking and (b) cycling paths in the National River Walks.

**Mary Creagh:**

We are committed to making the nine new river walks accessible to a wide range of users where it is feasible to do so, so that where possible they can benefit walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

#### ■ **Sewage: Devon**

**Martin Wrigley:** [\[28343\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what information his Department holds on the number and proportion of homes that use a (a) combined and (b) segregated sewerage system in Devon.

**Emma Hardy:**

Defra does not hold the specific information on sewerage operations in different regions. It is the responsibility of the sewerage undertaker to manage its own operation, in this case South West Water.

**Martin Wrigley:** [\[28347\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made on the potential impact of infiltration on sewage in Devon.

**Martin Wrigley:** [\[28348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of the number of cracks in sewerage systems in Devon.

**Martin Wrigley:** [\[28349\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps to reduce sewage infiltration in Devon.

**Martin Wrigley:** [\[28352\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with water companies on sewage infiltration.

**Emma Hardy:**

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

Regulators are working with South West Water on their Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans and will be ensuring they look at the investment needs for the issues raised relating to reducing infiltration in their sewerage system, leaks from the system, and removing surface water.

As part of its Waterfit programme, South West Water is carrying out surface water separation programmes within the catchments of Dawlish, Goodrington, Mothecombe, Millandreath & Ilfracombe, with the purpose of spill reduction and bathing water protection.

**Martin Wrigley:** [\[28355\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with water companies on the use of water butts to prevent sewage overflow in Devon.

**Martin Wrigley:** [\[28697\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the effectiveness of water butts in reducing sewage overflow in Devon.

**Emma Hardy:**

Defra have had no recent discussions with water companies about the use of water butts to prevent sewage overflow in Devon. However, as part of a well-designed

sustainable drainage system (SuDS), water butts can help in reducing pressure on sewerage.

This Government is strongly committed to requiring standardised SuDS in new developments. These should be to designs that cope with changing climatic conditions as well as delivering wider water infrastructure benefits, reduce run off and help to improve water quality, amenity and biodiversity. It is also important to ensure appropriate adoption and maintenance arrangements are in place.

## ■ Sewage: Peterborough

**Steve Barclay:** [\[28024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when the operator of the Peterborough Stanground Thistle Drive Pumping Station fitted an early duration monitor on the combined sewage overflow.

**Emma Hardy:**

Peterborough Stanground Thistle Drive Pumping Station has an EDM (Event Duration Monitor) on site as this is now a legal requirement for sites that discharge storm sewage. Further information on EDM data across the UK can be found at [Storm Overflow Spill Frequency](#) and information from the Anglian Water website on EDM data for 2023 can be found [here](#).

**Steve Barclay:** [\[28483\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will publish all relevant reports submitted to the Environment Agency in 2024 by the operator of the Peterborough Stanground Thistle Drive Pumping Station in compliance with their obligations under the The Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016.

**Emma Hardy:**

Relevant reports will be published in due course.

The permit (AWCNF428/10348) requires various information and data to be submitted to the Environment Agency as follows:

1. Annual Summary report for Storm Event Duration Monitoring (EDM) data – start & stop times. The 2023 report was submitted in 2024 () but Water Companies have until the end of February 2025 to submit 2024 data which we will make publicly available in March 2025.
1. Annual Summary report for Storm EDM data – operational/not operational. As above.

**■ Trees****Andrew Rosindell:** [\[27992\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to promote tree coverage in (a) the borough of Havering and (b) England.

**Mary Creagh:**

The Government is working towards the statutory target to reach 16.5% tree canopy and woodland cover in England by 2050. Defra is funding a significant package of grants and supporting activity across England to increase tree coverage. This includes funding a national network of fifteen Community Forests. These Forests are planting thousands of hectares of new trees and woodland in and around our towns and cities providing social, economic and environmental transformation. The Thames Chase Community Forest is one of this network with tree planting sites in Havering.

**■ Tyres: Waste Disposal****Tessa Munt:** [\[24642\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that recovered tyres exported from the UK to India are not exported in a form that allows them to be refitted to vehicles in India.

**Tessa Munt:** [\[24643\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has had discussions with his Indian counterpart on steps to ensure that recovered tyres exported to India are not used to breach Indian domestic law.

**Tessa Munt:** [\[24646\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if his Department will take steps to ensure that recovered tyres exported to India are not shipped in a form which enables them to be used in batch pyrolysis plants.

**Mary Creagh:**

The UK has strict controls on the export of waste to ensure that the waste is treated in an environmentally sound manner. These controls are established in UK legislation and enforced by the UK's waste shipment competent authorities.

Defra and the Environment Agency are engaging with the Indian authorities including the Indian Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change who have confirmed that the import of waste tyres for pyrolysis is prohibited under Indian law.

**Harriet Cross:** [\[26354\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of used tyre exports on the environment; and what steps his Department is taking to help mitigate these impacts.



**Emma Hardy:**

UK legislation requires that those involved in the shipment of waste take all necessary steps to ensure waste is managed in an environmentally sound manner throughout its shipment and at the waste management facility in the country of destination. Any operators found to be illegally exporting waste can face severe sanctions - from financial penalties to imprisonment for a period of up to two years.

■ **Water: Standards****Gregory Stafford:** [\[28363\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to publish the findings of the consultation entitled Reform of the Bathing Water Regulations 2013, published on 12 November 2024.

**Emma Hardy:**

The consultation on Reforms to the Bathing Water Regulations 2013 closed on 23 December 2024. We are currently analysing responses and evaluating how any proposed changes may impact the application and designation process. We will issue a formal government response to the consultation in due course.

■ **WRAP****Joe Robertson:** [\[26631\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 22 January 2025 to Question 23653 on Domestic Waste: Waste Disposal, how much funding her Department has provided for the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) in the 2024-25 financial year; and what the (a) terms of reference and (b) estimated delivery dates are for the commission to WRAP to provide guidance on best practice.

**Mary Creagh:**

As a charity organisation WRAP's annual report and accounts detailing Defra grant funding is available from the Charity Commission on Gov.UK. WRAP is working with and engaging Local Authorities to help bring together good practice by Spring.

**FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ **British Council****Wendy Morton:** [\[28565\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the British Council on the UK soft power and diplomacy.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The British Council plays a leading role in promoting UK values and interests through its work in arts and culture, education, and promotion of the English language.

The British Council's 2023 Global Perceptions report survey demonstrates that cultural relations initiatives are connected to higher levels of trust in the UK Government. The average score for trust in the UK Government given by young people surveyed across the G20 was 54%. However, for those who had participated in a UK cultural initiative, the score was 62%, and where this initiative was produced by the British Council, it was 69%.

## ■ Children: Malnutrition

**Luke Taylor:** [\[28246\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to tackle global child malnutrition.

**Anneliese Dodds:**

Achieving Sustainable Development Goal 2, Zero Hunger, and tackling malnutrition, is essential to our mission of a world free from poverty on a liveable planet.

Malnutrition is the underlying cause of 45% of child deaths and 20% of maternal deaths and the UK is committed to acting with urgency. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office is a co-founder of the Child Nutrition Fund (CNF), which supports partner governments to procure essential nutrition commodities and to prevent and detect malnutrition. Since 2021 the UK has contributed £15.74 million to the CNF and committed a further £8.55 million.

The UK continues to champion the integration of nutrition across different sectors such as health, agriculture, humanitarian, and climate, in order to achieve improved nutrition outcomes alongside successes on other UK development priorities.

## ■ Children: Vaccination

**Luke Taylor:** [\[28245\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support the global immunisation of children living in poverty.

**Anneliese Dodds:**

The UK is one of the largest donors to Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance. We have supported Gavi to immunise 300 million children and save up to 8 million lives from vaccine-preventable diseases. Since 2000, Gavi has vaccinated more than 1 billion children, saving over 18 million lives. We have committed £1.65 billion to the current strategic period for Gavi, covering 2021-2025.

## ■ Democratic Republic of Congo: Humanitarian Aid

**Wendy Morton:** [\[28562\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help facilitate the safe passage of humanitarian aid from (a) UK and (b) international NGOs and partners to the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.

**Anneliese Dodds:**

The UK is deeply concerned by the dire humanitarian impacts of the current situation in North Kivu. At the United Nations Security Council, the UK called on all parties not to obstruct the vital services that humanitarians are providing, and to cease hostilities and uphold the protection of humanitarian workers, as outlined in international humanitarian law. We also urged all parties to consider humanitarian corridors to restore essential services and ensure the safe passage of civilians and aid. The UK remains committed to supporting those most in need, providing £62 million this year in lifesaving humanitarian assistance.

**Development Aid****Olly Glover:**[\[28226\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to strengthen partnerships with (a) humanitarian organisations, (b) women-led organisations and (c) local civil society in development work.

**Anneliese Dodds:**

A vibrant civil society is one of the most important ingredients of a healthy democracy. The FCDO recognises that stronger, more inclusive engagement with partners and local organisations can better empower those that development and humanitarian efforts are designed to serve, so we are changing how we work with local civil society, prioritising their sustainability and helping them to advocate for the needs of their communities.

FCDO has also committed to putting women and girls at the heart of everything we do. This includes working to ensure that international responses better reflect the voices, needs, experience, and aspirations of affected populations, in particular women and girls. We are driving change by advocating for the systematic and meaningful participation of women in humanitarian action, which includes partnerships and direct funding of women-led organisations.

Through the UK's flagship partnership with the Equality Fund, funding has helped them reach over 1000 women's rights organisations across the globe, including in regions affected by conflict. The UK has supported the Start Network since its inception to deliver rapid NGO-led humanitarian crisis responses, with locally-led action central to this work. In December, the Prime Minister announced £37 million for the Grassroots and Counter Rollback Programme (2024-29). This will strengthen local and national civil society organisations and movements to expand access to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), and counter rollback, within their own communities and countries.

**Monica Harding:**[\[29161\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many UK aid programmes have been (a) paused and (b) otherwise affected by the USAID funding pause.

**Anneliese Dodds:**

We are currently working to assess the implications of the US funding pause across development sectors. We welcome the news that emergency food aid and life-saving humanitarian assistance should be exempt from the pause in US foreign aid. We are assessing implications in other humanitarian and development sectors. The UK's commitment to supporting both humanitarian aid and development across the world remains steadfast.

**Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Flags****David Simmonds:**[\[29073\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 20 January 2025 to Question 23888 on Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Flags, which flags other than the Union and Ukraine flags have been flown by his Department since 5 July 2024; and what was the estimated cost was of flying those flags.

**Catherine West:**

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's flag flying policy is that any additional flags flown on the estate are considered on a case-by-case basis and must have a compelling reason for inclusion in the flag flying schedule. Since 5th July 2024, in addition to the Union and Ukrainian flags, King Charles Street has flown the following flags externally on the roof flag poles: British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Rainbow, International Day of Criminal Justice, Falklands, Tristan da Cunha, Gibraltar, Commonwealth, United Nations, British Indian Ocean Territory, St Andrew's Saltire, Pitcairn Islands, and South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands. All of these flags were held in stock and no cost was associated with flying these flags from 5 July 2024.

**Hamas: UNRWA****Priti Patel:**[\[28011\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of the use of UNRWA facilities by Hamas since 7 October 2023.

**Priti Patel:**[\[28012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what information his Department holds on the number of reports of Hamas using UNRWA facilities.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The Prime Minister was pleased to speak with Emily Damari on 31 January and was deeply moved by her personal story. We are aware of the various reports since 7 October 2023 of Hamas using the United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) facilities. UNRWA Commissioner General Phillipe Lazzarini has since stated that UNRWA takes any such allegations

extremely seriously, and that UNRWA was forced to vacate all its installations in the north of Gaza Strip, including Gaza City, on 13 October 2023. We welcome the fact that UNRWA has said there should be independent investigations into any misuse of its facilities by Palestinian armed militants, including Hamas. Furthermore, following Catherine Colonna's Independent Review of Mechanisms and Procedures to Ensure Adherence by UNRWA to the Humanitarian Principle of Neutrality, UNRWA set out an action plan with detailed management reforms. As the Minister for Development told the House on 28 January, she has discussed the issue of neutrality with UNRWA's leadership, including directly with Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini. She also spoke to UNRWA staff members on their work to implement the recommendations of the Colonna report during her visit to the region on 3-5 December.

#### ■ **India: Visas**

**Mr Will Forster:**

[\[29664\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department (a) monitors and (b) reviews the granting of visa applications to British citizens by the Government of India.

**Catherine West:**

The UK government does not monitor or review individual visa applications made by British citizens to the Government of India.

#### ■ **UNRWA: Finance**

**James McMurdock:**

[\[28438\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has plans to increase funding to UNRWA.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

Since the Foreign Secretary restored funding to the United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in July 2024, the UK has committed £41 million this financial year to UNRWA, to deliver essential services for civilians in Gaza and the West Bank, and to Palestinian refugees across the region. The UK remains opposed to anti-UNRWA Knesset legislation which came into force on 30 January, and unequivocally rejects attempts to undermine or degrade UNRWA. UNRWA plays a vital role in delivering humanitarian assistance in Gaza and enabling the broader international response through its logistics and distribution network. We reiterated this position in our E3 joint Foreign Ministers' statement of 31 January, alongside France and Germany. As with all Official Development Assistance (ODA) spend, any new allocations provided to delivery partners (including UNRWA) are announced in the usual way.

**■ USA: Development Aid****Chi Onwurah:**[\[28907\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the suspension of USAID programmes on his Department's international development programmes.

**Anneliese Dodds:**

We are currently working to assess the implications of the US funding pause across development sectors. We welcome the news that emergency food aid and life-saving humanitarian assistance should be exempt from the pause in US foreign aid. The UK's commitment to supporting both humanitarian aid and development across the world remains steadfast. Progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals requires collective action, and the UK will continue to work with international partners toward that vision.

**Monica Harding:**[\[29162\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had recent discussions with his counterparts in other donor countries on responding to the decision to pause USAID funding.

**Anneliese Dodds:**

Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals requires collective action, and the UK will continue to work with all international partnerships toward that vision. We are currently working to assess the implications of the USAID funding pause and working with partners to gather information and analysis of the pause. The UK's commitment to supporting both humanitarian aid and development across the world remains steadfast.

**Monica Harding:**[\[29163\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department is taking steps to help mitigate the potential impact of USAID's funding pause on the UK's international development programmes.

**Anneliese Dodds:**

We are currently working to assess the implications of the US funding pause across development sectors. We welcome the news that emergency food aid and life-saving humanitarian assistance should be exempt from the pause in US foreign aid.

The UK's commitment to supporting both humanitarian aid and development across the world remains steadfast. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's (FCDO) Official Development Assistance (ODA) programme budget will be £9.24 billion in 2025/26. The FCDO will allocate budgets in line with UK priorities.

## ■ USA: World Health Organization

**Joe Robertson:**

[\[29313\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 5 February 2025 to Question 26628 on USA: World Health Organisation, whether he plans to increase the monetary value of the UK contribution to the World Health Organisation as a consequence of the departure of the United States.

**Anneliese Dodds:**

I refer the Hon. Member to my answer of 5 February 2025 to Question 26628, which can be found on the Q&A web pages: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2025-01-27/26628>. Further information on the UK's support to the World Health Organization can be found in my recent Written Ministerial Statement: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2024-11-21/hcws243>. The UK will continue to work with all international partners and the World Health Organization to create a healthier and safer world.

## ■ World Health Organisation: Finance

**James McMurdock:**

[\[28439\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has plans to increase funding to the World Health Organisation.

**Anneliese Dodds:**

In November 2024, the UK announced new funding to the World Health Organisation (WHO) in support of its delivery and transformation agenda. The UK will continue to work with the WHO, Member States and other partners to support WHO's ongoing transformation and to strengthen its efficiency, transparency and responsiveness.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

### ■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

**Peter Lamb:**

[\[902692\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure the long-term future of Crawley Urgent Treatment Centre.

**Karin Smyth:**

Urgent Treatment Centres have played a vital role in supporting patients while A&Es were under high demand this winter. We've taken action – announcing an extra £26 billion at the budget, rolling out the new RSV vaccine, and ending the resident doctor strikes. The NHS Sussex Integrated Care Board (ICB) is responsible for decisions on commissioning services for the local community.

**Catherine Atkinson:**

[\[902693\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of access to NHS dental services.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

We are determined to rebuild dentistry for the long term.

We will deliver an additional 700,000 urgent dental appointments; reform the dental contract; and introduce supervised toothbrushing for three- to five-year-olds in the most deprived communities.

We are working with the dental sector, including the British Dental Association, to deliver these shared ambitions.

**Tonia Antoniazzi:**

[\[902694\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of access to medical cannabis on the NHS.

**Karin Smyth:**

Licensed cannabis-based medicines are routinely funded by the NHS where there is clear evidence of their quality, safety and effectiveness. Two licensed cannabis-based medicines are available for prescribing on the NHS, but more research is required on unlicensed cannabis-based medicines to inform use on the NHS. We are supporting this by investing over £8.5m in randomised clinical trials.

**Maureen Burke:**

[\[902695\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce barriers to treatment and care between UK nations.

**Ashley Dalton:**

While health is predominantly devolved, working together across the United Kingdom on health and social care is ingrained in our values. NHS emergency care is available for all patients, regardless of borders and we are working with the Devolved Governments to support people to lead independent, healthier lives for longer. This government has provided an additional £6.6 billion through the Barnett formula to support the Scottish Government.

**Josh MacAlister:**

[\[902696\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase the provision of mental health services in rural areas.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

Integrated care boards are responsible for providing mental health services to meet the needs of their local populations.

As part of our plan for change, we will reduce delays and provide faster treatment.

We are working with NHS England to transform mental health services, shift care from hospitals to local communities and increase access to support for people across the country, including rural areas.



**Daniel Francis:**

[\[902698\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to shift care from hospitals into the community.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

We are determined to transform the NHS into a neighbourhood health service. As a downpayment we have announced the biggest boost to GP funding in years - an extra £889 million.

However, the reform needed to shift health care from hospital to community will come through our 10 year plan.

We are also making the biggest investment into hospices in a generation, boosting the Disabled Facilities Grant by £86 million and implementing an Elective Reform Plan that will see more tests and scans delivered in the community.

**Sally Jameson:**

[\[902699\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of access to NHS dental services.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

We are determined to rebuild dentistry for the long term.

We will deliver an additional 700,000 urgent dental appointments; reform the dental contract; and introduce supervised toothbrushing for three- to five-year-olds in the most deprived communities.

We are working with the dental sector, including the British Dental Association, to deliver these shared ambitions.

**John Glen:**

[\[902700\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to tackle ADHD medication shortages.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Department has worked intensively with industry and some supply issues with ADHD medicines have been resolved. We continue to engage with suppliers and also the NHS to resolve the remaining issues as quickly as possible, and improve the planning of future demand. I understand concerns in this area and would be happy to give my time to MPs, to sit down with the experts, to explain this further.

**Clive Lewis:**

[\[902701\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of access to NHS dental services.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

We are determined to rebuild dentistry for the long term.

We will deliver an additional 700,000 urgent dental appointments; reform the dental contract; and introduce supervised toothbrushing for three- to five-year-olds in the most deprived communities.

We are working with the dental sector, including the British Dental Association, to deliver these shared ambitions.

## ■ Avoidant/Restrictive Food Intake Disorder: Health Services

**Joe Morris:**

[28674]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people are seeking support for avoidant restrictive food intake disorder in (a) Hexham constituency, (b) Northumberland, (c) Newcastle, d) the North East (e) England.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

*[Holding answer 11 February 2025]:* NHS England has advised that the information requested is not available in the format requested. This is because it is not possible to specifically identify avoidant restrictive food intake disorder in relation to other eating disorders within the Mental Health Services Dataset.

## ■ Cancer: Drugs

**Clive Jones:**

[R] [28209]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 13 January 2025 to Question 21831 on Cancer: Drugs, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of the findings on page 21 of the European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations' publication entitled EFPIA Patients W.A.I.T. Indicator 2023 Survey, published in June 2024, that 25% of new oncology medicines approved by the European Medicines Agency had full public availability to English patients in 2019-2022.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Government wants National Health Service patients to benefit from effective NHS treatments at a price that is fair to the NHS and the taxpayer. It is important that we have a system in place for making evidence-based decisions on whether new medicines should be routinely funded by the NHS, based on an assessment of their costs and benefits.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) recommends most new licensed cancer medicines for use in the treatment of eligible NHS patients in England. Since 2019, 89% of NICE appraisals of cancer medicines have resulted in a positive recommendation for some or all of the eligible patient population.

Other countries operate very different health systems and direct comparisons in medicine availability are very difficult to make. The NICE's methods establish what is considered value for money for the NHS in England and overall, the rate of the availability of cancer medicines in England is higher than the European average.

## ■ Department of Health and Social Care: Correspondence

**Dr Caroline Johnson:**

[R] [\[28588\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of items of correspondence from Parliamentarians received by (a) his Department, (b) himself and (c) his ministerial team have not received a substantive response in each month since August 2024.

**Ashley Dalton:**

The Department is committed to meeting the target of responding to at least 80% of correspondence from Hon. Members within 20 working days. Parliament has a right to hold ministers to account. The Leader of the House of Commons wrote to all Cabinet members in November to remind ministers of their responsibilities to provide helpful and timely responses to Members' Parliamentary Questions and correspondence.

The Department receives some of the highest, and most sensitive, volumes of correspondence. In 2024 alone we received over 65,000 queries, with over 15,000 of those from Hon. Members. Ministerial correspondence performance data by Department is published annually by the Cabinet Office on the GOV.UK website.

## ■ General Practitioners: Standards

**Nick Smith:**

[\[28912\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether (a) Newington Road Surgery limited, (b) Lockwood Surgery prime health ltd, (c) Fieldhead health limited, (d) Mid Dorset primary healthcare limited, (e) Fieldhead property ltd, (f) Fieldhead medical services ltd, (g) Lockwood property ltd, (h) Gamaq Lockwood limited, (i) Gamaq Nook limited, (j) Viaduct care network limited, (k) Greenwood PCN limited and (l) Blue PCN limited have been subject to rulings by the Care Quality Commission.

**Ashley Dalton:**

*[Holding answer 11 February 2025]:* The Care Quality Commission (CQC) can bring prosecutions against providers. The CQC has not brought any criminal prosecutions against any of the providers referred to in the Hon. Member's question. All prosecutions are published on the CQC website, and are available at the following link: <https://www.cqc.org.uk/about-us/how-we-do-our-job/prosecutions>

The CQC can also bring civil enforcement action against providers, which includes warning notices. The CQC issued Newington Road Surgery Limited with two warning notices in June 2019, for breaches of Regulations 13 (Safeguarding service users from abuse and improper treatment) and Regulation 17 (Good governance) of the Health and Social Care Act (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014. The CQC also issued two further warning notices to this provider in March 2022 for breaches of Regulations 12 (Safe care and treatment) and Regulation 17 (Good governance).

**■ Gynaecology: Greater London****Luke Taylor:**[\[28240\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the waiting lists for gynaecological referrals in London.

**Karin Smyth:**

Patients have been let down for too long whilst they wait for the care they need. At the end of November 2024, the gynaecology waiting list in London stood at 99,018, with 57.1% of patient pathways waiting less than 18 weeks.

As set out in the Plan for Change, we have committed to return to the National Health Service constitutional standard that 92% of patients, including those waiting for gynaecology services, wait no longer than 18 weeks from Referral to Treatment by March 2029.

There are a range of efforts underway, nationally and in London, to reduce the time patients are waiting for gynaecological care. The Elective Reform Plan, published in January 2025, sets out the productivity and reform efforts we will undertake to return to the 18-week standard, and will ensure that patients have the best possible experience while they wait. This includes commitments to support innovative models that offer patients care closer to home, in the community, and piloting gynaecology pathways in community diagnostic centres for patients with post-menopausal bleeding. We have also committed to increasing the relative funding available to support gynaecology procedures with the largest waiting lists and reviewing support options from the independent sector.

**■ Hinchingsbrooke Hospital: Concrete****Ben Obese-Jecty:**[\[29228\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the maximum remaining lifespan is of each RAAC building left on the estate of Hinchingsbrooke Hospital.

**Karin Smyth:**

A report by Mott MacDonald in autumn 2022 into five of the seven predominantly reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) hospitals, including Hinchingsbrooke Hospital, estimated that the remaining life of the RAAC panels at the sites would generally extend until approximately 2030.

We have since commissioned a comprehensive site-by-site report into the seven RAAC schemes, including Hinchingsbrooke Hospital, due to report in summer 2025. The report objectives include forming an updated assessment of the remaining expected life span of the affected sites and establishing whether there are additional mitigation works that could be put in place to extend the sufficiently safe use of the whole hospital site, or areas of the hospital site. Conducting periodic reviews is to be expected in projects of this scale, and given the risks associated with RAAC.

Construction for all RAAC replacement schemes is planned to commence and substantially deliver between 2025 and 2030 as part of Wave 1 of the New Hospital

Programme. We will prioritise the most affected buildings and services first, followed by the less affected parts of existing hospitals. We continue to prioritise these schemes, with mitigation works in place to ensure patient and staff safety.

### ■ Hinchingsbrooke Hospital: Construction

**Ben Obese-Jecty:**

[29225]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the planned completion date is for the rebuild of Hinchingsbrooke Hospital as part of Wave 1 of the New Hospital Programme.

**Karin Smyth:**

The pre-construction activity for the Hinchingsbrooke Hospital scheme, which includes business case development and critical enabling works, is ongoing, with construction of the main hospital build expected to commence in 2027/28 as part of wave one of the New Hospital Programme.

The expected completion dates for all schemes will be confirmed following the approval of a Full Business Case as set out in HM Treasury Green Book, as is usual for large infrastructure projects

### ■ Hospitals: Construction

**Blake Stephenson:**

[28332]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to allow bids for the New Hospital Programme from hospitals which did not bid previously.

**Karin Smyth:**

At this stage, the Government does not have plans to add additional schemes into the New Hospital Programme (NHP) but is committed to tackling the crumbling estate through the full breadth of capital investment, of which the NHP is only one element.

The purpose of the review into the NHP was to put the programme onto a realistic and sustainable footing through a new costed and prioritised timetable for the delivery of the schemes already in the NHP. The NHP's Plan for Implementation sets out the outcome of the review, is published on the GOV.UK website, and is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/new-hospital-programme-review-outcome>

The Department has a £13.6 billion capital settlement for 2025/26, from which the Department has allocated £4 billion to integrated care boards in annual operational capital allocations. These allocations are managed locally, with funds allocated towards local priorities. In addition, my Rt. Hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, also committed over £1 billion to make inroads into the backlog of critical maintenance and to tackle dangerous reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete. £1.35 billion will be allocated to systems to support their progress towards achieving constitutional standards, with a focus on improving the efficiency and productivity of

existing workforces as well as capacity. Capital funding levels for future years will be determined through the current Spending Review which concludes in June 2025. This combined investment will be felt in all parts of the National Health Service estate in England.

## ■ Medical Records: Databases

**James MacCleary:**

[\[28194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure (a) transparency and (b) public trust in the collection and sharing of NHS patient data.

**Karin Smyth:**

Strong public trust is critical for the collection and sharing of National Health Service patient data, and transparency is key to building that trust and retaining public confidence.

NHS England publishes a range of documentation to maintain transparency about how data is used. These include:

- directions made by my Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, to NHS England to establish information systems;
- Data Protection Impact Assessments and other documentation, which provide information on how the information will be used in particular programmes; and
- data use registers that include details of external data sharing agreements and are published monthly. All NHS Research Network Secure Data Environments also maintain a data use register that includes details of data access agreements.

Statutory roles and functions have also been established to provide confidence and assurance that data is used lawfully and for the benefit of patients. The Confidentiality Advisory Group of the Health Research Authority (HRA), provides independent, expert advice to the HRA, and to my Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, on the use of confidential patient information, and their minutes and a register of the applications and decisions made are published. The National Data Guardian (NDG) provides advice to help ensure that people's confidential information is kept safe and used properly. The eight Caldicott rules established by the previous NDG set out key principles for the use of confidential information, including that individuals are informed about how their data is used. Caldicott guardians in every NHS organisation work to ensure these principles are upheld. The NDG publishes an annual report on their work and objectives.

To further build trust, we are delivering a national programme of large-scale public engagement on data which will reach over 6,000 people across England, representative of our diverse communities. This provides the opportunity for us to meaningfully involve the public in decisions and changes to how their health data is used, and complements smaller-scale activities carried out by data programmes throughout the NHS.

## ■ Neurological Diseases: Drugs

**Nesil Caliskan:**

[\[28275\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to tackle shortages of medicine for people with (a) epilepsy and (b) Parkinson's disease.

**Karin Smyth:**

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

We are currently aware of an ongoing supply issue with all strengths of topiramate tablets from one manufacturer. This supply issue is expected to resolve by the end of May 2025. We are also aware of a shortage of phenobarbital 15 milligram tablets from one manufacturer, with the resupply date to be confirmed. In both cases, alternative suppliers are in stock with sufficient supply to support patients, and these issues have been communicated to the National Health Service.

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

## ■ NHS Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire: HCRG Care Group

**Will Stone:**

[\[26893\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of whether the Bath, Swindon, and Wiltshire Integrated Care Board's decision to award a contract to HCRG Care Group for community-based care (a) includes social value in the contract, (b) conducts a public interest test for procurement and (c) ensures value for money while achieving the goals in the Business Case.

**Karin Smyth:**

Following a procurement process, HCRG Care Group will lead an innovative partnership with the National Health Service, local authorities, and voluntary sector groups, and will take responsibility for community services from 1 April 2025, under a contract that will run for at least a seven-year period.

The performance of HCRG Care Group, both from a clinical and non-clinical perspective, will be subject to the same scrutiny as all other health and care providers commissioned by the integrated care board (ICB), which includes NHS and non-NHS organisations. The contract contains the usual safeguards and ability to issue notices, as is standard with all NHS contracts. There is a fixed financial envelope, and the

provider is contractually required to deliver the services from within this funding. HCRG Care Group will also be required to undertake regular reporting regarding financial performance to the ICB.

I understand from the ICB that social value contributions will be monitored as part of the contract monitoring process. As part of procurement evaluation, 10% of the score was weighted to social value benefits in line with central guidance. The commitments made by HCRG Care Group within their bid form part of their contract.

Furthermore, the ICB report that they had a legal duty to proceed to procurement because existing contracts were ending and there was no scope to legally extend them further. Reprocurring the contract could not be subject to consultation as it was not optional. The procurement was carried out in line with the requirements of the process, and therefore, commissioners are required to abide by the outcome.

Engagement with patients and the public took place on the ICB's Health and Care model and elements of the ICB's Integrated Care Strategy, which gave a framework of the priorities that fed into market engagement events with providers. These events shaped the primary and community questions response from the ICB's Delivery Plan, and subsequent transformation priorities and key outcomes for integrated community-based care, which formed the basis of the Integrated Community Based Care programme, and the procurement.

#### ■ **NHS Property Services: Artificial Intelligence**

**Sir John Hayes:**

**[27973]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what purposes NHS Property Services has used artificial intelligence in the last 12 months.

**Karin Smyth:**

Artificial intelligence (AI) is at the heart of the Government's plan to kickstart an era of economic growth, transform how we deliver public services, and boost living standards for working people across the country.

NHS Property Services (NHSPS) is at an early stage of trialling AI technology to enhance its service offer for customers and to support its staff. This includes integrating AI into its cyber security, piloting its use as an assistant for customer support advisers, using it for data analysis on its staff survey results and employee development offer, and trialling Microsoft 365 Copilot. An AI ethics framework has been established across NHSPS to ensure appropriate controls and governance regarding AI usage.

NHSPS can draw on a range of resources, published on the GOV.UK website, to inform AI usage.



## ■ NHS: Public Consultation

**Claire Coutinho:**

[\[22357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department plans to publish its response to the consultation entitled NHS Constitution: 10 year review, which closed in June 2024.

**Karin Smyth:**

*[Holding answer 13 January 2025]:* In May 2024, the Department consulted on a series of proposed updates to the NHS Constitution as part of the 10-year review. We appreciate the time and care spent by everyone who contributed to the consultation at the time. Following the General Election in 2024, the Department is considering next steps and will provide an update shortly.

## ■ Palliative Care

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[27884\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps his Department has taken to improve (a) the provision of and (b) access to palliative care.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

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

NHS England has also developed a palliative and end of life care dashboard, which brings together all relevant local data in one place. The dashboard helps commissioners understand the palliative and end of life care needs of those in their local population, thereby enabling ICBs to put plans in place to address and track the improvement of health inequalities.

We have committed to develop a 10-year plan, to deliver a National Health Service fit for the future, and as part of this we will carefully be considering policies, including those that impact people with palliative and end of life care needs, with input from the public, patients, health staff, and our stakeholders as we develop the plan.

I met with key palliative and end of life care and hospice stakeholders on 3 February 2025 to discuss the long-term sustainability of palliative and end of life care, within the context of our 10-Year Health Plan.

## ■ Royal Shrewsbury Hospital: Accident and Emergency Departments

**Shaun Davies:**

[\[28071\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what he expects the operating capacity of the A&E at Royal Shrewsbury Hospital to be on its relocation from the Princess Royal Hospital in Telford.

**Karin Smyth:**

The future operating capacity of local services, including accident and emergency units, is a matter for National Health Service commissioners, in this case the Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Integrated Care Board, working closely with providers and in the best interests of their populations.

**■ Testosterone Isocaproate****Daisy Cooper:**[\[27889\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the (a) adequacy of access to and (b) reliability of the supply of Sustanon in the UK.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Government is not aware of any current supply issues regarding the provision of Sustanon. Decisions about which medicines to prescribe are made by the doctor or healthcare professional responsible for that part of the patient's care. Prescribers are accountable for their prescribing decisions.

It is for the responsible clinician to work with their patient and decide on the best course of treatment, with the provision of the most clinically appropriate care for the patient always being the primary consideration. Prescribers must always satisfy themselves that the medicines they consider appropriate for their patients can be safely prescribed and that they take account of the appropriate national guidance on clinical effectiveness, as well as the local commissioning decisions of their respective integrated care boards.

**■ Trastuzumab Deruxtecan****Alison Bennett:**[\[28293\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make a comparative assessment of levels of access to Enhertu for cancer patients in (a) England, (b) Wales, (c) Northern Ireland and (d) Scotland.

**Karin Smyth:**

No assessment has been made, as health is a devolved matter and decisions on the availability of medicines in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland are a matter for their own administrations.

Decisions on whether new medicines should be routinely funded by the National Health Service in England are made on the basis of recommendations from the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), following an evaluation of a treatment's costs and benefits. These are very difficult decisions to make, and it is important that they are made independently and on the basis of the available evidence.

NICE published guidance in July 2024 on the use of Enhertu for the treatment of HER-2 low metastatic and unresectable breast cancer and was unfortunately unable to recommend it for routine NHS funding. I understand that NICE and NHS England

have sought to apply as much flexibility as they can in their considerations of Enhertu for HER2-low breast cancer, and have made it clear to the companies that their pricing of the drug remains the only obstacle to access.

Ministers met with the manufacturers of Enhertu, AstraZeneca, and Daiichi Sankyo in November 2024, to encourage them to re-engage in commercial discussions with NHS England. Despite NICE and NHS England offering unprecedented flexibilities, the companies were unable to offer Enhertu at a cost-effective price. NICE's guidance, published in July 2024, will therefore remain unchanged. Although the deadline for a rapid review has now passed, NICE has reassured me that the door remains open for the companies to enter into a new NICE appraisal if they are willing to offer Enhertu at a cost-effective price.

## HOME OFFICE

### ■ Asylum: Age Assurance

**Sir John Hayes:**

[\[27972\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people arriving on small boats seeking asylum underwent scientific age checks in 2024.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

I refer the Rt Hon Member to the Answer I gave to the Shadow Home Secretary on 2 January 2025 to Question UIN 18967.

### ■ Asylum: Applications

**Bradley Thomas:**

[\[28413\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of charging asylum seekers for costs associated with their settlement in the UK.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

Current Home Office policy in this area remains the same as that in place under the previous government.

### ■ Asylum: Bromsgrove

**Bradley Thomas:**

[\[29373\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers have been granted the right to remain in Bromsgrove constituency since July 2024.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

The information requested is not currently available from published statistics, and the relevant data could only be collated and verified for the purpose of answering this question at disproportionate cost.

The Home Office publishes data on asylum in the '[Immigration System Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'. Data on the initial decision of asylum claims (including grants), is

published in table Asy\_D02 of the '[Asylum applications, initial decisions and resettlement detailed datasets](#)'. This data is not broken down by constituency. The Home Office does not track the addresses of those granted refugee status, and refugees are free to move around the UK or leave.

Data on asylum seekers on support by local authority is published in table Asy\_D11 of the '[Asylum seekers in receipt of support by local authority detailed datasets](#)'. This data does not include information about the decisions made on the asylum claims of these individuals.

The latest data relates to the year ending September 2024. Data for October to December 2024 will be published on 27 February 2025.

### ■ Asylum: Contracts

**David Simmonds:** [\[29613\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will list each individual awarded contract to strategic suppliers for the provision of asylum accommodation and support services including the value of each contract.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

The Home Office holds two contracts with SERCO for the provision of Asylum Accommodation and Support Services. Details of these agreements are published on Contract Finder at:

NW

[AASC - Asylum Accommodation & Support Services Contract NW - Contracts Finder](#)

MEE

[AASC - Asylum Accommodation & Support Services Contract MEE - Contracts Finder](#)

### ■ Asylum: Health Services

**David Simmonds:** [\[29612\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether private healthcare has been provided to asylum seekers in the last 12 months.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

The Home Office does not provide asylum seekers with private healthcare.

### ■ Asylum: Housing

**David Simmonds:** [\[29091\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 22 January 2025 to Question 24505 on Asylum: housing, in what types of accommodation asylum seekers will now be housed.

**David Simmonds:** [29092]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 22 January 2025 to Question 24505 on Asylum: housing, what the estimated spending is on accommodation for asylum seekers in 2025.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

I refer the Hon Member to the Answer he received on 22 January 2025 to UIN 24505.

**David Simmonds:** [29605]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 22 January 2025 to Question 24505 on Asylum: housing, what is the expected cost to the public purse of accommodation for asylum seekers in 2025.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

The Home Office publishes information on asylum expenditure in the Home Office Annual Report and Accounts at [Home Office annual reports and accounts - GOV.UK](#).

**David Simmonds:** [29606]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 22 January 2025 to Question 24505, how many people were housed in asylum accommodation in the last 12 months.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

Data on the number of supported asylum seekers in accommodation, including hotels, and by local authority can be found within the Asy\_D11 tab for our most recent statistics release: [Immigration system statistics data tables - GOV.UK](#).

## ■ Children and Young People: Protection

**Steve Race:** [28305]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on improving multi-agency teams to improve (a) early intervention and (b) support for young people.

**Jess Phillips:**

Effective joint working, at both a cross-Government and local agency level, is critical to ensuring that effective early intervention and support for young people is delivered.

These values are at the heart of the Young Futures Programme, which is bringing departments together from across Government (including the Department for Education, Department for Health and Social Care, Department for Culture, Media and Sport, the Ministry of Justice and the Home Office), to establish a network of Young Futures Hubs and Young Futures Prevention Partnerships.

The Young Futures Programme will bring local partners together across England and Wales to intervene earlier, ensuring vulnerable children and young people are identified and offered support in a more systematic way, as well as creating opportunities for young people in their communities, through the provision of open access to mental health and careers support.

Young Futures Prevention Partnerships will look to build on the excellent multi-agency working delivered through Violence Reduction Units and the Serious Violence Duty, and using the strong networks that have been created to improve how we identify, reach, and support young people at risk of being drawn into crime.

### ■ Crime: Young People

**Michael Payne:** [\[28326\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the effectiveness of council run youth centres in (a) tackling youth crime and (b) supporting young people.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

This government recognises the vital role youth services play in reducing a young person's likelihood of becoming involved in crime. This will be a vital element of our Young Futures Programme, which will establish a network of Young Futures Hubs and Young Futures Prevention Partnerships, to intervene earlier to ensure this cohort is identified and offered support in a more systematic way, as well as creating more opportunities for young people in their communities, through the provision of open access to mental health and careers support.

In addition, in 2025/26 DCMS will launch the Local Youth Transformation pilot, which will support local authorities to build youth service capacity. They will also allocate over £85m of capital funding in 2025/26 to create fit-for-purpose, welcoming spaces for young people, including launching the new Better Youth Spaces fund, which will allocate at least £26m for youth clubs to buy new equipment and undertake renovations. This will also include completing the Youth Investment Fund projects.

The Home Office does not measure the outcomes for council run youth centres.

### ■ Crimes of Violence: Pensioners

**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[27980\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an estimate of the number of assaults on pensioners in 2024; and what steps her Department is taking to reduce this.

**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[27981\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an estimate of the number of assaults on (a) men and (b) boys in 2024; and what steps she is taking to reduce this.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) publishes estimates, from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW), on the population aged 16 years and over who had been victims of violent crime broken down by the age and sex of victims in its annual nature of violent crime statistical release. The latest information can be found here:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/the-atureofviolentcrimeinenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2024>

The CSEW does not include children aged below 16 years in its main survey from which the headline estimates are derived.

This Government has put prevention front and centre of our plans to improve the lives of people across the United Kingdom and is taking ambitious action to reduce violent crime. This includes a commitment to halve national levels of knife crime over the next decade as part of the delivery of our mission to make our streets safer.

The Safer Streets Mission is one of five key missions the Government has committed to. It is the vehicle to drive delivery across Government to halve violence against women and girls, halve knife crime, tackle ASB, address the criminal exploitation of children and restore confidence in the policing and justice system.

## ■ Deportation

**Bradley Thomas:**

[28825]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of deporting foreign nationals resident in the UK that engage in activities contrary to British values.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

It is already government policy to pursue deportation where a foreign national:

- is convicted of an offence that has caused serious harm or if, the person has not yet been convicted of an offence, there is compelling circumstantial evidence that the person's conduct or presence in the UK has or will cause serious harm;
- is a persistent offender;
- poses a threat to national security;
- is involved in gun crime or serious drug offending (regardless of the length of sentence received); or
- has participated in or facilitated a sham marriage.

In this Government's first six months in office, we removed 2,580 foreign national offenders, a 23% increase on the same period twelve months prior.

## ■ Emergency Services: Medals

**Tom Morrison:**

[28628]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing an Injury on Duty Award Scheme for members of the emergency services.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

The Home Office will continue to consider proposals for new awards for members of the emergency services. It is only right that we recognise the sacrifices made by the

emergency services, and it is important to make sure this is done in a proportionate and effective manner.

Any official award is a gift from the Government, on behalf of His Majesty The King to recognise individuals within the service. The creation of a new award requires cross Government consensus and approval from the Committee on The Grant of Honours, Decorations and Medals ("HD Committee"), before advice is put to HM The King to make his final decision.

### ■ Firearms: Licensing

**Bradley Thomas:** [\[28374\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to reduce the waiting time for firearms license applications.

**Bradley Thomas:** [\[28375\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of increasing firearms license fees on firearms license holders.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

On 15 January, the Government laid a statutory instrument before Parliament that will increase fees charged by police forces to provide full-cost recovery for firearms licensing applications, giving effect to a commitment in the Government's manifesto. The new fees will come into force on 5 February 2025.

The fees were last increased in 2015 and they no longer meet the cost of the service provided. It is essential for both public safety and police efficiency that full cost recovery fees are introduced so that service improvements can be made. The need to increase firearms licensing fees to help address shortcomings in firearms licensing was highlighted by the Senior Coroner in his Preventing Future Deaths reports into the fatal shootings in Plymouth in August 2021.

The NPCC Lead on Firearms Licensing is developing a new performance framework for firearms licensing teams. In addition, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services will later this year be undertaking a thematic inspection of police forces' arrangements in respect of firearms licensing.

A full impact assessment, which covers the impact of increased fees on the shooting community, was published alongside the statutory instrument.

### ■ Foreign Influence Registration Scheme: China

**Bradley Thomas:** [\[28382\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of excluding China from the enhanced tier of the Foreign Influence Registration Scheme on UK national security.



**Dan Jarvis:**

The Government is currently working at pace to implement the scheme, which is expected to commence in 2025. The proposed foreign entities to be included in the scheme will be subject to formal debate and agreement by both Houses of Parliament in due course.

**Gender Based Violence: Young Futures Hubs****Rebecca Smith:**[\[28419\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of (a) Young Futures Hubs and (b) Young Futures Prevention Partnerships on tackling violence against women and girls.

**Jess Phillips:**

The Government has set an ambitious target to halve VAWG in a decade. To achieve this, we must reduce the current levels of offending and reoffending but also prevent abuse from happening altogether.

This focus on prevention also sits at the heart of the Young Futures Programme, which will establish a network of Young Futures Hubs and Young Futures Prevention Partnerships.

Young Futures Prevention Partnerships will bring local partners together to intervene earlier to ensure that vulnerable children at-risk of being drawn into a variety of crime types (including anti-social behaviour, knife crime and violence against women and girls) are identified and offered support in a more systematic way.

Young Futures Hubs will bring together services to improve access to opportunities and support for young people at community level, promoting positive outcomes and enabling them to thrive.

Officials from across a range of departments are working together, using evidence of what works, to start to shape how the Young Futures Hubs will work in practice.

**Gender Based Violence: Youth Services****Tonia Antoniazzi:**[\[28128\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential role of youth services in (a) preventing and (b) tackling violence against women and girls.

**Jess Phillips:**

The Government has set an ambitious target to halve VAWG in a decade. To achieve this, we must reduce the current levels of offending and reoffending but also prevent abuse from happening all together.

The Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy will set out our strategic direction and concrete actions to deliver this ambition. We are considering a range of policy options across Government to prevent these crimes including education for

young people around healthy relationships and consent, community interventions and tackling online VAWG.

That includes looking at how we can work most effectively with youth services and through the Young Futures programme to deliver this ambition.

**Rebecca Smith:** [\[28418\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of youth services on (a) preventing and (b) tackling violence against women and girls.

**Jess Phillips:**

The Government has set an ambitious target to halve VAWG in a decade. To achieve this, we must reduce the current levels of offending and reoffending but also prevent abuse from happening all together.

The Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy will set out our strategic direction and concrete actions to deliver this ambition. We are considering a range of policy options across government to prevent these crimes including education for young people around healthy relationships and consent, community interventions and tackling online VAWG.

That includes looking at how we can work most effectively with youth services and through the Young Futures programme to deliver this ambition.

#### ■ Immigration Enforcement Directorate: Equality

**Rupert Lowe:** [\[29969\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many diversity, equality or inclusions officers work in immigration enforcement.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

None.

#### ■ Motorcycles: Sherwood Forest

**Michelle Welsh:** [\[28341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to help tackle illegal off road biking in Sherwood Forest constituency.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

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

On 27 November 2024, the Government announced proposals to give the police greater powers to clamp down on off-road bikes and other vehicles involved in anti-social behaviour, with officers no longer required to issue a warning before seizing vehicles.

This will allow the police to quickly remove anti-social vehicles which are bringing misery to city centres and pedestrian areas. These powers will be included in the forthcoming Crime and Policing Bill.

## ■ Offences against Children: Inquiries

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

[\[28151\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 8 January 2025, to Question 21677 on Offences against Children, what funding is being made available to support council-led local inquiries.

**Jess Phillips:**

In January, the Home Secretary announced to Parliament a raft of measures and an investment of £10 million that will allow us to protect more victims and survivors and drive change at a local level.

This includes appointing Baroness Louise Casey to oversee an audit to improve our understanding of the scale, nature and drivers of group-based child sexual exploitation and abuse at a national and local level, and to make recommendations on what additional action is needed to improve our response.

We will provide stronger support for local areas which are interested in undertaking work to better understand local grooming gang issues and improve their own local responses going forward. £5 million has been made available to support this work.

## ■ Police: Biometrics

**David Davis:**

[\[28887\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people who are not wanted for arrest have been placed on police facial recognition watchlists.

**David Davis:**

[\[28888\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential implications for her policies of police forces using facial recognition technology to identify individuals not sought in connection to ongoing criminal investigations.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

Watchlists for live facial recognition deployments are compiled by the police and are specific to the operational requirements of each deployment

The College of Policing have published national guidance which sets out the categories of people that can be included on watchlists. They include people who are wanted either by the police or by the courts, missing persons, vulnerable people and people who could be a danger to themselves or others.

In each case there must be appropriate justification and authorisation, always passing the tests of necessity, proportionality and use for a policing purpose.

## ■ Police: Workplace Pensions

**Gavin Robinson:**

[\[29448\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many outstanding calculations remain for retired police officer pensions arising from the McCloud Judgement within each police force in the United Kingdom.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

Calculations for the police pension scheme, including those related to the McCloud remedy, are produced for each scheme member by the relevant scheme administrator.

While the Home Office has responsibility for overarching policy and legislative changes to the police pension regulations in England & Wales, the police pension scheme is locally administered by individual police forces. The devolved governments have overarching policy and legislative responsibility in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

It is for each Chief Constable, in their role as scheme manager for their force, to determine their administrative timetable.

The Home Office is actively collaborating with policing to support the effective implementation of the McCloud remedy for all affected individuals.

## ■ Shoplifting

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[27987\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to tackle shoplifting.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

In the last year of the previous government, shop theft soared to a twenty-year high, with more and more offenders using violence and abuse against shopworkers. We will not stand for this. Everybody has a right to feel safe at their place of work and the Government is committed to tackling retail crime.

We will introduce a new offence of assaulting a retail worker to protect the hardworking and dedicated staff that work in stores. We will also end the effective immunity, introduced by the previous Government, granted to shop theft of goods of and under £200. This will remove any perception that offenders will escape punishment.

We will provide £100k additional funding next financial year for the National Police Chiefs' Council to give further training to police and retailers on prevention tactics.

We will continue to crack down on the organised gangs targeting retailers. We will provide £5 million over the next three years to continue to fund a specialist analysis team within Opal, the National Policing Intelligence Unit for serious organised acquisitive crime.

We will also invest £2 million over the next three years in the National Business Crime Centre (NBCC) which provides a resource for both police and businesses to learn, share and support each other to prevent and combat crime.

## ■ Stalking

**Uma Kumaran:** [\[28398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to set national standards on stalking perpetrator programmes.

**Jess Phillips:**

Stalking is an insidious crime that can leave victims living in fear just going about their daily lives. That is why on 3 December the Government announced six new measures to tackle it and put victims first, making sure they can be protected at the earliest opportunity.

This included a commitment to develop national standards for police-funded stalking perpetrator programmes, which seek to engage with perpetrators to address the root causes of their stalking behaviour.

In developing these, we will take into account relevant learning from the stalking perpetrator programmes funded through the Home Office's Domestic Abuse and Stalking Perpetrator Intervention Fund alongside analysing the international evidence base and input from expert stakeholders.

## ■ Synthetic Cathinones: Crime

**Tom Hayes:** [\[29825\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of the sale of monkey dust on trends in the level of crime.

**Tom Hayes:** [\[29826\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs's review into Synthetic cathinones published on 3 February 2025.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

This Government is committed to reducing the harm caused to individuals and communities from drugs. This is vital to our missions to deliver safer streets, improve health outcomes, break down barriers to opportunities for all and contribute to economic growth.

The Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD) was commissioned in May 2023 by the then Minister of State for Crime, Policing and Fire to provide an updated harms assessment of 3',4'-Methylenedioxy- $\alpha$ -pyrrolidinohexiophenone (MDPHP) and other synthetic cathinones (sometimes sold as "monkey dust") under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971.

On 3 February 2025, the ACMD's report was published. Their assessment considered the harms and controls of synthetic cathinones, and it includes recommendations to reduce their harm across the UK. Although no specific assessment has been made about the sale and crime trends, the ACMD report does comment on the social harms and the association of synthetic cathinones with violent behaviour.

The Home Office will give careful consideration to the ACMD's recommendations and will respond in due course.

## ■ Tools: Theft

**Andrew Griffith:** [\[28161\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has had recent discussions with the Secretary of State for Business and Trade on reducing tool theft.

**Andrew Griffith:** [\[28162\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the impact of tool theft on (a) tradespeople and (b) small businesses.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

This government recognises the negative impact theft has on victims who rely on the tools of their trade to earn a living, including small businesses.

We are continuing to work with the police-led National Business Crime Centre and industry via the Combined Industries Theft Solutions forum to explore ways to tackle and prevent the theft of tools.

Following engagement with the Home Office and National Vehicle Crime Working Group, Thatcham Research agreed to add to their New Vehicle Security Assessment (NVSA), locks and alarms on the back of vans (previously NVSA only covers the cab area of vans) and a motion sensor on the load area of the van. This is supported by crime prevention advice developed by the Police Crime Prevention Initiatives: [Secured by Design - Vans & Tool Theft](#).

A key part of making acquisitive crime less attractive to criminals is making stolen goods harder to sell on. That is why we are working closely with policing and academic leads to examine what more can be done to tackle the disposal markets for stolen goods and reduce the ability to profit from this criminality.

The Office for National Statistics publishes estimates from the Crime Survey for England and Wales on the proportion of incidents that involved tools being stolen in personal theft offences. These estimates are available in Table 3b of [Nature of crime: personal and other theft](#). They provide estimates of theft of tools against individuals, including those who are self-employed but do not cover crimes against commercial premises.

**Luke Taylor:** [28235]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department collects data on the (a) frequency and (b) geographical distribution of tool theft in London.

**Luke Taylor:** [28236]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what support the Government provides to small businesses impacted by tool theft.

**Luke Taylor:** [28237]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to help tackle tool theft in Sutton and Cheam constituency.

**Luke Taylor:** [28238]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to stop the reselling of stolen tools.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

We recognise the negative impact theft has on victims who rely on the tools of their trade to earn a living, including small businesses.

We are continuing to work with the police-led National Business Crime Centre and industry via the Combined Industries Theft Solutions forum to explore ways to tackle and prevent the theft of tools.

The Police Crime Prevention Initiatives (PCPI) is a not-for-profit, police-owned organisation that works on behalf of Police and Crime Commissioners and Chief Constables to deliver crime prevention and reduction initiatives across the UK. It also provides crime prevention advice: [Secured by Design - Vans & Tool Theft](#).

A key part of making acquisitive crime less attractive to criminals is making stolen goods harder to sell on. That is why we are working closely with policing and academic leads to examine what more can be done to tackle the disposal markets for stolen goods and reduce the profit from acquisitive crime.

The Office for National Statistics publishes estimates from the Crime Survey for England and Wales on the proportion of incidents that involved tools being stolen in personal theft offences. These estimates are available in Table 3b of [Nature of crime: personal and other theft](#). They provide estimates of theft of tools against individuals, including those who are self-employed but do not cover crimes against commercial premises. These estimates cover England and Wales, but no regional breakdown is available.

**Steve Darling:** [28342]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to help tackle tool theft.

**Steve Darling:**

[28356]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish a regional breakdown of the costs of tool theft.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

We recognise the negative impact theft has on victims who rely on the tools of their trade to earn a living.

We are continuing to work with the police-led National Business Crime Centre and industry via the Combined Industries Theft Solutions forum to explore ways to tackle and prevent the theft of tools.

We are also working alongside the police and businesses to tackle these crimes and ensure perpetrators receive just punishment including work to make tradespeople's vans secure.

Following engagement with the Home Office and National Vehicle Crime Working Group, Thatcham Research agreed to add to their New Vehicle Security Assessment (NVSA), locks and alarms on the back of vans (previously NVSA only covers the cab area of vans) and a motion sensor on the load area of the van.

The Office for National Statistics publishes estimates from the Crime Survey for England and Wales on the proportion of incidents involving tools being stolen in personal theft offences. These estimates are available in Table 3b of [Nature of crime: personal and other theft](#). They also provide estimates of theft of tools against individuals, including those who are self-employed, but do not cover crimes against commercial premises. No regional breakdown is available.

## ■ Undocumented Migrants: Northern Ireland

**Carla Lockhart:**

[28646]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people identified as illegal migrants are being housed in Northern Ireland; and what funding they have received in the last five years.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

As at 30 September 2024, there were 2,632 people in receipt of Asylum Support being housed in Northern Ireland. Further data on the number of supported asylum seekers in accommodation, including hotels, and by local authority can be found within the Asy\_D11 tab for our most recent statistics release: Immigration system statistics data tables - GOV.UK(opens in a new tab).

The Home Office publishes information on asylum expenditure in the Home Office Annual Report and Accounts at Home Office annual reports and accounts - GOV.UK(opens in a new tab).



## ■ Undocumented Migrants: Republic of Ireland

**Carla Lockhart:** [\[28645\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to help tackle illegal immigration into the UK via the Republic of Ireland.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

The UK and Ireland have a close and collaborative working relationship on a range of issues, including migration and border security. That collaboration includes a joint commitment to protect the Common Travel Area (CTA) from abuse while preserving the rights of British and Irish citizens.

The UK operates intelligence-led operational activity on routes between Ireland and the UK and everyone entering the UK, regardless of where they enter from, is required to meet UK's immigration requirements. Anyone identified attempting to circumvent UK border controls is liable to be detained and, if they are not lawfully present within the UK, removed.

## HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### ■ Building Safety Act 2022

**Ben Obese-Jecty:** [\[29039\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department has prepared draft legislation to amend the Building Safety Act 2022.

**Alex Norris:**

The government will set out its legislative plans to Parliament in the usual way.

### ■ Buildings: Insulation

**Mike Amesbury:** [\[28102\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of the progress of building remediation work at The Decks in Runcorn.

**Alex Norris:**

We expect developers that signed the developer remediation contract with government to meet their obligation to remediate buildings for which they are responsible as quickly as reasonably practicable.

Taylor Wimpey, the developer of The Decks, has advised us that remedial works are expected to commence shortly, following recent execution of a legal agreement between relevant parties.

The Ministry monitors progress closely. Any developer that fails to comply with its obligations faces significant consequences.

**■ Community Development: Departmental Coordination****James Naish:** [28650]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to promote cross-Departmental work to invest in communities following violent disorder in summer 2024.

**Alex Norris:**

I refer my Hon Friend to the answer I gave to UIN [19795](#) on 20 December 2024.

**■ Cornwall Council: Employers' Contributions****Ben Maguire:** [28320]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of the proposed increase in employer's National Insurance on public services provided by Cornwall Council.

**Jim McMahon:**

We recognise the challenges that local authorities are facing as demand increases for critical services. That is why the government is providing an additional £2 billion of grant funding through the Settlement, which includes £502 million of additional grant funding to manage the impact of employer National Insurance Contributions (NICs) changes on council budgets.

Additional funding for employer NICs has been determined based on a national assessment of the costs for directly employed staff and the grant distribution methodology has been published in an explanatory note on the government website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/updated-explanatory-note-on-the-employer-national-insurance-contribution-grant-2025-to-2026>.

**■ Council of the Nations and Regions: National Identity****Kevin Hollinrake:** [27157]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 18 December 2024 to Question 18960 on Council of the Nations and Regions: National Identity, what definition of (a) regions and (b) nations her Department uses within the English Devolution White Paper, published on 16 December 2024.

**Jim McMahon:**

The United Kingdom comprises four constituent nations. The English Devolution White paper sets out how powers will be devolved within England, to regions whose boundaries are to be agreed with local stakeholders.

**■ Electoral Register****Phil Brickell:** [29202]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department is taking to increase voter registration for elections.

**Rushanara Ali:**

The government is committed to improving electoral registration. We are exploring a wide range of options to deliver on this manifesto commitment, including making greater use of public data and online government services. Any changes will be based on robust evidence and user research.

**Electricians: Certification****Michael Wheeler:**[\[27048\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of replacing the competent person schemes model for domestic electrical installation.

**Alex Norris:**

The Government takes electrical safety very seriously and the Building Regulations require work to homes' fixed electrical systems to be carried out safely to protect people from fire and injury. Government-backed schemes exist to ensure domestic electricians are qualified and registered and can self-certify their work. This is an essential part of safety protections and is one of several schemes – called the competent person schemes – that oversee the competence of tradespeople in many disciplines by considering their qualifications and experience as well as inspecting samples of their work. There are no plans to replace this model. Government does consider applications from new scheme providers periodically but there are no plans currently to invite new applications.

**Flats: Fire Prevention****Daisy Cooper:**[\[28103\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she has had recent discussions with (a) mortgage lenders and (b) insurers on their approach to (i) mortgages and (ii) building insurance policies relating to buildings that hold an EWS1 certificate issued by (A) Tri Fire and (B) Adam Kiziak.

**Alex Norris:**

EWS1s are not a legal or regulatory requirement. They are a mortgage valuation tool and the use of EWS1s is a commercial decision by industry.

The Department engages regularly with the mortgage lending and insurance industries. Officials are working closely with industry representatives to ensure they take a proportional approach to buildings with an EWS1 issued by Adam Kiziak and Tri Fire. Where a mortgage lender will not accept one of these EWS1s, we would expect them to consider alternative evidence.

**Freeports: Trade Unions****Mr Peter Bedford:**[\[28309\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department has plans to introduce union representation onto freeport boards.

**Alex Norris:**

Freeports can play an important role in achieving our number one priority – economic growth – by attracting investment and creating jobs in former industrial heartlands across the UK. That is why the government confirmed it is backing the Freeports Programme in October 2024. We are, however, working closely with Freeports to review progress to date and how to best align the Programme with this government's growth strategy. We will provide further details on these changes in due course.

**■ Grenfell Tower Inquiry****Andy Slaughter:**[\[28899\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when she plans to publish the Government's response to the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 2 Report; and if she will implement the recommendation in paragraph 113.40 of that report.

**Alex Norris:**

We are considering the recommendations set out in the Grenfell Inquiry report. The Prime Minister has committed to respond in full to the Inquiry's recommendations within 6 months and to update Parliament annually on our progress against every commitment made.

**■ Housing: Construction****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[27994\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to ensure new build housing follows high build standards.

**Alex Norris:**

We need historic levels of housebuilding to address the housing crisis. It is vital that the homes we deliver are high-quality, well-designed places where people can work and thrive.

The Building Safety Act enables the design and construction of more high quality homes and aims to ensure that all new homes meet stringent safety standards. It also requires the Building Safety Regulator to keep the safety and standard of buildings under review. Government is continually assessing the efficacy of Building Regulations to ensure that our new homes are safe and provide healthy living environments for their occupants.

Building control procedures that came into force in October 2023 also provide strengthened regulatory oversight of Building Regulations before, during, and on completion of higher-risk building work. This will ensure safer, better-quality buildings, without systemic defects.

## ■ Housing: Noise

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[27993]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to ensure new build housing allows for sufficient soundproofing against external noise pollution.

**Alex Norris:**

The Government is continually assessing the efficacy of Building Regulations to ensure that our new homes and buildings are safe and provide healthy living environments for their occupants. Part E of the Building Regulations requires protection against sound from other parts of a building, adjoining buildings and within a dwelling-house, and prevention of unreasonable reverberation in common internal parts of buildings with residential flats or rooms. For guidance on reducing the passage of external noise into buildings the government published the National Model Design Code: Part 2 – Guidance Notes (MHCLG, 2021) and we encourage designers to note the Association of Noise Consultants' Acoustics, Ventilation and Overheating: Residential Design Guide (2020). Installing background ventilators such as trickle vents, may increase noise pollution where façades face noisy environments. Approved Document F, volume 1 recommends that noise attenuating background ventilators are fitted in these circumstances.

## ■ Local Government Finance

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

[28037]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when she plans to publish the final local government finance settlement for financial year 2025-26.

**Jim McMahon:**

The final Local Government Finance Settlement for 2025-26 was published on the 3rd of February, 2025. The Local Government Finance Settlement and supporting documents are available [here](#).

**Mike Amesbury:**

[28113]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of ensuring local government funding formulas reflect local (a) need and (b) funding levels.

**Jim McMahon:**

We are making good on the previous government's commitment to improve and update the way in which local authorities are funded through "Fair Funding Review". We will implement long-awaited reforms through a multi-year settlement in 2026-27, which will reflect an up-to-date assessment of need and local resources. We are inviting views on our principles and objectives for this reform through a consultation which closes on 12 February.

These changes are part of a comprehensive set of reforms for public services to fix the foundations of local government. This will be done in partnership with the sector and on the principle of giving forward notice and certainty to allow time for councils to plan for the future.

#### ■ Local Government Finance: Halton

**Mike Amesbury:** [28110]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of trends in the level of funding provided to Halton council between 2010 and 2025 on public services in that area.

**Mike Amesbury:** [28111]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent assessment she has made of the potential impact of the new recovery grant on Halton Council.

**Jim McMahon:**

Halton Borough Council will receive £4.5 million from the Recovery Grant in 2025-26. The Recovery Grant is targeted towards areas with greater need and demand for services and less ability to raise income locally. This grant is the first meaningful step towards long overdue funding reform but the government is clear that this is not comprehensive reform. The metrics in this grant will not be as sophisticated as the fully updated assessment of need we are consulting on, and deprivation is the best available proxy.

This Government recognises that council funding has been under pressure since 2010. Detailed information on core spending power and settlement funding for Halton Borough Council from 2015/16 to 2020/21 can be viewed [here](#).

Due to changes in the function and financing of local government, comparable data on Core Spending Power is not available prior to 2015/16.

#### ■ Local Government: Ashfield

**Lee Anderson:** [27667]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions she has had with Ashfield District Council about phase one of the local government re-organisation.

**Jim McMahon:**

There has not been a meeting with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government and Ashfield District Council about phase one of the local government re-organisation.

**Local Government: Devolution****Kevin Hollinrake:** [\[28997\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the written statement of 5 February 2025, HCWS418, on English Devolution and Local Government, what additional funding will be provided to councils in the Devolution Priority Programme; and whether these councils will be required to have a mayoral combined authority.

**Jim McMahon:**

The Devolution Priority Programme aims to see a new wave of mayors elected in May 2026 across new mayoral combined authorities. Areas on the Programme will receive the full backing of government, this will include a long-term Mayoral Investment Fund. Funding will be confirmed at the forthcoming Spending Review.

This government believes that the benefits of devolution are best achieved where there is a mayor in place, to provide strong local leadership and accountability, and the English Devolution White Paper sets out a framework for future devolution agreements, moving away from negotiated deals to a consistent devolution offer.

**Local Government: Elections****Manuela Perteghella:** [\[28830\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent discussions she has had with local authorities on the adequacy of the support they received for holding local elections in May 2025.

**Rushanara Ali:**

The Government continues to engage with local authorities, following on from the sustained engagement and support provided ahead of last year's elections. The Government takes care to understand the needs of Electoral Registration Officers and Returning Officers and ensure they have the necessary support ahead of scheduled polls in May.

**Local Government: Hertsmere****Sir Oliver Dowden:** [\[28525\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions her Department has had with Hertsmere Borough Council on local government reorganisation.

**Sir Oliver Dowden:** [\[28526\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions her Department has had with Hertfordshire County Council on local government reorganisation.

**Jim McMahon:**

There has not been a meeting with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government and Hertsmere Borough Council or Hertfordshire County Council on local government re-organisation. Officials do meet regularly with councils and following receipt of my 5<sup>th</sup> February letter of invitation to submit reorganisation proposals all councils in Hertfordshire will be invited to a meeting with departmental officials.

**Local Government: Public Participation****Alicia Kearns:**[\[29648\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what guidance (a) her Department has and (b) its predecessor Departments have issued to councils on including within their constitutions provision for public participation at council meetings.

**Alicia Kearns:**[\[29662\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department has issued guidance to Councils on the process for residents to issue deputations at meetings; and whether residents are required to provide the full text of their deputation in advance.

**Jim McMahon:**

We have been clear that it is not for Government to micromanage local authorities. We do not provide guidance on allowing public participation, such as deputations, at formal local authority meetings; it is for individual authorities to decide what public participation they may permit and to put in place procedures that work for them and their residents. In support of open and accountable local government, formal council meetings must be open to the public except in limited defined circumstances where legislation requires or allows the meeting to be closed to the public.

**Local Government: Reorganisation****Lee Anderson:**[\[27669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when she plans to publish a timetable for local government re-organisation.

**Jim McMahon:**

I wrote to all councils in two-tier areas and to neighbouring small unitaries on 5<sup>th</sup> February to formally invite unitary proposals from all these councils. These letters will shortly be published on gov.uk and they set out the timelines and next steps for local government re-organisation.

**Sir Oliver Dowden:**[\[28522\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the English Devolution White Paper, CP 1218, published on 16 December



2024, what steps she is taking to ensure local identity is respected in local government reorganisation.

**Sir Oliver Dowden:** [28523]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the English Devolution White Paper, CP 1218, published on 16 December 2024, what guidance she has issued on deciding between alternative local government reorganisation proposals for one area.

**Jim McMahon:**

I wrote to all councils in two-tier areas and to neighbouring small unitaries on 5<sup>th</sup> February to formally invite unitary proposals from all these councils. The invitation includes guidance on issues of local identity among other matters, all of which will be relevant to decisions between alternative local government reorganisation proposals for one area.

#### ■ Local Government: Worcestershire

**Bradley Thomas:** [29376]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, by what date her Department plans to commence structural reform in Worcestershire.

**Jim McMahon:**

I wrote to all councils in Worcestershire on 5 February to formally invite unitary proposals. We have published these letters [here](#). This letter set out the timelines and next steps for local government re-organisation.

#### ■ Mayors

**Kevin Hollinrake:** [28147]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 6 January 2025 to Question 20571 on Mayors, who will determine the (a) allowance and (b) salaries of Commissioners; whether they will receive local government pensions; whether they must be Councillors; and whether they will be politically restricted.

**Jim McMahon:**

As announced in the English Devolution White Paper the Government will give Mayors the ability to appoint and remunerate 'Commissioners'. They will be able to support in the delivery of key functions, complementing the existing portfolio system by providing additional capacity and expertise. Additional detail will be introduced as part of the English Devolution Bill.

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

**Dr Caroline Johnson:** [28947]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many and what proportion of items of correspondence from Parliamentarians received by

(a) her Department, (b) her and (c) her Ministers in each month since August 2024 have not yet received a substantive response.

**Alex Norris:**

Since August 2024, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has received 3493 pieces of correspondence from Parliamentarians. The table below shows the number of items received by month (August 2024 – February 2025) that have not yet received a substantive response, and the proportion this represents of the total number of cases responded to, by month. The majority of cases from January – February are not yet due.

	AUG-24	SEPT-24	OCT-24	NOV-24	DEC-24	JAN-25	FEB-25*	TOTAL
Total	0	7	10	22	117	399	82	637
Proportion	0%	1%	1.5%	3.5%	22%	60%	100%	18%

\* February data is captured up until 6<sup>th</sup> February 2025

■ **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Industrial Disputes**

**Nick Timothy:**

[\[13622\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what industrial disputes are ongoing within (a) her Department and (b) each of the arm's length bodies connected to her 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 she plans to take to end each dispute.

**Alex Norris:**

The Public and Commercial Services trade union (PCS) had a mandate to call strike action between May and November 2024, PCS having notified the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government of a dispute over pay, pensions and jobs. That mandate expired with effect from 13 November 2024, no action has followed, and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has not been notified of a further ballot.

Further to the outcome of a ballot in December, Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS) members at HM Land Registry (HMLR) commenced Action Short of a Strike indefinitely on 21 January 2025. PCS has approximately 3,800 members in HMLR, out of a total headcount of approximately 7,000. The action consists of "Work to rule, whereby members will not work longer than their contracted hours and will carry out only the work required by their contract". The action is in relation to a Trade Dispute regarding the issues of office attendance, use of individual performance data in performance management, and casework classification.

HMLR is confident it will be able to manage its essential services effectively during this period of Action Short of a Strike, as it has done during previous disputes.

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

**Joe Robertson:**

[\[24046\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many (a) internal policy reviews, (b) independent reviews, (c) external reviews, (d) taskforces, (e) public consultations, (f) investigations and (g) other reviews their Department launched between 5 July 2024 and 5 January 2025; what the titles were of those reviews; and how many of those reviews have been (i) completed and (ii) published.

**Alex Norris:**

This Government has outlined its ambitions through the Plan for Change, which sets out an ambitious set of milestones - across the missions - for this Parliament. As the House would expect, Government continually reviews its work to ensure that it is delivering the best outcomes for the people of the United Kingdom, and that its policies continue to represent the best value for the taxpayer. Public reviews and consultations will be available on GOV.UK as they are published.

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

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

[\[28154\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the answer of 13 January 2025, to Question 21618, on MHCLG: Staff, how many desks are currently assigned in each of those offices.

**Alex Norris:**

Please find a table below of how many desks MHCLG have in each of their offices:-

	DESKS	NOTES
<b>Belfast</b>	17	
<b>Birkenhead</b>	38	
<b>Birmingham</b>	76	
<b>Bristol</b>	66	Currently in temporary office space as our new office is being refurbished
<b>Cambridge</b>	30	
<b>Cardiff</b>	25	
<b>Darlington</b>	30	MHCLG has use of 30 desk at Darlington Economic Campus and also other non-allocated desks.

	DESKS	NOTES
<b>Edinburgh</b>	30	
<b>Exeter</b>	14	
<b>Hastings</b>	12	
<b>Hemel Hempstead</b>	40	
<b>Leeds</b>	50	
<b>London</b>	947	
<b>Manchester</b>	66	
<b>Newcastle</b>	45	
<b>Norwich</b>	10	
<b>Nottingham</b>	30	Currently in temporary office space as our new office is being refurbished
<b>Plymouth</b>	30	
<b>Sheffield</b>	16	
<b>Truro</b>	13	
<b>Warrington</b>	42	
<b>Wolverhampton</b>	58	

## ■ Parish and Town Councils

**Blake Stephenson:**

[R] [\[28337\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the English Devolution White Paper, published on 16 December 2024, how she plans to reform the relationship between town and parish councils and principal local authorities; and what assessment she has made of the potential merits of additional powers for town and parish councils.

**Jim McMahon:**

The English Devolution White Paper was clear that we know people value the role of governance at the community scale. We will therefore want to see stronger community arrangements when reorganisation happens in the way councils engage at a neighbourhood or area level.

Local authorities act independently of central government. Town and parish councils can work with other tiers of local government to determine how they can best serve their communities in their area.

## ■ Restaurants: Fire Prevention

**Susan Murray:** [\[28389\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what support her Department provides to restaurant businesses who have incurred financial cost as a result of operating from premises affected by flammable cladding.

**Alex Norris:**

The key objective of the government's cladding funding schemes is to ensure that life safety fire risks associated with cladding are addressed as quickly as possible to ensure that residents in residential buildings are safe and feel safe in their homes. Funding is available towards eligible costs related to action needed to mitigate the risk posed by cladding on residential buildings over 11m in height. Commercial leaseholders operating in mixed use residential and commercial developments may in some circumstances benefit from protections against having to pay service charges towards equivalent works to fix cladding. Full details of eligibility for cladding safety funding can be found at [Cladding Safety Scheme overview - GOV.UK](#).

## ■ Social Rented Housing: Rents

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** [\[26960\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she is taking steps to ensure housing associations who raise rents for social housing tenants above inflation are using the increased revenue to invest in building new homes.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

Housing associations use income from social housing rents to deliver services to their tenants, manage and maintain their homes to the required standards, and invest in new homes.

Government does not place requirements on housing associations to use rental income to invest in new homes. However, we recognise the need to support them so they can build their capacity and make a greater contribution to affordable housing supply.

One way we are doing this is by providing capital grant through the Affordable Homes Programme. In October 2024, we announced an immediate one-year cash injection of £500m to the 2021-2026 Affordable Homes Programme over and above its £11.5bn budget, to support delivery of up to 5,000 new social and affordable homes.

**■ Thatched Roofing****Sarah Bool:** [\[28866\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of allowing water reed to be used as an alternative to thatching straw for protected thatched roofs.

**Alex Norris:**

My Department has no plans to make an assessment of the potential merits of allowing water reed as an alternative thatching material for historic buildings.

Any works to demolish any part of a listed building or to alter or extend it in a way that affects its character as a building of special architectural or historic interest require listed building consent. It is for local planning authorities to decide whether to grant listed building consent depending on the particular circumstances of each case.

**■ UK Shared Prosperity Fund****Llinos Medi:** [\[28571\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent progress she has made on developing a future funding framework to replace the Shared Prosperity Fund.

**Alex Norris:**

The government is progressing with the development of a future funding framework to replace the Shared Prosperity Fund. We will set out our long-term vision for local growth at the multi-year spending review.

**■ Woking Borough Council: Debts****Kevin Hollinrake:** [\[28152\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether the Government has received representations from local authorities to write off the Public Works Loan Board debts of Woking Borough Council.

**Jim McMahon:**

Previous Secretaries of State used statutory powers to intervene in a small number of councils failing their Best Value Duty partly associated with high levels of unsustainable debt, including Woking. We continue to work with Best Value Commissioners in these councils to support the councils' financial recovery.

**JUSTICE****■ Coronavirus: Criminal Proceedings****Mr Richard Holden:** [\[29550\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many cases relating to breaches of covid-19 laws are (a) awaiting and (b) ongoing in (i) Crown and (ii) magistrates courts.

**Sarah Sackman:**

According to the best available data from our live management information systems, there are 114 outstanding cases in the magistrates court under Coronavirus Offences as at 30 September 2024. There are no cases awaiting trial or sentencing at the Crown Court (although there are 3 appeals against magistrate court decisions there).

## ■ Courts: Interpreters and Translation Services

**Rupert Lowe:**[\[28403\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how much was spent on (a) translation and (b) interpretation in courts in 2024.

**Sarah Sackman:**

This question has been interpreted to mean spend for all language services, both translation and interpretation provided in a court setting, and for printed materials available in HMCTS buildings.

Information is not held disaggregated as (a) translation and (b) interpretation but has been provided in total.

In 2024/25 financial year, total spend to date (Apr-24 to Dec-24) by Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service on translation and interpretation is:

FINANCIAL YEAR TO DATE (APR-24 TO DEC-24)	2024-25
Total Cost	£10,049,422

These year to date figures for the current financial year are provisional and remain subject to change until the 2024-25 financial year concludes and the annual report and accounts have been audited.

It is vital that victims, witnesses and defendants understand what is happening in court to ensure justice is done, and we will always take steps to ensure a qualified interpreter is provided when needed.

## ■ Criminal Proceedings: Training

**Josh Babarinde:**[\[28195\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment her Department has made of the contribution of peer support programs to reducing reoffending rates in the criminal justice system.

**Josh Babarinde:**[\[28196\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps she is taking to expand peer-led initiatives in prisons and probation services.

**Josh Babarinde:**[\[28197\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps she is taking to ensure that peer mentors in the criminal justice system are adequately trained and supported in their roles.

**Josh Babarinde:**

[\[28198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how much funding her Department is providing to promote peer support schemes in (a) custody and (b) community settings in the criminal justice system.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

Peer mentoring already plays an important role in supporting rehabilitation within prison and probation services. It is currently used in various ways, including providing lived experience insights of probation community requirements, and direct one-to-one mentoring. Some peer-led services are also delivered by external organisations, further supporting rehabilitation efforts. Overall, there is national variation in delivery of peer led services.

The Ministry of Justice has not specifically assessed the contribution of peer mentoring schemes in relation to reducing offending.

The Ministry of Justice intends that any expansion of peer-led initiatives is informed by evidence, ensuring that growth supports safe and effective rehabilitation. Additionally, every prison has been encouraged to deliver peer mentoring as part of the prison regime. This will help to embed peer support across the custodial estate, promoting rehabilitative engagement and enhancing prisoners' access to mentoring opportunities.

There are several routes currently available for training and accreditation with most prisons offering a peer mentoring training and some offering higher learning with City and Guilds and other advice and guidance qualifications. In probation there has also been localised training created to deliver to peer mentors.

The funds for peer support schemes in both custody and community settings are delivered through various routes within prison and probation budgets. Funding is allocated regionally and locally by leadership teams, often through commissions and direct awards. As this funding is embedded within broader rehabilitation and resettlement budgets, it is not possible to publish a single figure for departmental spending on these initiatives.

**Josh Babarinde:**

[\[28199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps her Department has taken to stop vetting processes barring those with criminal records being offered peer support roles in the justice sector.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

The Ministry of Justice supports employment for people with lived experience of the criminal justice system, and we are committed to giving them the support they need to thrive.

The Department is responsible for the care, supervision and rehabilitation of thousands of people. As well as reducing re-offending, there is a duty to protect the public, and victims of crime. Security vetting is vital to ensure that we can deliver these objectives effectively.



For people with lived experience who are unable to attain security clearance, including for peer support roles, we have introduced two alternative entry schemes: Going Forward into Employment and Standard Plus. Applicants with recent offending history or who have recently left prison are risk-assessed for suitable roles within the organisation.

These schemes allow a more holistic approach to risk assessment, taking into account evidence of personal growth and rehabilitation, with a greater focus on how we can mitigate any risks, so that HM Prison & Probation Service (HMPPS) can make use of the skills and qualities that people with lived experience may be able to offer the organisation.

There are, however, certain offences that we consider to pose an unmanageable risk to the safety and security of HMPPS, those working in any capacity, for or on behalf of HMPPS, prisoners, people on probation, visitors, and the public. This may mean that individuals who have committed these offences may never be granted security clearance.

#### ■ **Magistrates: Standards**

**Bradley Thomas:** [\[28388\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of numbers of magistrates.

**Sarah Sackman:**

The Government is committed to increasing the number of magistrates and we aim to recruit up to 2,000 magistrates per year. We are investing in recruitment to ensure that we build a larger and more diverse group of magistrates to meet the needs of our courts. We are also continuously improving our recruitment process collaborating with the magistracy and Advisory Committees.

As of 01 April 2024, there were 14,576 active magistrates in England and Wales, an increase of 2,907 since the start of the Magistrate Attraction and Recruitment Campaign in January 2022. The next set of statistics for the period April 2024 to March 2025 will be published in July 2025.

#### ■ **Marriage: Relatives**

**Mr Richard Holden:** [\[29552\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 5 February 2025 to Question 902578 on Marriage: Relatives, what her Department's timetable is for the consideration of the Law Commission's 2022 wedding report.

**Alex Davies-Jones:**

The Law Commission set out that its recommendations would provide greater choice for couples in deciding how and where they get married. Marriage will always be one of our most important institutions and we must consider any recommendations to change weddings law carefully, including in relation to cousin marriage.

We will take the time to properly consider their report before setting out our position in the coming months.

### ■ Prison Accommodation: Fire Alarms

**Munira Wilson:** [\[28622\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 22 January 2025 to Question 23432 on Prisons: Fires, how many cell fire alarms in the identified prisons were found to be (i) working and (ii) not working.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

We undertake regular maintenance and inspection of cell fire detection devices to ensure that any potential issues are identified and addressed promptly. This is crucial to maintaining a safe environment within prisons.

To obtain the information requested, it would be necessary to examine individually each of 2,931 fire investigations, to determine whether failure of a cell fire detection device had been reported. That could not be done without incurring disproportionate cost.

### ■ Prison Sentences

**David Smith:** [\[28311\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the longest period is that a person is in prison over their minimum tariff; and what the original tariff length was for that person.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

We believe that disclosing the exact tariff information for a single person would be likely to lead to the individual concerned being identified. For this reason, we have chosen to provide figures for the ten prisoners who have served the longest period over their minimum tariff.

The table below shows ten unreleased prisoners that have served the longest period over their tariff, broken down by their tariff length, as of 31 December 2024. All ten prisoners have served 35 years or more over their minimum tariff.

MINIMUM TARIFF LENGTH	NUMBER OF PRISONERS
Less than or equal to 10 years	6
Greater than 10 years to less than or equal to 20 years	4

Notes:

1. Tariff length is the time between date of sentencing and tariff expiry date and does not take into account any time served on remand.
2. Figures only include those with recorded tariff information.

Where a request is made for information and the total figure amounts to five or fewer, we must consider whether this would be likely to lead to the identification of individuals and whether disclosure of this information would be in breach of our statutory obligations under the UK General Data Protection Regulation and/or the Data Protection Act 2018.

## ■ Prisoners: Suicide

**David Smith:** [\[28310\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people took their own life in prison while serving an imprisonment for public protection (IPP) sentence in 2024.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

There were four self-inflicted deaths of those serving an indeterminate sentence for public protection in 2024. This information can be found in [Table 1.7](#) of the '[Safety in custody: quarterly update to September 2024](#)'.

Self-inflicted deaths are any deaths of a person who has apparently taken his or her own life irrespective of intent. This not only includes suicides but also accidental deaths as a result of the person's own actions.

## ■ Probate

**Dr Roz Savage:** [\[28232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps she is taking to help tackle delays in the granting of probate.

**Sarah Sackman:**

HM Courts & Tribunals Service has invested in additional staff and made system and process improvements to reduce waiting times. Management Information published by HMCTS shows, despite continued high levels of receipts, average waiting times are improving and currently stand at 5 weeks, from receipt of the documentation needed, for November 2024.

Average waiting times for probate grants are routinely published on gov.uk via the Family Court Statistics ( [Family Court Statistics Quarterly - GOV.UK.](#) ) and HMCTS Management Information ( [HMCTS management information - GOV.UK](#) )

## ■ Probation

**Fred Thomas:** [\[28432\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what proportion of probation officers had a caseload of (a) above 30, (b) above 40, (c) above 50 and (d) above 60 in (i) 2010, (ii) 2014, (iii) 2019 and (iv) 2023.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

Caseload data for Probation Officers is unavailable pre-unification of the Probation Service (June 2021). Caseload data for the service as a whole is published for earlier

periods ([Offender management statistics quarterly - GOV.UK](#)) but is not broken down by which Probation Service grade delivers it.

As of 30 June 2023, the proportion of Probation Officers with a caseload above 30, 40, 50 and 60 is:

PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL POs

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a. caseload above 30	52.7%
b. caseload above 40	14.9%
c. caseload above 50	2.3%
d. caseload above 60	0.5%

i) Dataset as of 30 June 2023 from the Workload Measurement Tool (WMT). Data has been taken as of a single day in 2023 and caseload per officer is likely to fluctuate across the year.

ii) For caseloads of less than 30, the percentage of total Probation Officers is 47.3%

■ **Probation: Retirement**

**Fred Thomas:**

[\[28431\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many probation officers retired from the service in (a) 2010, (b) 2014, (c) 2019 and (d) 2023.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

The Ministry of Justice publishes data on the leaving reasons of probation officers in Table 14b of the quarterly "HM Prison and Probation Service workforce statistics" publication. The latest publication and tables, which covers the year to September 2024, are available here:

[www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hm-prison-probation-service-workforce-quarterly-september-2024](http://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hm-prison-probation-service-workforce-quarterly-september-2024)

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/673de4672ff787d4e01b0886/hmpps-workforce-statistics-tables-sep-2024.ods>

Data is only available since the National Probation Service was formed in June 2014, as a result of which the number who retired in 2010 is unavailable. The number of probation officers who retired in 2019 and 2023 is included in the above publication.

The number who retired in 2014 is available in the December 2015 publication available here: [www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-offender-management-service-workforce-statistics-december-2015](http://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-offender-management-service-workforce-statistics-december-2015)

This only includes data for those who retired after the formation of the National Probation Service in 2014.

**■ Probation: Staff****Fred Thomas:**[\[28430\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of probation officers had (a) less than one years' experience (b) less than three years' experience and (c) three or more years' service at (i) 30 June 2010, (ii) 30 June 2014 and (iii) 30 June 2024.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

The Ministry of Justice publishes data on the length of service of Probation Officers in Table 4 of the quarterly "HM Prison and Probation Service workforce statistics" publication. The latest publication and associated tables, which cover the year to September 2024, are available here:

[www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hm-prison-probation-service-workforce-quarterly-september-2024](http://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hm-prison-probation-service-workforce-quarterly-september-2024).

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/673de4672ff787d4e01b0886/hmpps-workforce-statistics-tables-sep-2024.ods>

Data is only available since the National Probation Service was formed in June 2014, as a result of which length of service data for 30 June 2010 is unavailable. Length of service data for Probation Officers in post on 30 June 2024 is included in the above publication.

**■ Probation: Staffordshire****Adam Jogee:**[\[28277\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps her Department is taking to support probation officers working in (a) Newcastle-under-Lyme constituency and (b) Staffordshire.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

West Midlands Probation region is committed to supporting probation officers across Staffordshire, including those working in the Newcastle-under-Lyme area. The challenges faced by probation staff are recognised and the region continues to take steps to ensure their wellbeing and professional development.

The Lord Chancellor has committed to bringing in at least 1,000 new probation officer trainees by March 2025 to bolster probation capacity. Across the West Midlands region, there are currently 186 trainee officers. In North Staffordshire, caseloads are carefully managed to make sure staff have the capacity to deliver effective supervision.

The Probation Service Learning and Development Model sets out the mandatory, required, and desirable learning for Probation Officer (PO) and Probation Services Officers (PSO). Support includes digital (e.g. videos, podcasts, interactive experiences and virtually delivered learning), as well as face to face delivery and a suite of resources. Alongside this, HMPPS launched a new learning programme in

2024 for all new Senior Probation Officers focused on developing their skills to support Probation Officers to deliver high quality probation practice.

Regional staff support and wellbeing leads cover both prison and probation. Their role includes coordinating wellbeing services, peer services and liaison with human resources (HR) and other stakeholders. An updated HMPPS Staff Support Directory was published in May 2024. A range of well-being and support initiatives are in place across North Staffordshire.

## SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

### ■ Artificial Intelligence: Arts

**Bradley Thomas:**

[28371]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what recent assessment he has made with Cabinet colleagues of the potential impact of AI on the creative industries.

**Feryal Clark:**

The Department for Science, Innovation and Technology and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport jointly published a consultation on Copyright and AI in December 2024, seeking views on several topics relating to the interaction between copyright and AI.

The Government has published a [summary assessment](#) of options alongside the consultation which aims to provide context on the range and scale of impacts the Government is considering in these policies.

The Government welcomes further information and evidence on impacts, including the economic impact of AI on the creative industries, to help shape its thinking.

The consultation closes on 25 February.

### ■ Artificial Intelligence: Software

**Chi Onwurah:**

[29464]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, which organisations are responsible for (a) the development and (b) the maintenance of the (i) Scout, (ii) Connect, and (iii) Humphrey AI tools.

**Feryal Clark:**

The Incubator for Artificial Intelligence (i.AI), which is part of the Government Digital Service, developed these tools. i.AI maintains Connect and the Humphrey GovAI toolkit. Scout will be maintained by the Infrastructure and Projects Authority.

**■ Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Centre for Media Monitoring****Nick Timothy:** [\[28201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how many letters his Department has responded to from the Centre for Media Monitoring since 4 July 2024.

**Feryal Clark:**

There has been no correspondence from the Department of Science, Innovation and Technology to the Centre for Media Monitoring since 4 July 2024.

**Nick Timothy:** [\[28202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how many times his Department has met with representatives from the Centre for Media Monitoring since 4 July 2024.

**Feryal Clark:**

The Department for Science, Innovation and Technology has not met with representatives from the Centre for Media Monitoring since 4 July 2024.

**Nick Timothy:** [\[28203\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how many times his Department has invited the Centre for Media Monitoring to official events since 4 July 2024.

**Feryal Clark:**

The Department for Science, Innovation and Technology has not invited the Centre for Media Monitoring to official events since 4 July 2024.

**■ Digital Technology: West Dunbartonshire****Douglas McAllister:** [\[28076\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps his Department is taking to support digital inclusion in West Dunbartonshire.

**Chris Bryant:**

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

**■ Hepatitis: Research****Peter Fortune:** [\[28175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how much funding the Government provided for research into Hepatitis B in the 2023-24 financial year; and which public bodies provided that funding.

**Peter Fortune:** [28176]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how much funding the Government provided for research into Hepatitis C in the 2023-24 financial year; and which public bodies provided that funding.

**Peter Fortune:** [28177]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how much funding the Government provided for research into hepatocellular carcinoma in the 2023-24 financial year; and which public bodies provided that funding.

**Peter Fortune:** [28178]

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

**Peter Fortune:** [28179]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how much funding the Government provided for research into primary biliary cirrhosis in the 2023-24 financial year; and which public bodies provided that funding.

**Peter Fortune:** [28180]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how much funding the Government provided for research into primary sclerosing cholangitis in the 2023-24 financial year; and which public bodies provided that funding.

**Peter Fortune:** [28181]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how much funding the Government provided for research into autoimmune hepatitis in the 2023-24 financial year; and which public bodies provided that funding.

**Peter Fortune:** [28182]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how much funding the Government provided for research into non-alcoholic fatty liver disease in the 2023-24 financial year; and which public bodies provided that funding.

**Peter Fortune:** [28183]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how much funding the Government provided for research into alcoholic fatty liver disease in the 2023-24 financial year; and which public bodies provided that funding.

**Feryal Clark:**

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) funds medical research through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). NIHR funds, enables, and delivers high-quality research to improve patient care and public health and [supports liver research](#) through a range of funding programmes, training, support for researchers and facilities.



UKRI delivers a substantial portfolio of researcher-led projects. This includes biological, physiological, mechanistic and clinical studies to investigate the causes and underpin the development of treatments for a variety of liver conditions/diseases.

Details of UKRI and NIHR funding on specific areas is provided in the table below: Due to the complexity of the table please view on the website: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2025-02-03/28183>

## ■ Media

**Victoria Collins:**

[29226]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how much funding the Government has allocated to media literacy initiatives since 4 July 2024; and what recent assessment he has made of the impact of those initiatives on media literacy.

**Feryal Clark:**

The government is committed to empowering internet users with the skills to engage critically with online content and make informed decisions.

Since 2022, nearly £3 million in funding has been provided for media literacy projects. This includes £0.5 million in 2024 to scale up two programmes to provide media literacy support to teachers, children aged 11-16, and professionals working with families. That funding covers the 2024/25 financial year.

Robust evaluation and monitoring are key requirements of the grant schemes. Both organisations must evaluate the impact of their programmes over the past year by March 2025.

## ■ Met Office: Artificial Intelligence

**Sir John Hayes:**

[27965]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, for what purposes the Met Office has used artificial intelligence in the last 12 months.

**Feryal Clark:**

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is at the heart of the Government's plan to kickstart an era of economic growth, transform how we deliver public services, and boost living standards for working people across the country.

The Met Office is at the forefront of public sector deployment of AI and has an organisation-wide change programme that fosters a culture of AI innovation: AI4Everyone. It has been using AI in a wide range of applications, for example working with The Alan Turing Institute to co-develop a machine learning model for weather prediction known as FastNet. It has also started using AI in climate science applications through its AI4Climate Programme and is deploying AI across its internal operations to deliver efficiencies, improved internal processes and to stimulate innovative new services. It will begin publishing records through the Algorithmic Transparency Recording Standard shortly.

All Arms Length Bodies can draw on a range of resources, published on GOV.UK, to inform AI usage and have access to the Government Digital Service, part of the Department for Science, Innovation & Technology, for expert advice.

## ■ Pornography Review

**Tonia Antoniazzi:** [\[29503\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, when he plans to publish the Bertin Review.

**Feryal Clark:**

The Independent Pornography Review is an important area of interest for this government. The Review has now concluded, the government is assessing its findings and the report will be published in due course.

## ■ Project Gigabit

**Victoria Collins:** [\[29213\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the progress of Project Gigabit; how many premises have been connected; and what the status of the outstanding procurements is.

**Chris Bryant:**

As of the end of March 2024, over one million premises had been upgraded to gigabit-capable broadband through government-funded programmes. Additionally, more than £2 billion of contracts have been signed to provide gigabit-capable coverage to over a million more premises.

All planned Project Gigabit contracts for England and Wales have been signed. In the last few months alone, the first premises have been given coverage as part of these contracts in areas including North Yorkshire, Norfolk, Suffolk and South Wiltshire. Build is under way in many other parts of the country too.

The Scottish Government has four procurements in progress and details of a contract covering the Borders and East Lothian area are expected to be announced shortly. Remaining areas of Scotland will be included within a procurement which is currently under way with Openreach, managed by the UK Government. A single procurement is also in progress in Northern Ireland, managed by the Department for Economy.

## ■ Social Media: Young People

**Bradley Thomas:** [\[28387\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment he has made with Cabinet colleagues of the potential impact of social media access on youth mental health.

**Feryal Clark:**

In November 2024, DSIT announced a feasibility study to further understand the impact of smartphones and social media on children.

The study will review existing evidence and assess which research methods will be most effective in determining the causal effect of social media and smartphones on children's developmental outcomes. The study will conclude in May 2025.

## SCOTLAND

### ■ Renewable Energy: Scotland

**Andrew Bowie:**

[\[28939\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the estimated timeline for the creation of jobs by GB Energy on the renewable energy industry in Scotland.

**Kirsty McNeill:**

The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero is in the process of establishing GB Energy, which will drive our clean energy mission. The company will employ staff in its Headquarters in Aberdeen and in additional sites in Edinburgh and Glasgow, making the most of the local skills and expertise available across Scotland.

GB Energy will install thousands of clean power projects across the country, crowding in investment for next-generation technologies, and providing vital support to accelerate large-scale projects; in turn, this will create thousands of good jobs, with good wages, across the country.

## TRANSPORT

### ■ Active Travel: Rural Areas

**Dr Simon Opher:**

[\[29056\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of the Active Travel England funding allocation formula on (a) rural and (b) semi-rural areas; and whether she plans to review the use of per capita weighting.

**Simon Lightwood:**

Local authority allocations for Active Travel England (ATE) funding are calculated using a formula based on both population and capability level. This enables investment to be focused on cost effective schemes that have high potential to convert short vehicles journeys to walking and cycling. Since 2020, approximately 9% of schemes with mapping data are in predominantly rural areas. This represents 7% of dedicated investment by the Department for Transport. However, more than 50% of ATE funding has been invested in areas within the highest quintile for deprivation, which are the most likely to have poor health. There are no plans to review the formula.

**■ Aviation: Fuels****Euan Stainbank:**[\[28234\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her Department has plans to bring forward the delivery timeline for the revenue certainty mechanism.

**Mike Kane:**

We expect the legislation for a revenue certainty mechanism to be in place by the end of 2026. We will continue to monitor the estimated delivery date and work with industry to deliver an effective revenue certainty mechanism as soon as possible.

**■ British Transport Police: Labour Turnover and Recruitment****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[27997\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, What steps she is taking to promote the (a) recruitment and (b) retention of officers within the British Transport Police.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The British Transport Police (BTP) are dedicated to building a modern, inclusive, and resilient force that reflects the communities it serves. Their latest headcount figures show the Force is successful at maintaining staff and officer numbers at a consistent level.

The Force has focussed on leadership development to foster a culture of empowerment, empathy and support. They have introduced a new well-being programme for the workforce, and they are investing in technology, training and facilities to equip their officers with the necessary tools for the dynamic environment they operate in every day.

BTP is also committed to creating a more representative workforce and have an outreach programme to encourage applications from candidates in underrepresented groups.

BTP is launching a pilot in London for new recruits to join BTP as part time police constables. This is a commitment from BTP's Learning and Development Strategy to attract high calibre applicants, from a range of backgrounds, who would otherwise not be able to apply or consider becoming a police officer.

**■ Bus Services: Rural Areas****Alex Mayer:**[\[28260\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when she expects the final evaluation report for the Rural Mobility Fund to be published.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The Rural Mobility Fund evaluation consists of two elements – a first stage including monitoring data collection and a process evaluation and a second stage including impact and value for money evaluation.

An interim monitoring data collection and process evaluation report was published in September 2023 and a second concluding process evaluation report will be published later this year.

The impact and value for money evaluation will be published in 2026.

**Alex Mayer:**

[\[28261\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the final evaluation report for the Rural Mobility Fund will include a conclusion on the optimum zone size for Demand-Responsive Transport services.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The Rural Mobility Fund (RMF) impact and value for money evaluation will seek to explore what works best, when and why in the RMF scheme areas (rural and suburban). However, it may be the case that there is no single optimal zone size, as the optimal size may vary depending on the number of vehicles in operation, hours of operation, traffic congestion, rurality, population density, other transport infrastructure and connections and demographics.

Additionally, DRT Best Practice Guidance is being developed which will support local authorities in determining whether DRT might be a suitable option in certain areas.

#### ■ **Crossrail 2 Line: Finance**

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[27989\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of providing funding for Crossrail 2.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

My department has not provided any further funding to develop the Crossrail 2 scheme since it was paused in 2020.

#### ■ **Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency: Telephone Services**

**Rupert Lowe:**

[\[28415\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the (a) average waiting time for people phoning and (b) time people spent on hold for the DVLA was in 2024.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

In the calendar year 2024, the average waiting time for someone telephoning the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency to be connected to an advisor was 12 minutes 8 seconds.

#### ■ **Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency: Translation Services**

**Rupert Lowe:**

[\[28416\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much was spent on (a) translation and (b) interpretation for people contacting the DVLA in 2024.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

In the financial year 2023-24 the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency spent a total of £28,403 on translation and interpretation services, including Welsh language and sign language translations.

**■ Driving Licences: Malaysia**

**Luke Taylor:** [\[28239\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her Department recognises the use of Malaysian driving licenses.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency is currently working towards putting in place a driving licence exchange agreement with Malaysia. This is subject to public consultation and the introduction of domestic legislation.

Currently, holders of a driving licence issued in Malaysia who become resident in the UK can drive small vehicles (motorcars and motorcycles) for up to 12 months from the date they become resident in the UK. To continue driving after this period the licence holder must apply for a provisional driving licence and pass both a theory and practical driving test here. If the holder of a driving licence issued in Malaysia is only visiting the UK they can drive using their Malaysian licence for up to 12 months from the date they last entered the UK.

**■ East West Rail Line**

**Blake Stephenson:** [\[28331\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her Department is taking steps to seek private capital investment for East-West Rail.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The Department works with the East West Rail Company and other Government departments to explore opportunities for the delivery of enhancements through using third party funding and financing options. The Department has been clear with East West Rail Company that securing third party funding is an essential element of delivering the scheme to ensure that the burden on the taxpayer is reduced as far as possible.

**■ East West Rail Line: Finance**

**Blake Stephenson:** [\[28334\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions she has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on ringfencing funding for the entirety of the East West rail project.

**Simon Lightwood:**

£1.3bn has been provided towards the delivery of Connection Stage 1 of East-West Rail and the Budget on 30th October 2024 set out the Government's support for the

remaining stages of East West Rail, confirming funding to accelerate the delivery of works for Connection Stage 2 to provide services between Oxford-Bedford from 2030.

### ■ East West Rail Line: Railway Stations

**Blake Stephenson:** [\[28330\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether railway stations on East-West Rail will be owned by the (a) public and (b) private sector.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The exact operating model for East West Rail will be decided in due course.

### ■ Electric Bicycles

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[28153\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent steps she has taken to help ensure that privately owned electric bikes comply with the law.

**Simon Lightwood:**

All e-cycles, whether privately owned or part of a rental scheme, must comply with the Electrically Assisted Pedal Cycle Regulations 1983. The Department has published extensive guidance on this on gov.uk, which it recently updated. It also works with the cycle industry to ensure that retailers make clear to their customers what is, and what is not, a legal e-cycle. Where the requirements set out in the EAPC Regulations are not met in full, the e-cycle is classed as a motor vehicle and needs to be approved and registered with the DVLA, as well as being taxed and insured. Enforcement of these requirements is a matter for the police.

### ■ Electric Scooters

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[28145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent steps she is taking to ensure that privately owned e-scooters comply with the law.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

The Department for Transport has previously written to micromobility retailers to remind them of their responsibility to provide their customers with accurate information about the legal restrictions on e-scooter use. The DVSA Market Surveillance Unit also carries out surveillance of e-scooter retailers to ensure they are being supplied in line with current legislation. When the MSU observes non-compliant advertising, they act to rectify this.

Until any changes are brought forward and come into effect, private e-scooters remain illegal to use on public roads, cycle lanes and pavements, and rental e-scooters can only be used in national rental e-scooter trial areas.

Law enforcement, including the enforcement of law on the road is an operational matter for the police, who will decide how to deploy available resources in dealing

with all the issues for which the force is responsible, taking into account any specific local problems and demands.

## ■ Electric Scooters: Regulation

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[28150\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has plans to introduce legislation on the use of e-scooters.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The Government recognises the depth of public concern about the longstanding question of regulation for e-scooters and the need to address it. We intend to deliver an integrated transport system that reduces emissions, improves journeys, and gives people choice over how they travel, and we are carefully considering how micromobility, including e-scooters, can help to deliver these objectives.

The trials of rental e-scooters are due to run until May 2026 and will help to build our evidence base and inform options for future regulation. Findings will be published once the evaluation of the trials has finished.

No decisions have been taken on regulating private e-scooters, but the Department for Transport has committed to consulting on any future regulations before they come into force so that all interested parties have the chance to shape the new regime.

## ■ Eurostar: Kent

**Josh Babarinde:** [\[28257\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she plans to support the reintroduction of Eurostar services to (a) Ebbsfleet and (b) Ashford.

**Simon Lightwood:**

I recognise the continued disappointment felt by communities and businesses in Kent about the continued cessation of Eurostar services. I too am keen to see the reinstatement of these services, recognising this is a commercial decision for Eurostar.

The Government is engaging with Kent stakeholders, including MPs, councillors and representative organisations to discuss this issue and is committed to continue to explore potential solutions including with potential new operators.

## ■ Great British Railways

**Olly Glover:** [\[28214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will outline the (a) role and (b) responsibilities of GBRX.

**Simon Lightwood:**

Network Rail has established GBRX to drive innovation and overcome the barriers to adoption of advanced technologies on Britain's railway. It aims to unlock strategic innovation where this is most challenging, at the crossroads of track and train,



partnering with world leading innovators and small and medium enterprises, and collaborating with organisations across the rail sector. GBRX will be an important step towards achieving Great British Rail's ambitions.

#### ■ **Great British Railways: Costs**

**Olly Glover:** [\[28215\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate she has made of the annual cost of GBRX.

**Simon Lightwood:**

GBRX has been allocated up to £4m annually through Network Rail's existing budget.

#### ■ **Heathrow Airport: Carbon Emissions**

**Pippa Heylings:** [\[28169\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of a third runway at Heathrow on the UK's carbon budget.

**Mike Kane:**

The government is committed to reaching net zero by 2050 and meeting our carbon budget obligations, as set out in the Climate Change Act. Making Britain a clean energy superpower and delivering greener transport, including aviation, is a Department for Transport priority.

We have been clear that any airport expansion proposals will need to demonstrate they contribute to economic growth and can be delivered in line with the UK's legally binding climate change commitments, as well as meeting strict air quality and noise standards.

The government will set out detail on plans for meeting legislated carbon budgets later this year.

**Gregory Stafford:** [\[28778\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of Heathrow Airport (a) expansion and (b) increased flight traffic on reducing emissions to meet net-zero targets.

**Mike Kane:**

The government is committed to reaching net zero by 2050 and meeting our climate change obligations, as set out in the Climate Change Act. Delivering greener transport to help make Britain a clean energy superpower is a Department for Transport priority.

DfT analysis shows that we can achieve net zero 2050 for aviation under a range of assumptions about future technology development.

We have been clear that any airport expansion proposals will need to demonstrate they contribute to economic growth and can be delivered in line with the UK's legally

binding climate change commitments, as well as meeting strict air quality and noise standards.

■ **Lower Thames Crossing: Finance**

**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[27988\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will publish a timetable for a decision on the funding of the Lower Thames Crossing.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

As with all capital projects, spending decisions on the Lower Thames Crossing scheme will be subject to the upcoming spending review.

■ **M1: Road Traffic Control**

**Natalie Fleet:** [\[28098\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions she has had with National Highways on works to improve congestion at junction 28 of the M1.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

Officials from my Department regularly engage with National Highways on the progress of proposals to improve the safety and performance of Junction 28 of the M1. The proposals are in early stages of development and are being considered for possible delivery as part of a future Road Investment Strategy.

■ **Motor Vehicles: Exhaust Emissions**

**Luke Akehurst:** [\[29783\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on how their Departments' procurement policies can support UK vehicle manufacturers to meet the zero emission vehicle (ZEV) mandate.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

The Government Fleet Commitment states that 100% of the central government car and van fleet will be fully zero emission by 2027. This represents a major opportunity for UK-based manufacturers, and the Department is working with them to ensure they can take advantage.

■ **Public Transport: Regulation**

**Alex Mayer:** [\[28259\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of establishing a separate regulatory framework for Demand-Responsive Transport services, distinct from taxi and bus regulations.

**Simon Lightwood:**

There is recognition that the regulatory framework covering demand responsive transport (DRT) is complex, not least because it includes elements of taxi, private hire vehicle and bus legislation, including vehicles using community transport permits.

We keep all policies under review and my officials have regular engagement with a range of stakeholders across the DRT sector, ensuring that key regulatory issues are considered.

#### ■ **Railway Stations: Alvechurch**

**Bradley Thomas:** [\[28383\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of Alvechurch train station car park.

**Simon Lightwood:**

We understand that West Midlands Trains (WMT) has acted positively on feedback about Alvechurch train station car park. It has done so by putting in place a maintenance programme that helps preserve the right of way to Alvechurch and Bordesley Nursery School via the car park.

#### ■ **Railways: Crew**

**Alex Brewer:** [\[28228\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions she has had with train operating companies on (a) train drivers' salaries and (b) performance.

**Simon Lightwood:**

Ministers continue to meet with train operating companies to hold them to account. Since the start of 2025, the Secretary of State has held meetings with Avanti West Coast and Northern Trains regarding the operators' performance. The Rail Minister also held meetings with Northern Trains, Avanti West Coast and CrossCountry in January to discuss their performance in depth. Other topics, including drivers' salaries, have been discussed at previous meetings between Ministers and train operating companies.

#### ■ **Railways: Dawlish**

**Steve Darling:** [\[28174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of recent disruption on the Dawlish rail line on the local economy of Torbay.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The Government has invested £165 million into the South West Rail Resilience Programme to build resilience around Dawlish, which has seen much improved performance. There has, however, been some disruption on the line through Dawlish in recent months with cancellations due to poor weather, a lack of traincrew on Sundays and fleet reliability. The Department is working closely with Great Western Railway and Network Rail to improve the resilience of train services on this rail line.

**■ Railways: Passengers****Adam Jogee:** [\[28281\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has had discussions with Network Rail on the use of the word passenger.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The Secretary of State regularly discusses all aspects of Network Rail's performance with the CEO and Chair of Network Rail. She supports Network Rail in its efforts to engage with passengers in a clear manner that recognises passengers' position at the heart of the railway.

**■ Railways: Safety****Andrew Rosindell:** [\[27995\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, What steps she is taking to improve passenger safety on the railway network.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The Department works closely with rail industry and the British Transport Police (BTP) to ensure passenger safety on the rail network. Whilst the most recent Transport Focus survey (10<sup>th</sup> January) shows that 80% of the public rate their personal security positively when travelling by rail we are not complacent. BTP use a range of policing techniques including overt and covert patrols at hot spot locations, regular high-visibility patrols across the network and use internal and external intelligence to assist in targeting locations.

BTP also encourage passengers and rail staff to report crime and suspicious activity via 61016, online or by calling 999 in an emergency.

The Office of Rail and Road (ORR), who are responsible for enforcing statutory health and safety legislation on the railways, continue to work closely with duty holders to deliver improvements in overall system safety, so far as is reasonably practicable. More generally, the Government is committed to maintaining a high standard of safety across the rail network.

**■ Railways: Wythall****Bradley Thomas:** [\[28384\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the train service between Wythall and Birmingham.

**Simon Lightwood:**

No specific assessment has recently been made of the adequacy of train services between Wythall and Birmingham. West Midlands Trains (WMT) keeps train loadings under review and are expected to adjust train lengths where possible.

## ■ Roads: Repairs and Maintenance

**Juliet Campbell:**

[\[28429\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has made an assessment of the merits of (a) self-healing asphalt and (b) other methods to tackle potholes.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

The Government is committed to enabling local highway authorities to maintain and renew their local highway networks. Decisions on which materials to use to repair their roads are matters for local highway authorities, but the Government encourages them to trial innovative processes and materials. The Department is currently supporting a £30 million “Live Labs” research programme, part of which allows innovative and environmentally friendly road-mending materials of this sort to be trialled and evaluated. The lessons learned will be shared with other local highway authorities.

A number of UK research institutions, including Swansea and Cambridge universities, are working on advanced materials, including self-healing asphalt, for filling potholes and resurfacing roads. Self-healing asphalt could potentially help prevent cracks from turning into potholes, but the technology is at an early stage and has not been tested at scale.

## ■ Shipping: Pay

**Joe Robertson:**

[\[28393\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking with her international counterparts to help improve (a) pay and (b) conditions for seafarers operating in UK waters.

**Mike Kane:**

Improving the pay and working conditions of seafarers is a priority for this government. We are committed to working with our international partners to improve standards.

We have worked closely with the French government to create a minimum wage corridor across the Channel, by bringing the Seafarers’ Wages Act 2023 into force alongside equivalent French legislation. Through the Employment Rights Bill, we are amending the Seafarers’ Wages Act to allow us to impose further requirements relating to safety and pay, including tours of duty, and we will be working with our international partners to agree such standards.

We are also taking steps, through the Employment Rights Bill, to ensure that post EU Exit, we have the powers to implement future amendments to the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, as amended and the Work in Fishing Convention, 2007.

The UK has signed Memoranda of Understanding with Spain, Greece and Cyprus agreeing to coordinate on matters relating to the conditions of seafarers. We continue to engage with our international partners on matters relating to seafarer employment on international routes.

## ■ Shipping: Supply Chains

**Joe Robertson:** [\[28394\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to ensure the resilience of maritime supply chains.

**Mike Kane:**

While the sector is fully privatised, my Department engages closely with industry to understand maritime operational issues that may affect wider supply chains. Assessment of those wider supply chain impacts sits with other government departments, depending on the supply chain affected.

## ■ Shipping: Training

**Joe Robertson:** [\[28396\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to support skills (a) development and (b) training in the maritime sector.

**Mike Kane:**

DfT remains committed to delivering a maritime workforce, with the skills and people it needs, both now and for the future.

The Maritime Skills Commission, which DfT is part of, assesses the sector's current and future skills needs. DfT and the Maritime and Coastguard Agency are working with industry to future-proof seafarer training through the Cadet Training and Modernisation Programme and the Ratings Review. This will ensure UK seafarers remain highly skilled, and equipped with the training to handle new vessels, fuels and future technologies.

The £18 million DfT Support for Maritime Training (SMarT) fund supports 50% of the cost of cadet training. DfT is also updating the 2017 SMarT Review and Seafarer Projections report which provides the evidence base and analysis for SMarT and the UK's need for seafarers over the next decade.

## ■ Taxis: Licensing

**Chris Ward:** [\[28406\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to support local authorities to enforce taxi and private hire vehicle licensing regulations.

**Chris Ward:** [\[28410\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to help ensure that (a) taxi and (b) private hire journeys either (i) start or (ii) finish within licensed vehicle areas.

**Simon Lightwood:**

It is widely accepted that taxis and private hire vehicles have always been permitted to carry pre-booked fares outside the area in which they are licensed. This allows the sector to work more flexibly to meet the needs of their passengers.

Licensing authorities in England are required by law to share safeguarding or road safety concerns about taxi and private hire vehicle drivers licensed in other areas with the authority that issued the licence. The authority that issued the licence must then consider whether to suspend or revoke the driver's licence.

The Department for Transport has issued guidance to licensing authorities which includes ways that authorities can, if needed, seek increased compliance and enforcement powers. Licensing authorities can jointly authorise each other's officers or can seek additional powers over all licensed vehicles and drivers through the Community Safety Accreditation Scheme. Licensing authorities can also undertake joint enforcement operations.

The Government recognises concerns around out-of-area working and is considering options to strengthen the regulation of the sector.

### ■ Traffic Officers

**Laurence Turner:** [\[29687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many Highways England traffic officers were employed on 15 March in each year since 2016.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

The number of traffic officers employed by National Highways on 15 March in each year since 2016 was as follows:

YEAR	TRAFFIC OFFICER HEADCOUNT ON 15 MARCH
2016	1,435
2017	1,410
2018	1,419
2019	1,546
2020	1,472
2021	1,412
2022	1,390
2023	1,488
2024	1,553

**■ Transport: Northern Ireland****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[27984\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she plans to take to improve transport connectivity between Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

**Simon Lightwood:**

Whilst transport is devolved, the Department for Transport is committed to is enhancing links between Northern Ireland and Great Britain. The Department is providing funding for Transport Scotland's feasibility study to explore options to bypass the villages of Springholm and Crocketford on the A75 and is supporting the Windsor Framework to streamline transport and customs processes. The Government is also supporting key aviation routes, including the Public Service Obligation between City of Derry Airport and London Heathrow Airport.

**■ Underground Railways: Greater London****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[27996\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to reduce crime on the London Underground Network.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The British Transport Police (BTP) are responsible for policing the London Underground and are committed to tackling crime on the network. As a devolved matter, the force works closely with TfL, the Mayor of London and rail industry partners to ensure passengers and rail staff feel safe.

**■ Vehicles: Registration****Rebecca Paul:**[\[28166\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to page 32 of the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency's report entitled Registering historic, classic, rebuilt vehicles and vehicles converted to electric: Response summary report, published in December 2024, what her planned timetable is for publishing new policy proposals.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

Following the publication of the summary of responses to the call for evidence, the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency held a very positive meeting with members of the Historic Vehicle User Group to discuss next steps. Following this meeting, members of the Historic Vehicle User Group submitted further feedback which is currently being considered.



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

**Mr Mark Francois:** [\[28893\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether her Department has made a value for money assessment of the Chagos Island deal.

**Darren Jones:**

HMT has been working with the FCDO and the MOD on this agreement. As the lead departments, responsibility for judging the value for money of any deal sits with the FCDO and the MOD, who must balance its commitments against wider priorities – as per the Managing Public Money framework.

■ **Heathrow Airport: Job Creation**

**Nesil Caliskan:** [\[28211\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether her Department has made an estimate of the number of additional jobs created by Heathrow expansion.

**Darren Jones:**

Heathrow expansion could result in billions invested into the economy to create over 100,000 jobs, and support many more jobs by boosting UK economic growth.

Our pledge to use more sustainable aviation fuel, part of our Plan for Change, will also support thousands of jobs, bring down our transport emissions, and make the UK a clean energy superpower.

■ **National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority**

**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[27990\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority will be put on a statutory footing.

**Darren Jones:**

The National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority (NISTA) will combine the functions of the National Infrastructure Commission and Infrastructure and Projects Authority. NISTA will bring oversight of strategy and delivery into one organisation, driving more effective delivery of infrastructure across the country.

On 17 January 2025, the Prime Minister announced in a Written Ministerial Statement that NISTA will be a joint unit of HM Treasury and Cabinet Office, effective from 1 April 2025. Further detail on the work and governance of NISTA will be announced in due course.

■ **Personal Care Services: Tax Evasion**

**Andy MacNae:** [\[28216\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps she is taking to tackle tax evasion in hair salons.

**James Murray:**

The Government recognises that sometimes businesses do not declare all of their income and thereby conceal their true earnings. We are committed to creating a level playing field for all, by ensuring that everyone pays the right amount of tax at the right time, to ensure trust and fairness in the tax system. Most taxpayers pay what they owe, but a small minority fail to register with HMRC or only declare a portion of their earnings. This small minority deprive our vital public services of funding, affect fair competition between businesses, and place unfair burdens on everyone else. It is vital these revenues are collected to fund our essential public services. Closing the tax gap and making sure that more of the tax that is owed is correctly paid, is one of the Government's top priorities for HMRC.

HMRC is making it increasingly difficult for businesses to hide their earnings and have an extensive range of powers, including information gathering powers, that help build a picture of risk and identify those who are trying to abuse the system. HMRC's approach to tax evasion aims to tackle current non-compliance and change future behaviours. Their activities include national campaigns and specialist task forces that incorporate intensive bursts of activity in targeted sectors, such as the hair and beauty sector, and locations across the UK. This includes providing customer education highlighting the importance of keeping accurate records.

We recognise that some customers can find it hard to understand their tax obligations, so HMRC are developing and testing new educational material to better explain the rent a chair model. This is planned to be ready for publication on GOV.UK in the spring.

**■ Police: Workplace Pensions****Gavin Robinson:**[\[29447\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the McCloud judgement [2018] EWCA Civ 2844, how many outstanding police pensions cases HMRC had yet to assess on 6 February 2025; and what HMRC's timetable is for the completion of this work.

**James Murray:**

HMRC is committed to providing a good customer service for individuals affected by the McCloud remedy. It is working closely with individual pension schemes to ensure they and their members have the support they need. For police, HMRC has received 662 and processed 136. HMRC has 526 police force cases which have been submitted and are yet to be processed.

HMRC checks and processes the submissions based on the information provided and has 90 days in which to process a refund where applicable.

**■ Retail Trade: Business Rates****Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown:**[\[27096\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many hereditaments used for retail in England had a rateable value of £500,000 or above on 29 January 2025.

**Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown:** [\[27097\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many hereditaments used for hospitality in England had a rateable value of £500,000 or above on 29 January 2025.

**Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown:** [\[27098\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many hereditaments used for leisure in England had a rateable value of £500,000 or above on 29 January 2025.

**Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown:** [\[27099\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many hereditaments in England that are not used for retail, hospitality or leisure had a rateable value of £500,000 or above on 29 January 2025.

**Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown:** [\[27100\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many hereditaments used for (a) distribution and (b) warehousing in England had a rateable value of £500,000 or above on 29 January 2025.

**James Murray:**

The information requested is provided in the Valuation Office Agency's *Non Domestic Rating Stock of Properties* publication available on gov.uk.

#### ■ **Special Educational Needs: Employers' Contributions**

**Gregory Stafford:** [\[28787\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions her Department has had with transport companies providing services for children with SEND on changes to employer National Insurance contributions.

**James Murray:**

Home-to-school travel is an integral part of the school system and provides a valuable service on which many families rely. Officials across departments engage regularly with local authorities to understand the challenges they face and will continue to monitor this situation. The Department for Education do not expect there to be a significant impact on home-to-school travel for children with special educational needs and disabilities. Local authorities are responsible for arranging home-to-school travel and deliver this through a range of in-house services and external providers.

The £515m of additional funding made available to help local government manage the impact of changes to employer NICs has been determined based on a national assessment of the costs for directly employed staff across the public sector.

However, this funding is unringfenced and it is for LAs to determine how to use this funding across relevant services and responsibilities.

**WORK AND PENSIONS**■ **Children: Maintenance****Andy McDonald:**[\[28067\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people have had their driving license suspended for failure to pay child maintenance in each of the last five years.

**Andrew Western:**

- From January to September 2024, the courts issued 1 immediate and 5 suspended disqualifications for driving.
- From January to December 2023, the courts issued 4 suspended disqualifications for driving.
- From January to December 2022, the courts issued 1 immediate and 8 suspended disqualifications for driving.
- From January to December 2021, the courts issued 1 immediate and 4 suspended disqualifications for driving.
- From January to December 2020, the courts issued 2 suspended disqualifications for driving.

Current legislation for driving license and passport removal requires repayment of the debt within six months, whereas legislation covering commitment to prison allows the courts to order the paying parent to repay debt in instalments over a two-year period. This longer period is generally more appropriate, so the commitment to prison power is used more often.

It should also be noted that these are actions of last resort and are intended to have a deterrent effect. The low number of sentences given may not reflect the number of people persuaded to pay by the prospect of these powers being used.

■ **Children: Poverty****Manuela Perteghella:**[\[28832\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking with Cabinet colleagues to help reduce child poverty in Stratford-on-Avon constituency.

**Alison McGovern:**

Delivering our manifesto commitment to tackle child poverty is an urgent priority for this Government, and the Ministerial Taskforce is working to publish a Child Poverty Strategy which will deliver lasting change.

The Strategy will look at levers across four key themes of increasing incomes, reducing essential costs, increasing financial resilience; and better local support especially in the early years. This will build on the reform plans underway across Government and work underway in Devolved Governments.

The vital work of the Taskforce comes alongside our commitments to triple investment in breakfast clubs to over £30 million, roll out free breakfast clubs at all primary schools, create 3,000 additional nurseries, and increase the National Living Wage to £12.21 an hour from April 2025 to boost the pay of 3 million workers.

■ **Department for Work and Pensions: Muslim Council of Britain**

**Joe Robertson:** [\[28705\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether the Minister for Social Security and Disability travelled to the Muslim Council of Britain's leadership dinner on 25 January 2025 by Ministerial car; whether the invitation was (a) received and (b) accepted through his Ministerial office; whether he has made a declaration of hospitality; and whether Government business was discussed at the event by the Minister.

**Sir Stephen Timms:**

I travelled by public transport to and from the Muslim Council of Britain leadership dinner on the evening of 20 January 2025. My ministerial office was not involved in the invitation arrangements.

I was at the event for approximately an hour, and consumed only a glass of water. No ministerial business was discussed.

■ **Department for Work and Pensions: Telephone Services**

**Rupert Lowe:** [\[28414\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the average (a) waiting time for people calling and (b) time people spent on hold for her Department was in 2024.

**Andrew Western:**

The table below shows the Average Speed of Answer and Total Hold Time, in an hours, minutes and seconds (hh:mm:ss) format, for all people calling DWP during the calendar year, 2024.

CALENDAR YEAR	AVERAGE TIME TO ANSWER (HH:MM:SS)	AVERAGE HOLD TIME (HH:MM:SS)
2024	00:07:33	00:00:24

**DISCLAIMER**

Please note this information is derived from the Department's management information, designed solely for the purpose of helping the Department to manage its business. As such, it has not been subjected to the rigorous quality assurance checks applied to our published official statistics. As DWP holds the information internally, we

have released it. However, it is possible information held by DWP may change due to operational reasons and we recommend that caution be applied when using it.

### ■ Job Centres: Staffordshire

**Adam Jogee:** [\[28273\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of job centres on economic growth in (a) Newcastle-under-Lyme constituency and (b) Staffordshire.

**Alison McGovern:**

Jobcentre colleagues understand the labour market needs of their local areas. Across Newcastle-under-Lyme and Staffordshire, our Jobcentre teams engage with employers and providers to host job fairs, Sector-Based Work Academy Programmes, recruitment events and group information sessions to support customers to improve their ability to enter and retain employment. Higher participation in the labour market, and more people in work are key to supporting the Government's mission to kickstart economic growth.

As announced in the recent Get Britain Working White Paper, we are reforming Jobcentre Plus and creating a new service that will enable everyone to access support to find good, meaningful work, and support to help them progress in work, including through an enhanced focus on skills and careers advice. This new service will transform our ability to support people into work, help those on low pay to increase their earnings, and create a more flexible workforce for a fast changing, higher skilled jobs market. This transformation is expected to contribute to economic growth by addressing local skills gaps and providing tailored support to meet the needs of local labour markets.

Since September 2024 we have delivered 42 Sector Work Academy Programmes (SWAPs) in Staffordshire with the majority of them supporting the Construction, Education & Teaching, Transport and Adult Social Care. These SWAPs have supported several employers with their recruitment activity.

### ■ Jobcentres: Translation Services

**Rupert Lowe:** [\[28408\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how much was spent on translation in Jobcentres in 2024.

**Andrew Western:**

The total spent on translation in Jobcentres in 2024 was £882,118. This figure includes International Pension Service.

## ■ Parents: Staffordshire

**Adam Jogee:**

[\[28274\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she plans to take to support parents who live in (a) Newcastle-under-Lyme constituency and (b) Staffordshire into work.

**Alison McGovern:**

Our recently published Get Britain Working White Paper sets out our aspirations to overhaul the Jobcentre system and establish a new Job and Career Service, which will focus on people's skills and careers instead of just monitoring and managing benefit claims. This will be kickstarted by £55million of investment, to help people – including parents - get into work, stay in work, build skills and progress in their career.

The Get Britain Working White Paper also committed DWP to supporting and providing all areas in England with resource to produce a local 'Get Britain Working Plan'. Initially focussing on economic inactivity, local Get Britain Working plans will enable all areas to take the lead in shaping a coherent offer of support for their local citizens, including the offer of support for parents, across work, health, and skills.

We are also considering how we can improve our support to help parents into work as part of our Child Poverty Strategy which will be published later this year.

At present Work Coaches provide individual, tailored support to all customers across the country, this includes advice to parents on childcare support or help to address their skills gaps to aid career progression.

Both areas also have access to The UK Shared Prosperity Fund, which was extended for a further year until March 2026. Areas are free to select from three investment priorities, with People and Skills interventions are designed to help reduce the barriers some people – including parents - face to employment, support them closer towards employment and education, reduce economic inactivity and to fund skills support.

## ■ Pension Credit: Applications

**Chris Hinchliff:**

[\[28292\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of the time taken for Pension Credit applications to be approved and what steps her Department is taking to reduce the time taken for Pension Credit applications to be processed.

**Torsten Bell:**

DWP works to a planned timescale of 50 working days to clear Pension Credit claims. The most recent information on processing times for Pension Credit was published in the [DWP annual report and accounts 2023 to 2024 - GOV.UK](#) (ARA) on 22nd July 2024. This shows that in 2023/24 DWP cleared 192,000 Pension Credit claims within the planned 50 working day timescale, equating to 77.7%. The next

publication of the ARA will include claims processed in the Financial Year 2024 to 2025, which is due for publication in the summer.

As a result of the increase in Pension Credit claims, the Department has deployed over 500 additional people to ensure it has the capacity to assess all claims in reasonable timescales. The latest available information for week commencing 20 January 2025 shows that the Average Actual Clearance Time for Pension Credit is 45 working days. However, Pension Credit is a complex benefit, and some claims require additional investigation or information from the customer, which can result in longer processing times.

Please note, the Average Actual Clearance Time figure shown is unpublished management information, collected and intended for internal departmental use and has not been quality assured to National Statistics or Official Statistics publication standard. It is rounded to the nearest working day and based on the week the claim was cleared, rather than the week the claim was made.

## ■ Pension Credit: Capital Rules

**Dave Doogan:** [\[29070\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the disregarded capital limit on pension credit was in each of the last 15 years; and if she will increase the disregarded capital limit in line with inflation since the last increase.

**Torsten Bell:**

The capital disregard in Pension Credit has been set at £10,000 since 2009 and will remain at that level in 2025/26. Capital over £10,000 reduces weekly entitlement by £1 per £500 of capital. Unlike with working age income related benefits, there is no upper capital limit.

Benefit rules, including capital disregards in income related benefits, are kept under regular review. There are no plans to increase the capital disregard in Pension Credit.

## ■ Pensioners: Personal Income

**Blake Stephenson:** [\[29561\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an estimate of the median income for pensioners in the 2024-25 financial year.

**Torsten Bell:**

The [Pensioners' Incomes statistics](#) contains estimates of the levels, sources and distribution of pensioners' incomes. This is published by the department annually. The latest data covers financial year ending 2023.

In financial year ending 2023, it is estimated that the median net income for all pensioner units was £424 per week before housing costs, and £387 per week after housing costs. This information is available in Table 2.1 of the Pensioners' Incomes: financial years ending 1995 to 2023 tables, which can be found here: [Pensioners' Incomes: financial years ending 1995 to 2023 - GOV.UK](#)



Pensioners' Incomes data is derived from the Family Resources Survey and covers private households in the United Kingdom. A pensioner unit can be a single pensioner over State Pension age, a pensioner couple where one member is over State Pension age, or a pensioner couple where both members are over State Pension age.

## ■ Pensions

**Richard Tice:** [\[27713\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to paragraph 28 of Schedule 7 of the Pensions Act 2004, if she will make an estimate of the number of pensioners who have accrued pensionable service before 6 April 1997 for which they do not receive annual increases in periodic compensation from the Pension Protection Fund in (a) Boston and Skegness constituency and (b) the UK.

**Torsten Bell:**

The rules around PPF indexation are generally in line with the legal requirements for defined benefit pension schemes. I recognise this matter has been the subject of much discussion and am aware of the concerns of pensions scheme members affected by this issue. The estimate, as of 31 March 2024, for members of the Pension Protection Fund with accrued pensionable service prior to 6 April 1997, who do not receive annual increases in periodic compensation are:

- Around 650 pensioners in the PPF who live in the Boston and Skegness constituency.
- Around 172,000 pensioners who live in the UK.

## ■ Social Security Benefits: Deductions

**Andy McDonald:** [\[28068\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department has taken to assess the (a) number and (b) causes of incorrect deduction orders.

**Andrew Western:**

The data requested is not held centrally. To extract this data would involve the manual review of all relevant cases to identify those deduction orders with an error and the reason which would be at a cost to the department and taxpayer.

CMS has taken positive steps to ensure the correct administration of deduction orders. Improvements include updates to CMS computer system 2012, amendments to operational procedures and inclusion in the Quality Assurance framework.

When any error is identified CMS undertake a thorough review of the case and action to correct the error. Each case is used as a learning opportunity with staff and to review and update our operational procedures to prevent future reoccurrences.

**Andy McDonald:**

[\[28069\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of the accessibility of the appeals process for deduction orders.

**Andrew Western:**

The Child Maintenance Service (CMS) takes the accessibility of the appeals process for Regular Deduction Order (RDO) or Lump Sum deduction Order (LSDO) seriously.

Guidance on how to appeal the deduction order is enclosed with the final lump sum deduction order letter when it is sent to the paying parent. The guidance clearly points out the time limits associated with an appeal.

The Family Court rules determine the 21 days afforded to appeal a deduction order is absolute. Neither CMS nor the courts have the power to extend the period to appeal beyond 21 Days.

The Judicial Review Team is aware that the Family Courts in England and Wales are experiencing unprecedented demand for their services and as such there is a delay in responding to customers' deduction order appeals. To mitigate matters for the customer, measures have been put in place to hold the secured funds with the deposit taker for longer provided the customer can provide evidence the appeal was filed in the court within the 21-day appeal window.

The Judicial Review Team do investigate the lawfulness of the application of the deduction order. If errors are identified, action is taken to remedy those errors. This may involve reducing the amount of the sums frozen or discharging the funds completely. However, if the deduction order is lawful the Judicial Review Team will mount a defence to the appeal instructing a solicitor from the Government Legal Department to assist. Appeals are determined by a District Judge sitting in the Family Court.

**Andy McDonald:**

[\[28070\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to ensure that direct deduction orders do not leave people in relative poverty.

**Andrew Western:**

The Child Maintenance Service (CMS) encourages paying parents to pay their maintenance on time in order to avoid accrual of arrears. Where a paying parent fails to pay on time or in full, the Service is committed to using its wide-ranging enforcement powers proportionately to recover the debt and re-establish compliance to ensure children receive the financial support they need and deserve.

When appropriate, CMS can implement one of two types of deduction order, Regular deduction order (RDO) or Lump sum deduction order (LSDO).

The Department has a range of safeguards in place to prevent deductions from pushing people in to poverty. Decisions about enforcement actions are made on a case-by-case basis, considering the welfare of all parties, potential financial hardship

of paying parents, and the most appropriate action to give the greatest chance of securing money for children. RDOs should not exceed 40 per cent of the paying parent's gross weekly income, and LSDOs can only be made if the account has a credit balance above a minimum amount of £110.

### ■ Social Security Benefits: Disability

**Pippa Heylings:**

[\[28171\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what reforms to disability benefits she plans to introduce in 2025; when each reform will be implemented; and whether she plans to publish any further consultations on planned reforms.

**Sir Stephen Timms:**

This Government is committed to reforming the system of health and disability benefits so that it promotes and enables employment among as many people as possible.

We are working to develop proposals for health and disability reform in the months ahead and will set them out in a Green Paper ahead of the Spring Statement. This will launch a public consultation on the proposals. This Government is committed to putting the views and voices of disabled people at the heart of all that we do, so we will consult on these proposals, where appropriate, with disabled people and representative organisations.

### ■ Social Security Benefits: Fraud

**Lee Anderson:**

[\[29494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many reports of benefit fraud were made to her Department in 2024; and how many and what proportion of these resulted in benefits being revoked.

**Andrew Western:**

The number of benefit fraud public referrals, received by Counter Fraud, Compliance and Debt (CFCD) in the Department, in the calendar year 2024 was 160,079. Data is not held on how many of these resulted in benefit being revoked.

Counter Fraud and Compliance has different approaches to tackling fraud, depending on the nature and severity. The team deploys a diverse range of expertise, technology, and intelligence to protect the integrity of the benefits system, correcting benefit where appropriate and bringing the most serious cases to justice. This approach has seen Counter Fraud and Compliance deliver over £1.2 billion savings for 2023-24.

**■ Social Security Benefits: Middlesbrough and Thornaby East****Andy McDonald:** [28064]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many recipients of social security payments are subject to deductions in Middlesbrough and Thornaby East constituency; and for what reasons those people are subject to deductions.

**Andy McDonald:** [28065]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the (a) mean and (b) median value was of deductions to social security payments for people in Middlesbrough and Thornaby East constituency in each of the last five years.

**Andy McDonald:** [28066]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many recipients of social security payments were subject to one or more deduction in each of the past five years; and what the (a) mean and (b) median monthly deduction was by constituency.

**Sir Stephen Timms:**

Some of the requested information for Universal Credit is published and available here: [Universal Credit statistics, 29 April 2013 to 10 October 2024 - GOV.UK](#). Table 6 in the Universal Credit deductions statistics, supplementary data tables breaks down households with deductions by Advance deductions, Government deductions and Third Party deductions for each parliamentary constituency in August 2024.

The remaining information for Universal Credit is provided in the separate spreadsheet.

Information regarding other social security payments is not readily available, as it requires merging of different data tables from several sources, and to provide it would be at disproportionate cost.

**Attachments:**

1. Attachment [Attachment.xlsx]

**■ Winter Fuel Payments****Wendy Morton:** [28099]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 26008 on Pension Credit, how many people eligible for Pension Credit were awaiting Winter Fuel Payments as of (a) 30 December 2024 and (b) 31 January 2025.

**Torsten Bell:**

Where the customer is eligible for a Winter Fuel Payment, the Department aims to make this payment within 2 weeks of the award of Pension Credit. Customers won't miss out on Winter Fuel Payments even if their qualifying benefit takes longer to process than usual.

## WRITTEN STATEMENTS

### ATTORNEY GENERAL

#### ■ **Crown Prosecution Service (Contingencies Fund Advance)**

**The Solicitor General (Lucy Rigby):**

[\[HCWS433\]](#)

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) requires a Contingencies Fund Advance of £60 million to cover urgent payments of RDEL expenditures, such as February payroll and to pay suppliers invoices. Due to the uplift in funding sought at the Supplementary Estimate, this has led to CPS requiring a Contingencies Fund Advance to ensure it has the cash required ahead of the Parliamentary approval of the Supplementary Estimate.

Parliamentary approval for additional resource of £60,000,000 will be sought in a Supplementary Estimate for the Crown Prosecution Service. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £60,000,000 will be met by repayable cash advances from the Contingencies Fund.

### BUSINESS AND TRADE

#### ■ **Growth Guarantee Scheme**

**Minister for Services, Small Business and Exports (Gareth Thomas):**

[\[HCWS432\]](#)

I wish to make members aware of the details of a proposed variant of the existing Growth Guarantee Scheme (GGS), which is designed to increase uptake by businesses of green assets that facilitate the transition to a low-carbon economy.

The GGS was launched on 1 July 2024 and is facilitated by the Government-owned British Business Bank (BBB) and delivered through its delivery partners. Under the scheme, lenders offer facilities of up to £2 million to support businesses that would otherwise be unable to access the finance they need, or would only be able to do so on worse terms.

Green GGS uses the infrastructure of the existing GGS programme to help increase the supply of affordable finance for businesses investing in green technologies. Lenders face uncertainty over the future value of these green assets in the instance of borrower default, due to the pace of technological advances and a lack of observable track record or data in the relevant second-hand markets. As a result, lenders raise the upfront cost of financing green assets to mitigate this uncertainty, or simply choose not to finance the green asset. This in turn dampens business demand for green investment.

The BBB's GGS variant is designed to address this uncertainty by setting a floor on losses that a lender would take if a borrower defaulted on the loan. This would give lenders the confidence to support finance for green assets or lower the upfront cost of that finance, increasing the supply of finance available to SMEs to invest in green assets.

The terms of the programme ensure that the benefit of the guarantee is passed to the business.

Initially, the British Business Bank will reallocate funding from the existing GGS to pilot this scheme with a single lender, facilitating an initial portfolio of £30 million of investment in green assets. There will be no change to the maximum lending facilitated across both GGS variants, which will remain at £2.2 billion, as notified to Parliament by means of a Written Ministerial Statement made on 24 May 2024. Any future proposed increase in the capacity of Green GGS will be notified as applicable.

I will be laying a Departmental Minute today containing a description of the liability undertaken.

## DEFENCE

### ■ Ministry of Defence Votes A Annual Estimate 2025-26.

**Secretary of State for Defence (John Healey):**

[\[HCWS438\]](#)

The Ministry of Defence Votes A Estimate 2025-26, has been laid before the House of Commons on 11 February 2025 as HC638. This outlines the maximum numbers of personnel to be maintained for each Service in the Armed Forces during Financial Year 2025-26.

These numbers do not constitute the strength of the Armed Forces, which is published separately in the UK Armed Forces Quarterly Service Personnel Statistics.

## EDUCATION

### ■ National Apprenticeships Week

**Secretary of State for Education and Minister for Women and Equalities (Bridget Phillipson):**

[\[HCWS436\]](#)

This week is National Apprenticeship Week, where we celebrate the life-changing opportunities that apprenticeships offer people up and down this country. I want to update the House on a range of steps this government is taking to introduce the greater flexibility in our apprenticeships system that learn to break down to barriers opportunity and boost economic growth.

First, we have confirmed today that we will be changing the rules relating to achievement of English and maths qualifications as part of an apprenticeship for over 19s. Upskilling in English and maths will continue to remain a key feature of all apprenticeships, and from today we have listened to employers and will be offering more flexibility over when a standalone qualification is required in addition to this.

All apprentices will be required to secure and will be assessed on the job-specific skills English and maths they need, but moving forward employers will have more flexibility over whether adult (19+) apprentices are required to achieve a standalone English and maths qualifications. In future, adult apprentices will be able to complete their

apprenticeship if they have demonstrated they have the skills – including relevant English and maths skills – to be effective in the role without undertaking a standalone English and maths qualification. All 16-18 apprentices will continue to be required and funded to secure up to a Level 2 qualification in English and maths if they do not hold one, consistent with our expectation that all young people should have a meaningful further opportunity to secure a Level 2 qualification in English and maths post-16. This delivers the flexibility that employers have long called for and we expect it to lead to thousands more qualified apprentices in a range of key sectors, including in social care and construction.

Second, we will reduce the minimum duration of apprenticeships to 8 months from August 2025. This new flexibility will mean that employers can make greater use of apprenticeships and learners can be fully trained more quickly. We expect this new flexibility to particularly benefit learners with high levels of prior learning, where the current 12 month requirement means they are not eligible for an apprenticeship; and particular occupations that do not typically work in fixed 12 month training cycles. We will be working closely with Skills England to identify where this new flexibility will have the greatest impact. Today we are announcing that the first shorter apprenticeships to be available to all apprentices will be in priority occupations including Healthcare Support Workers, Dual Fuel Smart Meter Installers, and Production Assistants in the creative industries. We will be setting out more details in due course.

Finally, in our next step towards establishing Skills England as the key driving-force behind this government's growth plans, I am confirming that the new Chair of Skills England will be Phil Smith CBE, with Sir David Bell serving as Vice Chair.

This team will bring together extensive industry experience in digital, tech and innovation, with decades of experience in the education and skills sector. They will work with employers, national, regional and local government, providers, and unions to identify skills shortages and provide strong strategic direction for the skills system ensuring we have the highly skilled workforce needed to deliver our industrial strategy and the government's Plan for Change. I look forward to working with them to deliver the dynamic skills system and economic growth that this country needs to thrive.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

### ■ **Telecare National Action Plan**

**Minister of State for Care (Stephen Kinnock):**

[\[HCWS434\]](#)

The digital phone switchover is a necessary upgrade to our underlying national digital infrastructure as the old analogue landline network is becoming increasingly unreliable. The safety of telecare users throughout the switchover is government's utmost priority. That is why I am pleased to publish a joint Telecare National Action Plan with the Minister of State for Data and Digital Infrastructure (Chris Bryant MP) setting out the steps that stakeholders need to take to safeguard telecare users during the digital phone switchover.

The digital phone switchover means traditional analogue devices, such as telephone handsets and telecare units that are currently connected to the analogue landline network, will need to be reconnected to the digital network. There is a risk that the process of migrating telecare users to digital landlines will disrupt their telecare services. Telecare users must be protected during the digital phone switchover and every effort must be taken to avoid these risks.

Our action plan is predominantly aimed at communication providers, local authorities, housing providers, third sector organisations and commercial providers. It demonstrates the Government's commitment to working with the telecare and telecommunications industries and ensuring that telecare users' safety is put first during the switchover. Officials have worked closely with stakeholders to develop and agree the actions set out in this plan.

This Telecare National Action Plan sets out the actions that the government expects to see delivered. The actions are set out against the following outcomes:

- No telecare user will be migrated to digital landline services without the communication provider, the user, or the telecare service provider confirming that the user has a compatible and functioning telecare solution in place.
- Use of analogue telecare devices is phased out to ensure that only digital devices are being used. DHSC will be working with stakeholders over the coming months to set a deadline for this.
- Telecare users, their support networks and their service providers understand what actions they need to take to ensure a safe migration to digital phone lines.
- Stakeholders identified within the plan collaborate to safeguard telecare users through the digital phone switchover.

The government is committed to improving adult social care for those who draw on it, helping people to stay independent in their own homes, joining up services and improving the quality of care. The government recently announced an independent commission into adult social care led by Baroness Louise Casey as part of its critical first step towards a national care service. Whilst the Casey Commission carries out its work, the government is getting on with the job of reforming the system and has announced immediate actions to improve adult social care services. This includes the development of new national standards and trusted guidance for technology in social care. The new standards and guidance will make it easier for providers, commissioners and people who draw on care and support to identify the technologies that will work best for them.

The transition to digital telephone networks will lay the foundations for a next generation of telecare services that will support more personalised and early preventive interventions and support the government's reforms to adult social care. The plan includes examples of where local areas have utilised the opportunities presented by the digital phone switchover to advance the use of technology within their social care provision.

Given the complexity of the issue, it is possible that additional necessary actions might be identified. We will review progress against the Telecare Nation Action Plan every six



months and identify new actions as needed. A copy of the Telecare National Action Plan will be deposited in the Library of both Houses and will also be published on GOV.UK.

## SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

### ■ DVD Enforcement Guidelines

**Minister of State for Data Protection and Telecoms (Chris Bryant):** [\[HCWS435\]](#)

Today the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology has published guidelines on how the Secretary of State will approach compliance and enforcement of Designated Vendor Directions (“**DVD**”) issued under the Communications Act 2003 (the “**Act**”) as amended by the Telecommunications (Security) Act 2021.

The Act introduced powers for the Secretary of State to issue Designation Notices to vendors whose presence in UK networks poses national security risks and DVDs to public communications providers (“**PCP**”), placing controls on their use of goods and services provided by a designated vendor. The Secretary of State can issue a DVD to a PCP if they consider that it is necessary in the interests of national security and the requirements imposed by the DVD are proportionate to what is sought to be achieved by the DVD.

The Act also provides the Secretary of State with powers to ascertain whether PCPs are complying with the requirements imposed by a DVD and enforce against a PCP where they are found to be non-compliant with the requirements in a DVD.

This guidelines cover:

- the background to DVDs and the powers available;
- the approach to enforcement action;
- how to establish whether there has been a contravention of a DVD requirement;
- how to determine whether to enforce against a contravention;
- the process for coming to a proposed penalty;
- issuing formal enforcement action;
- issuing a confirmation decision; and
- the governance for how decisions on enforcement are made and communicated.

This document acts as a guiding framework for His Majesty’s Government when considering enforcement and imposing penalties in relation to non-compliance with requirements in a DVD.

## TREASURY

### ■ Public Service Pension Scheme Indexation and Revaluation 2025

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Darren Jones):

[\[HCWS437\]](#)

Legislation governing public service pensions in payment requires them to be increased annually by the same percentage as additional pensions (State Earnings Related Pension and State Second Pension). Public service pensions will therefore be increased from 07 April 2025 by 1.7 per cent, in line with the annual increase in the Consumer Prices Index up to September 2024, except for those public service pensions which have been in payment for less than a year, which will receive a pro-rata increase. This will ensure that public service pensions take account of increases in the cost of living and their purchasing power is maintained.

Separately, in the career average revalued earnings public service pension schemes introduced in 2014 and 2015, pensions in accrual are revalued annually in relation to either prices or earnings depending on the terms specified in their scheme regulations. The Public Service Pensions Act 2013 requires the Treasury to specify a measure of prices and of earnings to be used for revaluation by these schemes.

The prices measure is the Consumer Prices Index up to September 2024. Public service schemes which rely on a measure of prices, therefore, will use the figure of 1.7 per cent for the prices element of revaluation.

The earnings measure is the Whole Economy year on year change in Average Weekly Earnings (non-seasonally adjusted and including bonuses and arrears) up to September 2024. Public service schemes which rely on a measure of earnings, therefore, will use the figure of 4.5 per cent for the earnings element of revaluation.

The effective date of revaluation listed in the order is 1 April 2025, but some schemes have chosen to move their effective revaluation date to 6 April 2025 in order to manage interactions with the annual tax allowance.

Revaluation is one part of the amount of pension that members earn in a year and needs to be considered in conjunction with the amount of in-year accrual. Typically, schemes with lower revaluation will have faster accrual and therefore members will earn more pension per year. The following list shows how the main public service schemes will be affected by revaluation:

SCHEME	CIVIL					ARMED		
	POLICE	FIREFIGHTERS	SERVICE	NHS	TEACHERS	LGPS	FORCES	JUDICIAL
Revaluation for active member	2.95%	4.5%	1.7%	3.2%	3.3%	1.7%	4.5%	1.7%