



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 12 March 2025 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:15 P.M., 12 March 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

### ATTORNEY GENERAL

#### ■ Unexplained Wealth Orders

**Liam Byrne:**

[\[36050\]](#)

To ask the Solicitor General, if she will make an estimate of the number of unexplained wealth orders that have been (a) requested by and (b) granted to the Serious Fraud Office for each year from 2020 to 2024.

**Lucy Rigby:**

The SFO has made one application for an unexplained wealth order (UWO) since 2020. This UWO application was accepted by the court on 17 January 2025 and related to the recovery of property suspected to have been purchased with the proceeds of a £100 million fraud.

### BUSINESS AND TRADE

#### ■ Alternative Fuels: Ammonia

**Kit Malthouse:**

[\[35326\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of including green ammonia technologies in (a) the advanced manufacturing or (b) clean energy industries sections of the Industrial Strategy.

**Sarah Jones:**

The Industrial Strategy Green Paper identified eight growth-driving sectors, including both advanced manufacturing and clean energy industries. Low carbon ammonia could play a role in reaching net zero as part of a diverse energy mix. All sectors can shape and benefit from policy reform through the Industrial Strategy's cross-cutting policies alongside the broader Growth Mission.

The Industrial Strategy, alongside Sector Plans for the growth-driving sectors, will be published in spring 2025, aligned with the multi-year Spending Review.

#### ■ Ammonia: Exports

**Kit Malthouse:**

[\[35325\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment he has made of the international export potential of UK manufacturers of ammonia cracking technology.

**Sarah Jones:**

We are aware of various companies developing ammonia cracking technologies, who are also looking to export these technologies overseas. We are committed to ensuring that businesses in the UK hydrogen sector grow and thrive, including through exports of hydrogen goods and services, so they can benefit from the



opportunities of the transition to clean energy, through strong international trade relationships and effective supply chains.

## ■ Arts: Competition

**Tom Morrison:**

[\[34398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether his Department has made an assessment of the competitiveness of the UK creative industry.

**Sarah Jones:**

As set out in the Industrial Strategy Green Paper published in 2024, the UK's creative industries are world-leading, with the UK, according to UN Trade and Development statistics, being the third largest creative services exporter globally (behind Ireland and the United States).

While the Department for Business and Trade has not made a formal assessment of the competitiveness of the UK creative industry, in 2023, the UK, according to UN Trade and Development statistics, was the tenth largest exporter of creative goods and according to Department for Culture, Media and Sport statistics contributed an estimated £124 billion to the UK economy, accounting for 5.2 per cent of UK gross value added.

The forthcoming Industrial Strategy aims to leverage the sector's global comparative advantages to unlock private investment, boost exports and develop its highly skilled workforce.

## ■ Business: Fylde

**Mr Andrew Snowden:**

[\[35403\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps he is taking to help reduce employment costs for businesses in Fylde.

**Mr Andrew Snowden:**

[\[35404\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will take steps to reduce employment regulations for businesses in Fylde.

**Justin Madders:**

The Plan to Make Work Pay is central to our Plan for Change to grow the economy, raise living standards and create opportunities for all. It will tackle low pay, poor working conditions and poor job security, creating long-term growth and investment to support businesses. We must ensure that our Plan works for all businesses. Insights gained from our ongoing engagement with businesses has been invaluable in developing proportionate, effective policy. Make Work Pay will increase workforce productivity and ensure a level playing field, so businesses trying to do the right thing, like those in Fylde, are not undercut.

**■ Business: Staffordshire****Leigh Ingham:** [\[35537\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what plans he has to (a) meet the Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce and (b) visit businesses in Stafford constituency.

**Gareth Thomas:**

The Department for Business and Trade (DBT) is committed to driving long-term, inclusive and secure economic growth in all parts of the country, and engagement with businesses and communities in all regions, including the West Midlands, is therefore a priority.

DBT officials are in regular contact with Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce colleagues, helping to support their local businesses. The Ministerial team's plans for engagement, including regional and local visits, are revisited regularly.

**■ Companies House****Liam Byrne:** [\[36040\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, for what reason the launch of the service to register Companies House authorised agents has been delayed.

**Justin Madders:**

Companies House is transforming its technology infrastructure in order to implement measures under the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023.

The decision was taken to postpone the full launch for a short period to allow time to address the issues and ensure the service will continue to operate to a high standard for customers.

**■ Companies House: Reform****David Burton-Sampson:** [\[35447\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023, what steps his Department is taking to reform Companies House.

**Justin Madders:**

The Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023 (ECCTA) is fundamentally reforming Companies House, enabling it to play a greater role in improving corporate transparency, improving the quality of data and information on the company register and giving Companies House greater powers to contribute to our efforts in tackling economic crime.

The reform of Companies House is backed by £63 million of investment from the Department for Business and Trade and fees have been increased to fund greater investigation and enforcement capabilities.

The first phase of reforms came into force in March 2024. Further measures, including the introduction of Identity Verification, are in the process of being implemented.

## ■ Construction: Billing

**Michael Wheeler:**

[\[34123\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of delayed invoice payments on (a) self-employed individuals, (b) sole traders and (c) small businesses in the construction industry.

**Sarah Jones:**

Smart Data Foundry research shows that small businesses, including those in the construction industry were owed on average an estimated £22,000 in late payments in 2022. This represents a significant cash flow challenge for small businesses, undermining opportunities to invest and innovate.

In September 2024 we announced a package of measures to help ensure small businesses and the self-employed are paid promptly to improve the resilience of supply chains and boost economic growth across the UK.

We will soon launch a public consultation on further measures to address late payments and long payment terms, including specific measures to address the construction contractual practice of retention payments.

Source: *Smart Data Foundry (2022) – Payment Speed and Timeliness for UK Small & Micro Businesses* – <https://smartdatafoundry.com/resources/news/payment-speed-and-timeliness-for-uk-small-and-micro-businesses>

## ■ Consumer Goods: Safety

**Olly Glover:**

[\[35561\]](#)

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

**Justin Madders:**

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

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

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

**■ Consumers: Protection****Charlie Maynard:** [\[35570\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that local trading standards services have adequate (a) support and (b) expertise to enforce consumer protection laws introduced through the Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act 2024.

**Justin Madders:**

Department for Business and Trade officials have contributed to training events and provided practical information to the Chartered Trading Standards Institute to disseminate to trading standards officers about the Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act 2024, including changes to consumer protection law and trading standards' enforcement powers.

Furthermore, the Department provides grants to the Chartered Trading Standards Institute and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, as well as others, who are developing training material on the Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act 2024. Funding also supports the maintenance of Business Companion which provides trading standards officers and business with the latest information on the application of consumer law.

**■ Department for Business and Trade: Food****Sir John Hayes:** [\[35217\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what proportion of food procured by his Department is sourced in the UK.

**Justin Madders:**

The department does not procure any food directly. All accommodation, property, and facilities management services - including catering outlets - are provided to, and managed on behalf of, the Department for Business and Trade (DBT) by the Government Property Agency (GPA).

**■ Department for Business and Trade: Social Media****Josh Fenton-Glynn:** [\[35131\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how many social media accounts their Department operates; and how much their Department spent on social media (a) subscriptions and (b) advertisements on each social media platform in each of the last three years.

**Justin Madders:**

The Government communicates across a range of media channels in order to reach its target audience effectively. Channels are selected based on whether they will reach the intended audience on a specific issue to have the most impact. Social media is an essential part of government communications and is used to inform the public directly about matters which may affect their lives or interests.

DBT's spend for the last three calendar years on social media subscriptions was as follows (table):

	2022	2023	2024
X/Twitter Premium annual subscription	£0	£0	£99

DBT's spend for the last three calendar years on social media advertising by platform was as follows (table):

	2022	2023	2024
LINKEDIN IRELAND LIMITED	£2,655,074	£2,066,426	£1,979,092
META PLATFORMS IRELAND LIMITED	£432,192	£318,433	£247,498
TWITTER UK LTD	£165,370	£32,554	
NEXTDOOR EUROPE UK LIMITED		£12,500	£9,727
SNAP GROUP LIMITED		£8,500	£11,364
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£3,252,636</b>	<b>£2,438,413</b>	<b>£2,247,681</b>

## ■ Employment Rights Bill: Small Businesses

**James McMurdock:**

**[35608]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the Employment Rights Bill on regulatory requirements for small and medium-sized enterprises.

**Justin Madders:**

On Monday 21 October, the Government published 24 Impact Assessments representing a comprehensive package of analysis on the impact of the Employment Rights Bill. These Impact Assessments are available at the following link: <http://www.gov.uk/guidance/employment-rights-bill-impact-assessments>. As per our Better Regulation requirements, each Impact Assessment includes a small, medium and micro business assessment, which discuss the potential impacts of the Employment Rights Bill.

## ■ Flexible Working and Reasonable Adjustments

**Lee Barron:**

[\[35559\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he is taking steps to (a) strengthen the right to flexible working for people with neuro-disabilities and (b) make it the default position for all employers to offer reasonable adjustments for people with (i) cerebral palsy and (ii) other neuro-disabilities.

**Justin Madders:**

The Employment Rights Bill contains measures to make flexible working the default for all employees, except where it is not reasonably feasible.

A job applicant or employee with cerebral palsy will almost certainly meet the Equality Act 2010's definition of disability, which is a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. As such, the law will already have the "default" position that an employer must make reasonable adjustments for that person, provided that they are aware that the person has the condition, in the case of job applicants. In the case of neuro-diverse people, it is appropriate for employers to use the definition set out above, to make decisions on the need for reasonable adjustments.

## ■ Iron and Steel: Northern Ireland

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[35257\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what discussions he has had with his counterpart in Northern Ireland on encouraging international steel investment in Northern Ireland.

**Sarah Jones:**

We believe that our Plan for Steel will be a once-in-a-generation opportunity to make a real difference for this industry. It will address the problems the sector faces and create a competitive business landscape across the entirety of the United Kingdom.

Supporting the strategy is the Steel Council to which the Minister for the Economy is a member and met in January. In addition, I met with Minister Archibald prior to the launch of the consultation on the strategy in February.

## ■ Overseas Trade: China

**Bradley Thomas:**

[\[35918\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether the Government considers increased trade with China to be an inherent risk to national security.

**Mr Douglas Alexander:**

China is the world's second largest economy and predicted to be the largest driver of global growth from 2021 to 2035. Identifying opportunities to build secure and resilient growth through a mature, stable, and balanced relationship with China is in our national interest.

National security and growth are not opposed – they are mutually reinforcing. The UK must engage with international partners, including China, on trade and investment to grow our economy, while ensuring we uphold our security and values by challenging China on areas where we disagree.

#### ■ Overseas Trade: Russia

**Martin Wrigley:** [\[35024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what information his Department holds on the amount of trade insured by UK-based companies with a final destination in Russia.

**Mr Douglas Alexander:**

The Department does not hold information concerning the amount of trade insured by UK-based companies with a final destination in Russia. The government has sanctioned the provision of insurance in certain circumstances and it is a criminal offence to breach these sanctions unless a licence has been granted for the activity.

**Martin Wrigley:** [\[35031\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he plans to place further restrictions on trade with Russia.

**Mr Douglas Alexander:**

The Government does not speculate on specific future sanctions measures as to do so could reduce their impact. Most recently, plans for new trade sanctions were set out by the Foreign Secretary on 24 February.

Together with our international partners, we have put in place the largest and most severe package of sanctions ever imposed on a major economy. Over the past three years, the UK has sanctioned over £20 billion (97%) worth of goods trade with Russia, and £375 million worth of services.

#### ■ Small Businesses: Billing

**Michael Wheeler:** [\[34124\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether his Department is taking steps to help small businesses respond to the payment of delayed invoices by larger businesses.

**Gareth Thomas:**

In September 2024 we announced a package of measures to help ensure small businesses are paid promptly by the large businesses they supply.

This included the newly launched Fair Payment Code by the Small Business Commissioner, and upcoming legislation to require that large companies include payment performance reporting headlines within their annual reports.

We will soon launch a public consultation on further measures to address late payments and long payment terms, including strengthened powers for the Small Business Commissioner.

### ■ **Small Businesses: Training**

**Mrs Elsie Blundell:** [\[34047\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of subsidising the cost of IT courses for staff in small and medium enterprises.

**Gareth Thomas:**

Use of digital technology is a key driver for productivity, helping businesses become more efficient. However, many businesses in the UK are slow to adopt new software, and we know smaller businesses in particular may not have access to information, resources and skills to do so.

Government already supports digital skills through initiatives like digital apprenticeships, digital skills bootcamps and the Digital Inclusion Action Plan. We are exploring ways to help businesses become more digital through the SME Digital Adoption Taskforce, Technology Adoption Review, and AI Opportunities Action Plan.

### ■ **Stellantis: Luton**

**Blake Stephenson:** [\[35850\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 25 February 2025 to Written Question 31113 on Stellantis: Luton, whether any agreements have been reached during discussions.

**Sarah Jones:**

Ministers have engaged closely with Stellantis on the future of its operations in the UK.

Regrettably, Stellantis confirmed on 5 February that it will be closing the plant in April of this year. We have a longstanding partnership with Stellantis and will continue to work closely with them, as well as trade unions and local partners on the next steps of their proposals.

**Chris Hinchliff:** [\[35932\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he has had recent discussions with Stellantis on the closure of their Luton plant.

**Sarah Jones:**

Ministers have engaged closely with Stellantis on the future of its operations in the UK, with the Secretary of State for Business and Trade most recently meeting the Chair of the Stellantis board on 1 February to discuss how the Luton plant could be kept open as well as ensuring appropriate support for affected workers should a closure proceed.



## ■ Trade Agreements: NHS

**Seamus Logan:**

[\[35527\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to amend the Trade Act 2021 to prevent future international trade agreements from including provisions relating to the operation of the NHS.

**Mr Douglas Alexander:**

Section 2(5) of the Trade Act already ensures that international trade agreements, within the scope of the Act, cannot include provisions which are inconsistent with maintaining a UK publicly funded healthcare service.

## ■ Trade Agreements: USA

**Bradley Thomas:**

[\[35911\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how many officials are working on the negotiations of a trade deal with the United States.

**Mr Douglas Alexander:**

DBT's Trade Policy, Implementation and Negotiations (TPIN) Group operates a flexible resourcing model to maximise efficiency across priorities. In January 2025, DBT had 675 staff working in TPIN.

The US is the UK's largest single country trading partner, with trade worth around £300 billion in the year to September 2024.

## ■ Zero Hours Contracts

**James McMurdock:**

[\[35610\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he plans to allow businesses to retain the ability to offer zero-hours contracts where that is in the interests of employees.

**Justin Madders:**

The Employment Rights Bill seeks to end exploitative zero hours contracts, ensuring that all jobs provide a baseline of security and predictability so workers can better plan their lives and finances. We recognise that some workers need and value the flexibility that a zero hours contract can provide.

Under the Bill, those who are offered guaranteed hours will be able to turn these down and remain on their current contract or arrangement if they wish.

**CABINET OFFICE****■ Cabinet Office: Palantir****Jon Trickett:**[\[32929\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many staff his Department has seconded from Palantir since July 2024.

**Georgia Gould:**

Secondments are organised - and data is held - at Business Unit Level. Under the Plan for Change, the Cabinet Office is drawing together multi-disciplinary teams across the country including front line public service workers, policy officials and those with digital and data skills to pioneer public service reform. This does not currently include employees from Palantir.

**■ Elections: Subversion****Ellie Chowns:**[\[35504\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Intelligence and Security Committee report entitled: Russa HC 632 published 21 July 2020, if he will open an investigation into alleged Kremlin-linked interference in UK elections.

**Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:**

We are committed to ensuring we have robust systems in place to defend the UK from all forms of malign state interference in UK democratic processes.

The Defending Democracy Taskforce brings together Ministers from across Government, along with representatives from law enforcement and the intelligence community, to coordinate a programme of work that aims to protect UK political parties, elected officials and core electoral infrastructure.

As part of this, the Cabinet Office, together with MHCLG, runs the Joint Election Security and Preparedness Unit, which leads on coordinating cross-government preparedness on election security, including running an extensive exercising programme.

**■ Emigration: Guinea-Bissau and Portugal****Ben Obese-Jecty:**[\[36471\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many children from (a) Guinea-Bissau and (b) Portugal have left the UK permanently since 2010.

**Georgia Gould:**

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

A response to the Hon gentleman's Parliamentary Question of 7th March is attached.

**Attachments:**

1. Letter from the National Statistician [PQ36471 (1) (1).pdf]

## ■ Government Departments: Cost Effectiveness

**Richard Fuller:**

[\[35244\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Government has plans to introduce a Minister for Government Efficiency in the Cabinet Office to oversee cross-departmental efficiency initiatives.

**Georgia Gould:**

The Cabinet Office is driving reform to deliver cross-departmental efficiencies, including through better use of data and technology.

I have ministerial responsibility for public sector reform, which includes driving cross-departmental work to improve efficiency in government.

## ■ Government Departments: Fujitsu

**Sir John Hayes:**

[\[35637\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether Fujitsu has been awarded any Government contracts since 5 July 2024.

**Georgia Gould:**

Details of all contracts valued above £12,000 and awarded by central government under the Public Contracts Regulation 2015 are published on [Contracts Finder](#). The Procurement Act 2023 requires contracting authorities to publish more information on tenders and contracts let, and this will be stored on the central digital platform, [Find a Tender](#), enabling greater transparency going forward.

[In addition to extensions available under Fujitsu's existing contracts, Contracts Finder provides details of seven](#) new Fujitsu contracts since July 2024. All of these contracts were with existing customers and in line with Fujitsu's bid approach. Three of these contracts were direct awards of services that Fujitsu was already providing and were done to ensure continuity of public services, whilst competitive procurements are being set up, as appropriate.

In January 2024, Fujitsu said it would withdraw from bidding for contracts for work with new Government customers until the Post Office Horizon Inquiry concludes or with prior consultation and support from such new customers. Fujitsu also said it would only bid for work with existing Government customers where it already has an existing relationship with them, or where there is an agreed need for Fujitsu's skills and capabilities.

Fujitsu's bid approach is detailed in [this letter](#), deposited in Parliament. For more details, please see [here](#).

## ■ Government Departments: Security

**Joe Robertson:**

[\[35506\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he has taken to minimise disruption to government business during the security staff strike.

**Georgia Gould:**

The hard work of security guards and other staff keeps the government running. The Government Property Agency has been working to ensure impacted buildings continue to operate safely and securely during the industrial action.

■ **Public Houses****Clive Jones:**[\[36530\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what estimate the UK Statistics Authority has made of the number of pubs in Wokingham constituency in January (a) 2019, (b) 2020, (c) 2021, (d) 2022, (e) 2023, (f) 2024 and (g) 2025; and which constituency in (a) England, (b) the South East and (c) Berkshire has the most pubs.

**Georgia Gould:**

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

A response to the Hon gentleman's Parliamentary Question of 7th March is attached.

**Attachments:**

1. Letter from the National Statistician [PQ36530 (1).pdf]

**CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ **Department for Culture, Media and Sport: Food****Sir John Hayes:**[\[35222\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what proportion of food procured by her Department is sourced in the UK.

**Chris Bryant:**

To date the Government has not held information on where publicly procured food is sourced from.

Starting right away, for the first time ever, this government will review the food currently bought in the public sector to determine the standards that it is meeting, where it is bought from and look to introduce monitoring for transparency and accountability within those supply chains to ultimately get the best food for the consumer.

This work will be a significant first step to inform any future changes to public sector food procurement policies as we want to help make it an equal playing field for British producers to bid into the £5 billion spent each year on public sector catering contracts.

■ **Exercise: Women****Anneliese Midgley:**[\[35795\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to increase physical activity levels for women.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

The Government is dedicated to supporting every aspect of women's sport and ensuring all women and girls, no matter their background, have access to high quality sport.

We want to break down the barriers that exist and prevent women and girls from being active including but not limited to kit, facilities, time and cost. This Girl Can, which recently celebrated its ten year anniversary, is an inspiring campaign that has promoted women's sport, challenged prejudice and made clear that sport is for everyone.

The Government provides the majority of support for grassroots sport through Sport England, which annually invests over £250 million in Exchequer and Lottery funding. Separately, as a government, we are investing £123 million in inclusive grassroots sport facilities that will support more women and girls to take part in the sports that they love.

**■ Gambling: Reform****Stuart Andrew:**[\[31016\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she plans to implement the policies set out in the policy paper entitled High stakes: gambling reform for the digital age, published on 27 April 2023; and if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of the policies in that white paper on the land-based gambling industry.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

The Minister for Gambling has indicated her support for the previous government's 2023 gambling white paper. This government has moved quickly to implement a number of proposals, including the statutory levy and online slots stake limits. We are considering the best available evidence from a wide range of sources to inform decisions on the remaining measures relating to the land-based sector. We are moving forward with measures to modernise the regulations for land-based casinos and are working as quickly as we can to ensure that legislation is laid in Parliament as soon as possible to implement these measures.

**■ Gambling: Regulation****Sarah Gibson:**[\[35096\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of (a) further regulating gambling companies and (b) creating a Gambling Ombudsman.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

The government is committed to strengthening protections to ensure that people can continue to enjoy gambling, without the risks that can ensue from harmful gambling.

The previous government published its gambling [white paper](#) in April 2023. The white paper set out the future of regulation and legislation in the gambling sector. This included a broad package of evidence-led proposals which aim to prevent harm as

early as possible, and we have delivered on the introduction of the statutory levy and online slots stake limits. We will continue to monitor the best available evidence in taking decisions on future gambling reform, and the Minister for Gambling will outline further steps in due course, including on the ombudsman.

#### ■ **Mobile Phones: Rural Areas**

**Harriet Cross:** [\[35159\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment her Department has made of the contribution made by the terrestrial broadcasting sector to mobile phone coverage in (a) rural and (b) remote areas.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

The Government's project on the future of TV distribution is seeking to understand how people receive their television now and in the next decade. As part of this project, close consideration is being given to the interrelationships between television distribution and a variety of other sectors. In particular, the project has identified both the ongoing sharing of physical infrastructure by the two sectors, and that terrestrial broadcasting and mobile telecommunications represent competing uses of ultra high frequency electromagnetic spectrum.

#### ■ **National Citizen Service Trust**

**David Williams:** [\[32546\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of reallocating the funding for National Citizen Service to the youth sector from April 2025.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

We appreciate the disappointment many will be feeling following the decision to wind down the NCS programme from March 2025 and close the NCS Trust when parliamentary time allows.

This Government acknowledges the great work NCS have done over the years providing thousands of young people from all backgrounds with opportunities to become 'work-ready and world-ready'.

We also acknowledge the challenges facing the sector and the changing needs of the young people it supports. That is why this government has launched the co-production of an ambitious new National Youth Strategy, which will be developed together with young people and the youth sector.

Funding allocations for specific programmes will be communicated in due course.

#### ■ **Radio and Television: Scotland**

**Harriet Cross:** [\[35154\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the expiry in 2034 of the licences for terrestrial (a)

television and (b) radio on (i) all households (ii) households reliant on terrestrial signals in Scotland.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

The Government's project on the future of TV distribution is seeking to understand how people receive their television now and in the next decade. This will inform any decision concerning the future of digital terrestrial television services after 2034. Before any decision is made in relation to the availability of services beyond 2034, close consideration will be given to how any changes would impact audiences, and especially those who rely on digital terrestrial television as their primary means of watching television.

As part of this process, a wide range of views are being sought from across the TV sector, audience groups and infrastructure, including through a stakeholder forum which I chair. Membership of the Stakeholder Forum includes a range of broadcasters active in Scotland, including the Scottish broadcaster STV, the BBC and ITV. The forum also benefits from the perspectives of a number of groups representing the interests of Scottish and UK-wide audiences, such as Voice of the Listener and Viewer, Digital Poverty Alliance and Silver Voices.

Given the extensive relationship between the UK's DTT and radio broadcast networks, we will separately look at how broadcast radio services may be affected and will ensure that any decision taken on the future of TV distribution fully considers the wider impacts on broadcast radio services.

■ **Television**

**Harriet Cross:**

[\[35155\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will publish minutes of the TV Distribution Stakeholder Forum's meetings to date.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

The Government's project on the future of TV distribution is seeking to understand how people receive their television now and in the next decade. The minutes of the Future of TV Distribution Stakeholder Forum will be published following the conclusion of the forum process. The terms of reference and membership list for the forum have already been published and can be found on GOV.UK.

■ **Young People**

**Ian Sollom:**

[\[35434\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to p.57 of the report by The Duke of Edinburgh's Award entitled Youth Voices, published 23 July 2024, if she will make it her policy to ensure that the views of young people are represented (a) at all levels of policy and decision-making and (b) in decisions on issues that affect young people.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

This Government recognises the value of effective youth participation in decision making at all levels. We understand this leads to impactful policy locally, regionally and nationally.

Youth consultation opportunities are being held across various government departments, including the Department for Work and Pensions, the Department for Education, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, to shape policies on youth employment, communities, and environmental improvement.

We are currently co-producing the National Youth Strategy in partnership with young people and the youth sector. DCMS has already conducted Ministerial roundtables with young people and over the coming months will conduct a number of different engagement activities with young people, including focus groups. We launched a national survey on 5 March 2025 to ask young people about their issues and priorities.

We have also produced an engagement toolkit so MPs can run their own workshops and discussions with young people, or share this toolkit with organisations in their constituencies who work with young people.

**■ Youth Services****Harpreet Uppal:**[\[35985\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, how many local authorities have not fulfilled their statutory duty to provide recreational leisure-time activities for young people; and what steps the Government are taking to support those local authorities.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

The Government does not hold the data requested. Local authorities fund youth services from their Local Government Settlement in line with local need, and this was increased to more than £69 billion in 2025/26 - a 6.8% increase in cash terms compared to 2024/25.

Additionally, we will be launching the Local Youth Transformation pilot this year, which will support local authorities to build back capability to improve local youth offers. We will share more information in due course.

**DEFENCE****■ Ammunition: Manufacturing Industries****James Cartlidge:**[\[35341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many manufacturing jobs have been created to support the Next Generation Munitions Solution agreement (a) between 11



July 2023 and 4 July 2024 and (b) since 5 July 2024 in (i) Washington in Tyne & Wear and (ii) Glascoed, Wales.

**Maria Eagle:**

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) does not currently hold the number of manufacturing jobs created to support the Next Generation Munitions Solution agreement in the specified time period.

The Department has requested BAE Systems, (who deliver the Next Generation Munitions Solution for the MOD) to provide updated figures, and once they are received I will write to the hon. Member and will place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

■ **Armed Forces: Neurodiversity**

**Katie White:**

[\[35511\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to recruit more neurodiverse graduates into the armed forces.

**Luke Pollard:**

In a competitive age, our advantage derives from the talent and skills of our people. Attracting, recruiting, and retaining the best people drawn from the broadest diversity of thought, skills and background is mission critical to our operational effectiveness. It ensures we continue to meet the threats we face and safeguard the security, stability and prosperity of our nation. Diversity drives performance, innovation, increases creative thinking and reduces the risks of group think and lack of challenge, as highlighted in the Chilcot Review.

This Government has already begun to modernise and refine our policies and processes to attract, and then retain the best possible talent in our Armed Forces. Defence is committed to a diverse workforce, including in neurodiversity. The Defence Secretary has undertaken to review the current recruitment policies and has already announced several changes to prior outdated approaches, including medical entry standards relating to neurodiverse conditions. For example, candidates with Autism Spectrum Disorder can now join the Armed Forces, providing their symptoms have no significant impact and do not require ongoing specialist support.

■ **Armed Forces: Palestine Action**

**Luke Akehurst:**

[\[36249\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of direct action taken by Palestine Action on the (a) defence sector and (b) adequacy of the supply of assets to the Armed Forces.

**Maria Eagle:**

The Ministry of Defence regularly monitors risks and issues facing the defence sector as part of our supply chain resilience work.

A number of UK Defence companies have reported that they have incurred costs through installing additional security measures in responding to the threat of actions from groups such as Palestine Action. It is also recognised that there are a small number of defence companies, and associated supporting businesses, who have been targeted by Palestine Action with criminal damage and intimidation of their staff. At an individual level these businesses have incurred costs and disruption through the damage caused and we are working with the Police to deal with such offences and mitigate potential future such action.

However, the overall impact to Defence has been limited and there have been no significant reported impacts to the Defence supply chain.

#### ■ **Armed Forces: Protective Clothing**

**Ben Obese-Jecty:** [\[35835\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on Peltor ComTac XP/XPI ear defence since the Tactical Hearing Protection System was introduced in 2015.

**Maria Eagle:**

I am unable to provide the details requested, as releasing this information could prejudice commercial interests.

#### ■ **Boxer Vehicles: Procurement**

**Ben Obese-Jecty:** [\[36482\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 7 March 2025 to Question 35428 on Boxer Vehicles: Procurement, what the delivery schedule is for Mechanised Infantry Vehicles (BOXER) during the period 2025 to 2027 by (a) month and (b) brigade.

**Maria Eagle:**

Whilst the Army's modernisation will continue over the next decade with a programme of investment worth billions of pounds, future capability development priorities will be guided by the Strategic Defence Review (SDR).

There have been some ongoing delays to the contract delivery of BOXER vehicles due to global supply chain issues, following the war in Ukraine.

However, production vehicles are now arriving, and Defence expects industry to deliver up to 100 vehicles per year.

It would be inappropriate to comment on specific fielding plans and future force development until the SDR completes.

#### ■ **Chinook Helicopters: Decommissioning**

**James Cartlidge:** [\[34633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the oral statement of the Prime Minister of 25 February 2025 on Defence and Security, Official Report, column

631, whether it remains his policy to proceed with the decommissioning of fourteen CH-47 Chinook helicopters.

**James Cartlidge:**

[\[34634\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the oral statement of the Prime Minister of 25 February 2025 on Defence and Security, Official Report, column 631, whether it remains his policy to proceed with the decommissioning of the Puma helicopter fleet.

**James Cartlidge:**

[\[34637\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the comments by the Prime Minister published in the Telegraph on 16 February 2025, whether he plans to proceed with the decommissioning of fourteen CH-47 Chinook helicopters.

**James Cartlidge:**

[\[34638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the comments by the Prime Minister published in the Telegraph on 16 February 2025, whether he plans to proceed with the decommissioning of the Puma helicopter fleet .

**Maria Eagle:**

The phased retirement of the 14 oldest Chinook helicopters over the next four years, synchronised with the delivery of replacement state-of-the-art Chinook H-47 (Extended Range) from 2027 onwards, represents the optimal transition that delivers the new aircraft and trained aircrew.

Likewise, it remains the Department's position to retire Puma on 31 Mar 25 while the new Airbus H145 HC2 Jupiter helicopter will enter service from 2026 in both Brunei and Cyprus. In the interim, the Department continues to assess any capability gaps and will deploy Chinook to Cyprus in support of the wildfire season.

## ■ Firearms

**Ben Obese-Jecty:**

[\[35423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) SUSAT, (b) ACOG L85 and (c) Specter OS4X (LDS) sights his Department holds.

**Maria Eagle:**

The number of weapons sights held by the Department changes frequently and the figures provided have been collated using single Service data. As at 5 March 2025, there were 107,671 Sight Unit Small Arms, Trilux (SUSAT) sights and 34,258 Elcan Specter OS4X Lightweight Day Sights (LDS) held across the Ministry of Defence. The L85 Advanced Combat Optical Gunsights (ACOG) were removed from combat service in 2015, 18 are currently held in stock.

**■ Ministry of Defence: Equality****Steve Barclay:** [\[35255\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many full-time equivalent roles there are in his Department relating to equality, diversity and inclusion; and how many of those roles are unfilled but budgeted for.

**AI Carns:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 26 September 2024 to Question 5190 to the hon. Member for Great Yarmouth (Rupert Lowe).

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-09-10/5190>

**■ Thales: Northern Ireland****Alex Burghart:** [\[35735\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what weightings were applied to (a) technical capability, (b) cost, (c) delivery timelines and (d) risk assessment in the award of the contract to Thales Northern Ireland for lightweight-multirole missiles.

**Maria Eagle:**

This procurement was not subject to competition, in accordance with applicable procurement legislation, and therefore tender assessment weightings were not applicable.

**■ Ukraine: Intelligence Services****James Cartlidge:** [\[36425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential implication for his policies of the decision by the US to pause intelligence sharing with Ukraine.

**Luke Pollard:**

There is a long-standing position of successive Governments not to comment on specific intelligence capabilities or detail concerning intelligence operations.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[36426\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the decision by the US to pause intelligence sharing with Ukraine on the use of Storm Shadow missiles supplied by Britain.

**Luke Pollard:**

There is a long-standing position of successive Governments not to comment on specific intelligence capabilities or detail concerning intelligence operations.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[36427\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the decision by the US to pause intelligence sharing with Ukraine on the use of UK RC-135W Rivet Joint to support intelligence gathering for Ukraine.

**Luke Pollard:**

There is a long-standing position of successive Governments not to comment on specific intelligence capabilities or detail concerning intelligence operations.

**■ Unmanned Marine Systems**

**James Cartlidge:** [\[35726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent estimate he has made of when (a) trials and (b) experimentation of CETUS will conclude.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[35727\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, for what reasons there has been a delay in commencing the CETUS sea trials.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[35729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what his target in service date is for CETUS.

**Maria Eagle:**

CETUS is undergoing Integrated Test, Evaluation and Acceptance trials which are expected to complete in the summer, before handover to the Royal Navy. This is six months later than planned because of an amendment to the original design of the vessel. CETUS will continue progressive experimentation and capability demonstration activities until late 2027.

CETUS is a capability demonstrator, so will enable greater understanding of how this type of vehicle can be operated, maintained and commanded - it is not intended to enter operational service and therefore does not have a target in-service date.

**■ USA: Trident**

**Ben Obese-Jecty:** [\[36215\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what aspects of Trident are reliant upon US support.

**Maria Eagle:**

The UK has a longstanding, close relationship with the US on all defence nuclear issues, which has endured through many changes of Government in our two nations. One result of our close relationship is that the UK is able to procure certain non-nuclear components from the US, most notably the Trident II D5 missile, significantly reducing the cost of our nuclear deterrent capability.

Our extant long-term arrangements under the 1958 Mutual Defense Agreement and the 1963 Polaris Sales Agreement (as amended in 1982 for Trident) provide for co-operation and collaboration which has been, and continues to be, of considerable mutual benefit to both nations.

Further details can be found in Command Paper 1058: Delivering the UK's Nuclear Deterrent as a National Endeavour at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/defence-nuclear-enterprise-command-paper> ]

## EDUCATION

### ■ Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund

**Lewis Cocking:**

[R] [35389]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made an assessment of the potential impact of the delay in confirming funding for the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund for the financial year 2025-26 on families and children who receive support.

**Janet Daby:**

Announcements on funding for the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund (ASGSF) will be made as soon as possible. We will, of course, always consider the impact of decisions on vulnerable children. ASGSF applications are generally permitted to extend up to 12 months, allowing children and families to receive continuing therapy across financial years. Where applications are agreed, therapy which starts before March 2025 may therefore continue into the next financial year, under previously agreed transitional funding arrangements.

### ■ Apprentices: Taxation

**Jim Shannon:**

[35256]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to encourage employers to take advantage of the apprenticeship levy to use these funds to develop skills in young people.

**Janet Daby:**

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

The government is reforming the current levy-funded apprenticeships offer to deliver greater flexibility for employers. Apprenticeships will remain at the heart of the offer. To support more businesses to participate in apprenticeships, the department is introducing shorter duration apprenticeships and foundation apprenticeships in targeted sectors.

Foundation apprenticeships will be a new work-based training offer that give more young people a foot in the door at the start of their working lives, whilst supporting the pipeline of new talent that employers will need to drive economic growth. The department is working closely with employers and providers to design foundation apprenticeships that offer young people a good route into good, skilled work and meet the needs of the industrial strategy.

To support smaller employers to access apprenticeships, the government pays the full training costs for young apprentices aged 16 to 21, and for apprentices aged 22 to

24 who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan or have been in local authority care.

Employers of all sizes can also benefit from £1000 payments when they take on apprentices aged 16 to 18, or apprentices aged 19 to 24 who have an EHC plan or have been in local authority care. This is in recognition of the additional support that younger apprentices may require when entering employment. Employers can choose how they spend these payments. Employers also benefit from not being required to pay anything towards employees' National Insurance for all apprentices aged up to age 25 where they earn less than £967 a week (£50,270 a year).

### ■ Asylum: Children

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

[35309]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 11 February 2025, to Question 29606, on Asylum: Housing, how many unaccompanied asylum seeking children are supported by local authorities broken down by per council.

**Janet Daby:**

Information on the number and proportion of looked after children, including unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, is submitted to the department on an annual basis and was last published on 14 November 2024 at local authority level in our statistical release. The statistical release is available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoptions>.

### ■ Breakfast Clubs

**Mrs Elsie Blundell:**

[35417]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what guidance her Department issues on timings schools will be expected to run free breakfast clubs to and from on a given day.

**Stephen Morgan:**

From the start of the summer term, early adopter schools will be expected to deliver a free, universal breakfast club providing childcare and food for at least 30 minutes, immediately before the start of the compulsory school day. This will also be a requirement for all schools with primary aged children under the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill. More information can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/breakfast-clubs-early-adopter-guidance-for-schools-and-trusts-in-england/breakfast-clubs-early-adopter-guidance-for-schools-and-trusts-in-england>.

### ■ Breakfast Clubs: Fylde

**Mr Andrew Snowden:**

[35400]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many schools left the breakfast club early adopters scheme due to funding constraints in Fylde constituency prior to 24 February 2025.



**Stephen Morgan:**

This government is clear on the impact that breakfast clubs can have to support children to arrive at school ready to learn. That is why we committed to introducing free breakfast clubs in every state-funded school with primary aged pupils.

The early adopter scheme has not yet started. We were delighted that over 3,000 schools applied to be early adopters. The list of the 750 schools selected was published on 24 February.

Early adopters will start delivering from the summer term, meaning we are bringing change now for pupils and parents in every corner of the country.

**■ Carers: Children and Young People****Charlotte Cane:**[\[35469\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to help tackle persistent absence among young carers.

**Stephen Morgan:**

The department wants to ensure that young carers have the best life chances by supporting them in their education. We recognise that absence from school is almost always a symptom of wider needs and barriers that a family is facing. It is often the best early indication of need in a family that may not be in contact with other services.

The department's expectations of local authorities and schools, as set out in the 'Working together to improve school attendance' guidance, were made statutory on 19 August 2024. The 'support-first' ethos of the attendance guidance is that pupils and families, including young carers, should receive holistic, whole-family support to help them overcome the barriers to attendance they are facing. This includes holding regular meetings with the families of pupils who the school, and/or local authority, consider to be vulnerable, to discuss attendance and engagement at school. Schools are expected to recognise that absence is a symptom and that improving pupil's attendance is part of supporting the pupil's overall welfare.

Young carers are also now part of the school census, which will improve their visibility in the school system and allow schools to better identify and support their young carers. This will provide an annual data collection to establish long term trends. Separately, the department also publishes daily attendance data on a fortnightly basis and will continue to monitor the quality of data on young carers that is collected via the school register for consideration to include in the daily data collection in the future.

Schools can also use pupil premium funding to support other pupils with identified needs, including young carers. Pupil premium funding has increased to over £2.9 billion for the 2024/25 financial year.



## ■ Childcare: Standards

**Charlotte Cane:**

[\[35470\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to ensure the availability of high-quality childcare.

**Stephen Morgan:**

It is the department's ambition that parents have access to high-quality, affordable and flexible early education and childcare.

Next year alone, we plan to provide over £8 billion for the early years entitlements, which is a more than 30% increase compared to 2024/25, as we roll out the expansion of the entitlements, so eligible working parents of children aged from nine months can access 30 hours of funded childcare.

From the start of September 2024, eligible working parents have been entitled to 15 hours a week of early education and care from the term after their child turns nine months. So far, over 320,000 additional parents are now accessing a place. Going further, from September 2025, eligible working parents will be able to access 30 hours of early education and childcare a week, over 38 weeks of the year, from the term after their child turns nine months until they start school.

In September 2024, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education announced that state-funded primary phase schools could apply for up to £150,000 of £15 million capital funding to create or expand on-site nurseries. Schools could apply between 17 October and 19 December 2024 and will be notified of the outcome in this year. This new funding will complement ongoing work to expand provision across the country, including the £100 million capital funding allocated to local authorities in 2023/24 to increase capacity of early years and wraparound provision in local areas.

Parents may also be eligible for childcare support through Tax-Free Childcare or Universal Credit Childcare.

The department is determined to create change in the approach to early years, focusing on high-quality early education, celebrating and supporting early years careers, and embedding the sector into the wider education system. We are delivering programmes to support the sector to attract talented staff and childminders by creating conditions for improved recruitment, alongside programmes to better utilise the skills of the existing workforce.

The department also wants to ensure that parents are aware of and accessing all government-funded childcare support they are eligible for. We are raising awareness of the government-funded childcare support available via the Childcare Choices website to stimulate increased take-up by eligible families, because this could make a significant financial difference to families.

## ■ Department for Education: Social Media

**Josh Fenton-Glynn:**

[\[33293\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many social media accounts her Department operates; and how much her Department spent on social media (a) subscriptions and (b) advertisements on each social media platform in each of the last three years.

**Janet Daby:**

The department uses social media to connect directly and speak with the public on the issues and areas of interest they care most deeply about.

It operates 25 live social media accounts incorporating campaigns and supporting agencies.

The department spends no money on social media platform subscriptions.

The department undertook communications activity across its remit in line with the government's published communications plans for each year. All spend complies with Cabinet Office spending controls to ensure that, where taxpayer money is being spent on government communications, it is cost-effective, coordinated and reflects functional standards and professional best practices. Activity included delivering joined up, national campaigns to increase supply and demand for technical qualifications, including apprenticeships and T Levels, and skills offers; inspiring more people to teach in schools and colleges; encouraging take up of government-funded childcare; and inspiring more people to become childcare professionals. As part of these campaigns, the department spent the following on paid-for advertising on each social media platform in each complete financial year:

PLATFORM	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
<b>Meta</b>	£ 1,513,264.00	£ 2,170,187.00	£ 3,202,273.00
<b>LinkedIn</b>	£ 223,926.00	£ 476,815.00	£ 486,835.00
<b>Pinterest</b>	£ 95,280.00	£ 99,799.00	£ 175,733.00
<b>Snapchat</b>	£ 598,276.00	£ 821,765.00	£ 1,449,496.00
<b>Twitter</b>	£ 276,397.00	£ 391,616.00	-
<b>Reddit</b>	-	£ 47,644.00	£ 28,145.00

## ■ Education: North of England

**Ian Lavery:**

[\[35263\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to help reduce the divide in attainment between the north and south of England; and what the barriers are to reducing that divide.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

All children and young people should have every opportunity to succeed, no matter who they are or where they are from. However, we know that too many children and young people face barriers to learning. This is not acceptable, which is why the Opportunity Mission will break down barriers and the unfair link between background and success, helping all children achieve and thrive wherever they are in the country.

High and rising standards in every school are at the heart of this mission. The department aims to deliver these improvements through excellent teaching and leadership, a high-quality curriculum, and a system which removes the barriers to learning that hold too many children back.

To ensure all children and young people have expert qualified teachers driving high and rising standards across our schools and colleges, the department is committed to recruiting 6,500 new expert teachers.

Teaching School Hubs have been established across the country, which provide approved high-quality professional development to teachers at all stages of their careers. These Hubs play a significant role in delivering initial teacher training, the Early Career Framework, national professional qualifications and Appropriate Body services. Three Rivers Teaching School Hub is a centre of excellence which delivers teacher training and development across Newcastle upon Tyne, North Tyneside and Northumberland.

We have also launched the Curriculum and Assessment Review that will look closely at key challenges to attainment, and the barriers which hold children back from the opportunities and life chances they deserve.

The department is 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 provide 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 department has also introduced the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill to give every family the certainty that they will be able to access a good local school for their child, where they can achieve and thrive, regardless of where they live.

Absence is one of the biggest barriers to success for children and young people. Missing school regularly is harmful to a child's attainment, safety and physical and mental health, which limits their opportunity to succeed. This government is determined to tackle this and have a comprehensive strategy in place.

This includes our attendance mentoring programme, which multiple areas in the north, including Middlesbrough, Blackpool and Hartlepool, are benefiting from. Backed by over £15 million investment, the programme provides targeted one-to-one support for students who are persistently absent.

To enable the sharing of good practice across the sector, we also have a network of Attendance Hubs led by a school with good attendance practices. Each hub has a broad geographical spread, and schools are clustered with similar schools. There are currently 31 hubs across England working with 2,000 schools.

#### ■ Educational Visits: Costs

**Damian Hinds:** [\[34813\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of Low Emission Zones on the cost of school trips made by coach by schools in (a) Greater London and (b) other parts of the country.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

Schools typically offer a range of enriching opportunities, including trips, for pupils but it is for schools to decide what to offer in line with their curriculum and what works for the children and families they serve.

The department has not made an assessment of the impact of Low Emission Zones on the cost of school trips made by coach.

#### ■ Free School Meals

**Charlotte Cane:** [\[35467\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of expanding the eligibility criteria for free school meals.

**Stephen Morgan:**

Under current programmes, 2.1 million disadvantaged pupils are registered to receive benefits-based free school meals (FSM). An additional 1.3 million are eligible for a free meal under universal infant free school meals.

The government is committed to delivering an ambitious strategy to reduce child poverty by tackling the root causes and giving every child the best start in life. To support this, a new Ministerial taskforce has been set up to develop a Child Poverty Strategy. The taskforce will consider a range of policies, assessing what will have the greatest impact in driving down rates of child poverty. As with all policies, the government keeps the approach to FSM under review.

#### ■ Further Education: San Marino

**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[31799\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she is taking steps to promote cooperation within the tertiary education sector with the Republic of San Marino.

**Janet Daby:**

This government is resetting the relationship with our European friends to strengthen ties, secure a broad-based security pact and tackle barriers to trade.

We are working with the higher education (HE) sector to ensure our world leading universities continue to attract the best and brightest and support the UK's economy.

The UK is outward looking and welcomes international students, including those from San Marino, who make a positive impact on the UK's HE sector, our economy and society as a whole.

## ■ **Holiday Activities and Food Programme**

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[33931\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment has she made of the contribution of the Holidays and Activities Fund (a) nationally and (b) in York.

**Stephen Morgan:**

Since 2022, the department has invested over £200 million each year in free holiday club places for children from low-income families, through the holiday activities and food (HAF) programme, with all 153 local authorities in England delivering during the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays.

The HAF programme supports disadvantaged children and their families with enriching activities, providing them with healthy food, helping them to learn new things and improving socialisation.

Since 2022, the HAF programme has provided 15.6 million HAF days to children and young people in this country. Across the 2023/24 academic year, almost five million HAF days were provided during winter, Easter, and summer delivery.

Over summer 2024, local authorities reported that over 628,000 children and young people attended the HAF programme. Of these participating children, over 511,000 were funded directly by the HAF programme and over 433,000 were receiving benefits-related free school meals (FSM). The reports showed that over 9,700 clubs, events or organised activities operated across the country over the summer.

Over Easter 2024, local authorities reported that over 377,000 children attended the programme, of which over 324,000 were funded directly by the HAF programme and over 276,000 were receiving benefits-related FSM.

Based on reporting data published on York local authority's website, over 4,700 children attended the programme during HAF delivery periods in 2023. New data that will include numbers for Easter, summer and Christmas 2024 should be published by the local authority later this year.

## ■ **Personal Care Services: Apprentices**

**Dame Caroline Dinenge:**

[\[34828\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential implications for her policies on apprenticeship of the British Hair Consortium's report entitled Securing the future of UK hairdressing and beauty: The economic, fiscal & societal case for VAT reform, published in February 2025.

**Janet Daby:**

The hair and beauty sector have developed several high-quality apprenticeships, including the level 2 hairdressing professional standard, and the department

continues to encourage employers in the sector to use apprenticeships to develop the skilled workforces they need.

To support smaller employers to access apprenticeships, the government pays the full training costs for young apprentices aged 16 to 21, and for apprentices aged 22 to 24 who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan or have been in local authority care. Employers can also benefit from £1000 payments when they take on apprentices aged 16 to 18, or apprentices aged 19 to 24 who have an EHC plan or have been in local authority care. Employers can choose how they spend these payments.

As the report highlights, we recognise that the increase to employer National Insurance contributions will have a varying impact across all sectors. Employers are not required to pay anything towards employees' National Insurance for all apprentices aged up to age 25, where they earn less than £50,270 a year.

This government also remains committed to ensuring that apprentice wages support the attraction of talented individuals into apprenticeships and remain fair for employers.

#### ■ Private Education: East Midlands

**Sir John Hayes:**

[\[31764\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate she has made of the number of children that have moved from independent to state schools as a result of applying VAT to independent schools in (a) Lincolnshire and (b) the East Midlands.

**Stephen Morgan:**

The department has made no separate estimate of the number of pupils in individual local authority areas who have left the independent school system as a result of VAT on school fees.

The government predicts that, in the long-term steady state, there will be 37,000 fewer pupils in the private sector in the UK as a result of the removal of the VAT exemption applied to school fees. This represents around 6% of the current private school population.

Of the expected 37,000 pupil reduction in the private sector, the government estimates an increase of 35,000 pupils in the state sector in the steady state following the VAT policy taking effect, with the other 2,000 consisting of international pupils who do not move into the UK state system and domestic pupils moving into homeschooling. This state sector increase represents less than 0.5% of total UK state school pupils, of which there are over 9 million. This movement is expected to take place over several years.

The impact on individual local authorities will interact with other pressures and vary between authorities. Every year, many pupils move between schools, including between the private and state-funded sectors.

Local authorities routinely support parents who need a state-funded school place, including where private schools have closed. Where local authorities are experiencing difficulties in ensuring there are enough school places for children that need them, the department will offer support and advice.

The department provides capital funding through the Basic Need grant to support local authorities to provide school places, based on their own pupil forecasts and school capacity data. They can use this funding to provide places in new schools or through expansions of existing schools.

Local authorities in the East Midlands region have been allocated a total of £177.1 million, including £23.2 million for Lincolnshire, to support the provision of new mainstream school places needed over the current and next two academic years, up to and including the academic year starting in September 2026.

## ■ Pupils: Fylde

**Mr Andrew Snowden:**

**[35399]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to reduce pupil absenteeism in Fylde constituency.

**Stephen Morgan:**

Tackling absence is at the heart of the government's mission to break down barriers to opportunity in all areas. If children are not in school, it does not matter how effective or well-supported teaching and learning is, they will not benefit. Thanks to the hard work of parents and teachers there has been progress, but levels of absenteeism remain higher than they were prior to the pandemic.

The department has set out clear expectations of all local authorities and schools in the 'Working together to improve school attendance' guidance, which was made statutory in August 2024. This guidance can be found at:

[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.

The department has also established 31 attendance hubs that offer their support to around 2000 schools, including secondaries. Hubs are established and led by senior leaders in schools with strong attendance practice. The meetings led by these hubs are intended to give senior leaders in other schools a forum to discuss and share effective attendance practice. Whilst we do not hold numbers at a constituency level, 23 schools in Blackpool, Lancashire and surrounding areas have been offered the support of an attendance hub.

Last year, the department published an attendance toolkit, bringing together effective practice from across the hubs. This toolkit gives schools practical advice on how to



diagnose and target their attendance problem and how to effectively implement great practice.

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, including support for attendance as necessary. Improving school attendance is a national priority for RISE teams.

Alongside hub lead schools and RISE advisers, the department is delivering a programme of regional attendance conferences across England, giving secondary school leaders and senior attendance champions the chance to hear directly from hubs and other practitioners on improving attendance. The conference in the North West will be held on 24 March.

Every state school in England, including in Fylde constituency, is required to share their attendance data with the department. Schools can access this data through a secure, interactive dashboard, allowing them to target attendance interventions more effectively.

## ■ Pupils: Mobile Phones

**Mr Andrew Snowden:**

**[35398]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the use of mobile phones in schools on recent trends in the levels of pupil attainment in Fylde constituency.

**Stephen Morgan:**

Schools should prohibit the use of mobile phones and other smart technology with similar functionality to mobile phones throughout the school day, including during lessons, the time between lessons, breaktimes and lunchtime, as set out in the 'Mobile phones in schools' guidance 2024.

We expect all schools to take steps in line with this guidance to ensure mobile phones do not disrupt pupils' learning.

The department does not centrally collect behaviour data from schools or individual constituencies. The latest results of the annual National Behaviour Survey is available here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6628dd9bdb4b9f0448a7e584/National\\_behaviour\\_survey\\_academic\\_year\\_2022\\_to\\_2023.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6628dd9bdb4b9f0448a7e584/National_behaviour_survey_academic_year_2022_to_2023.pdf).



## ■ Pupils: Neurodiversity

**Calum Miller:**

[\[36320\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department plans to introduce legislation for the provision of (a) early screening for neurodivergent conditions and (b) improved teacher training in those conditions.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

The department is committed to improving support for all children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), including those with neurodiverse conditions.

We have established a neurodivergence task and finish group, which includes a range of experts including clinicians, scientists and academics, education experts and third sector organisations. This group is chaired by Professor Karen Guldberg from Birmingham University and is working closely with the department to help improve inclusivity and expertise in mainstream settings in a way that works for neurodivergent children and young people. This includes considering the use of needs-assessment and screening tools by educational professionals.

High-quality teaching is the most important in-school factor for improving outcomes for all children, particularly those with SEND. All initial teacher training (ITT) providers must ensure that their courses enable trainee teachers to meet the Teachers' Standards, which set clear expectations that teachers must understand the needs of all pupils, including those with SEND, such as neurodiversity, to be recommended for the award of qualified teacher status.

The ITT Core Content Framework and Early Career Framework (ECF), for trainee and Early Career Teachers (ECTs) respectively, cover the first three years or more at the start of a teacher's career. They set out the core body of knowledge, skills and behaviours that define great teaching, and from September 2025, these will be superseded by the combined Initial Teacher Training and Early Career Framework (ITTECF), which sets out a minimum entitlement to training and must be used by providers of ITT and those delivering provider-led early career training to create their curricula. From September 2025, all ECTs will be entitled to a two-year induction that is underpinned by the ITTECF, known as the Early Career Teacher Entitlement (ECTE).

The department's review of content for the ITTECF paid particular attention to the needs of trainees and ECTs when supporting pupils with SEND. There is now significantly more content related to adaptive teaching and supporting pupils with SEND, including those with neurodiversity. We have edited existing statements to improve inclusivity for SEND throughout the framework including, for example, developing an understanding of different pupil needs, and learning how to provide opportunities for success for all pupils. From September 2025, the department has also enhanced the requirement on providers of ECT training to develop SEND training materials. The department tested this approach with SEND educational

experts with consensus that the approach of 'quality-first teaching' would be the best way to improve outcomes for all children, particularly those with SEND.

We recognise that continuous improvement is essential and have recently committed to a full review of the ECTE in 2027 to ensure it continues to provide the best possible support for ECTs. This review will focus on the support we provide new teachers in teaching pupils with SEND.

### ■ **School Meals: Nutrition**

**Dr Roz Savage:**

**[35593]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what data her Department holds on the proportion of (a) healthy and (b) unhealthy food provided to (i) schools and (ii) school caterers.

**Stephen Morgan:**

The department does not hold data on the proportion of healthy and unhealthy food provided to schools and school caterers.

The standards for school food are set out in the Requirements for School Food Regulations 2014, known as school food standards. Schools are responsible for their school meals service and governing boards have a responsibility to ensure compliance with the standards. The standards can be found here:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2014/1603/contents/made>.

### ■ **Schools: Attendance**

**Abtisam Mohamed:**

**[35629]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of changes to the School Attendance Order process in the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill on local authority staff time.

**Stephen Morgan:**

The department is legislating through the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill to make School Attendance Orders a more efficient remedy to ensure that children are in receipt of suitable education. This includes making it an offence for parents to withdraw a child subject to a School Attendance Order from school without following the proper procedure. This means that parents convicted of breaching a School Attendance Order can be prosecuted again if they continue to breach it without local authorities having to restart the process from the beginning, which will save resources.

Other measures which will impact on local authority staff time include additional statutory timelines on parts of the process, a new requirement for local authorities to consider the home and other learning environments, and a new power for local authorities to request to see the child in their home(s).

Where additional local authority resources will be required to undertake new duties created by these School Attendance Order changes, the department is considering

these additional requirements and will conduct a full new burdens assessment as is required.

## ■ Schools: Fylde

**Mr Andrew Snowden:**

**[35401]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to help ensure the safety of teachers and pupils in schools in Fylde constituency.

**Stephen Morgan:**

Violent incidents in schools are rare, but all schools should be places of safety and learning. Education settings are designed to be secure environments with robust safeguarding frameworks. They should have policies on security measures, supported by clear guidance to develop plans for deterring attacks, keeping learners safe and implementing lockdowns when necessary.

The department has a tested incident response mechanism that allows us to support the education sector if impacted directly or indirectly by a major incident. Our primary goal is to safeguard the health and safety of children, young people and staff while minimising disruptions to education. In addition, the department has published comprehensive guidance and high-quality resources to help teachers and learners prepare for and respond to counter terrorism incidents and attacks. These resources can be found here:

<https://www.protectuk.police.uk/catalogue/EducationLearningandGuidance>.

We also currently provide specialist pupil support in serious violence hotspots in England. Support, attend, fulfil, exceed taskforces are school-led partnerships that develop a targeted, local response to serious violence in ten areas. Interventions delivered include mentoring, social skills training and cognitive behavioural approaches. In alternative provision (AP) settings, alternative provision specialist taskforces are joined up, multi-disciplinary teams, which include youth workers, family workers and careers workers, embedded within the largest AP schools in 22 areas.

## ■ Schools: Solar Power

**James MacCleary:**

**[35520]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 22 July 2024 to Question 374 on Schools: Solar Power, what steps her Department has taken to support schools in the move to solar; and what funding they will provide to schools for the installation of solar PV panels.

**Stephen Morgan:**

High and rising school standards are at the heart of this government's mission to break down barriers to opportunity and give every child the best start in life. High-quality and sustainable buildings are a key part of that.

The Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme supports schools, hospitals and other public sector bodies with funding to switch to cleaner heating and cut building emissions. Additionally, capital funding allocated by the department to the school

sector each year can be used for projects that improve the energy efficiency and sustainability of school buildings, as well as improving the condition of the estate to keep schools safe and operational. From visits made to schools for the department's Condition Data Collection programme (CDC2), we know that almost 30% of schools already have photovoltaic panels installed.

Decisions on which projects to prioritise with capital allocations are primarily taken at a local level. In the 2024/25 financial year, the department committed £1.8 billion in capital funding to improve the condition of the school estate. At the Autumn Budget 2024 the government increased funding to £2.1 billion for the 2025/26 financial year.

This is on top of the School Rebuilding Programme, which is rebuilding or refurbishing poor condition buildings at over 500 schools. Since November 2021, the department has required all new department-delivered schools be designed to be net zero carbon in operation. This is alongside delivering investment to increase green infrastructure and sustainable water management on school sites.

The department is aware of an increasing amount of interest in this area from schools and suppliers and is engaging with the sector to look at how it can further support schools in the move to solar. Our sustainability support programme provides online and in person help to education settings in identifying appropriate actions to become more sustainable, including considering decarbonisation of their energy supply. Where schools are considering the purchase of solar panels or other sustainable systems, our 'Get help buying for schools' service provides support to ensure that schemes procured are of high-quality and value to the sector. Information about the service can be found here: <https://gethelpbuyingforschools.campaign.gov.uk/>.

Pilot programmes such as the Net Zero Accelerator Service and the Decarbonisation Pilots have been working with small groups of schools to explore what interventions work best in different typologies of schools to reduce emissions and energy bills. The learning from these pilots will be captured and shared through the sustainability support programme.

The department has also published guidance for schools and colleges on sensible steps for reducing energy use and small-scale works to improve energy efficiency. Further details are available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/energy-efficiency-guidance-for-the-school-and-fe-college-estate/energy-efficiency-guidance-for-the-school-and-further-education-college-estate>. In addition, advice on reducing energy costs, including renewing energy contracts, and frameworks for procuring sustainable solutions, is available here: <https://find-dfe-approved-framework.service.gov.uk/pages/rising-energy-prices>.

## ■ Schools: Sports

**Laura Trott:**

**[26079]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much funding was allocated to the Opening School Facilities Fund for (a) 2023-24 and (b) 2024-25.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

In line with the contract agreed by the previous government, the department has allocated £19 million in the 2023/24 and 2024/25 financial years to the Opening School Facilities fund. The contract is ending in March 2025, as agreed at the outset of the programme.

**Science and Mathematics: Stafford****Leigh Ingham:****[35536]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what comparative assessment she has made of the level of attainment of (a) girls and (b) boys under 11 in (i) maths and (ii) sciences in Stafford constituency.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

A breakdown of attainment is not available for the Stafford constituency, however a breakdown for Staffordshire local authority is as follows. Data for Stafford Constituency is available at key stage 2, however this is not split by sex.

In the 2023/24 academic year, 74% of boys in Staffordshire met the expected standard in mathematics and 79% of boys in Staffordshire met the expected standard in science at the end of key stage 2. In the same year, 74% of girls in Staffordshire met the expected standard in maths and 86% of girls in Staffordshire met the expected standard in science at the end of key stage 2. At the end of key stage 2, children are 10 or 11-years-old.

The multiplication tables check is taken by pupils, aged 8 or 9 years old, at the end of year 4. In the 2023/24 academic year, the average attainment score for boys in Staffordshire was 21.2 and 20.8 for girls.

**Special Educational Needs****Neil Duncan-Jordan:****[35611]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many children were refused an education, health and care plan assessment by their local authority in the last financial year.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

The department collects information on the number of requests for an education, health and care (EHC) needs assessment, the number of EHC needs assessments, and the outcome of these requests and assessments.

This information can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/3216aeea-b67c-4fc7-e256-08dd5a6d191a>.

These figures are the most up to date we hold and refer to the 2023 calendar year. We do not hold information on a financial year basis.

Information on EHC plans maintained by local authorities, including requests for needs assessments, decisions made to assess and the number of plans issued is

included in the statistical release, 'Education, health and care plans'. The full publication can be read here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/education-health-and-care-plans>.

### ■ **Special Educational Needs: Occupational Therapy**

**Marie Goldman:** **[33128]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department plans to take to consult with occupational therapists as part of investment plans to increase the number of children with special education needs and disabilities in mainstream schools in England.

**Marie Goldman:** **[33129]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to increase recruitment of specialist occupational therapists supporting children with special educational needs and disabilities; and what steps she is taking to reduce waiting times for children's occupational therapy services.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

The government is committed to ensuring that every child has the best start in life. This includes all children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). We are committed to improving inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools.

The department regularly consults with various experts, stakeholders and stakeholder groups, including the Royal College of Occupational Therapists. We will continue to work with the sector as essential and valued partners to deliver our shared mission.

The department is working closely with NHS England to improve access to community health services, including occupational therapy, for children and young people with SEND. NHS England continues to monitor community services waiting lists to assess the number of people on them and the length of time they wait for services, and continues to look at actions to reduce waiting times for these services.

The Department of Health and Social Care have launched a 10 Year Health Plan to reform the NHS. A central part of this will be workforce and how they ensure they train and provide the staff the NHS needs to care for patients across our communities.

### ■ **Students: Loans**

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** **[33979]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of continually accrued student loan interest on students when they pause their studies due to unforeseen circumstances.

**Janet Daby:**

UK higher education creates opportunity, is an engine for growth in the economy, and supports local communities. The department is committed to supporting the aspiration of every person who meets the requirements and wants to go to university.

Student loans are subject to interest to ensure that those who can afford to do so contribute to the full cost of their degree.

Interest is charged from the first payment of the student loan is made until the loan has been repaid in full or cancelled, with interest added to the principal balance each month. Interest will continue to accrue even if a student suspends or withdraws from their course, including for students pausing their studies due to unforeseen circumstances. Borrowers will be liable to repay after leaving study only when earning over the relevant student loan repayment threshold.

After study, unlike commercial loans, student loans carry significant protections for borrowers. Regular student loan repayments are based on a borrower's monthly or weekly income, not the interest rate or amount borrowed, and no repayments are made for earnings below the relevant student loan repayment threshold. Any outstanding debt, including interest built up, is written off at the end of the loan term with no detriment to the borrower.

## ■ T-levels

**Luke Murphy:**

[\[35501\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many planned learning hours an average T-level student is expected to undertake in 2024-25.

**Janet Daby:**

T Levels range in size, with planned learning hours varying across pathways depending on the needs of individual sectors. Individual providers have freedom to plan their curriculum and structure their teaching hours based on local needs, and there are significant variations in delivery patterns. On average, a T Level has around 1,200 guided learning hours across the two-year programme, in addition to an industry placement of a minimum of 315 hours and employability, enrichment and pastoral activities.

## ■ Universities: Overseas Students

**Martin Wrigley:**

[\[32729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 13 February 2025 to Question 29255 on Immigration: Overseas Students, if she will take steps to promote UK universities to international students.

**Janet Daby:**

This government has made clear that we welcome international students, who make a positive impact on the UK's higher education (HE) sector and our economy and society as a whole.

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education is leading our efforts to promote our great universities to international students. In her first speech, in July 2024, and in subsequent video messages, she has set out that the UK is an attractive overseas study destination with high quality education institutions that will support international students throughout their studies.



The UK has a world-class HE sector with four universities in the world university rankings top 10, and 15 in the top 100, alongside a wide array of leading institutions which can offer a fulfilling and enjoyable experience to international students from around the world.

International students enrich our university campuses, forge lifelong friendships with our domestic students and become global ambassadors for the UK. That is why we offer them the opportunity to work or remain in the UK, and contribute to the society and economy, for two or three years after their studies.

## ■ Universities: Staff

**Juliet Campbell:** [\[32010\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many people living in Nottinghamshire are employed by universities in the latest period for which data is available.

**Janet Daby:**

The Higher Education Statistics Agency is responsible for collecting and publishing data on the UK higher education (HE) sector. These data are shared with the department and include a wide range of information on staff working at UK HE providers.

However, information on the home addresses of HE staff is not collected, therefore those living in Nottinghamshire and employed by UK HE providers, cannot be identified by the department.

The following table presents staff numbers by HE provider for each academic year from 2014/15 to 2023/24: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/staff/table-24>.

This table can be used to determine the number of staff working for HE providers that are based in Nottinghamshire, although we are not able to determine whether these staff also reside in Nottinghamshire.

## ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

### ■ Alternative Fuels: Ammonia

**Kit Malthouse:** [\[35320\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of classifying ammonia as a fuel vector.

**Sarah Jones:**

Officials are working closely with other departments, such as the Department for Transport, to understand the potential role of ammonia in the UK's future low carbon economy and how it should be considered within the UK's policy frameworks.

Low carbon ammonia, as a derivative of low carbon hydrogen, could have the potential to play a role in reaching net zero where it could be used as a chemical feedstock or burned as a fuel in transport or power stations, and could also be stored



in large quantities. The Department for Transport's (DfT) 2019 Clean Maritime Plan sets out the significant role that low carbon ammonia and methanol may play in decarbonising the maritime sector.

**Kit Malthouse:**

[\[35321\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of ammonia as a hydrogen carrier to support industrial decarbonisation.

**Sarah Jones:**

The Government continues to review the range of potential hydrogen carriers and their role in supporting the long-distance transport and trade of hydrogen, including its contribution to industrial decarbonisation. These potential options include ammonia, methanol, liquid organic hydrogen carriers (LOHCs), and liquid hydrogen. Our ongoing assessment highlights the need for further research, demonstration and learning from deployment in order to optimise these carrier options, whilst ensuring environmental and safety concerns have been fully considered and mitigated.

**Kit Malthouse:**

[\[35322\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to develop a green ammonia market in the UK.

**Sarah Jones:**

Low carbon ammonia could play a role in reaching net zero as part of a diversified energy mix. Officials are working closely with other departments, such as the Department for Transport, to understand potential demand for low carbon ammonia, where appropriate supply may come from, and whether any Government intervention may be required.

**Kit Malthouse:**

[\[35323\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he plans to allow projects that use ammonia cracking technology to be eligible in future Hydrogen Allocation Rounds.

**Sarah Jones:**

In line with our current priorities, the Hydrogen Production Business Model is intended to support primary methods of hydrogen production, such as electrolytic and CCUS-enabled production, in the UK. Ammonia cracking would not create any new hydrogen (given the ammonia itself is produced from hydrogen) and so we do not consider it to meet these criteria.

We are currently developing our approach to future Hydrogen Allocation Rounds (HARs), including the third Hydrogen Allocation Round (HAR3), to ensure they deliver on the Government's priorities. We will seek feedback on the proposed design and delivery of HAR3 through a market engagement exercise, similar to the approach taken for HAR2. Further details will be provided in due course.

**Kit Malthouse:**[\[35324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what estimate he has made of the size of the global green ammonia market; and what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of steps other nations are taking to support the development of green ammonia projects.

**Sarah Jones:**

The current green ammonia market is minimal, but it is expected to grow as electrolytic hydrogen production scales up. The International Energy Agency (IEA) estimate that 92Mt of green ammonia (about 40% of total ammonia production) will be produced globally each year by 2050 in their Net Zero Scenario. Ammonia is also expected to play a role in hydrogen trade, with the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) estimating that 690Mt/yr of ammonia could be utilised for transporting hydrogen in their 2050 Net Zero Scenario.

Officials are working closely with other departments, such as the Department for Transport, to understand potential demand for low carbon ammonia in the UK, where appropriate supply may come from, and whether any Government intervention may be required.

**■ Carbon Capture, Usage and Storage: Finance****Harriet Cross:**[\[35546\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what his Department's timetable is for announcing the Track 2 Cluster sequencing for carbon capture, usage and storage funding.

**Sarah Jones:**

CCUS requires significant resources, and it is right that it is considered within the Spending Review. We continue to engage at both working and ministerial level with all future projects, including Track-2, and further decisions for future CCUS deployment will be taken in due course.

**■ Climate Change and Environment Protection****Andrew Bowie:**[\[35351\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what the (a) overall cost and (b) breakdown of expenditure was for the Climate and Environment Conference hosted by the Civil Service Climate + Environment Network.

**Kerry McCarthy:**

Information on departmental expenditure is made publicly available the usual way through the Department's annual report and accounts.

**Andrew Bowie:**[\[35352\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what the sources of funding were for the Climate and Environment Conference hosted by the Civil Service Climate + Environment Network.

**Kerry McCarthy:**

The 2025 conference was funded by learning and development budgets from across government.

**Andrew Bowie:**[\[35353\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether staff in his Department will be given paid time off to attend the Climate and Environment Conference hosted by the Civil Service Climate + Environment Network.

**Kerry McCarthy:**

Attendance at the Civil Service Climate + Environment Conference is treated like other professional development opportunities within the Civil Service. Staff may attend with their line manager's agreement as part of their learning and development, in line with standard departmental policies. This aligns with the Civil Service's commitment to continuous professional development and cross government collaboration.

This is the second such conference, with the inaugural event in 2023 attended by Ministers from the previous administration in which the Hon Member was a Minister

**Andrew Bowie:**[\[35354\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how much civil service time has been spent organising the Climate and Environment Conference hosted by the Civil Service Climate + Environment Network.

**Andrew Bowie:**[\[35355\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how much civil service time is spent on organising the Civil Service Climate + Environment Network each week.

**Kerry McCarthy:**

The Civil Service Climate + Environment Network is run by volunteers across government who typically dedicate around 5% of their time to network activities, often as part of their learning and development. The annual conference is delivered primarily through this voluntary commitment, with minimal impact on departmental resources.

This is the second such conference, with the inaugural event in 2023 attended by Ministers from the previous administration in which the HM was a Minister.

**■ Electricity: Prices****Andrew Bowie:**[\[35357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment his Department has made of the gap between market prices and average tariffs charged by electricity suppliers over the next five years.

**Miatta Fahnbulleh:**

Under the default tariff cap, Ofgem has capped the profits of energy suppliers in the retail market to ensure excessive profits aren't made. There are different costs

included in the price cap and any changes to these costs affect how much the price cap will increase or decrease each time it is reviewed. For the period 1 April to 30 June 2025, the main cost increase is due to an increase in the wholesale price of energy that suppliers buy from global fossil fuel markets.

The Government believes that our mission to deliver clean power by 2030 is the best way to break our dependence on global fossil fuel markets and protect billpayers permanently. The creation of Great British Energy will help us to harness clean energy and have less reliance on volatile international energy markets and help in our commitment to make Britain a clean energy superpower by 2030.

**Pippa Heylings:**

[\[35407\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he plans to take steps to decouple electricity prices from the wholesale gas price.

**Michael Shanks:**

The electricity market in GB operates on the principle of marginal pricing, whereby the price of electricity is set by the last technology needed to meet overall demand. In the current market, gas prices often set the wholesale electricity price because it is typically the last source of supply to meet demand.

Decarbonising the power system will increase energy security by reducing dependence on imported oil and gas, which will in turn reduce the exposure of consumer bills to volatile international prices. The ever-increasing participation of renewables in the wholesale market means that over time, cheaper electricity produced by renewable technologies will determine the price more often and gas will play a much more limited role in setting the wholesale market price.

Increasing the number of renewables on Contracts for Difference (CfDs) has already made a tangible difference. When wholesale electricity prices spiked in the winter of 2022/23, the CfD delivered the equivalent of an £18 saving on a typical annual household bill.

Expanding the CfD scheme to enable more renewables in the wholesale market will help to rapidly decouple electricity from gas prices without the need for more complex arrangements.

The Review of Electricity Market Arrangements (REMA) programme is considering what further steps can be taken to shield consumers from the impacts of potential price spikes.

The second REMA consultation sought views on some specific proposals, including retaining marginal pricing across the wholesale market alongside futureproofing the CfD scheme as the best tool to decouple gas and electricity prices.

■ **Energy: Payments**

**Andrew Bowie:**

[\[35358\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, which companies have received curtailment payments; and what those payments were in each year since 2015.

**Michael Shanks:**

The Department does not hold this information. The National Energy System Operator (NESO) is responsible for managing constraints and publishes yearly breakdowns by cost and volume, which can be found here: [Constraint Breakdown Costs and Volume | National Energy System Operator](#). This is aggregate data and does not show which companies have received constraint payments.

Increasing the capacity of Great Britain's electricity network is essential for reducing curtailment and constraint payments. This is why the Government is working to accelerate the build of new network infrastructure, so more cheap, homegrown energy can power up our homes and businesses.

**Energy: Prices****David Mundell:****[35240]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of zonal energy pricing in Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale constituency on household energy bills.

**Miatta Fahnbulleh:**

Through the Review of Electricity Market Arrangements (REMA), the government is continuing to assess options for strengthening locational and operational signals in the electricity market. This includes measures which could be implemented under national pricing, as well as a zonal pricing option.

Zonal pricing has the potential to deliver large consumer benefits by creating a more efficient energy system. It would result in a smaller, more efficient power system reducing the need for new power stations and lower the amount of new network that needs to be built.

However, we recognise that implementing zonal could also create uncertainty for investors. We are considering the balance between potential consumer and system benefits from enabling greater demand-side flexibility, potential distributional impacts, and the future trajectory of network charging which already introduces regional variations in consumer bills.

**Andrew Bowie:****[35356]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of monthly market price variability on plans to decarbonise the grid by 2030.

**Michael Shanks:**

Currently, the market price varies strongly based on fossil fuel prices, which we do not expect to impact the delivery of Clean Power 2030.

As the action plan makes clear, homegrown renewable energy is the key to energy independence. Clean Power 2030 will reduce our exposure to volatile international gas markets and the leverage of hostile petrostates like Russia.

**Pippa Heylings:****[35408]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he is taking steps to help end regional differences in domestic energy bills.

**Miatta Fahnbulleh:**

Standing charges are a commercial matter for suppliers, and are regulated by Ofgem, but we know that too much of the burden of the bill is placed on them. The Government has worked constructively with the regulator on the issue of standing charges, and we are committed to lowering the cost of them.

Ofgem's recently published update on reform of standing charges outlines how it will look to make standing charges fairer for consumers. Ofgem has also committed to consider whether these regional differences should remain or whether there is a different option that would better protect consumers overall.

**Green Homes Grant Scheme****Andrew Rosindell:****[35227]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to support homeowners that had Icynene spray foam insulation installed under the Green Homes Grant scheme.

**Miatta Fahnbulleh:**

Any measures fitted under government schemes must be fitted to the highest standards with issues promptly and properly rectified. Installations of any insulation under current Government schemes must be installed in accordance with the PAS 2030 and PAS 2035 standards. In any instance where insulation is installed improperly under a government-backed scheme, consumers are entitled to remediation by their installer or, failing that, the insurance-backed guarantee.

If installed under a government scheme the TrustMark website contains further guidance on how consumers can complain if things go wrong and the dispute resolution process: <https://www.trustmark.org.uk/homeowners/if-things-go-wrong>.

Ministers will now press ahead with a sweeping overhaul of consumer protection through the Warm Homes Plan.

**Housing: Insulation****Anna Sabine:****[35533]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to support homeowners to remove and replace faulty home insulation.

**Miatta Fahnbulleh:**

Installations of any insulation under current Government schemes must comply with the PAS 2030 and PAS 2035 standards. In any instance where insulation is installed improperly under these schemes, consumers are entitled to remediation by their installer or, failing that, the guarantee provided.

The TrustMark website contains further guidance on how consumers can complain if things go wrong and the dispute resolution process:

<https://www.trustmark.org.uk/homeowners/if-things-go-wrong>.

Through the Warm Homes Plan, the Government will further drive up the quality of installations and protect consumers.

**Anna Sabine:**

**[35534]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to support homeowners who received a government grant to get foam roof insulation which has caused damp issues.

**Miatta Fahnbulleh:**

Any measures fitted under government schemes must be fitted to the highest standards with issues promptly and properly rectified. Installations of any insulation under current Government schemes must be installed in accordance with the PAS 2030 and PAS 2035 standards. In any instance where insulation is installed improperly under a government-backed scheme, consumers are entitled to remediation by their installer or, failing that, the insurance-backed guarantee.

If installed under a government scheme the TrustMark website contains further guidance on how consumers can complain if things go wrong and the dispute resolution process: <https://www.trustmark.org.uk/homeowners/if-things-go-wrong>.

Ministers will now press ahead with a sweeping overhaul of consumer protection through the Warm Homes Plan.

## ■ **Members: Correspondence**

**Seamus Logan:**

**[35525]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, when he will reply to correspondence from the Member for Aberdeenshire North and Moray East on climate change emissions of (a) 11 October 2024, (b) 25 November 2024 and (c) 14 January 2025.

**Kerry McCarthy:**

I wrote to the Hon. Member on 21 February, in response to the Hon. Member's correspondence about how the Government plans to deliver emission cuts, generate jobs, lower energy bills and restore nature. In that response I apologised for the delay in replying. As the hon. Member is aware this correspondence was passed to the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

## ■ **National Grid: Concrete and Metals**

**Andrew Bowie:**

**[35359]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what estimate his Department has made of the amount of (a) copper, (b) aluminium, (c) steel, (d) concrete



and (e) other metals required to upgrade the electricity (i) transmission and (ii) distribution grids over the next five years.

**Michael Shanks:**

Grid expansion will be dependent on equipment manufacturers securing the materials required to produce grid components to meet global demand. The UK Critical Mineral Intelligence Centre (CMIC) recently published a study into requirements of our national grid infrastructure to reach net zero. The cumulative material demand between 2023-2050 for upgrades is expected to be between 1.1m-1.6m tonnes of copper and 200,000-300,000 tonnes of aluminium.

As part of the Government's upcoming Plan for Steel, we are working to better understand domestic demand and explore what can be done to ensure our steel sector is best positioned to capitalise on it.

■ **S&P Global: USA**

**Andrew Bowie:**

[\[35349\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether Ministers in his Department will attend the CERAWeek conference in Houston, Texas, between 10 March 2025 and 14 March 2025.

**Michael Shanks:**

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

**Andrew Bowie:**

[\[35350\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether any civil servants from his Department will attend the CERAWeek conference in Houston, Texas, between 10 March 2025 and 14 March 2025.

**Michael Shanks:**

Details of meetings held by officials are not held centrally and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

■ **Warm Home Discount Scheme: Cowdenbeath and Kirkcaldy**

**Melanie Ward:**

[\[35490\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how many people are eligible for the Warm Home Discount Scheme in Cowdenbeath and Kirkcaldy constituency.

**Miatta Fahnbulleh:**

The latest published [Warm Home Discount statistics](#) are for 2023/4 and use the constituency boundaries operating prior to the 2024 General Election. Most (84%) of the residential premises in Cowdenbeath and Kirkcaldy constituency come from Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath constituency under the previous boundaries, in which 1,666 households received the Warm Home Discount rebate in 2023-24. The statistics only cover receipt of the Warm Home Discount and not eligibility.



## ■ Warm Homes Plan: Post Codes

**Steff Aquarone:**

[R] [\[36524\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the use of lower layer super output areas to define eligible postcodes for the Warm Homes Local Grant; and whether she has made an assessment of the effectiveness of that criteria in supporting households in poverty.

**Miatta Fahnbulleh:**

Lower layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) have been used to identify Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) Income Decile 1-2 eligible postcodes for the Warm Homes: Local Grant.

The IMD Income Deprivation domain measures the proportion of the population experiencing deprivation relating to low income. Income Decile 1 represents the most economically deprived areas of the country and 10 the least.

I am therefore confident that use of IMD Income Deciles 1-2 to establish income eligibility for Warm Homes: Local Grant maintains a focus on low-income households. It will also support area-based delivery by Local Authorities – who have welcomed this eligibility route.

## ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

### ■ Agriculture: Inheritance Tax

**Joe Robertson:**

[\[29973\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions his Department has had with local authorities on the inheritance tax changes to agricultural land and property.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

As is standard practise, the Department has not held discussions with local authorities on this issue.

### ■ Bovine Tuberculosis: Disease Control

**Ellie Chowns:**

[\[32482\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what progress his Department has made on ending badger culling.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

The Government has started work on a comprehensive new bovine TB strategy, to continue to drive down disease rates to save cattle and farmers' livelihoods and to end the badger cull by the end of this parliament. The previous government was taking decisions that were not based on sufficient scientific understanding of the subject, and the new Government has put following the science at the heart of its strategy.

Additionally, this work is being undertaken through stakeholder co-design with farmers, vets, scientists and conservationists, with a steering group formed from the existing Bovine TB Partnership for England.

A key part of the strategy is to drive forward the ongoing development of a cattle vaccine, which is at the forefront of innovative solutions to help eradicate this disease. In August, the Government also outlined several actions it is taking immediately to end the badger cull. This is available at the link below and includes:

- Surveying the badger population for the first time in a decade, to estimate badger abundance and population recovery. Surveys of eligible land started this February.
- Developing a new national wildlife surveillance programme, to unlock a data-driven approach that informs how and where TB vaccines and other eradication measures are deployed.
- Establishing a new Badger Vaccinator Field Force, to continue increasing delivery to create progressively healthier badger populations that are less susceptible to catching and transmitting TB.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-to-end-badger-cull-with-new-tb-eradication-strategy>.

The work toward a new strategy represents a new direction in defeating this disease that will both protect the farming community and wildlife, building on the 2018 independent strategy review. To ensure it benefits from the latest evidence, my Department has also asked Professor Sir Charles Godfray, who led that review, to reconvene a panel of experts to consider whether there's any substantive new evidence that might affect previous conclusions.

## ■ Climate Change and Disease Control

**Jonathan Davies:**

**[34493]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to improve the UK's biosecurity resilience against (a) invasive species, (b) plant diseases, (c) animal diseases and (d) other emerging threats; and what steps he is taking to help mitigate the potential impact of climate change on agricultural ecological systems.

**Mary Creagh:**

Our biosecurity is paramount – it underpins safe food; protects human, animal and plant health; and supports a prospering economy and trade. We have in place robust measures to maintain and improve our ability to understand, detect, prevent, respond and recover from outbreaks, both those that affect animals and those that affect plants.

The government has announced it will set up a new National Biosecurity Centre, which will strengthen the UK's defences against animal diseases that threaten farming, food security, trade and public health.

As the Chancellor announced in the Autumn 2024 budget, there is £208 million in funding over 2024-2026 to transform the Animal & Plant Health Agency (APHA) animal health facility at Weybridge.

Defra is playing its part in responding to the recommendations of Module 1 of the UK Covid-19 Inquiry. We have been reviewing our plans and processes within the department which will be tested through the upcoming national pandemic response exercise.

## ■ Litter

**Nadia Whittome:**

[\[36460\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will publish a new national strategy for tackling littering.

**Mary Creagh:**

At this time, the Government is not planning to implement a new national litter strategy. This Government is committed to reducing waste by transitioning to a circular economy. To support the government in achieving this goal we have convened a Circular Economy Taskforce, comprising experts from across government, industry, academia and civil society, to help us develop a Circular Economy Strategy for England.

As part of this we remain focused on delivering the Collection and Packaging Reforms including the Deposit Return Scheme (DRS). The DRS will go live in October 2027. It will introduce a redeemable deposit on single-use in-scope drinks containers which can be claimed back by customers when the empty container is returned. This will reduce litter, increase recycling rates, create high quality recyclate for producers, and promote a circular economy. We remain committed to supporting local authorities to tackle littering and are currently examining what further steps we can take to aid them.

## ■ Meat: Smuggling

**Carla Lockhart:**

[\[36147\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with law enforcement agencies on taking steps to help tackle organised criminal networks involved in the illegal meat trade; and what steps he plans to take to help disrupt this activity.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

We are not complacent about illegal meat smuggling, which may pose threats to animal health, food safety and public health. That is why we are working closely with the Home Office and the Food Standards Agency to tackle this issue with the support of Border Force, Port Health Authorities and local authorities.

Where non-compliant meat is identified inland, the Food Standards Agency works closely with its local authority partners, who hold responsibility for this aspect of enforcement, to remove the goods from potential sale in the UK market. This work is

conducted by the Food Standards Agency's National Food Crime Unit who work with partners to disrupt, prevent and where appropriate investigate those involved in food crime.

## FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

### ■ Afghanistan: Development Aid

**Wendy Morton:** [\[35276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that Official Development Assistance allocated to Afghanistan reaches people who are most in need.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The UK has a committed and responsible approach to supporting humanitarian aid and essential services for vulnerable Afghans. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office is delivering £171 million in aid this financial year (2024-25) and remains committed that at least 50 percent of people reached are women and girls. UK aid is subject to strict monitoring and verification to ensure it is only used to help those in need. All funding is provided directly to implementing partners who are highly experienced at delivering in difficult circumstances. We do not give aid to the Taliban. We engage pragmatically with the Taliban to ensure continued access for humanitarian assistance.

### ■ Afghanistan: Religious Freedom

**Sir Iain Duncan Smith:** [\[35216\]](#)

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 Taliban (a) restrictions on the practice of religion and (b) the targeting of (i) Shia Muslims, (ii) Sikhs, (iii) Hindus and (iv) other religious minorities in Afghanistan; and if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of his support for international efforts to help ensure that the right to freedom of religion or belief is upheld in that country.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office officials regularly press the Taliban to respect the human rights of all Afghans. In October 2024, we co-sponsored a Human Rights Council resolution which extended the mandate of UN Special Rapporteur Richard Bennett to monitor and report on the human rights situation for another year, including on minority groups. Ministers and officials engage regularly with a range of Afghans, including religious and ethnic minorities, to ensure our policy and programming reflect the needs of the entire population. Without truly inclusive governance that reflects the religious, ethnic, gender and cultural diversity of Afghanistan, we will never see an Afghanistan at peace with itself and its neighbours.

**■ Alaa Abd El-Fattah****Neil Duncan-Jordan:**[\[36337\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when he next plans to discuss the case of Alaa Abd el-Fattah with his Egyptian counterpart.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The UK Government continues to raise Mr Alaa Abd El-Fattah's case at the highest levels with the Egyptian government. We have been consistently clear in calling for his release and continue to press for urgent consular access. The Prime Minister raised the case in a phone call with President Sisi on 28 February 2025 and previously wrote to President Sisi on 26 December 2024 and 8 January 2025. The Foreign Secretary raised this case with Egyptian Foreign Minister on 23 January 2025. I raised the case with the Egyptian Ambassador to London on 18 February 2025.

**■ British Council: Finance****Wendy Morton:**[\[35281\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to introduce a longer-term funding model for the British Council.

**Wendy Morton:**[\[35282\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of funding for the British Council for supporting his Department's objectives for UK soft power.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The British Council's Board of Trustees is ultimately responsible for the British Council's financial sustainability.

The Government is committed to working with the British Council to ensure its financial sustainability. These issues are being considered in the round as part of the Spending Review process, which will allocate departmental budgets between 2026-27 and 2028-29.

**■ Gaza: Humanitarian Aid****Kanishka Narayan:**[\[34948\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of Israel's decision to restrict access into Gaza on humanitarian outcomes in that area.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

We are deeply concerned at the announcement that Israel has halted all humanitarian aid from entering Gaza. As per the UK Government's statement on 5 March, with France and Germany, the entry of lifesaving aid should never be

contingent on a ceasefire or used as a political tool. A halt on goods and supplies entering Gaza, such as that announced by the Government of Israel would risk violating International Humanitarian Law. It is vital that the ceasefire is sustained, all the hostages are released, and continued flows of humanitarian aid to Gaza are ensured.

## ■ International Day of Education

**Wendy Morton:** [\[36071\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 12 February 2025 to Question 28557 on International Day of Education, what estimate his Department has made of the proportion of aid delivered to Afghanistan reaching women and girls.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The UK is committed to prioritising gender equality and rights. The needs and priorities of women and girls are at the core of the government's humanitarian response. In financial year 2023-24 (the most recent period for which we have verified data) we can confirm that at least 50 percent of our aid reached women and girls, supporting at least 1.3 million women with humanitarian assistance alone. We have met this target since financial year 2021-22 and expect to continue to meet this target in 2024-25. Our aid is subject to strict monitoring and we have robust third-party monitoring for all our official development assistance funded programmes.

## ■ Iran: USA

**Wendy Morton:** [\[35679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what (a) plans and (b) discussions with the US Administration he has had on developing a strategy for managing Iran's influence in the Middle East region.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The Foreign Secretary has discussed the situation in the Middle East, including Iran, with Secretary Rubio. We are in close contact with the US Administration on all our Middle East priorities and will continue to work with the US to counter Iran's destabilising activity in the region. This includes by holding Iran to account in multilateral fora, using sanctions regimes to target Iranian support to its proxies, and by maintaining our permanent defence presence in the region.

## ■ Iraq and Kurds: Conditions of Employment

**Nadia Whittome:** [\[36462\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions his Department has had with the (a) Iraqi Government and (b) Kurdish Regional Government on (i) resolving the teachers' dispute and (ii) protecting workers' rights in Iraqi Kurdistan.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

Through the UK's diplomatic engagements with the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), we continue to encourage greater cooperation to resolve outstanding issues. This includes disputes between Baghdad and Erbil around federal budget allocations and salary payments.

The UK is aware that payments of KRG civil servants' salaries have been missed, and that this has led to continued teachers' protests. This is despite a ruling by Iraq's Federal Supreme Court last year, which mandated that the salaries of KRG civil servants, including teachers, must be paid by Baghdad.

Our Ambassador in Baghdad, and our Consul General in Erbil continue to advocate for greater workers' rights and employment protections across Iraq, and a resolution to this dispute.

**■ Israel: Hamas****Sarah Champion:**[\[35264\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 26 February 2025 to Question 30101 on Israel: Hamas, which partners are reporting and monitoring aid losses; and whether their assessments will be published.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) maintains regular communication with the UN, like-minded donors, and our other partners to understand the risk of aid losses and share approaches to mitigation. We consistently communicate our expectation that losses are reported to us proactively, in line with our signed agreements - with which they comply fully. The FCDO's Fraud Investigations Team ensures robust investigations take place where loss is identified, and works with our partners to understand ongoing risks and learn lessons from all cases. Individual investigation reports and outcomes are confidential, but details of total losses, along with details of any loss over £300,000, are published in the FCDO's Annual Report and Accounts.

**■ Israel: Palestinians****Anna Dixon:**[\[35971\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help protect the rights of Palestinian minors currently detained by Israel.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The plight of children affected by the war in Gaza is deeply distressing. We are deeply concerned by reports of the mistreatment of detainees. The UK continues to reiterate calls for Israel to allow the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) unfettered and immediate access to detention facilities. We continue to raise this with the Israeli government as a priority. The UK reaffirms our support for the ICRC as the



only humanitarian actor with the experience, capability, independence and mandate to carry out their important responsibilities. We believe it is critical that the ICRC is given regular access to detainees to deliver on their independent visiting role, as enshrined within the 1949 Geneva Conventions.

## ■ Methanol: Poisoning

**Tom Morrison:** [\[35429\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has taken steps to implement a public awareness campaign on the risks of methanol poisoning for British nationals travelling abroad.

**Tom Morrison:** [\[35430\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has reviewed the effectiveness of warnings on methanol poisoning on its website; and what steps he is taking to ensure those warnings reach young travellers.

### **Mr Hamish Falconer:**

Since November 2024 the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) has proactively communicated the risks of methanol poisoning to British travellers through Travel Aware, the FCDO's public-facing campaign that aims to prevent consular assistance cases. This includes:

- a dedicated drink spiking and methanol poisoning page on the Travel Aware website: <https://travelaware.campaign.gov.uk/spiking-and-methanol-poisoning>;
- regular Travel Aware social media posts (X, Facebook, Instagram), directing audiences to the webpage;
- work with Student Brand Ambassadors (youth-focussed content creators) to raise awareness;
- work with Travel Aware industry partners, including ABTA, who have shared information with relevant audiences.

We regularly review our social media engagement. Travel Aware methanol-related posts received 41,103 views in the period 28 November 2024 - 6 March 2025.

**Tom Morrison:** [\[35432\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department plans to update travel advice for British nationals to include stronger warnings about the risks of methanol poisoning in high-risk destinations.

**Tom Morrison:** [\[35433\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that British nationals visiting countries with a high risk of methanol poisoning are adequately (a) informed and (b) protected.



**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) travel advice remains under regular review to ensure it reflects our latest assessment of risks to British nationals. The risks of methanol poisoning are included in our travel advice pages where we see evidence of a trend that is likely to affect British nationals in that country or territory.

We include information about the risks from methanol poisoning or counterfeit alcohol in our Travel Advice pages for Cambodia, Costa Rica, Fiji, Indonesia, Laos, Thailand, Turkey and Vietnam. In determining what we include in our Travel Advice, we assess a range of factors, including drawing on local knowledge and monitoring trends in consular cases.

**■ Nigeria: Malnutrition****Wendy Morton:**[\[35671\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department plans to make additional funding commitments under the Nutrition for Growth initiative to support malnutrition interventions in Nigeria.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The UK Government welcomes the upcoming Nutrition for Growth summit in Paris, and continues to champion improved nutrition in the long-term, integrating its approach alongside successes in other sectors such as health, agriculture, humanitarian, and climate. Specific funding commitments are being worked through following the decision to reduce UK Official Development Assistance (ODA) from 0.5 per cent of Gross National Income today to 0.3 per cent in 2027. The Government will set out its spending plans following the completion of the Spending Review and departmental resource allocation processes.

**■ Pakistan: Freedom of Expression****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[35739\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his counterpart in Pakistan on freedom of expression in Pakistan.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The UK is clear that the freedom to express views without censorship, intimidation or unnecessary restriction is a cornerstone of democracy. I raised the importance of upholding freedom of information when I met Pakistan's Human Rights Minister on 19 November 2024 and discussed the safety of Pakistani journalists in Parliament on 28 November 2024. The UK also runs the Chevening South Asia Journalism Fellowship to support South Asian journalists. The UK is committed to promoting human rights and democratic norms in Pakistan - a commitment I discussed with representatives from the UK-Pakistan diaspora on 18 February 2025. We will continue to urge the

Government of Pakistan to uphold the right to freedom of expression in accordance with international standards.

### ■ **Pakistan: Religious Freedom**

**Preet Kaur Gill:** [\[36110\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to his Pakistani counterpart on (a) the treatment of religious minorities and (b) restrictions on religious expression for Hindu students in educational institutions in that country.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

Promoting freedom of religion or belief is a key part of the UK's diplomatic engagement overseas. I underlined the importance of religious tolerance and harmony when I met Pakistan's Human Rights Minister on 19 November 2024, although I did not raise religious expression within educational institutions specifically. The British High Commission in Islamabad continues to promote the rights of marginalised groups, including Hindus and other religious minorities, at the highest levels. For example, on 3 March 2025, the British High Commissioner raised the rights of the Ahmadi community in a meeting with Prime Minister Sharif. UK programming also facilitates interfaith dialogue by convening influential community and faith leaders and minority representatives to resolve local issues.

### ■ **Palestinians: Fire and Rescue Services**

**Stephen Gethins:** [\[36087\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 17 December to Question 18869 on Palestinians: Fire and Rescue Services, what progress he has made on discussions with Israeli counterparts to ensure the successful delivery of this donation.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development (FCDO) Officials have raised the matter of this donation directly with the Israeli authorities and are working with colleagues in the Scottish Government to resolve the matter.

### ■ **Syria: Refugees**

**Wendy Morton:** [\[35687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support the safe and voluntary return to Syria of Syrian refugees.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

As I made clear in my Statement to the House on 10 March, Syria faces an ongoing humanitarian crisis, with the UN reporting 16.5 million people in need of humanitarian assistance. We agree with the UN's assessment that the conditions in Syria are not currently suitable for large-scale refugee returns. With the international community,

we are providing vital humanitarian and development support to Syrians in Syria and those displaced across the region. The UK has provided over £4.3 billion in aid to date, our largest ever response to a single humanitarian crisis.

#### ■ **UK Soft Power Council: Finance**

**Wendy Morton:**

[\[36067\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 7 February 2025 to Question 27532 on the Soft Power Council, what allocation from existing budgets has (a) been allocated to and (b) been spent on the Soft Power Council to date; and what estimate he has made of the resources needed to support the Council in the financial year 2025-26.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

£20,000 was allocated from existing budgets to support the Soft Power Council in the current financial year. £7,257.73 was spent on the first meeting, covering AV, pull-up banners, tea, coffee, water and biscuits as well as Government Hospitality staffing costs. £8,094 was spent on a one-off reception for 175 people to mark the launch of the Council and the Government's new approach to soft power. We are in the process of establishing a Secretariat to support the Council and its Working Groups as part of broader soft power structures.

### HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

#### ■ **Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: Nottinghamshire**

**Michelle Welsh:**

[\[36271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to tackle the NHS backlog for ADHD assessments in (a) Sherwood Forest and (b) Nottinghamshire.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

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

NHS England has established an ADHD taskforce which is working to bring together those with lived experience with experts from the National Health Service, education, charity, and justice sectors. The taskforce is working to get a better understanding of the challenges affecting those with ADHD, including timely and equitable access to services and support, with the final report expected in the summer.

In conjunction with the taskforce, NHS England has carried out detailed work to develop an ADHD data improvement plan to inform future service planning. NHS England has also conducted detailed work to understand the provider and commissioning landscape, capturing examples from ICBs who are trialling innovative

ways of delivering ADHD services. NHS England is using this information to support systems to tackle ADHD waiting lists and provide support to address people's needs.

The Nottingham and Nottinghamshire ICB advises that it is working with Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust to review current waiting lists and develop an improvement plan to reduce waiting times. These improvements include streamlining the referral, triage and assessment processes and improving data quality. The current service pathway has been reviewed and options for improvement have been developed, these are being progressed locally during 2025 and aim to improve the pathway, including pre-assessment and post-assessment support.

### ■ **Cancer and Tomography: Recruitment**

**Clive Jones:**

[R] [\[31610\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 28 January to Question 25057 on Workforce freezes, whether he plans to publish an Answer following engagement with NHS England.

**Ashley Dalton:**

We have increased specialty training places for key roles, such as radiologists, radiographers, and other diagnostic professionals, alongside initiatives to improve retention and reduce reliance on outsourcing. These efforts are part of our continued commitment to building a resilient, sustainable service capable of meeting rising demand and improving patient outcomes.

We are aware of cases where trusts have put recruitment restrictions in place in diagnostic services. Systems and trusts need to manage their expenditure within the budgets they have been allocated for the year. Information regarding proportion of trusts is not currently available.

### ■ **Cancer: Children**

**Helen Maguire:**

[\[35590\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase funding for research into (a) neuroblastoma and (b) other childhood cancers.

**Ashley Dalton:**

The Department invests £1.6 billion each year on research through its research delivery arm, the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). NIHR research expenditure for all cancers was £133 million in 2023/24, reflecting its high priority.

Research is a vital part of improving diagnosis and treatment for children and young people with cancer. The NIHR spent approximately £9.9 million over the last five financial years, from 2019/20 to 2023/24, on directly funded research to improve outcomes for children and young people with cancer, including for neuroblastoma.

These investments are pivotal to informing efforts to improve cancer prevention, treatment, and outcomes. An example of a recent award is the RElapse Decision MAKing Parent Process trial, for the development of a treatment decision aid for parents of a child with neuroblastoma which has relapsed. The total award value was £308,000.

The NIHR funds research in response to proposals received from scientists rather than allocating funding to specific disease areas. The NIHR continues to encourage and welcome funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including neuroblastoma research and other childhood cancers. Applications are subject to peer review and judged in open competition, with awards being made on the basis of the importance of the topic to patients and health and care services, value for money, and scientific quality.

The Department relaunched the Children and Young People's Cancer Taskforce, which met on 4 March 2025. Caroline Dinenage and Professor Darren Hargrave have been appointed as co-chairs. The taskforce will examine clinical and non-clinical ways to improve outcomes and patient experience for children and young people with cancer, including neuroblastoma research. The taskforce will feed into wider Department work on the National Cancer Plan.

## ■ Care Homes: Inspections

**Dr Luke Evans:**

[\[35370\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential implications for his Department's policies of the statistics, published by Sky News, showing that the Care Quality Commission has inspected 3.6% of the 67,778 concerns it received between October 2022 and 2024 about elderly care homes.

**Ashley Dalton:**

No such assessment has been made. The number of concerns raised with the Care Quality Commission (CQC), and highlighted by Sky News, include those which are being handled by another body, for example, a local authority or the police. It may also include duplicates, that is, where a number of concerns have been raised about the same incident.

While not all information shared with the CQC would necessarily result in an inspection, it does inform ongoing monitoring and will result in action where there are indications that people are at risk of harm.

## ■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

**Esther McVey:**

[\[35250\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to paragraph 3.19 of the minutes of the Covid-19 Vaccine Benefit Risk Expert Working Group held on 18 November 2020, if he will publish the communications undertaken to inform recipients of the Pfizer/BioNTech mRNA vaccine about its highly reactogenic nature.

**Esther McVey:**

**[35251]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to paragraph 3.7 of the minutes of the Covid-19 Vaccine Benefit Risk Expert Working Group held on 18 November 2020, if he will publish the risk-based evaluation for the Pfizer/BioNTech mRNA vaccine.

**Ashley Dalton:**

The reactogenicity of vaccines refers to their capacity to produce common or “expected” adverse reactions following vaccination such as fever, tiredness, and a sore arm at the vaccination site. These reactions, and the frequency with which they occur, are listed in section four of the vaccine package leaflet, which states what possible side effects people may experience. Regarding the reference to reactogenicity in paragraph 3.19 of the minutes of the COVID-19 Vaccine Benefit Risk Expert Working Group held on 18 November 2020, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) published information for the recipients of the Pfizer/BioNTech mRNA vaccine, as well as for healthcare professionals. These documents detail the reactogenic nature of the vaccines, and are available, respectively, at the following two links:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/61c518a0e90e071971e2561e/Temporary\\_Authorisation\\_Patient\\_Information\\_BNT162\\_18\\_0\\_UK\\_Clean.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/61c518a0e90e071971e2561e/Temporary_Authorisation_Patient_Information_BNT162_18_0_UK_Clean.pdf)

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/61c51662d3bf7f1f7bc0ac8b/Temporary\\_Authorisation\\_HCP\\_Information\\_BNT162\\_19\\_0\\_UK\\_Clean.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/61c51662d3bf7f1f7bc0ac8b/Temporary_Authorisation_HCP_Information_BNT162_19_0_UK_Clean.pdf)

The MHRA also regularly published coronavirus vaccine summaries of Yellow Card reporting throughout the pandemic. Amongst many other matters regarding the safety of the COVID-19 vaccines, the reactogenic nature of the vaccines was regularly discussed in these communications, which are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-vaccine-adverse-reactions/coronavirus-vaccine-summary-of-yellow-card-reporting>

Regarding paragraph 3.7 of these same minutes, the MHRA published product information for the COVID-19 vaccines on the GOV.UK website when regulatory approval was given, starting from 2 December 2020 when the Pfizer/BioNTech (Comirnaty) vaccine was the first COVID-19 vaccine in the world to be approved. On this day, the risk-based evaluation for the Pfizer/BioNTech mRNA vaccine referenced in this paragraph of the minutes was published as part of a summary of the public assessment report for the COVID-19 vaccine Pfizer/BioNTech, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulatory-approval-of-pfizer-biontech-vaccine-for-covid-19/summary-public-assessment-report-for-pfizerbiontech-covid-19-vaccine>

## ■ Death Certificates

**Helen Whately:**

[\[35346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 28 February 2025 to Question 31062 on Death Certificates, what the median time taken was to register a death at the most localised level for which data is available.

**Ashley Dalton:**

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) publishes weekly data showing the median time to register a death by certification type in England and Wales. The latest data, for deaths registered in the week ending 21 February 2025, shows that the median time to register all deaths was nine days, and the median time to register deaths certified by a doctor was eight days. The ONS is planning to extend this data to include the median time taken to register a death by region, and expect this to be available in Spring 2025.

## ■ Defibrillators: Basingstoke

**Luke Murphy:**

[\[35498\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to encourage community organisations in Basingstoke to register automated external defibrillators with the national defibrillator network.

**Luke Murphy:**

[\[35499\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase (a) survival rates from out-of-hospital cardiac arrests and (b) the availability of defibrillators in Basingstoke.

**Ashley Dalton:**

To improve patients' survival rates following out-of-hospital cardiac arrests, the Government has committed to improving access to automated external defibrillators (AEDs) in public spaces and reducing inequalities in access to these life saving devices. Following the depletion of the existing AED Fund, launched in September 2023, the Government approved a further £500,000 in August 2024 to fulfil existing applications to the fund.

As part of the application process, the Department has selected Smarter Society as its independent partner to manage grant applications against requirements specified by the Department, to ensure that resources are allocated where there is the greatest need, for instance in remote communities with extended ambulance response times, places with high footfall and high population densities, hotspots for cardiac arrest including sporting venues and venues with vulnerable people, and deprived areas.

When an AED is installed, these defibrillators are required to be registered on The Circuit, the national defibrillator ambulance service database. Upon registration, contact details are provided for the nominated AED guardian/s who are local to the defibrillator's location and conduct checks when required. Four AEDs have been distributed through the fund to the Basingstoke postcode area.



**■ Dental Services: West Midlands****Mr Andrew Mitchell:** [\[28461\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will make an assessment of the adequacy of funding levels for NHS dentists in the West Midlands.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

The Government inherited public finances in their worst state since 1945. The National Health Service in England invests £3 billion into dentistry every year. NHS England is responsible for issuing guidance to integrated care boards (ICBs) on dental budgets, including ringfences. NHS England Planning Guidance for 2025/26 has now been published and sets out the funding available to ICBs.

The Government plans to tackle the challenges patients face when trying to access NHS dental care with a rescue plan to provide 700,000 more urgent dental appointments and recruit new dentists to the areas that need them most.

Responsibility for commissioning primary care dentistry to meet the needs of the local population has been delegated to ICBs across England. For Sutton Coldfield constituency, this is NHS Birmingham and Solihull ICB.

**■ Department of Health and Social Care: Written Questions****Clive Jones:** [\[34120\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to Question 31610 tabled by the hon. Member for Wokingham on 13 February 2025.

**Ashley Dalton:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to Question [31610](#) on 12 March 2025.

**■ Drugs and Medical Equipment: Research****Tom Morrison:** [\[32740\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an (a) economic and (b) regulatory assessment of the potential impact of In Silico computer modelling and simulation methods on the (i) pharmaceutical and (ii) medical device sectors.

**Ashley Dalton:**

Funding has recently been established through the Centre of Excellence in In-Silico Regulatory Science and Innovation (CERSI). This CERSI cements the United Kingdom's role at the forefront of regulatory science, driving forward the innovations of tomorrow while upholding our unwavering commitment to public health. This first-of-its-kind programme embeds innovation at the very heart of our regulatory processes.

It will make a substantial contribution to the development of a regulatory framework to support the adoption and assessments of these technologies. It will support and safely accelerate clinical investigation and trial regulatory assessments, improve patient safety, and reduce the time to safely allow the devices or medications to be



used by the patients who need them. It will reduce the time to develop and take a device or medication to the market, reducing the cost of drug development. Therefore, it will position the UK globally as one of the best places to conduct safe and effective investigations and trials.

These activities will be led by this CERSI in collaboration with the Medicine and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency and Innovate UK.

## ■ Health Services and Social Services: Inspections

**Markus Campbell-Savours:**

[\[35458\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to end single-word ratings for Care Quality Commission assessments.

**Ashley Dalton:**

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) is currently focussing on making the improvements recommended in the reviews carried out by Dr Penny Dash, Sir Professor Mike Richards, and Professor Vic Raynor. This includes work to develop new ratings characteristics, make changes to how the CQC uses scoring in assessments, and develop a new handbook for providers, which will explain clearly how assessments are carried out.

A specific review of one-or two- word ratings for health and social care providers is therefore not a priority currently, but will be kept under review.

## ■ Health Services: Migrants

**James McMurdock:**

[\[35604\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 3 March 2025 to Question 32835 on Health Services: Migrants, whether (a) his Department and (b) the NHS has made an assessment of the potential merits of collecting patient information categorised by immigration status; and if he will consider making this his policy.

**Ashley Dalton:**

The Department and the National Health Service do not collect patient information categorised by immigration status. No assessment has been made or is planned by the Department or the NHS to collect patient information categorised in this way.

Due to the way in which data is held across multiple agencies, it is not possible to categorise the total number of people who have received medical treatment by immigration status.

NHS treatment is prioritised by clinical need, and resources are allocated by integrated care boards based on the specific clinical requirements of a local area, with all patients treated equally.

**■ Healthy Start Scheme: Cotswold and Wiltshire****Dr Roz Savage:** [\[35594\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many families receive the Healthy Start scheme in (a) Cotswold and (b) Wiltshire.

**Ashley Dalton:**

The NHS Business Services Authority operates the Healthy Start scheme on behalf of the Department. Monthly figures for the number of people on the digital Healthy Start scheme are published on the NHS Healthy Start website, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.healthystart.nhs.uk/healthcare-professionals/>

In February 2025, the number of people who were on the digital Healthy Start scheme in the Cotswolds was 260, and in Wiltshire was 1,875.

**■ Heart Diseases: Screening****Gregory Stafford:** [\[35592\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of conducting a review of the UK National Screening Committee's decision-making process regarding screening for sudden cardiac death.

**Ashley Dalton:**

The UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC) is an independent scientific advisory committee which advises ministers and the National Health Service in all four countries on all aspects of population and targeted screening, and supports implementation.

Using research evidence, pilot programmes, economic evaluation, expert stakeholders, and consultation, the UK NSC assesses the evidence for national screening programmes against a set of internationally recognised criteria covering the condition, the test, the treatment options, and the effectiveness, ethics, and acceptability of the screening programme.

The committee is open about their procedures and how evidence and expertise has been considered in formulating their recommendations. They engage with a broad range of stakeholders across the United Kingdom to ensure their advice reflects societal perspectives and is balanced. Further information on the UK NSC's approach to evidence review criteria is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evidence-review-criteria-national-screening-programmes>

In addition, further information about the processes and principles used by the UK NSC is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/uk-nsc-processes-and-principles>

## ■ Hospitals: Discharges

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[36113\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has had with Integrated Care Boards about their policies to reduce delayed discharge from hospital where patients meet the criteria to (a) return home or (b) receive community care.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

The Government is working to reduce delayed discharges, ensuring that people are not stuck in hospital beds when they are well enough to go home. We will tackle delayed discharges by improving local partnership working between the National Health Service and the social care system, making sure people get the right support to return home as soon as possible. To drive improvements, we will work with those systems experiencing the worst discharge delays, using senior experts from across local government and the NHS.

On 30 January 2025, the Government published a revised Better Care Fund policy framework for 2025/26. As part of this, the NHS and local authorities will be expected to make measurable improvements on delayed discharges.

My Rt. Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, and I continue to engage with key partners and meet regularly with NHS England to discuss discharge and urgent & emergency care performance.

## ■ Members: Correspondence

**Clive Jones:**

[\[35078\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the Minister for Public Health and Prevention plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for Wokingham of 21 January 2025 on blood cancer.

**Ashley Dalton:**

I replied to the hon. Member on 10 March 2025.

## ■ Mental Health Services: Children

**Callum Anderson:**

[\[33721\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help meet the mental health needs of children from underserved communities in (a) Buckinghamshire and (b) Milton Keynes.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

We know that waits for children and young people's mental health services are far too long and that some disadvantaged groups are less likely to access support. That is why the National Health Service's planning guidance for 2025/26 makes it clear that one of the priorities for children's mental health services is to reduce local inequalities in access to children and young people's mental health services between

disadvantaged groups, including in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes, and the wider population.

The Government will also recruit 8,500 additional mental health workers across child and adult mental health services and provide access to specialist mental health professionals in every school through expanding Mental Health Support Teams, so that every young person has access to early support to address problems before they escalate.

Early intervention and prevention support in the community is vital. That is why we are providing £7 million of funding to extend support for 24 Early Support Hubs that have a track record of helping thousands of young people in their community.

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

**Dr Danny Chambers:**

[\[36555\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will take steps to ensure that the level of funding for mental health services (a) reflects changes in service demand and (b) reduces the imbalance of resource allocation between mental and physical health.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

Despite the challenging fiscal environment, the Government has committed to protecting funding on mental health. We know 2025/26 will be a challenging year, and the National Health Service must live within its means. This will require a relentless focus on operational performance, recovering productivity, tackling unwarranted variation, and reducing delays and waste to ensure taxpayers' money is spent wisely.

Our focus on mental health will continue to be backed by the Mental Health Investment Standard in 2025/26 to ensure mental health funding is ring-fenced to support delivery of our commitments, including those outlined in the NHS Planning Guidance.

### ■ **Mental Health Services: Prisons**

**Sarah Edwards:**

[\[35787\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help ensure that healthcare treatment provided to prisoners with mental health conditions is adequate.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

The Prison Mental Healthcare service specification reinforces that prison healthcare, including care for people with mental health problems, should provide excellent, safe, and effective services and interventions to all prisoners, equivalent to the services and interventions available in the community.

It specifies that there should be access to suitable, evidence-based psychological and clinical interventions. The provision of specific clinical interventions should be determined according to appropriate clinical guidance. Accordingly, the service

specification is not prescriptive as to the specific mix of psychological therapies which should be provided, with the aim of ensuring a personalised approach is utilised when meeting individual needs.

NHS England is in the process of reviewing and refreshing the Prison Mental Healthcare service specification. The aim of this review is to ensure that high-quality mental health care is provided to patients in prison, and that the specification is current and fit for purpose, taking account of changing patient needs and developments in health and justice and the wider National Health Service.

## ■ **Mental Health Services: Standards**

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

**[33977]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the adequacy of waiting times for talking therapies in (a) Slough, (b) Berkshire and (c) England.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

The latest NHS Talking Therapies data for England show that as of December 2024, 91.2% of people completing treatment waited less than six weeks for their first appointment, against a target of 75%. Additionally, 98.4% of people completing treatment waited less than 18 weeks, against a target of 95%.

Waiting times data for NHS Talking Therapies are not held at constituency or county level but are available at integrated care board (ICB) level through the NHS Mental Health Dashboard, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/nhs-mental-health-dashboard/>

Despite the challenging fiscal environment, the Government has chosen to prioritise the funding to deliver expansions of NHS Talking Therapies and Individual Placement & Support schemes, demonstrating our commitment to addressing the root cause of mental health issues and providing support for people with severe mental illness to contribute to the economy by remaining in or returning to work.

## ■ **Mental Health: Pupils**

**Jim Shannon:**

**[33887]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Education on tackling poor mental health in schools.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

The Department of Health and Social Care is working closely with the Department for Education to deliver the commitment to provide access to specialist mental health professionals in every school through rolling out NHS Mental Health Support Teams in schools and colleges.

## ■ Mental Health: Young People

**Euan Stainbank:**

[36236]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help improve the mental health of young people.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

We know children and young people often face long waits for mental health support and too many are not receiving the care they need. That is why we are providing £7 million of funding to extend support for 24 early support hubs that have a track record of helping thousands of young people in their community.

We will also provide access to a specialist mental health professional in every school in England and roll out Young Futures Hubs to provide open access mental health support for children and young people.

As part of our mission to build a National Health Service that is fit for the future and that is there when people need it, we will recruit an additional 8,500 mental health workers across children and adult mental health services in England to reduce delays and provide faster treatment.

## ■ Myasthenia Gravis: Health Services

**Dr Luke Evans:**

[35772]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with (a) NHS England, (b) the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency and (c) the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence on the availability of (i) treatment options and (ii) care pathways for patients with myasthenia gravis.

**Ashley Dalton:**

Working under the UK Rare Diseases Framework, the Government is committed to improving the lives of those living with rare diseases, such as myasthenia gravis. My Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has not specifically discussed myasthenia gravis with NHS England, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), or the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE).

On 7 March 2024, the MHRA approved the medicine rozanolixizumab (Rystiggo) to treat adults with generalised myasthenia gravis, an autoimmune disease that causes muscle weakness, which can affect multiple muscle groups throughout the body. The MHRA is in active discussion with companies to bring more medications to patients.

The NICE is currently developing technology appraisal guidance on the following treatments for generalised myasthenia gravis: rozanolixizumab and zilucoplan for treating antibody positive generalised myasthenia gravis; and efgartigimod for treating generalised myasthenia gravis. Further information on rozanolixizumab, zilucoplan, and efgartigimod is available, respectively, at the following three links:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/indevelopment/gid-ta10994>

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/indevelopment/gid-ta11096>

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/indevelopment/gid-ta10986>

In addition, nipocalimab and inebilizumab, for treating generalised myasthenia gravis, have been selected for appraisal by the NICE, with further information on both available, respectively, at the following two links:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/awaiting-development/gid-ta11492>

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/awaiting-development/gid-ta11667>

Finally, the NHS.UK website page on myasthenia gravis provides an overview of the care pathway, with further information available at the following link:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/myasthenia-gravis/>

## ■ NHS Trusts: Fines

**Edward Morello:**

[\[32867\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to review the system of financial penalties imposed on NHS trusts for health and safety breaches.

**Edward Morello:**

[\[32868\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of potential alternative models to financial penalties for NHS trusts that (a) do not diminish frontline patient care and (b) improve affected local services.

**Ashley Dalton:**

Enforcement is one of the core components of the operating model that the Care Quality Commission (CQC) uses to achieve its purpose and perform its role, to improve health and adult social care services and protect the health, safety and welfare of people who use them. The CQC monitors and assesses service providers against the fundamental standards of quality and safety. Failure to comply with the standards and make improvements, could result in enforcement action by the CQC.

The current system of penalties imposed on National Health Service trusts for health and safety breaches is defined by law. The Department has not made any assessments of other models and, therefore, has no plans to review this.

## ■ NHS: Compensation

**Rupert Lowe:**

[\[34094\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much the NHS paid in compensation in 2024.

**Ashley Dalton:**

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer given on 14 November 2024 to Question [12205](#).



The figures for the 2024/25 financial year are not complete at this stage. NHS Resolution will publish the figures for the 2024/25 financial year in its annual report and accounts in the summer.

### ■ NHS: Pilot Schemes

**Martin Wrigley:** [\[35861\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of requiring the NHS to offer pocket-sized trauma cards for patients to show during appointments.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

There are currently no plans to assess the potential merits of introducing trauma cards in the National Health Service.

### ■ NHS: Trade Agreements

**Seamus Logan:** [\[35528\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will hold discussions with the Secretary of State for Business and Trade on the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to amend the Trade Act 2021 to prevent future international trade agreements from including provisions relating to the operation of the NHS.

**Ashley Dalton:**

The Government's policy position is to protect the National Health Service and the services it provides in trade agreements. The Department of Health and Social Care will continue to work closely with the Department for Business and Trade to defend this position in all trade policy and trade agreement considerations.

### ■ Nicotine Replacement Therapy and Oral Tobacco: Safety

**Alex Brewer:** [\[35519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the (a) safety and (b) regulation of (i) snus and (ii) nicotine pouches.

**Ashley Dalton:**

Oral tobacco, otherwise known as snus, has been banned in the United Kingdom and the European Union since 1992. All tobacco products are harmful to health, and the International Agency for Research on Cancer has determined that smokeless tobacco is carcinogenic to humans. The Tobacco and Vapes Bill re-enacts the existing ban in a way that is more comprehensive, clearer, and more accessible for the relevant parties, such as retailers and enforcement agencies. We have no intention of allowing a banned and harmful product into the UK market.

There is currently limited research and evidence into the harms of nicotine pouches. However, they are never recommended for children. Nicotine, the active ingredient in pouches, is a highly addictive drug, and we have a duty to protect children and young

people from future harm and addiction. Advice on the health impacts of nicotine can be found on the Talk to Frank website, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.talktofrank.com/drug/nicotine>

That is why, through the Tobacco and Vapes Bill, we are banning the advertisement and sponsorship of these products, introducing age of sale restrictions to 18 years old for nicotine pouches, banning free samples, and providing powers to restrict packaging, flavours, and point of sale displays.

Whilst the use of nicotine pouches is currently low among adults, it is increasingly popular with younger male audiences. We will continue to monitor the use of these products and will update public health guidance and messaging accordingly.

### ■ **Pancreatic Cancer: Greater London**

**Andrew Rosindell:**

**[35233]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve patient treatment for pancreatic cancer within the North East London NHS Foundation Trust area.

**Ashley Dalton:**

The Department is working with NHS England to deliver interventions to improve treatment for those with pancreatic cancer across England, including within the North East London NHS Foundation Trust area. As the first step to ensuring faster diagnosis and treatment, the National Health Service is delivering an extra 40,000 operations, scans, and appointments each week.

Early diagnosis is imperative to improving outcomes for all types of cancer, especially pancreatic cancer due to the non-specific nature of its symptoms. NHS England is providing a route into pancreatic cancer surveillance for those at inherited high-risk to identify lesions before they develop into cancer, creating pathways to support faster referral routes for people with non-specific symptoms, and increasing direct access for general practitioners to diagnostic tests.

On 12 September 2024, the National Cancer Audit Collaborating Centre published their State of the Nation Report on Pancreatic Cancer. The NHS cancer programme is currently considering how to take forward the initial recommendations of that audit. NHS England is also funding a new audit into pancreatic cancer to increase the consistency of access to treatments, and to stimulate improvements in cancer treatments and outcomes for patients.

### ■ **Pharmacy: Finance**

**Marie Goldman:**

**[33127]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he expects the NHS-commissioned report on community pharmacy funding to be published.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

NHS England commissioned Frontier Economics to undertake an independent economic analysis of National Health Service pharmacy funding in 2024. This work is nearing completion and will be published.

**■ Prostate Cancer: Havering****Julia Lopez:**[\[35363\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the findings by the National Prostate Cancer Audit in their publication entitled the State of the Nation Report published in January 2025, what steps he plans to take to tackle age-related disparities in (a) prostate cancer diagnosis and (b) care for older populations in Havering.

**Ashley Dalton:**

The NHS England Cancer Programme has commissioned clinical cancer audits, including for prostate cancer, which provide timely evidence for cancer service providers of where patterns of care in England may vary. These audits will help NHS England understand where to increase the consistency of access to treatments and help stimulate improvements in cancer treatment and outcomes for patients. The audits are ongoing and will act on their findings in due course.

The National Cancer Plan will include further details on how we will improve outcomes for cancer patients, including for those living with prostate cancer. The plan will highlight how we aim to improve diagnosis rates for people across England, including in Havering.

The NHS Long Term Plan states that, where appropriate, every person diagnosed with cancer will have access to personalised care, including needs assessment, a care plan, and health and wellbeing information and support. This includes provision of information, empowering people to manage their care and the impact of their cancer. We are committed to ensuring that all cancer patients get access to these interventions, ensuring care is focused on what matters most to each person, including for older people in Havering.

**■ Prostate Cancer: Screening****Katie White:**[\[35508\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he is taking steps to regulate commercially available prostate specific antigen tests; and if he will produce clinical guidance to ensure the promotion of (a) clear and (b) evidence-based public health messaging on the (i) risk of prostate cancer and (ii) options for testing.

**Ashley Dalton:**

In January 2024, the UK National Screening Committee updated its information on paid-for private screening tests, and how they differ from National Health Service screening programmes.

The updated guidance sets out the potential benefits and harms of all screening, including summarising some additional possible issues for people to think about if

considering commercially offered health screening tests. These issues include that commercial companies often only offer a test, rather than an end-to-end screening pathway. If an individual then receives an abnormal finding, it is up to them to seek any advice, further investigation, or treatment.

Furthermore, NHS England is taking steps to raise awareness of the symptoms of prostate cancer, where there are opportunities to do so. NHS England's Getting It Right First Time programme published guidance in April 2024 to support the implementation of good practice in the management of prostate cancer, which includes ensuring that the diagnostic pathways for prostate cancer were implemented from a primary care setting to a secondary care presentation.

The Government recognises that a cancer-specific approach is needed to meet the challenges in cancer care, and to improve all cancer services and outcomes for people living with cancer, including those with prostate cancer. The Department is investing £16 million into the Prostate Cancer UK-led TRANSFORM screening trial, which seeks to find better ways of detecting prostate cancer. This trial will compare the most promising tests that look for prostate cancer in men that do not have symptoms, and aims to address disparities in detection rates across different groups.

As recently announced, we will publish a new National Cancer Plan, which will include further details on how we will improve cancer services across England, including for those living with prostate cancer.

## ■ Public Health: Finance

**Stuart Anderson:**

[\[34313\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing local authorities longer-term public health funding.

**Ashley Dalton:**

Following the upcoming Spending Review, we will aim to issue multi-year public health grant allocations to local authorities from 2026/27. We recognise that multi-year funding settlements for councils provide several benefits, enabling them to focus on delivering outcomes in a stable environment rather than managing budget uncertainties. In addition, 93% of respondents in a Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (Solace) survey stated that they believe multi-year settlements would support economic prosperity.

## ■ Rare Diseases

**Anna Gelderd:**

[\[34206\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help improve health outcomes for patients with rare diseases, in the context of the recent announcement by NHS Specialised Commissioning on (a) dabrafenib and (b) trametinib.

**Ashley Dalton:**

In January 2021, the Government published the UK Rare Diseases Framework providing a national vision for how to improve the lives of those living with rare diseases. The 2025 England Rare Diseases Action Plan was published on 28 February 2025.

Dabrafenib and trametinib are medicines mostly used for children with cancer. We are committed to getting the National Health Service diagnosing cancer earlier and treating it faster so that more children and young people survive, and we will improve young cancer patients' experience across the system.

That is why on 4 February 2025 we relaunched the Children and Young People Cancer Taskforce to identify tangible ways to improve outcomes and experience for children and young people with cancer. The taskforce will explore opportunities for improvement across detection and diagnosis, genomic testing and treatment, research and innovation, and patient experience.

**■ Rare Diseases: Health Services****Anna Gelderd:****[34205]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to meet priority four of the policy paper entitled The UK Rare Diseases Framework, published on 9 January 2021.

**Ashley Dalton:**

The Government is committed to improving the lives of those living with rare diseases. The UK Rare Diseases Framework sets out four priorities collaboratively developed with the rare disease community, which includes priority four on improving access to specialist care, treatments, and drugs. We remain committed to delivering under the framework, and published the fourth England action plan on 28 February 2025.

Under priority four:

- we have worked with industry, clinicians, and patients to understand the challenges and opportunities of early access pathways for rare disease therapies;
- we have committed to continuing to keep the effectiveness of the schemes for rare treatments under review;
- the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence has launched a review of its highly specialised technology programme for evaluating rare disease treatments;
- introduced action 38 on reforming clinical trial regulations; and
- introduced action 39 on developing an operational framework for individualised therapies in the National Health Service.

For further details, the 2025 England Rare Diseases Action Plan is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/england-rare-diseases-action-plan-2025>

## ■ Trade Agreements: USA

**Seamus Logan:**

[\[35114\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of a free trade agreement with the US on the NHS.

**Ashley Dalton:**

The Department is considering the impact of a potential trade deal between the United Kingdom and the United States. As my Rt. Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, said last week, “we’re clear the NHS is not on the table. It’s not up for sale. But when it comes to life sciences and medical technology... we’ve got a lot to offer the United States, and we’ve got a lot to get from the United States in return”.

**Seamus Logan:**

[\[35529\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has a policy on the inclusion of provisions on the supply of services to the NHS within the proposed free trade agreement with the US.

**Ashley Dalton:**

The Government’s policy position is to protect the National Health Service and the services it provides in trade agreements.

## HOME OFFICE

### ■ Airguns: Licensing

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[35231\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing licensing for air guns.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

Air weapons are subject to firearms legislation which regulates their possession and use. Air weapons can be lawfully possessed in England and Wales without a firearm certificate if the muzzle energy is not more than six foot pounds for air pistols, and 12 foot pounds for air rifles. An air rifle above this muzzle energy threshold must be held on a firearm certificate and an air pistol above this threshold is a prohibited firearm which can only be held with the authority of the Secretary of State.

In July 2023, secondary legislation introduced in Parliament clarified the ‘reasonable precautions’ which air weapons owners must take to safely store air weapons away from children, so that whenever under-18s are present, air weapons must be stored securely, out of sight, and separately from ammunition.

The Government keeps all firearms controls under review, and we will not hesitate to take action to further tighten the controls on air weapons where it is deemed appropriate.

**■ Asylum: Contracts****Kevin Hollinrake:****[35307]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 11 February 2025, to Question 29613, on Asylum: Contracts, whether her Department holds contracts with non-strategic suppliers for the provision of asylum accommodation and support services; and which organisation provides asylum accommodation and support services outside the (a) North West, (b) Midlands and (c) East of England.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

The Home Office holds five contracts with non-strategic suppliers for the provision of Asylum Accommodation and Support Services, outside of the North West, Midlands and East of England. These services are provided by Mears and CRH.

Details of these agreements are published on Contract Finder at:

NEYH

[AASC - Asylum Accommodation & Support Services Contract NEYH - Contracts Finder](#)

Scotland

[AASC - Asylum Accommodation & Support Services Contract Scotland - Contracts Finder](#)

NI

[AASC - Asylum Accommodation & Support Services Contract NI - Contracts Finder](#)

Wales

[AASC - Asylum Accommodation & Support Services Contract Wales - Contracts Finder](#)

South

[AASC - Asylum Accommodation & Support Services Contract South - Contracts Finder](#)

**■ Asylum: Finance****Steve Barclay:****[35252]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 4 March 2025 to Question 33002 on Asylum: Finance, if she will make an estimate of the number of top-up payments made to Asylum Support Enablement Cards in each week since 4 July 2024.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

I refer the Honourable Member to the Answer he received on 3 March 2025 to UIN 33002.



**Kevin Hollinrake:**

[\[35302\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 21 February 2025, to Question 30641, on Asylum: Finance, what the budget is for payments to councils under the (a) Grant 7 and (b) Grant 6 programmes across (i) England and (ii) the United Kingdom for financial years (A) 2024-25 and (B) 2025-26; and whether there are targets for the number of individuals who will be assisted.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

I refer the Honourable Member to the Answer he received on 14 February 2025 to UIN 30641.

The number of individuals assisted is based on demand and not on targets.

Details of funding for the forthcoming financial year will be issued in due course.

#### ■ **Asylum: Health Services**

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

[\[35311\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the answer of 11 February 2025, to Question 29612, on Asylum: Health Services, whether independent sector providers have been commissioned by her Department to provide NHS health care services to asylum seekers in the last 12 months.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

Private healthcare is not provided to asylum seekers as part of Asylum Support and Accommodation provided by the Home Office.

#### ■ **Asylum: Housing**

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

[\[35310\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 11 February 2025, to Question 29605, on Asylum: Housing, what is the Resource DEL budget for Asylum Support, Resettlement and Accommodation in financial year 2024-25.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

I refer the Honourable Member to the Answer he received on 11 February 2025 to UIN 29605.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

[\[35316\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the number of asylum seekers accommodated in (a) hotels, (b) houses and (c) flats.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

Available data on the number of supported asylum seekers in accommodation is published quarterly on GOV.UK under the immigration statistics data tables.

## ■ Asylum: Refugees

**Kevin Hollinrake:** [\[35308\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers have obtained refugee status since 4 July 2024.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

The Home Office publishes data on asylum in the '[Immigration System Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'. Data on initial decisions on asylum claims is published in table Asy\_D02 of the '[Asylum applications, initial decisions and resettlement detailed datasets](#)'.

Information on how to use the datasets can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbook. The latest data relates to 2024.

## ■ British Nationality

**Charlie Maynard:** [\[35568\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to her Department's Good character: caseworker guidance, updated on 13 February 2025, how many people she expects to be impacted by this guidance.

**Seema Malhotra:**

I refer the Honourable Member to the answer provided on 25 February 2025 to Question UIN 31371.

## ■ Care Workers: Migrant Workers

**Claire Hanna:** [\[35378\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on the potential for exploitation of migrant care worker visas being tied to individual employers; and whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of visa sponsorship being done via an independent body.

**Seema Malhotra:**

The Government condemns the exploitation of international care workers by rogue employers in the adult social care sector and continues to take robust action against this unscrupulous behaviour.

We have recently implemented a prohibition on Skilled Worker sponsors recouping sponsorship costs from those they sponsor, and those doing so now risk losing their licence. We also intend to ban any employer who flouts employment laws from acting as a sponsor in the future.

However, employer sponsorship is a core element of the UK's economic immigration system and ensures those who most directly benefit from attracting workers to the UK play a vital role in maintaining the integrity of the system.

## ■ Crime: Rural Areas

**Helen Whately:** [\[35343\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to tackle rural crime; what progress she made on a rural crime strategy; and when she plans to launch that strategy.

**Helen Whately:** [\[35344\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to help tackle (a) organised crime, (b) theft and (c) antisocial behaviour in rural areas.

**Helen Whately:** [\[35345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with (a) local authorities, (b) local police and (c) rural stakeholders on tackling rural crime.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

Rural crime can have devastating consequences for countryside communities. The Government is joint with the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) to deliver a new Rural and Wildlife Crime Strategy, ensuring our Safer Streets Mission benefits every community no matter where they live.

Rural communities will benefit from more local visible policing through the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee, which will put 13,000 more neighbourhood officers and PCSOs in communities across the country, helping to tackle crimes like anti-social behaviour (ASB), fly tipping and county lines which can have a devastating impact on rural life. In addition, the National Rural Crime Unit and National Wildlife Crime Unit – specialist policing units supported by the Home Office - play key roles in helping police across the UK tackle organised theft and disrupt serious and organised crime.

To tackle the theft and re-sale of high-value equipment, particularly for use in an agricultural setting, we are committed to implementing the Equipment Theft (Prevention) Act 2023. Additionally, the Crime and Policing Bill will introduce a new power for the police to enter and search premises to which items have been electronically tracked, where the items are reasonably believed to have been stolen and are on those premises, and it is not reasonably practicable to obtain a warrant from a court.

I recently have met with the NPCC lead for rural crime and the Head of the National Rural Crime Unit, on how we can better work together to tackle the scourge of rural crime in our countryside communities.

## ■ Cybersecurity

**Joe Robertson:** [\[35950\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of requiring technology companies to build backdoors into encrypted systems on public (a) safety and (b) privacy.

**Joe Robertson:** [\[35952\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department plans to take to ensure that Government access to encrypted data is compliant with human rights standards.

**Joe Robertson:** [\[35953\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to protect people's (a) privacy and (b) security in the context of Government access to encrypted data.

**Joe Robertson:** [\[35954\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to help ensure that backdoor access to encrypted data is not misused by unauthorised actors.

**Dan Jarvis:**

The UK has a longstanding position of protecting people's privacy whilst also ensuring action can be taken against child sexual abusers and terrorists.

The suggestion that cybersecurity and access to data by law enforcement are at odds is false. The Investigatory Powers Act contains robust safeguards and independent oversight to protect privacy and ensure that data is only obtained on an exceptional basis and only when it is necessary and proportionate to do so.

It is entirely possible to have robust cyber security measures that guard against access to data by malicious actors whilst also ensuring data can be disclosed in response to specific authorised requests.

Home Office Ministers and senior officials regularly meet with key stakeholders, including technology companies, on a range of policies and issues.

Details of ministerial meetings are published on a quarterly basis on gov.uk.

## ■ Demonstrations: Tower of London

**Claire Hanna:** [\[35379\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will take steps to enable access to safe protest around the Tower of London.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

The management of protests is an operational decision for the police.

The Government fully support the police to ensure that the right to protest can be exercised in a lawful way.

## ■ Development Aid: Asylum

**Sir John Hayes:**

[\[34580\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how the overseas aid budget has been spent in the context of housing for asylum seekers in the UK in each of the last three years.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

In-donor refugee costs are published each year in the Statistics on International Development (SIDs). 2024 figures will be published in the Spring 2025 provisional SIDs publication.

## ■ Economic Crime

**Liam Byrne:**

[\[36048\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if her Department will take steps to publish a public private economic crime data strategy.

**Dan Jarvis:**

The Government is committed to delivering the Economic Crime Plan 2 commitment to publish a public-private Economic Crime Data Strategy. The Home Office has engaged extensively with stakeholders in the public and private sectors over the last 18 months to determine the vision and content of the strategy and intends to publish a strategy later this year.

## ■ Employment: Fraud

**Mr Andrew Snowden:**

[\[36184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will take legislative steps to criminalise people who knowingly mislead a potential employer with a misrepresentative CV.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

The Government's key priorities within the Safer Streets Mission are to restore neighbourhood policing, tackle antisocial behaviour, and halve the levels of knife crime and violence against women and girls within a decade. We have no plans to divert policing resources to focus on the Hon Member's suggested priority instead.

## ■ Fraud: Pensions

**Dr Luke Evans:**

[\[35769\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of including pension fraud as part of the Government's forthcoming fraud strategy.

**Dan Jarvis:**

The Government committed in our manifesto to introduce an expanded Fraud Strategy, which will cover all relevant types of fraud where criminals target the UK public and businesses, including pension fraud.

We will be engaging all relevant stakeholders in the development of the Strategy, and further details will be set out in due course.

### ■ Fraud: Reviews

**Liam Byrne:** [\[36047\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if her Department will publish its response to the Independent Review of Disclosure and Fraud Offences.

**Dan Jarvis:**

The Report from Part One of the Independent Review of Disclosure and Fraud Offences, "*Disclosure in the Digital Age*", will be published shortly. The Government Response will be published in due course.

### ■ Human Trafficking: Cambridgeshire

**Ben Obese-Jecty:** [\[36472\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many cases of child-trafficking have been investigated in Cambridgeshire since 2010.

**Jess Phillips:**

The Government is committed to tackling modern slavery; ensuring that victims are provided with the support they need to begin rebuilding their lives and that perpetrators are prosecuted and punished.

The Modern Slavery Act 2015 gives law enforcement agencies the tools to tackle modern slavery, including potential maximum sentences of life imprisonment for perpetrators and specific support and protection for victims, including children. The Home Office has provided over £19 million of dedicated funding to the police since 2016, to improve national policing capabilities to identify victims and to investigate offenders to bring them to justice.

The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is the UK's framework for identifying and supporting victims of modern slavery and human trafficking. The table below shows the number of NRM referrals where Cambridgeshire Constabulary were the police force responsible for investigation for individuals that were under 18 at the time of referral. This data is available up to 2016.

YEAR	NUMBER OF NRM REFERRALS
2024	55
2023	68
2022	45
2021	37
2020	5

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YEAR	NUMBER OF NRM REFERRALS
2019	55
2018	29
2017	15
2016	5

The identification of a child who is a potential victim of modern slavery, or is at risk of being a victim, should always trigger the agreed local child protection procedures to ensure the child's safety and welfare, and to enable the police to gather evidence about abusers and coercers.

## ■ Immigration

**Ian Sollom:** [\[35435\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues ahead of the publication of the Immigration White Paper.

**Seema Malhotra:**

The Home Secretary is in regular dialogue with colleagues about all aspects of her responsibilities within the Government's Plan for Change.

## ■ Immigration: Guinea-Bissau and Portugal

**Ben Obese-Jecty:** [\[36470\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people from (a) Guinea-Bissau and (b) Portugal have entered the UK by (i) age and (ii) ethnicity since 2010.

**Seema Malhotra:**

The Home Office publishes available data on entry clearance visas by nationality in the '[Immigration System Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'. Data on the outcomes of visas are published in table 'Vis\_D02' of the [detailed entry clearance dataset](#). Information on how to use the dataset can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbook. Data is from 2005 up to the end of 2024.

## ■ Licensing Laws

**Kevin Hollinrake:** [\[35303\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Written Statement of 27 February 2025 on Consultation Results: Alcohol in licensed pavement areas, HCWS477, whether pubs and restaurants with pavement licences will need to vary their Licensing Act 2023 premises licence to continue to serve alcohol in designated pavement areas.



**Kevin Hollinrake:** [\[35304\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Written Statement of 27 February 2025 on Consultation Results: Alcohol in licensed pavement areas, HCWS477, what the application fee is of the Licensing Act 2023 variation permit for pubs that wish to continue to sell take-away pints.

**Kevin Hollinrake:** [\[35314\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Written Statement of 27 February 2025 on Consultation Results: Alcohol in licensed pavement areas, HCWS477, how many licensed premises will need to obtain licensing variations when easements expire.

**Kevin Hollinrake:** [\[35315\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Written Statement of 27 February 2025 on Consultation Results: Alcohol in licensed pavement areas, HCWS477, whether she has made an assessment of the potential impact of the expiry of easement measures on pubs.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

As explained in the written statement of 27 February 2025, those businesses with an on-sales only licence that have taken advantage of the Covid era easement and wish to continue off-sales after 31 March will need to obtain a licensing variation. According to [recent statistics](#) published on GOV.UK, as of October 2024, 2490 premises were taking advantage of the easement.

To minimise the impact on businesses, the Government has amended statutory licensing guidance to make it easier and cheaper for businesses to apply for this variation. This guidance advises licensing authorities to initially treat applications for such amendments as a minor variation to the licence. This will minimise any transitional cost and bureaucracy for those affected by making the process quicker and much cheaper – costing £89 - than major licence variations.

As we made clear in the Written Statement, the Government will monitor the decisions made around the country by local authorities on these requests for licence variations, in liaison with the beer and pub industries, and will assess any evidence that pubs where the current easements have been working successfully are being denied the opportunity to continue making off-sales beyond April 2025 without reasonable cause. In those circumstances, and notwithstanding the results of last year's consultation exercise, we will consider what further steps may need to be taken through the licensing regime to support our local pubs.

**■ Offences against Children: Reviews****Kevin Hollinrake:** [\[35305\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 21 February 2025, to Question 29607, on Offences against Children: Reviews, what remuneration is being given to Baroness Case of Blackstock for leading the review; and

whether this remuneration is in addition to her remuneration as the Government's lead Non-Executive Director.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

[\[35313\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 11 February 2025 to Question 28151 on Offences against Children: Inquiries, how the £5 million will be allocated to local authorities; and whether local authorities must bid for such funding.

**Jess Phillips:**

On 16 January 2025, the Home Secretary announced a funding package to deliver stronger national support for locally-led work on tackling group-based child sexual exploitation. This includes supporting Oldham Council who have confirmed work to undertake a local inquiry that has already begun. We are in the process of consulting with local authorities and relevant stakeholders on the design and delivery of this package and will update the House in due course.

Baroness Casey is leading the National Audit in her role as the Government's lead Non-Executive Director. She is therefore not receiving additional remuneration for the Audit.

## ■ **Oppression: China**

**Luke Taylor:**

[\[36235\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the redevelopment of a Chinese embassy in London on transnational repression efforts against Hong Kongers, Uyghurs, Tibetans, and Chinese dissidents.

**Dan Jarvis:**

The planning application has been called in by the Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and she will make this quasi-judicial decision independent from the rest of Government.

We are clear that national security is the first duty of Government. The Foreign Secretary and Home Secretary submitted written representations to the Planning Inspector on 14 January. That letter is clear that the Home Office has considered the breadth of national security issues.

We have a broad suite of powers to counter foreign interference, including those actions which amount to transnational repression. We will continue to use all the tools at our disposal to keep people safe.

## ■ **Police: Football**

**Luke Myer:**

[\[36515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has had recent discussions with the (a) Football Association and (b) Football Association of

Wales on increasing the level of football clubs' contributions to policing costs at matches; and what steps she is taking to reduce the cost to the police of policing football matches.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

We are aware of the pressures that football policing places on police force budgets. We agree that large, highly-profitable businesses should make a reasonable contribution to the costs of policing their events and we are considering options for how to manage this in a fair and proportionate way going forward.

## HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

### ■ Members: Prisoners

**Joe Robertson:**

[\[33756\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent and Rhymney, representing the House of Commons Commission, whether hon. Members serving a custodial sentence at His Majesty's Pleasure can have their Parliamentary (a) mail and (b) casework delivered to them at their new residence.

**Nick Smith:**

Royal Mail receives mail instructions from Members, such as deliver to desk, keep at Members' Lobby or forward to an external address such as a home or constituency office.

The rules concerning the sending and receipt of mail from prison are the responsibility of the Home Office. In 1970 the Committee of Privileges considered the rights of hon. Members detained in prison, including their ability to send and receive mail, and concluded that "a Member of Parliament should not be given any special advantages by reason of being a Member".

## HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### ■ Asylum: Health Services

**Steve Barclay:**

[\[35253\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 4 March 2025 to Question 30616 on Asylum: Health Services, if she will make it her policy to collect information on the amount spent by local authorities on services to support (a) refugees and (b) people seeking asylum to access healthcare services.

**Jim McMahon:**

As set out in my answer to [Question 30616](#), the department does not hold this information to the level requested. At this time, line 49 [in the local authority expenditure and financing statistics](#) accounts for services or interventions for asylum seekers, including:

- Supported access to health, housing or education services

- Language/interpreter support
- Providing advice and information
- Access to legal advice

MHCLG engages with local authorities and other government departments to understand what data is a priority to capture within the local authority expenditure and financing statistics, and considers making changes on a case by case basis. At present, we do not have plans to collect additional information on local authority spend on refugees.

### ■ Batteries: Storage

**Sir Alec Shelbrooke:**

[\[35249\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make fire and rescue authorities statutory consultees for planning applications for battery energy storage systems.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to Question UIN [5520](#) on 11 October 2024.

### ■ Elections: Prosecutions

**Ben Obese-Jecty:**

[\[36476\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 7 March to Question 34375 on Elections: Disqualification Orders, how many prosecutions have been made under the Elections Act 2022.

**Rushanara Ali:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to Question UIN [34375](#) on 7 March 2025.

As stated in our previous answer, we do not hold data on how many people have been disqualified. This includes data on the number of people prosecuted.

### ■ Heat Pumps: Planning Permission

**Luke Murphy:**

[\[35497\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the press notice entitled Help to save households money and deliver cleaner heat to homes, published on 21 November 2024, when her Department will announce a date for the removal of the one-meter rule which requires planning permission to install heat pumps in England.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

Further announcements on permitted development rights for air source heat pumps and electric vehicle charging points will be made in due course.

**■ Homelessness: Young People**

**David Smith:** [\[36537\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions she has had with the homelessness sector on tackling youth homelessness.

**David Smith:** [\[36538\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department has made a comparative assessment between (a) young adults and (b) other age groups experience of homelessness; and if she will help support young adult's needs in the homelessness strategy.

**Rushanara Ali:**

I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given to Question UIN [20895](#) on 19 December 2024.

**■ Housing: Bricks**

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** [\[35369\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will introduce a statutory requirement for swift bricks.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer to Question UIN [22080](#) on 15 January 2025.

**■ Infrastructure: Planning Permission**

**Kevin Hollinrake:** [\[28050\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 5 December 2024 to Question 16199 on Infrastructure: Planning Permission, what steps she is taking to speed up Ministerial decision-making on national significant infrastructure consents.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

As part of the government's Plan for Change, we are committed to fast-tracking planning decisions on at least 150 major economic infrastructure projects by the end of this Parliament.

The reasons that Ministerial decisions on individual applications can exceed the three-month statutory deadline are varied and complex and include the need to secure additional information on unresolved matters at the point Ministers receive the recommendation of the Examining Authority.

The forthcoming Planning and Infrastructure Bill includes measures designed to resolve issues prior to the decision stage. It will deliver a faster and more certain consenting process for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP) by ensuring that National Policy Statements are updated regularly, streamlining NSIP consultation requirements and reducing opportunities for judicial review.

## ■ Land Use

**Wendy Morton:** [\[36394\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the National Planning Policy Framework published in December 2024, what her Department's definitions of (a) grey belt and (b) green belt are.

**Wendy Morton:** [\[36395\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the National Planning Policy Framework, published in December 2024, what steps she plans to take to ensure consultation with local communities before any developments are approved on grey belt land.

**Wendy Morton:** [\[36396\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the National Planning Policy Framework, published in December 2024, what instruction has been given to the planning inspectorate on determining land as grey belt.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answers to Question UIN [26011](#) on 31 January 2025 and Question UIN [26507](#) on 5 February 2025. Land is Green Belt if designated as such in a Local Plan.

On 27 February, Planning Practice Guidance was published to assist local authorities and other decision-makers, and to support a consistent approach to determining whether land is grey belt. It can be found on gov.uk [here](#). This new guidance will support authorities in producing Local Plans, while also making sure that planning applications and development on suitable grey belt land can proceed in the short-term in areas without an up-to-date plan.

## ■ Leasehold: Legal Costs and Service Charges

**Siân Berry:** [\[34537\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Written Statement of 21 November 2024 on Leasehold and Commonhold Reform, HCWS244, what her planned timetable is to (a) consult and (b) bring measures into force on the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024's provisions on (i) service charges and (ii) legal costs.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

As set out in the Written Ministerial Statement in question, the government will consult this year on the Act's provisions on service charges and on legal costs, bringing these measures into force as quickly as possible thereafter.

## ■ Licensing Laws

**Kevin Hollinrake:** [\[35706\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 24 February 2025 to Question 31048 on Licensing Laws, what the evidential basis is that a unified consent regime for pavement licences did not prove workable.

**Alex Norris:**

In March 2024 the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government made permanent changes to streamline applications for pavement licenses. In May 2024 the Home Office consulted on options to make permanent its existing temporary measures to streamline applications for alcohol licenses where a pavement licence is in effect. The Home Office published its analysis of responses in February 2025 and concluded that it would not take forward any of the options proposed and would instead allow temporary streamlining to end as of 31 March 2025.

## ■ Nightclubs and Public Houses: Planning

**Kevin Hollinrake:** [\[35306\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 21 February 2025, to Question 30643, on Nightclubs and Public Houses: Planning, if she will provide the gov.uk address for her Department's guidance on (a) noise and (b) statutory nuisance; and whether her Department issues specific guidance on the agent of change principle.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

Planning Policy Guidance on noise with advice about how planning can manage potential noise impacts in new developments, and the 'agent of change' principle, can be found in the online Planning Practice Guidance on Noise [here](#) in Paragraph: 009 Reference ID: 30-009-20190722.

## ■ Property Development: Floods

**Blake Stephenson:** [\[35436\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 3 February 2025 to Question 26368 on Property Development: Floods, if she will make an estimate of the number of houses that may be built on flood plains between up to July 2029.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to Question UIN [26368](#) on 3 February 2025.



## ■ Rented Housing

**Neil O'Brien:**

[\[34921\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many and what proportion of people (a) renting privately and (b) in the social rented sector were (i) born in the UK and (ii) not born in the UK in each region of England in each year since 1997.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

The Department does not hold the required information.

## ■ Right to Manage Companies

**Luke Murphy:**

[\[35495\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether the forthcoming Leasehold and Commonhold Reform Bill will include provisions to enable multi-building developments to apply for the right to manage as a single entity.

**Luke Murphy:**

[\[35496\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what her Department's timetable is for bringing forward proposals for a Leasehold and Commonhold Reform Bill; and what plans she has to consult leaseholders on those proposals.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

I refer the hon. Member to the Written Ministerial Statement I made on 21 November 2024 ([HCWS244](#)).

## ■ Tree Preservation Orders: Bedfordshire

**Blake Stephenson:**

[\[35438\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 18 February 2025 to Question 25797 on Tree Preservation Orders: Bedfordshire, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of keeping a centralised national record of Tree Protection Orders.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

Tree Preservation Orders safeguard individual trees or groups of trees of particular value to local amenity.

Local planning authorities have the principal responsibility for applying these protections effectively.

The government has no plans at present to create a central record of their decisions, but we will keep the matter under review.

**JUSTICE****■ Compensation: Court Orders****David Chadwick:**[\[35532\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps her Department is taking to ensure there is adequate enforcement of unfulfilled court compensation orders.

**Alex Davies-Jones:**

Courts may impose a compensation order on an offender requiring them to make financial reparation to the victim for any personal injury, loss or damage resulting from the offence. Compensation may be ordered for such amount as the court considers appropriate having regard to any evidence including any representations made by the offender or prosecutor. There is no limit on the value of a single compensation order handed down to an adult offender. For young offenders, the maximum limit is £5,000.

Financial penalties imposed by the courts will often consist of multiple elements including, amongst others, compensation, victim surcharge, prosecutor's costs and a fine. The imposition is enforced as a whole, and any receipts received are applied to the offender's account in accordance with a strict legal hierarchy. This ensures that compensation is paid first to ensure that victims receive any monies they are due first, with the victim surcharge being the second element to be collected and the fine element being the last to be collected.

The courts will do everything within their powers to trace those who do not pay and use a variety of means to ensure the recovery of criminal fines and financial penalties. This includes deducting money from an offender's earnings, or benefits if they are unemployed, or, if appropriate, issuing warrants instructing approved enforcement agents to seize and sell goods belonging to the offender. Offenders can also be imprisoned for up to 12 months for non-payment of compensation orders.

HM Courts & Tribunals Service is already investing over £14 million in technology to increase the collection of financial penalties imposed in the criminal courts, including compensation orders, with a replacement IT system currently under development.

**■ Debt Collection****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[35226\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment she has made of the potential implications for her polices of recent trends in the number of bailiffs.

**Alex Davies-Jones:**

The Government is committed to ensuring that there are effective and sustainable enforcement processes available to judgment creditors for the enforcement of judgment debts and fines. We also want to ensure that those facing enforcement action, particularly the most vulnerable in society, are treated fairly. We continue to monitor trends in the number of bailiffs as part of our overall consideration of policies in this area.

## ■ Employment Tribunals Service

**James McMurdock:**

[\[35616\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps her Department is taking to reduce the average wait time for an Employment tribunal application to reach a tribunal hearing.

**Alex Davies-Jones:**

Following recruitment, in 2024 we had 21 more salaried and 34 more fee-paid judges than in 2023, with further fee paid judge appointments to follow; and recruitment for up to 36 salaried Employment Judges commencing on 13 March 2025. HMCTS continues to invest in improving tribunal productivity through the recruitment of additional judges, deployment of Legal Officers to actively manage cases, the development of modern case management systems, and the use of remote hearing technology. A 'Virtual Region' of judges has delivered over 1,500 extra sitting days, which has allowed judicial capacity in certain regions of the country to be made available to hold remote hearings in other parts where capacity is stretched. The demand and pressures on London and the South East are particularly acute, and this initiative has allowed sitting capacity in other regions, such as Scotland, Wales etc to be deployed to ease them.

The Lord Chancellor was able to announce on 5 March a sitting day allocation for the Employment Tribunals of 33,900 in 2025/26, the maximum allocation they are able to sit.

We recognise that there remain significant challenges for the performance of the Employment Tribunals. We are therefore continuing to monitor demand on Employment Tribunals and will work with the judiciary and HMCTS on any further actions needed to improve efficiency and reduce waiting times.

## ■ Ministry of Justice: Written Questions

**Kirith Entwistle:**

[\[36493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, when she plans to respond to (a) Question 34399 on Legal Costs: Low Incomes and (b) Question 34403 on Sentencing: Legal Costs, tabled on 27 February 2025.

**Alex Davies-Jones:**

I refer the Honourable Member to the answers given to PQs [34399](#) and [34403](#) on 7 March 2025 by the Minister for Courts and Legal Services.

## ■ Prison Accommodation

**Stuart Anderson:**

[\[35366\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps she is taking to increase capacity within the prison system.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

This Government inherited a criminal justice system in crisis, with prisons operating at over 99% capacity and on the brink of collapse.

The 10-year Prison Capacity Strategy was published on 11 December 2024, alongside the Annual Statement on Prison Capacity. The former set out our aims to: deliver 14,000 prison places by 2031, invest in maintenance to refurbish the prison estate and improve safety, buy new land for prison development, and introduce planning legislation to build prisons faster.

The previous Government promised to deliver 20,000 places, but ended up only adding around 500 to the prison estate. This Government will build where the previous administration failed to do so. Of the 14,000 prison places, we will deliver around 6,500 places in new prisons (of which HMP Millsike is the first and is due to open in Spring 2025). 6,400 prison places will be delivered through houseblocks at existing sites and around 1,000 through Rapid Deployment Cells, and we are also refurbishing residential units, facilities and ancillaries across the estate.

As well as the 10-year capacity strategy, in October we launched an Independent Review of Sentencing with the aim to ensure we are never again left in a position where we have more prisoners than prison places.

#### ■ **Prison Officers: Industrial Disputes**

**John McDonnell:**

[\[36354\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent discussions her Department has had with private prison operators on the right of prison officers to take industrial action.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

We have no plans to amend section 127 of the Criminal Justice Act 1994.

There have been no recent discussions with private prison contractors on this matter.

#### ■ **Prison Officers: Length of Service**

**Grahame Morris:**

[\[36385\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will make an estimate of the cumulative number of years of experience held by prison officers in each year since 2010.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

The cumulative length of service, in years, held by band 3-5 prison officers in public sector prisons is given in the following table. Figures are given as of 31 December each year.

Although national staffing levels have improved, we are focusing on retaining the new intakes of staff. As of December 2024, 39.2% of Band 3-5 prison officers have less than 3 years of experience.

As the figures show, over the last 14 years of Conservative Government, experience of prison officers was allowed to decline. The loss of experienced staff has left the Service with a relatively inexperienced workforce, and we are improving our learning and development offer to upskill these newer colleagues.

We launched The Enable Programme, which is a dedicated HMPPS workforce transformation programme. It aims to transform prisons over the medium term, through a series of workforce and regime changes that will transform how HMPPS trains, develops, leads, and supports prison staff. This includes new training foundation training and upskilling packages for prison officers at the beginning of their service, and a strengthened succession planning and talent pipeline for prison Governors. We have already begun rolling this programme out focusing on the most inexperienced staff, first.

Table 1 – Cumulative length of service(1) of band 3-5 prison officers(2) in public sector prisons in England and Wales, as at 31 December each year from 2010 to 2024(3)

DATE	NUMBER OF PRISON OFFICERS IN POST (FULL TIME EQUIVALENT)	CUMULATIVE LENGTH OF SERVICE OF ALL PRISON OFFICERS (YEARS)
31/12/2010	24,501	329,353
31/12/2011	23,054	326,563
31/12/2012	21,841	326,660
31/12/2013	18,731	287,921
31/12/2014	17,795	278,254
31/12/2015	18,235	272,086
31/12/2016	17,887	261,607
31/12/2017	19,901	253,415
31/12/2018	22,681	247,741
31/12/2019	22,116	246,083
31/12/2020	21,501	242,473
31/12/2021	22,072	239,970
31/12/2022	21,562	226,620
31/12/2023	23,198	220,227
31/12/2024	23,062	215,994

#### Notes

1. THE LENGTH OF SERVICE IN HMPPS IS CALCULATED FROM MOST RECENT HIRE DATE. WHERE STAFF HAVE TRANSFERRED IN FROM ANOTHER GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT OR HAVE TRANSFERRED IN THROUGH HMPPS TAKING OVER A FUNCTION, LENGTH OF SERVICE IS CALCULATED FROM ENTRY TO HMPPS. 2. BAND 3-5 OFFICERS INCLUDES BAND 3-4 / PRISON OFFICERS (INCL. SPECIALISTS), BAND 4 / SUPERVISING OFFICERS, AND BAND 5 / CUSTODIAL MANAGERS.

3. The dates reflect the Full Time Equivalent and cumulative years of service at that particular point of the year.

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4. Data may not match previous releases as we are now excluding all staff who were not an active member of the workforce and receiving pay on the relevant date from our staff in post counts.

## ■ Probation

**Grahame Morris:**

[\[36388\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the capacity of accredited probation programmes is in each region.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

A regional breakdown of staff in post vs target staffing has been provided below.

PROBATION REGION	TARGET STAFFING (FTE)	STAFF IN POST (FTE)	STAFFING LEVEL (%)
PS East Midlands	82.1	52.9	64%
PS East of England	161.9	122.4	76%
PS Greater Manchester	68.9	66.5	97%
PS Kent, Surrey & Sussex	78.6	49.4	63%
PS London	134.4	106	79%
PS North East	64	54.4	85%
PS North West	104.1	92.8	89%
PS South Central	82.8	62.5	75%
PS South West	136.6	110.3	81%
PS Wales	107.2	103.1	96%
PS West Midlands	113.5	73.1	64%
PS Yorkshire & the Humber	96	79.2	83%

PROBATION REGION	TARGET STAFFING (FTE)	STAFF IN POST (FTE)	STAFFING LEVEL (%)
Overall			79%

#### Notes

- Staff in Post data have been taken from Workforce Planning Tool returns for December 2024.
- Workforce Planning Tools are subject to inaccuracy as a result of the manual nature with which returns are completed.
- Targets have been taken from the December 2024 Target Staffing figures as reflected in the Workforce Planning Tools.
- Data shows the average position across the month, adjusted for joiners and leavers within month.
- Data includes Internal functions, 'PS Accredited Programmes', 'PS Sexual Offending Programmes' and 'PS Structured Interventions'.

#### ■ Probation: Length of Service

##### Grahame Morris:

[\[36386\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will make an estimate of the cumulative number of years of experience held by probation officers in each year since 2021.

##### Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The cumulative length of service, in years, held by all band 4 probation officers is given in the following table. Years' figures are given as of 31 December each year from 2021 to 2024.

The service of Probation Service staff in Probation Trusts prior to the creation of the Probation Service on 1 June 2014 is not included and thus the figures presented here are an underestimate, and do not represent the full cumulative experience of Probation Officers.

DATE	NUMBER OF PROBATION OFFICERS IN POST (FULL TIME EQUIVALENT)	CUMULATIVE LENGTH OF SERVICE OF ALL PROBATION OFFICERS (YEARS)
31/12/2021	4,613	37,105
31/12/2022	4,648	38,332
31/12/2023	4,948	41,088
31/12/2024	5,283	45,667

1. The length of service in HMPPS is calculated from most recent hire date. Where staff have transferred in from another Government Department or have transferred



in through HMPPS taking over a function, length of service is calculated from entry to HMPPS.

1. The dates reflect the Full Time Equivalent and cumulative years of service at that particular point of the year.
1. Data may not match previous releases as we are now excluding all staff who were not an active member of the workforce and receiving pay on the relevant date from our staff in post counts.
1. Data are extracted from large administrative data systems and are based on HR records.

#### ■ Probation: Overtime

**Grahame Morris:** [\[36389\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate she has made of the amount of time off in lieu that was accrued by probation officers in each year since 2021; and how much and what proportion of this time was (a) taken and (b) rolled over.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

The information requested could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

#### ■ Probation: Staff

**Grahame Morris:** [\[36387\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many incidents of (a) attrition, (b) sickness absence and (c) work-related stress there were for probation officers in each region in the most recent period for which data is available.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

Number of leavers, sickness absences and stress-related sickness absences for probation officers in the 12 months to end of December 2024 by region:

	LEAVERS	SICKNESS ABSENCES	OF WHICH, STRESS SICKNESS ABSENCES <sup>1</sup>
Approved Premises	0	7	~
East Midlands Probation Service	24	424	50
East of England Probation Service	41	469	45
Greater Manchester Probation Service	17	276	39

	LEAVERS	SICKNESS ABSENCES	OF WHICH, STRESS SICKNESS ABSENCES <sup>1</sup>
Kent, Surrey and Sussex Probation Service	17	265	36
London Probation Service	78	569	86
North East Probation Service	16	239	30
North West Probation Service	33	442	61
South Central Probation Service	20	343	47
South West Probation Service	30	351	50
Wales Probation Service	30	322	68
West Midlands Probation Service	47	460	76
Yorkshire & the Humber Probation Service	47	517	77
Other parts of HMPPS <sup>2</sup>	1	10	~
Probation officers total	401	4,694	669

1) There is a sickness reason in the MoJ HR system called 'Stress' but this does not show whether it is work-related or not.

2) Includes probation officers working outside of the Probation Service but still within HMPPS.

3) ~ Denotes suppressed values of 2 or fewer or other values which would allow values of 2 or fewer to be derived by subtraction. Low numbers are suppressed to prevent disclosure in accordance with the Data Protection Act, 2018.

**SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY****■ 5G: Aerials****Paul Holmes:**[\[35374\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether his Department has made an estimate of the number of legal cases that have commenced related to the installation of 5G masts; and whether provisions within the Product Security and Telecommunications Infrastructure Act 2022 are retrospective.

**Chris Bryant:**

Legal cases relating to telecommunications installations can commence in either the County Court or the Lands Tribunal. The Department does not have comprehensive data, but is aware of an increase in applications to the courts relating to telecommunications infrastructure installation since 2017. Applications can cover a range of different situations. We do not know how many relate specifically to 5G masts. Most applications do not proceed to a full hearing, but are resolved consensually.

Sections 58,59 and 61 – 64 of the Product Security and Telecommunications Infrastructure Act 2022 have some limited retrospective effects. Other provisions are not considered retrospective.

**■ Animal Experiments****Sarah Champion:**[\[35265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether his Department plans to set (a) clear objectives, (b) measurable milestones and (c) interim targets to phase out animal testing.

**Feryal Clark:**

The Labour Manifesto includes a commitment to “partner with scientists, industry, and civil society as we work towards the phasing out of animal testing”, which is a long-term goal.

The government will publish a strategy to support the development, validation and uptake of alternative methods later this year, which will set out clear objectives and measurable milestones. Any work to phase out animal testing must be science-led, in lock step with partners, so we will not be setting interim targets or arbitrary timelines for reducing their use.

**■ Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Food****Sir John Hayes:**[\[35221\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what proportion of food procured by his Department is sourced in the UK.

**Feryal Clark:**

To date the Government has not held information on where publicly procured food is sourced from.

Starting right away, for the first time ever, this government will review the food currently bought in the public sector to determine the standards that it is meeting, where it is bought from and look to introduce monitoring for transparency and accountability within those supply chains to ultimately get the best food for the consumer.

This work will be a significant first step to inform any future changes to public sector food procurement policies as we want to help make it an equal playing field for British producers to bid into the £5 billion spent each year on public sector catering contracts.

**■ Digital Technology: Older People****Sir John Hayes:**[\[35223\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he is taking to tackle digital exclusion among older people in rural areas.

**Chris Bryant:**

Tackling digital exclusion is a Government priority. We published the Digital Inclusion Action Plan in February 2025, identifying five target groups to benefit most from digital inclusion initiatives, including older people.

The Action Plan outlines five immediate actions for Government, including launching the Digital Inclusion Innovation Fund to support locally delivered digital inclusion initiatives.

We are also upgrading broadband and mobile connectivity in rural areas through Project Gigabit and the Shared Rural Network and are exploring options for further support to connect very hard to reach areas.

**■ Hate Crime: Internet****Ben Obese-Jecty:**[\[35420\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he is taking to help reduce online (a) misogyny and (b) misandry.

**Feryal Clark:**

The Online Safety Act requires all platforms to proactively tackle the most harmful illegal content including illegal misogyny and misandry. Where this type of abuse is not illegal, Category 1 services will have extra duties, requiring them to establish user empowerment tools, enabling all adult users to have greater control over their online experience.

Services likely to be accessed by children must provide safety measures protecting children from harmful and age-inappropriate content and activity.

The Act requires Ofcom, the regulator, to publish guidance about protecting women and girls online, which they published in draft for consultation on 25 February.

## ■ Internet: Advertising

**Bobby Dean:** [\[35416\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps his Department is taking to (a) develop and (b) implement codes of practice for fraudulent advertising under the Online Safety Act 2023.

**Feryal Clark:**

The duties related to fraudulent advertising apply to Category 1 and 2A services. Category 1 services will need to tackle paid-for fraudulent advertising on their platforms, and Category 2A search services will need to address paid-for fraudulent advertising in search results.

Ofcom is responsible for developing codes of practice. It expects to consult on the codes for these duties by early 2026. The codes will recommend how companies can comply with these duties. These duties will not come into force until the register of categorised services has been published by Ofcom and the final code has been approved by Parliament.

## ■ Mobile Phones

**Victoria Collins:** [\[35480\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of using revenue generated by spectrum Annual Licence Fees to support improved mobile coverage.

**Chris Bryant:**

Ofcom sets mobile spectrum fees independently to promote the optimal use of spectrum. The Government recognises the cost of these fees to the industry. Supporting investment in mobile networks is a priority and the Government continues to assess what further interventions are needed to support 5G deployment.

## ■ Radio Frequencies: Mobile Phones

**Victoria Collins:** [\[35479\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what discussions he has had with Ofcom on increasing spectrum available to mobile operators.

**Chris Bryant:**

I have not had any discussions with Ofcom directly on increasing the spectrum available to mobile operators, but my officials are in regular discussion with them on spectrum issues. The Government recognises the importance of ensuring access to suitable spectrum across different sectors, the opportunities this creates for growth, and that a focus on innovation and enhanced shared use of spectrum will become increasingly important to realise this.

**TRANSPORT****■ A35: Repairs and Maintenance****Edward Morello:**[\[35575\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of the level of funding allocated to the A35 Sea Road South scheme on (a) road safety and (b) local transport infrastructure in West Dorset constituency.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

The safety of our roads is an absolute priority for this Government, and we are committed to reducing the numbers of those killed and injured on our roads. The A35 Sea Road South improvement scheme is assessed, like any other Customer and Communities designated funds scheme. National Highways have developed a safety study running throughout Dorset. Working with partners such as the police they have assessed the safety need along the route and allocated funding in 2025/26 to a scheme to make the route safer and more intuitive for road users.

**■ Active Travel****Joe Morris:**[\[35411\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to increase active travel in (a) Hexham constituency, (b) Northumberland, (c) the North East, (d) Newcastle, and (e) England.

**Simon Lightwood:**

On 12 February, the Department for Transport and Active Travel England (ATE) announced almost £300 million of funding to boost walking, wheeling and cycling with £222.5 million awarded to local authorities across England. This includes over £9.3 million of funding in 2024/25 to 2025/26 for the North- East Combined Authority (NECA). It will be for NECA to decide on priorities for investment across its local transport network.

ATE also funds a range of wider projects to enable more active travel, including Bikeability cycle training, Walk to School Outreach and Bike Bike Revival activities. ATE also provides funding to Sustrans to maintain and upgrade the National Cycle Network, which includes routes in the North-East.

**■ Aviation: Pakistan****Harpreet Uppal:**[\[35986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what her planned timetable is for direct flights to resume from the UK to Pakistan.

**Mike Kane:**

Pakistan is still on UK Air Safety List and there is a process to follow to come off the Air Safety List. The Department for Transport, along with the UK Civil Aviation

Authority continues to engage with the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority. Responsibility remains with the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority to ensure it is meeting required safety standards to be delisted and we cannot provide a timeline on this.

## ■ **Bus Services: Concessions**

**Lee Anderson:** [\[36134\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending free bus travel to all people over 60 years old in England, outside of London.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) provides free off-peak bus travel to those with eligible disabilities and those of state pension age, currently sixty-six. The ENCTS costs around £700 million annually and any changes to the statutory obligations, such as lowering the age of eligibility, would therefore need to be carefully considered for its impact on the scheme's financial sustainability.

Local authorities in England have the power to offer concessions in addition to their statutory obligations such as lowering the age of eligibility. Additional local concessions are provided and funded by local authorities from local resources.

The government has confirmed £955 million for the 2025 to 2026 financial year to support and improve bus services in England outside London. This includes £243 million for bus operators and £712 million allocated to local authorities across the country. East Midlands Combined County Authority has been allocated £40.5 million of this funding. Funding allocated to local authorities to improve services for passengers can be used in whichever way they wish. This could include extending the discretionary concessions available in the local area.

## ■ **Cycleways**

**Joe Morris:** [\[36196\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department has taken to expand the number of cycle routes in (a) Hexham, (b) Northumberland, (c) Newcastle, (d) North East and (e) England.

**Joe Morris:** [\[36197\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department has taken to improve the condition of cycle routes in (a) Hexham, (b) Northumberland, (c) Newcastle, (d) North East and (e) England.

**Joe Morris:** [\[36198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to improve the safety of cycle routes in (a) Hexham, (b) Northumberland, (c) Newcastle, (d) North East and (e) England.



**Simon Lightwood:**

Pursuant to my response to UIN 35411, the Department for Transport and Active Travel England (ATE) are working with local authorities to boost walking, wheeling and cycling across England.

It is for local authorities to decide on where to invest in their local transport networks. Funding awarded by ATE can be used by local authorities to improve the safety of existing infrastructure, deliver new active travel projects and for the development of walking and cycling networks. As part of the National Parks project, ATE is working with Northumberland National Park Authority to develop an active travel network plan.

In addition to funding, ATE provides training for local authority staff to enable the delivery of high-quality walking and cycling schemes, as well as design workshops and design assurance reviews of schemes under development. ATE is working closely with the North East Combined Authority to operate a Design Review Panel to improve the quality and safety of schemes within the region.

**DFDS: Roll-on Roll-off Ships****Neil Duncan-Jordan:**[\[35598\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will list the vessels certified by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency for DFDS's roll-on roll-off ferry services to Jersey from (a) Poole and (b) Portsmouth.

**Mike Kane:**

The Maritime and Coastguard Agency currently do not certify any vessels operated by DFDS on services to Jersey from Poole or Portsmouth.

The Maritime and Coastguard Agency are currently working with DFDS in relation to vessels taking up operations from these ports later in March 2025 and April 2025.

**Neil Duncan-Jordan:**[\[35599\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has had discussions with trade unions on seafarer jobs providing DFDS services to Jersey from (a) Poole and (b) Portsmouth.

**Mike Kane:**

Ministers and officials meet regularly with the trade unions to discuss seafarers. The issue of seafarer jobs on the new DFDS services to Jersey has not been raised.

**Diesel Vehicles: Nitrogen Oxides****Olly Glover:**[\[36299\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment her Department has made of the impact of excess nitrogen oxide (NOx) emissions from diesel vehicles using defeat devices on UK air quality.

**Olly Glover:**

[\[36300\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to (a) identify and (b) recall diesel vehicles found to contain illegal defeat devices.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

The Department for Transport is the department responsible for setting and enforcing standards for NOx emissions from diesel vehicles. The Market Surveillance Unit within the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency is undertaking a programme looking at possible non-compliant diesel emissions in Euro 5 and Euro 6A/B/C diesel cars and vans where there is reason to believe that they contain a prohibited defeat device.

DVSA investigations will include assessing the impact of excess NOx emissions from non-compliant vehicles.

This programme of investigations is ongoing, and the Department will publish outcomes of these investigations when completed.

#### ■ **Driving Tests: Administrative Delays**

**Calum Miller:**

[\[36565\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, which regions have the longest driving test waiting times; and what steps her Department is taking to reduce delays in these regions.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

The regions currently experiencing the longest driving test waiting times are London and the South East of England.

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) continues to work to attract and recruit more driving examiners (DE) in the London and South East areas.

For recruitment campaigns, DVSA continues to use additional measures when advertising in these areas, such as local managers attending and running recruitment events, and working in local communities, building and fostering relationships to showcase the DE roles.

DVSA has seen success in its recent campaigns for these regions. From these campaigns, 36 candidates have completed DE training successfully and have been placed to their test centre, and a further 19 candidates are currently undertaking training.

From the most recent campaigns, DVSA has a further 26 potential candidates booked for upcoming training courses, with a further 48 currently undergoing pre-employment checks.

#### ■ **Dual Carriageways and Motorways: Litter**

**Nadia Whittome:**

[\[36461\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to help tackle litter along (a) motorways and (b) dual carriageways.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

National Highways is responsible for litter collection on motorways and some 'A' roads whilst the relevant local authorities manage litter collection on the rest of the roads in England.

National Highways is committed to keeping its roads predominantly free from litter, without compromising safety and delivering affordably. National Highways pick litter on a section of the Strategic Road Network (SRN) every day and is consistently working to deliver an improved and more rapid clean up using innovative interventions such as industrial vacuums, as well as undertaking a number of anti-littering interventions to influence behaviours and attitudes of road users towards litter. These include anti-littering messaging through social media, trialling AI enforcement cameras to capture those throwing litter on the SRN, using geofencing to send targeted anti-littering messages to mobile devices around identified litter hotspots, as well as putting up anti-littering posters and signs and installing car and lorry height bins at motorway service areas, to encourage drivers and passengers to dispose of their litter appropriately.

**■ Electric Vehicles: Exhaust Emissions****Mr Paul Kohler:**[\[37081\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate her Department has made of the potential impact of trends in the level of use of electric vehicles on emissions in the next 15 years.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

The main driver of electric vehicle uptake in the UK is expected to be the Zero Emission Vehicle mandate for cars and vans. This has legislated zero emission vehicle targets for sales of new cars, rising from 22% of new car sales in 2024 to 80% in 2030, and for sales of new vans, rising from 10% in 2024 to 70% in 2030. A cost benefit analysis was published alongside the regulation that estimates that this uptake of zero emission vehicles will deliver greenhouse gas savings of 29 Mt CO<sub>2</sub>e across carbon budget 5 (2028-2032), 79 Mt CO<sub>2</sub>e across carbon budget 6 (2033-2037), and a total of 420 Mt CO<sub>2</sub>e savings from 2024-2050.

**■ Ferries: Pay****Neil Duncan-Jordan:**[\[35600\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has had discussions with harbour authorities in (a) Poole and (b) Portsmouth on the application of the Seafarers Wages Regulations 2024 on ferry services scheduled to operate from these ports in 2025.

**Mike Kane:**

Department for Transport officials engaged with all harbour authorities with services in scope of the Seafarers' Wages Act 2023 and Regulations 2024 to explain how the

legislation applies, ahead of it coming into force. This included Poole and Portsmouth.

#### ■ **HM Coastguard: North West**

**Mr Gregory Campbell:** [\[36365\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she made an assessment of the potential impact of relocating HM Coastguard's mud rescue capability from Coleraine to Bangor on the (a) North Coast and (b) North West.

**Mike Kane:**

An operational assessment of the impact of relocating HM Coastguard's mud rescue capability from Coleraine, including the impact on the (a) North Coast and (b) North-West was undertaken both at Area and Divisional level.

#### ■ **Housing: Parking**

**Kevin Hollinrake:** [\[36099\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what guidance her Department has issued to local authorities on the practice of charging (a) to allow householders to park within the curtilage of their property without a formally approved dropped kerb and (b) making highways works to drop a kerb; and whether councils are able to generate a profit from such charges.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

The Department has issued no guidance to local authorities on these matters. Section 184 of the Highways Act 1980 makes clear that local authorities may recover costs of carrying out works to create a dropped kerb, once complete.

#### ■ **National Highways: Flood Control**

**Blake Stephenson:** [\[35857\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 25 February 2025 to Question 30745 on National Highways: Flood Control, if she will have discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the potential merits of providing additional funding to Internal Drainage Boards that wish to take on responsibility for Highways balancing ponds.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

The ownership and management of National Highways' assets, at this level, fall within National Highways' delegated authority. The Department does not plan to make an assessment on the future ownership of balancing ponds owned by National Highways.

## ■ Public Transport: Fylde

**Mr Andrew Snowden:**

[\[35814\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what funding her Department is providing for public transport projects in Fylde.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The government is committed to delivering the better, more reliable bus services that passengers deserve. In the Budget the government confirmed investment of over £1 billion to support and improve bus services and keep fares affordable. Lancashire County Council has been allocated over £27 million for the 2025 to 2026 financial year to support and improve bus services.

All future funding for buses will be considered as part of the upcoming multi-year spending review. We have also committed to reforming bus funding to give local leaders more control and flexibility to allow them to plan ahead to deliver their local transport priorities.

Lancashire County Council will also receive a share of the £650 million-plus funding for local transport announced in the Budget. This funding aims to support everyday journeys and improve transport connections in our towns, villages, and rural areas, as well as in our major cities.

## ■ Public Transport: Older People

**Helen Maguire:**

[\[35584\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of enabling people over 60 to travel for free on public transport in England.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) provides free off-peak bus travel to those with eligible disabilities and those of state pension age, currently sixty-six. The ENCTS costs around £700 million annually and any changes to the statutory obligations, such as lowering the age of eligibility, would therefore need to be carefully considered for its impact on the scheme's financial sustainability.

Local authorities in England have the power to offer concessions in addition to their statutory obligations such as lowering the age of eligibility. Additional local concessions are provided and funded by local authorities from local resources.

The government has confirmed £955 million for the 2025 to 2026 financial year to support and improve bus services in England outside London. This includes £243 million for bus operators and £712 million allocated to local authorities across the country. Surrey County Council has been allocated £12 million of this funding. Funding allocated to local authorities to improve services for passengers can be used in whichever way they wish. This could include extending the discretionary concessions available in the local area.

**■ Railways: Fares**

**James McMurdock:** [35614]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of increases in regulated rail fares on commuters in England.

**James McMurdock:** [35615]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions her Department has had with (a) train companies and (b) public transport campaigners on the impact of increased rail fares.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The Department regularly meets with the rail industry and stakeholders, on a variety of issues including rail affordability. Our aim is to keep the price of rail travel at a point that works for both passengers and taxpayers, where possible.

This year's increase was the lowest absolute increase in three years and will help ensure that funding for the railway is fairly balanced between the passengers who use it and the taxpayers who do not.

**■ Railways: Standards**

**James McMurdock:** [35612]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment her Department has made of trends in the level of (a) delays and (b) cancellations of trains in England.

**Simon Lightwood:**

Ministers have been clear that rail services have been failing passengers; we need to improve services for passengers and deliver better value for money for the taxpayer.

The Rail Minister is meeting with the Managing Directors of all train operators and their Network Rail counterparts, to address poor performance and demand immediate action to raise standards.

Publicly-owned Great British Railways will end years of fragmentation – bringing together track and train to deliver for passengers with more reliable, better-quality services and simpler ticketing and fares. Shadow Great British Railways (SGBR) will start to provide the opportunity to take joined up, whole system decisions that improve performance for the benefit of passengers and taxpayers.

The Office of Rail and Road publish statistics on delays and cancellations periodically and quarterly on their website at

<https://dataportal.orr.gov.uk/statistics/performance/passenger-rail-performance/>.

**■ Roads: Repairs and Maintenance**

**Helen Whately:** [35730]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what funding her Department plans to provide for road improvements at the capital roads project Brenley Corner; and when work will begin on it.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

Proposals to improve Brenley Corner on the A2 are being developed as part of the pipeline of projects to be considered for possible delivery in a future Road Investment Strategy. Funding has been allocated for the development stages of the proposals only. If taken forward, the project would enter construction beyond 2031.

**Shipping: British Overseas Territories****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[35239\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to support the maritime registration sector within British Overseas Territories.

**Mike Kane:**

The Secretary of State for Transport provides support to the maritime registration sectors of the British Overseas Territories through the Overseas Support Programme managed by the Maritime & Coastguard Agency. This programme has been running since 2016. The programme provides legislative drafting support and personnel training to the OTs maritime administrations and their ship registers to develop their maritime sectors. The MCA also discharges the Secretary of State's general superintendence over all British shipping matters in respect of oversight, good governance, technical advice and common technical policy for the maritime administrations of the Overseas Territories.

**Transport: West Midlands****Mr Andrew Mitchell:**[\[35225\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she is taking steps to implement a (a) long term and (b) devolved approach to funding for (i) local and (ii) regional transport services in the West Midlands.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The department is working with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to implement an "Integrated Settlement" for the West Midlands Combined Authority from April 2025. This will give the Mayor and Combined Authority a consolidated budget across local transport, housing, regeneration, local growth, skills, buildings retrofit, and employment support, with much greater freedom and funding flexibility to drive forward the local economy and deliver growth.

The department is also looking to simplify the current funding arrangements for all other Local Transport Authorities so that they can spend funding according to their local priorities and avoiding unnecessary bureaucracy. Multi-year funding will be confirmed at the upcoming spending review.



## ■ Unadopted Roads

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

[\[36683\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what guidance her Department has issued to local authorities on whether a road in a new build development should be adopted by a local authority.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

Any decision on whether or not to adopt roads of this sort is a matter for the local highway authority. The Department has published guidance on gov.uk on *Highways Adoption: The Adoption of Roads into the Public Highway*, which was last updated in August 2022. It sets out the process by which new and existing roads can be adopted by highway authorities so that they become maintainable at public expense.

## TREASURY

### ■ Agriculture and Business: Inheritance Tax

**Wendy Morton:**

[\[36399\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment she has made of the potential impact of changes to Agricultural Property Relief (APR) on the ability of farming families to pass on agricultural (a) businesses and (b) property to future generations.

**James Murray:**

The Government believes its reforms to agricultural property relief and business property relief from 6 April 2026 get the balance right between supporting farms and businesses, and fixing the public finances. The reforms reduce the inheritance tax advantages available to owners of agricultural and business assets, but still mean those assets will be taxed at a much lower effective rate than most other assets. Despite a tough fiscal context, the Government will maintain very significant levels of relief from inheritance tax beyond what is available to others and compared to the position before 1992. Where inheritance tax is due, those liable for a charge can pay any liability on the relevant assets over 10 annual instalments, interest-free.

The reforms are expected to result in up to 520 estates claiming agricultural property relief, including those also claiming business property relief, paying more inheritance tax in 2026-27. Almost three-quarters of estates claiming agricultural property relief, including those that also claim for business property relief, will not pay any more tax as a result of the changes in 2026-27, based on the latest available data.

### ■ Beer: Excise Duties

**Martin Wrigley:**

[\[35862\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make a comparative assessment of the rate of Beer Duty (a) in the UK and (b) in Europe.

**James Murray:**

There is significant variation in alcohol taxation policy amongst European countries, with some countries having lower alcohol duty rates and some having higher rates.

**■ Cost of Living: Disposable Income****Helen Maguire:**[\[35583\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of trends in the cost of living on future levels of disposable household income.

**James Murray:**

The Government's Plan for Change outlines our goals to raise living standards across the UK and ensure that working people have more money in their pockets.

Specific actions already taken by the Government include increasing to the National Living Wage from April 2025; extending the Household Support Fund and Discretionary Housing Payments in England and Wales in 2025-26; and introduction of a new Fair Repayment Rate from April 2025 to cap debt repayments made through Universal Credit.

In the OBR's October 2024 forecast, living standards, as measured by Real Household Disposable Income per capita, were forecast to rise by an annual average of 0.5% over the course of this parliament (Q2 2024 – Q2 2029).

**■ Defence: Expenditure****James Cartlidge:**[\[36438\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Prime Minister's Oral Statement of 25 February 2025 on Defence and Security, whether all of the announced uplift to defence spending will be allocated to the Ministry of Defence.

**Darren Jones:**

On 25 February 2025 the Prime Minister announced that NATO qualifying defence spending will increase to 2.5% GDP by 2027-28. Final budgets for departments for the Spending Review period will be announced on 11 June 2025.

**James Cartlidge:**[\[36439\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Prime Minister's Oral Statement of 25 February 2025 on Defence and Security, whether she plans to hold any of the announced uplift to defence spending as a reserve.

**Darren Jones:**

On 25 February 2025 the Prime Minister announced that NATO qualifying defence spending will increase to 2.5% GDP by 2027-28. Final budgets for departments for the Spending Review period will be announced on 11 June 2025.

**■ Economic Growth: Oxford-Cambridge Arc****Calum Miller:**[\[36563\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to her speech entitled Chancellor vows to go further and faster to kickstart economic growth on 29 January 2025, which Minister is responsible for the Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor.

**Darren Jones:**

The Chancellor of the Exchequer has announced Lord Patrick Vallance as a Ministerial champion for the Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor.

Lord Vallance brings extensive experience across life sciences, business, academia and government. Whilst responsibility for specific levers will remain within respective departments, Lord Vallance will work closely with local experts and across government to unblock and identify growth-focused interventions across the Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor, so world-class talent can live and work in a local area that is closely connected to world-class companies delivering innovative growth.

**Calum Miller:**[\[36564\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the level of (a) physical and (b) social infrastructure needed for the Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor to achieve its aims.

**Darren Jones:**

The Oxford-Cambridge region is home to world leading universities and globally renowned science and technology firms. But the region's true potential is being held back by constraints, including unaffordable housing and transport constraints. The Government is taking action to drive sustainable growth across this key region which, according to experts, could boost the UK economy by £78 billion by 2035.

The Government believes additional action can maximise the economic performance of the wider Oxford-Cambridge region. This is why Lord Vallance has been appointed as Oxford-Cambridge Growth Champion, to identify, coordinate and promote further interventions linked to the EWR route and drive growth across the region.

The Government is already investing in East West Rail (EWR), which will deliver much needed transport connections between Oxford and Cambridge, and other communities along the route. In the Autumn Budget, the Chancellor also committed £10m of funding to enable the Cambridge Growth Company to develop an ambitious plan for the housing, transport, water, and wider infrastructure Cambridge needs to realise its full potential. In her speech of 29 January, the Chancellor confirmed that a new Cambridge Cancer Research Hospital is being prioritised for investment as part of wave 1 of the New Hospital Programme. In the wider corridor, we will target investment in R&D clusters, including the AI Growth Zone in Culham.

The Government will deliver Phase 2 of the Spending Review and the 10 Year Infrastructure Strategy later this year, to support delivery of the Government's plans for a decade of national renewal. Any further Government support for infrastructure in the region will be assessed and agreed through the formal Spending Review process.

## ■ Government Communication Service: Social Media

**Neil O'Brien:**

[\[35364\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the comments of the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on Newsnight on 29 July 2024, what the evidential basis is for the claim that the Government Communication Service spent hundreds of millions of pounds on filming content for Conservative ministers' social media channels.

**Darren Jones:**

The government has taken decisive action to reduce wasteful spend, In Fixing the Foundations, the Chancellor identified £100m of savings from non-essential spending on government communications across 2024-25 and 2025-26.

Cabinet Office provided estimates of comms spending during the Public Spending Audit, announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in July 2024. Estimates were based on internal Government Communication Service data on campaigns planned by Departments and arm's length bodies at the time of commissioning. These indicate that UK Government was expected to spend £449m on communications campaigns during 24/25. This includes communications considered operationally critical, for example, required to fulfil a statutory duty, life-saving, or required for the efficient functioning of a public service. At Autumn Budget 2024, the Chancellor announced that the Government Communications Service is expecting to save £50m in 2024-25 and £85 million from reducing unnecessary communications spend in 2025-26 – exceeding the £100 million target set out in July.

## ■ Holiday Accommodation: Taxation

**Harriet Cross:**

[\[35548\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 5 February 2025 to Question 27456 on Holiday Accommodation: Tax Allowances, if she will hold discussions with the Scottish Government on sharing data from the Short-term Let Licensing Scheme to (a) identify the number of Furnished Holiday Let properties in Scotland and (b) inform the implementation of changes to the Furnished Holiday Lettings tax regime in Scotland.

**James Murray:**

The UK Government regularly engages with the Scottish Government, including on the implementation of policies. The Scottish Government regularly publishes statistics from its Short-term Licensing Scheme, which is publicly available. HMRC currently has no plans investigate Furnished Holiday Lettings in Scotland separately to those in the rest of the UK and the EEA.

## ■ Hospitality Industry: Herefordshire

**Ellie Chowns:**

[\[35934\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of changes to the level and threshold of (a) employer National Insurance contributions and (b) business rates relief on the hospitality sector in Herefordshire.

**James Murray:**

A Tax Information and Impact Note (TIIN) was published alongside the introduction of the Bill containing the changes to employer NICs. The TIIN sets out the impact of the policy on the exchequer; the economic impacts of the policy; and the impacts on individuals, businesses, and civil society organisations, as well as an overview of the equality impacts.

The Office for Budget Responsibility also published the Economic and Fiscal Outlook (EFO), which sets out a detailed forecast of the economy and public finances.

On business rates, without any government intervention, Retail, Hospitality and Leisure (RHL) relief would have ended entirely in April 2025, creating a cliff-edge for businesses. Instead, the Government has decided to offer a 40 per cent discount to RHL properties up to a cash cap of £110,000 per business in 2025-26 and frozen the small business multiplier.

From 2026-27 we intend to introduce permanently lower tax rates for retail, hospitality, and leisure (RHL) properties with rateable values below £500,000. This tax cut must be sustainably funded, and so we intend to introduce a higher rate on the most valuable properties on 2026-27 - those with rateable values of £500,000 and above. These represent less than one per cent of all properties, but cover the majority of large distribution warehouses, including those used by online giants.

The Government will confirm the rates for the new multipliers at Budget 2025.

Tax policy and legislation is not subject to the Better Regulation Framework Guidance which requires an Impact Assessment to accompany policy decisions. Nevertheless, when the new multipliers are set at Budget 2025, HM Treasury intends to publish analysis of the effects of the new multiplier arrangements.

**■ Humanitarian Aid: Ukraine****Steve Darling:**[\[35393\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether her Department has considered tax breaks for companies that donate humanitarian products to Ukraine.

**Emma Reynolds:**

The Corporation Tax regime includes provisions that allow the deduction of qualifying charitable donations from a company's total taxable profits for the accounting period in which they are paid. Following certain conditions, companies are also able to obtain tax relief for donations of trading stock of medical supplies and/or medical equipment for humanitarian purposes. This could include eligible donations made to support Ukraine.

We sincerely appreciate the dedication and effort UK businesses are demonstrating in their support for Ukraine. The UK is at the forefront to providing military, financial and humanitarian support to Ukraine for as long as it takes. The UK has committed £12.8bn in military, humanitarian and economic support to Ukraine since February 2022. The UK will continue to honour the PM's commitment on 10 July which

provides Ukraine with £3bn of military support p.a. until 2030/31 or for as long as needed. Support from UK businesses to Ukraine is invaluable, and we are committed to strengthening these ties to help in securing a lasting peace for Ukraine.

## ■ Independent Review of the Loan Charge

**Harriet Cross:** [\[35553\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps she is taking to ensure an independent appointment process is in place for the Loan Charge review.

**Harriet Cross:** [\[35554\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she has plans to consult affected stakeholders when establishing the terms of reference for the Loan Charge review.

**Harriet Cross:** [\[35555\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she has considered including the role of promoters and intermediaries within the scope of the Loan Charge review.

**Harriet Cross:** [\[35556\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps she is taking to ensure transparency in the conduct of the Loan Charge review.

**Harriet Cross:** [\[35557\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of expanding the scope of the Loan Charge review to examine the wider contracting sector.

### **James Murray:**

The Government has commissioned an independent review of the Loan Charge. Ray McCann, a highly respected figure in the tax world, is leading the review. His name was suggested by one of the Loan Charge campaigners.

To ensure transparency, the terms of reference make it clear that Mr McCann will be supported by a team of officials who have not previously worked on this policy area and will be based outside of HM Treasury and HMRC. Information provided by HMT and HMRC to the review team and factual comments provided on draft reports will be published after the review has concluded.

The Government does not think it is right for people affected by the Loan Charge to have to wait years to bring this matter to a close and has therefore ensured that the review has a focused remit, allowing it to report by this summer. The Government will respond by Autumn Budget 2025.

Alongside the review, the Government will consult in 2025 on measures to tackle promoters of marketed tax avoidance and has already announced measures to tackle the significant tax avoidance and fraud in the umbrella company market.

## ■ Mortgages

**Manuela Perteghella:**

[36897]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she has made an assessment of the potential impact of interest only mortgages on financial planning for borrowers.

**Emma Reynolds:**

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) has responsibility for the day-to-day operation of the residential mortgage market, including the regulation of interest only mortgages.

Following research and analysis published in August 2023, the FCA is reviewing its existing guidance on the treatment of interest only borrowers.

## ■ Museums and Galleries: Government Assistance

**Bradley Thomas:**

[35917]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 6 February of Question 29769 on Museums, what the cost of the VAT Refund Scheme was in 2024; and whether she plans to change the funding for the VAT Refund Scheme.

**James Murray:**

Under section 33A of the VAT Act 1994, certain museums and galleries are eligible to reclaim VAT incurred on the non-business costs associated with providing free admission to the public. Further information about the scheme and its eligibility conditions can be found in VAT Notice 998: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/vat-refund-scheme-for-museums-and-galleries-notice-998>.

Museums and galleries provide estimates of their likely VAT reclaims when applying to join the scheme, to ensure costs are managed. But they are not required to provide figures on particular costs within their VAT returns on an ongoing basis, as this would impose an excessive administrative burden. The information requested is therefore not available .

Whilst the Government keeps all taxes under review, the Government is not planning any changes to the scheme.

## ■ Public Expenditure

**Jo White:**

[35446]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will outline the timeline for the review of the Green Book.

**Darren Jones:**

The review of the Green Book will report back at the conclusion of the Spending Review in June.



## ■ Public Expenditure: Cost Effectiveness

**Richard Fuller:**

[\[35245\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing structural changes to efficiency oversight as part of the 2025 Spending Review.

**Darren Jones:**

This government is committed to spending taxpayers' money efficiently. At the first phase of the Spending Review for 2025-26 it set a 2% target for efficiency, productivity and savings for all departments.

Phase 2 of the Spending Review (2026-2029) goes further with departments undertaking a line-by-line review of existing day-to-day budgets for the first time in 17 years. Departments are expected to identify a minimum of 5% savings and efficiencies against their current budgets freeing up funding to achieve the government's priorities.

The Office for Value for Money is also advising the Chancellor and me on decisions for the Spending Review, which will include conducting an assessment of where and how to root out waste and inefficiency.

The government will set out its plans on efficiencies at the conclusion of the Spending Review.

## ■ Railways: Infrastructure

**Charlie Maynard:**

[\[35564\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment she has made of the potential impact of rail infrastructure funding on future trends in the level of regional economic growth.

**Darren Jones:**

The growth mission is the central mission of this government. The impact of rail infrastructure investment on regional economic growth is a key consideration that is informing decisions for phase 2 of the Spending Review. The first phase of the Spending Review delivered a £1.1bn cash increase to the transport budget in 2025-26 compared to 2024-25 representing 1.5% real terms growth, delivering record spending.

## ■ Sovereignty: British Indian Ocean Territory

**Dr Luke Evans:**

[\[36451\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she has had discussions with Cabinet colleagues on using funding reallocated from the Overseas Development Assistance budget to fund the Chagos settlement.

**Darren Jones:**

FCDO and the MOD are the lead departments for the Chagos agreement, and must balance any commitments under an agreement against wider priorities in their budgets – and in line with the Managing Public Money framework. OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) guidelines on ODA eligibility will continue to be applied in the usual way to any financial obligations arising from an agreement. The Prime Minister recently announced that the UK will spend 2.5% of GDP on defence by the 2027/28 financial year, funded by a reduction in ODA spending to the equivalent of 0.3% of GNI.

■ **Transport: Oxfordshire****Charlie Maynard:**[\[35563\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to her speech at Siemens Healthineers in Oxfordshire on 29 January 2025, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of allocating additional funding to improve connectivity in Oxfordshire.

**James Murray:**

We are already making considerable investment in transport infrastructure in Oxfordshire, including support for East West Rail and the acceleration of works on the Marston Vale Line to deliver services between Oxford and Bedford, as well as £10m in 25/26 to provide improvements to local bus services. In addition, Oxfordshire County Council received £33.5m of total highway maintenance allocations for the County for 2025/26.

Future transport spending is subject to Phase 2 of the SR and will be considered in the round through that process.

■ **Treasury: Equality****Joe Robertson:**[\[35957\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Answer of 27 September 2024 to Question HL1114 on Treasury: Equality, how many staff in her Department have been permitted to undertake diversity-related network time during core working hours since 1 January 2025; and what proportion of working time they are permitted to spend on that activity.

**James Murray:**

Participation in staff networks is voluntary and carried out in addition to an employee's job role.

■ **Treasury: Food****Sir John Hayes:**[\[35218\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what proportion of food procured by her Department is sourced in the UK.

**James Murray:**

To date the Government has not held information on where publicly procured food is sourced from.

For the first time ever, this government will review the food currently bought in the public sector to determine the standards that it is meeting, where it is bought from, and look to introduce monitoring for transparency and accountability within those supply chains to ultimately get the best food for the consumer.

This work will be a significant first step to inform any future changes to public sector food procurement policies as we want to help make it an equal playing field for British producers to bid into the £5 billion spent each year on public sector catering contracts.

**WALES****■ Agriculture: Wales****Richard Foord:**[\[903068\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what discussions she has had with the Welsh Government on support for the farming industry in Wales.

**Dame Nia Griffith:**

The Government is steadfastly committed to the farming sector. We protected the farm budget at its current level and allocated £337m to the Welsh Government at the Autumn Budget.

The Welsh Government in their budget have used this to maintain the Basic Payment Scheme at its current level for another year, providing much needed support for farmers across Wales....a budget as he knows that his party supported, whilst Tory and Plaid Cymru Senedd members tried to block it.

**■ Economic Growth: Wales****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[903070\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what recent discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on increasing economic growth in Wales.

**Chris Vince:**[\[903072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what recent discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on increasing economic growth in Wales.

**Jo Stevens:**

Kickstarting economic growth is at the heart of our Plan for Change. Since coming into government, I have worked with UK and Welsh Government colleagues to drive over £1.5 billion in private investment from the likes of Eren Holding and Copenhagen

Infrastructure Partners into Wales, creating hundreds of jobs and laying the ground for thousands more.

### ■ Infrastructure: Wales

**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[903069\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what discussions she has had with the Welsh Government on steps to improve infrastructure in Wales.

**Jo Stevens:**

Our Plan for Change will turn the UK into a clean energy superpower.

In just the last two weeks, I was very pleased to announce Copenhagen Infrastructure Partner's £600m investment into Bute Energy and GreenGen Cymru.

This will contribute significantly to the UK Government's Clean Power 2030 ambition of doubling onshore wind and Welsh Government targets for green electricity by 2035.

### ■ Women: Football

**Peter Swallow:** [\[903071\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what steps she is taking with the Welsh Government to build on the participation of Wales at UEFA Women's Euro 2025.

**Jo Stevens:**

I'm thrilled that our Wales Women's football team has qualified for the Euros for the first time, and I wish them all the very best for their games, especially the one against the Lionesses on 13 July.

We are working closely with the Welsh Government to take full advantage of this unique opportunity to promote Wales as a first-class destination for international investment and tourism.

## WORK AND PENSIONS

### ■ Attendance Allowance

**Seamus Logan:** [\[35530\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department has targets for the time taken to process Attendance Allowance.

**Torsten Bell:**

The Actual Average Clearance Time for Attendance Allowance claims for January 2025 was 23 working days. There is a quick application process for people who have been diagnosed with a terminal illness and aren't expected to live more than 12 months. These claims are fast tracked.

Attendance Allowance is currently undergoing a significant modernisation reform through the piloting of an on-line digital claim process as a part of the department's wider Service Modernisation plans.

Please note, the Average Actual Clearance Time figures 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.

## ■ Education and Employment: Young People

**Lewis Cocking:**

**[35801]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the press release entitled Biggest employment reforms in a generation unveiled to Get Britain Working again, published on 26 November 2024, what steps her Department is taking to implement the youth guarantee.

**Alison McGovern:**

Our plan to get Britain working includes a new Youth Guarantee for all young people aged 18-21 in England to ensure that they can access quality training opportunities, an apprenticeship or help to find work.

The Department for Work and Pensions and the Department for Education are working closely with the eight Mayoral Strategic Authorities in England who will begin delivering the Youth Guarantee Trailblazers announced in the Get Britain Working White Paper from Spring 2025.

To tackle the rising number of young people who are not participating in education, employment or training, these Trailblazers will test how new local leadership, accountability structures and existing provision can be integrated into a cohesive education, training and employment support for young people. More broadly, we will work closely with mayoral authorities on a range of wider initiatives such as developing national and local partnerships to support the Youth Guarantee .

The Trailblazers will run for 12 months, and we will use the learning to inform the future design and development of the Youth Guarantee as it rolls-out across the rest of England. Additionally, Department for Education are also developing new foundation apprenticeships to give more young people a foot in the door at the start of their working lives whilst supporting the pipeline of new talent that employers will need to drive economic growth.

The Department for Work and Pensions are also working to develop proposals for reform to the system of health and disability benefits and will set them out in a Green Paper in the Spring. The Government is committed to putting the views and voices of disabled people at the heart of all that we do, so we will consult on these proposals with disabled people and representative organisations.

## ■ Employment: Autism

**Harpreet Uppal:**

[\[35981\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what support is available to companies seeking to (a) train and (b) employ autistic job seekers.

**Alison McGovern:**

Neurodivergent people bring many positive benefits to workplaces but face particular barriers to employment, which is reflected in a poor overall employment rate. As a government, we want to support all forms of neurodiversity in the workplace by encouraging employers to adopt neuro-inclusive working practices so that everyone can thrive at work.

On 29 January this year, the Government launched an independent panel of academics with expertise and experiences of neurodiversity to advise us on boosting neurodiversity awareness and inclusion at work. Many of the panel are diagnosed or identify as neurodivergent and/or have familial experience alongside their professional experience and expertise.

The panel will consider the reasons why neurodivergent people have poor experiences in the workplace, and a low overall employment rate. Recommendations are expected to include employer actions that can support the inclusion of neurodivergent people, including in recruitment and day to day workplace practices.

Employers have a key role to play. Our support to employers includes the online Support with Employee Health and Disability service, to support employers managing health and disability in the workplace. This includes questions of disclosure and equipping employers to feel confident having conversations about health and disability. The Disability Confident scheme also signposts employers to expert resources which support the employment of disabled people, including neurodivergent people.

## ■ Employment: Chronic Illnesses

**Anneliese Midgley:**

[\[35794\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to support young people living with a long-term health condition to find work.

**Alison McGovern:**

The Government recognises that many people find health conditions and disabilities a barrier to employment. Disabled people and people with health conditions are a diverse group so access to the right work and health support, in the right place, at the right time, is key.

Department for Work and Pensions currently provides young people aged 16-24, who are claiming Universal Credit, with labour market support through an extensive range of interventions at a national and local level. This support includes the Youth Employment Programme, Youth Hubs across Great Britain, and Youth Employability Coaches for young people with additional barriers to finding work. Youth

Employability Coaches specifically work closely with Disability Employment Advisors to support those with disabilities and health conditions.

Department for Work and Pensions and Department for Education will also be launching a Youth Guarantee for all 18-21 year olds in England to ensure that they can access quality training opportunities, an apprenticeship or help to find work, starting in eight Youth Trailblazer areas from this Spring.

There are a range of specialist initiatives to support individuals with health conditions to stay in work and get back into work, which involve joint working between Department for Work and Pensions and Department for Health and Social Care. Support includes Employment Advisers in NHS Talking Therapies, Individual Placement and Support programme for people with severe mental illnesses, and Intensive Personalised Employment Support programme aimed at disabled people with complex barriers to employment. In addition, Department for Health and Social Care's Early Support Hubs also provide employment advice and broader mental health and wellbeing support to young people aged 11-25.

## ■ Employment: Mental Illness

**Katie White:**

[\[35509\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to (a) support young people with mental health conditions into work and (b) help reduce the number of young people signed off work due to mental health conditions.

**Alison McGovern:**

The Get Britain Working White Paper set out the government's plans to drive forward approaches to tackling economic inactivity, create an inclusive labour market in which everybody can participate and progress in work, and meet the long-term ambition of an 80% employment rate. The White Paper set out three major reforms: to create a new Jobs and Careers Service, address the growing and unsustainable problem of people being out of work due to poor health, and establish a new Youth Guarantee.

The Youth Guarantee will be for all 18-21 year olds in England and will ensure that they can access quality training opportunities, an apprenticeship or help to find work, starting in eight Youth Guarantee Trailblazer areas this Spring.

Department for Work and Pensions already provides young people aged 16-24, who are claiming Universal Credit, with labour market support through an extensive range of interventions at a national and local level. This support includes the Youth Employment Programme, Youth Hubs across Great Britain, and Youth Employability Coaches for young people with additional barriers to finding work. Youth Employability Coaches specifically work closely with Disability Employment Advisors to support those with disabilities and health conditions.

The Government also recognises that many people find health conditions and disabilities, including mental ill health, a barrier to employment. Disabled people and people with health conditions are a diverse group so access to the right work and health support, in the right place, at the right time, is key.



There are a range of specialist initiatives to support individuals with health conditions to stay in work and get back into work, which involve joint working between Department for Work and Pensions and Department for Health and Social Care. Support includes Employment Advisers in NHS Talking Therapies, Individual Placement and Support programme for people with severe mental illnesses, and Intensive Personalised Employment Support programme aimed at disabled people with complex barriers to employment. In addition, Department for Health and Social Care's Early Support Hubs also provide employment advice and broader mental health and wellbeing support to young people aged 11-25.

Policy relating to waiting lists for people referred for mental health support sits with my Ministerial colleagues at the Department for Health and Social Care, and you may wish to raise the matter with them.

## ■ **Employment: Musculoskeletal Disorders**

**Anneliese Midgley:**

[\[35793\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to support people living with a musculoskeletal condition to remain in work.

**Alison McGovern:**

MSK conditions are one of the leading conditions reported by people who are economically inactive due to long-term sickness in the UK, increasing by 34% between 2018/19 and 2023/24.

The 'Get Britain Working' white paper sets out government's plans to reform employment, health and skills support to tackle rising economic inactivity levels including the £3.5m joint DWP, DHSC and NHS England 'Getting It Right First Time' MSK Community Delivery Programme which will work directly with ICBs to reduce MSK community waiting times, improve data and enable referral pathways to wider support services.

WorkWell sites also went live in 15 areas across England from October 2024, providing low intensity holistic support for health-related barriers to employment, and a single joined up gateway to existing local work and health service provision. By Spring 2026, WorkWell is expected to support up to 56,000 disabled people and people with health conditions, including MSK, to get into work and get on at work.

## ■ **Pension Credit**

**Dr Luke Evans:**

[\[35767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the number of Pension Credit applications rejected by decision makers since September 2024; and what the reasons were for the rejection of those applications.

**Torsten Bell:**

The latest published data on Pension Credit applications and awards was published on 27 February [[Pension Credit applications and awards: February 2025 - GOV.UK](#)]. This showed that DWP cleared 232,200 Pension Credit claims between 29 July 2024



and 23 February 2025, of which 117,800 claims were awarded Pension Credit and 114,500 were not awarded Pension Credit. In common with all income-related benefits, a person's eligibility for Pension Credit depends on their financial and household circumstances. The most common reason why a person might not qualify for Pension Credit is because their household income is too high.

**Dr Luke Evans:**

[\[36448\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 25 February 2025 to Question 31507 on Pension Credit, from which directorate have the additional staff been deployed to process pension credit applications; and for how long the additional staff have been seconded to process pension credit applications.

**Dr Luke Evans:**

[\[36449\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 25 February 2025 to Question 31507 on Pension Credit, whether she is taking steps to ensure that backlogs of work are actioned within directorates that have seconded additional staff to process pension credit applications.

**Torsten Bell:**

The directorates within DWP where colleagues were redeployed to support Pension Credit activity were from Child Maintenance Service and Counter Fraud, Compliance and Debt. Other additions were via use of a flexible pool of DWP colleagues that move across functions as required.

Our approach to deploying additional people to support Pension Credit activity was taken in a manner to not disadvantage other services. Backlogs have not emerged as a consequence of these moves.

## ■ Pension Credit: Aldridge-brownhills

**Wendy Morton:**

[\[36402\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 3 March 2025 to Question 33016 on Pension Credit: Aldridge-Brownhills, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of publishing data on the number of outstanding Pension Credit claims at the constituency level.

**Torsten Bell:**

There are currently no plans to publish volumes of Pension Credit Outstanding Claims at a constituency level. Statistics on the number of Pension Credit outstanding claims for Great Britain were published on 27 February 2025. This includes numbers of applications that were received, awarded and not awarded, and outstanding, up to week commencing 17 February 2025. [Pension Credit applications and awards: February 2025 - GOV.UK.](#)

Outstanding Pension Credit claims for Great Britain totalled 30,400 at the end of week commencing 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2025. This includes 7,100 advanced claims. Advanced claims are where the application can be started up to 4 months before reaching State Pension age.

At the end of week commencing 24<sup>th</sup> June 2024, the last full week of the previous government, outstanding Pension Credit claims for Great Britain totalled 35,000. This includes 5,500 advanced claims.

Pension Credit caseload statistics are available at a constituency level on Stat-Xplore: [Stat-Xplore - Log in](#).

## ■ Pensioners: Lincolnshire

**Sir John Hayes:** [\[34776\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many pensioners are living in poverty in (a) South Holland and the Deepings constituency and (b) Lincolnshire.

**Torsten Bell:**

Statistics on the number of pensioners living in relative and absolute poverty are not available at a constituency or county level.

Statistics on the number of pensioners living in relative and absolute poverty are published annually in the Households Below Average Income statistics: [Households below average income: for financial years ending 1995 to 2023 - GOV.UK](#). These statistics include regional breakdowns.

## ■ Pensions: Regulation

**Mrs Sureena Brackenridge:** [\[35880\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what protections exist for pensioners in the case of scheme buyouts.

**Torsten Bell:**

Insurance buyout is a long-established way of defined benefit pension schemes securing members' full pensions. Members are guaranteed to receive their full pension from an insurer, backed by a rigorous capital adequacy regime and underpinned by 100 per cent compensation from the Financial Services Compensation Scheme.

Trustees have a fiduciary duty to act in the best interests of the members and must be satisfied that transferring the liabilities of the scheme to an insurer is in the best interests of the members before the transfer can take place.

## ■ Small Businesses: Sick Pay

**James McMurdock:** [\[35609\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of increasing the rate of statutory sick pay on financial costs for small businesses.

**Alison McGovern:**

The Department undertook a Regulatory Impact Assessment covering the measures in the Employment Rights Bill to strengthen Statutory Sick Pay: removing the Lower Earnings Limit and the waiting period. This can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/employment-rights-bill-impact-assessments>. The Regulatory Impact Assessment estimates that small and micro businesses pay around 60% of the annual SSP cost to employer.

## ■ Statutory Sick Pay

**Graham Leadbitter:** **[36543]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of changing the replacement rate to the Statutory Sick Pay lower earnings limit on people on this limit.

**Alison McGovern:**

The Department undertook a Regulatory Impact Assessment covering the measures in the Employment Rights Bill to strengthen Statutory Sick Pay: removing the Lower Earnings Limit and the waiting period. This can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/employment-rights-bill-impact-assessments>.

## ■ Universal Credit

**Mel Stride:** **[34601]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what her Department's timetable is for abolishing the couple's administrative earnings threshold; and what estimate she has made of the potential impact of the abolition of the couple's administrative earnings threshold on the number of people entering the Intensive Work Search regime.

**Alison McGovern:**

The previous administration planned to abolish the Couples AET to increase compliance and conditionality requirements on working households, without clear evidence that this would be cost-effective. The Government's plans for supporting working households towards sustainable good quality jobs are set out in the Get Britain Working white paper.

## ■ Winter Fuel Payment: Lancashire

**Mr Andrew Snowden:** **[36839]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the number of eligible people who have applied for and are waiting to receive the winter fuel payment for winter 2024-25 in (a) Fylde and (b) Lancashire.

**Torsten Bell:**

On 27 February 2025 we published Pension Credit applications and award statistics. This publication provides application volumes up to 23 February 2025. [Pension Credit Applications and Awards - February 2025](#).

## WRITTEN STATEMENTS

### ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

#### ■ Government Response to the Consultation on Reforms to the Bathing Water Regulations 2013

**Minister for Water and Flooding (Emma Hardy):**

[\[HCWS516\]](#)

In November last year, the Government, jointly with Welsh Government, announced the consultation on Reforms to The Bathing Water Regulations 2013, in the first shake-up to our bathing waters since the Regulations were introduced. These reforms include removing strict automatic de-designation, amending the designation process to include feasibility of improvement as a criterion for designation, and moving the current fixed dates of the monitored bathing season into guidance.

The Government received clear public support for its proposed three proposed reforms, nine technical amendments, and two wider reforms. These reforms align with the recommendations made in the Office of Environmental Protection's report on the implementation of the Bathing Water Regulations 2013. We now intend to proceed with their implementation. We will also begin robust research and development on the wider reforms to see how they can best be implemented in future. Defra will work closely with the Environment Agency to ensure the new measures are implemented effectively and innovatively.

We are also reopening the bathing water application window in 2025. From May, communities in England can apply for new bathing waters, meaning that some additional sites may be designated ahead of the 2026 season. Prospective sites will be assessed against the Government's newly reformed standards, set to become law later this year. Further details of the application process will be published in guidance at the start of the 2025 bathing season.

Updating bathing water regulations is part of the wider action the Government is taking to fix our water system. To meet the scale of the challenge, and deliver transformational change, the Government last year launched an Independent Commission into the water sector to review its regulatory system. On 27 February, the Commission launched a wide-ranging Call for Evidence, which is open for views from all interested parties until 23 April. The Commission is focused on recommendations to strengthen the water sector and the regulatory framework, whereas the planned reforms to the Bathing Water Regulations 2013 are focused on specific improvements to the operation and management of the bathing water system, so that more people have the opportunity to experience the benefits of our beautiful waters.

## ■ Sustainable Farming Incentive

**Minister for Food Security and Rural Affairs (Daniel Zeichner):** [\[HCWS514\]](#)

With record numbers of farm businesses in farming schemes and the sustainable farming budget successfully allocated, yesterday the Government has stopped accepting new applications for the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI24).

Our Environmental Land Management schemes will remain in place, including SFI, and there will be a new and improved SFI offer with more information in summer 2025.

Every penny in all existing SFI24 agreements will be paid to farmers, and outstanding eligible applications that have been submitted will also be taken forward.

Our vision is for a sector with food production at its core because food security is national security. We want farm businesses to be more resilient to shocks and disruption, and an agricultural sector that recognises restoring nature is not in competition with sustainable food production but is essential to it.

By pursuing these principles, we will support farm businesses to be more profitable, addressing the underlying problem that some farmers do not make enough money for the hard work they put in.

This Government inherited farming schemes which were underspent, meaning millions of pounds were not going to farming businesses. This Government is proud to have secured the largest budget for sustainable food production in our country's history, with £5 billion over a 2-year period to sustainable farming and nature recovery.

We have left no stone unturned in our determination to get farmers into our Environmental Land Management schemes. As a result, we now have a record number of farmers in these schemes with more than 50,000 farm businesses and more than half of all farmed land now being managed under our schemes.

The largest of these schemes, SFI, now has more than 37,000 live agreements in place. It is not only delivering sustainable food production and nature's recovery for today and the years ahead, but it is also putting money back into farm businesses.

However, this Government inherited an uncapped scheme aimed at mass participation of farm businesses, despite a finite farming budget. The high level of participation in SFI means we have now reached the upper limit.

Now is the right time for a reset: supporting farmers, delivering for nature and targeting public funds fairly and effectively towards our priorities for food, farming and nature.

We will take forward any submitted SFI application where the agreement has not yet started. If farmers have already submitted an application, they will receive an agreement. If farmers are in the SFI Pilot, they will be able to apply when the pilot agreement ends.

The reformed and improved SFI will:

- deliver our vision of a sector with food production at its core, supporting less resilient farm businesses while ensuring nature recovery

- ensure we deliver value for money for taxpayers as we invest in sustainable food production and nature recovery
- have a clear budget set and put in place strong budgetary controls so that SFI is affordable
- better target SFI actions fairly and effectively, focusing on helping less productive land contribute to our priorities for food, farming and nature.

As we evolve the scheme, we will listen to farmers' feedback to ensure we learn and improve for the future.

Our improved SFI scheme will be another step in this Government's New Deal for Farmers to support growth and return farm businesses to profitability. In recent weeks we have already:

- extended the Seasonal Worker Visa Scheme for 5 years.
- outlined plans to back British produce across the public estate.
- protected farmers in trade deals.
- invested £110 million in farming grants to improve productivity, trial new technologies and drive innovation in the sector.
- made the supply chain fairer, including new regulations for the pig sector by the end of this month.
- invested over £200 million in a new National Biosecurity Centre to protect livestock from diseases.

The Government is committed to working with farmers and farm organisations to ensure future policies deliver in the best interests of farming for the long term. For instance, we are developing the first-ever long-term Farming Roadmap to understand the barriers facing farmers and identify ways to reform the farming budget so that it can best deliver for food production and the environment.

The Land Use Framework will guarantee our long-term food security and future-proof our farm businesses, supporting economic growth on the limited land we have available.

I will be making an oral statement on this subject later today.

## HOME OFFICE

### ■ Statement of Changes in Immigration Rules

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Migration and Citizenship (Seema Malhotra):** [\[HCWS515\]](#)

My rt hon Friend the Home Secretary is today laying before the House a Statement of Changes in Immigration Rules.

### **Introduction of a Visit Visa requirement on Trinidad and Tobago**

We are today introducing a visa requirement on all visitors from Trinidad and Tobago. Nationals of Trinidad and Tobago will also be required to obtain a Direct Airside Transit Visa if they intend to transit via the UK having booked travel to another country. The visa requirement comes into force at 15:00 GMT today.

Consequential to this, nationals of Trinidad and Tobago will no longer be eligible to apply for an electronic travel authorisation for travel to the UK.

There will be a six-week, visa-free transition period for those who already hold an electronic travel authorisation and confirmed bookings to the UK obtained on or before 15:00 GMT 12 March 2025 where arrival in the UK is no later than 15:00 BST 23 April 2025.

Arrangements are in place so that nationals of Trinidad and Tobago can apply for visas. We are publicising the changes so travellers are aware and can plan accordingly.

We are taking this action due to an increase in the number of Trinidad and Tobago nationals travelling to the UK for purposes other than those permitted under visitor rules. This has included a significant and sustained increase in asylum claims, which has added significantly to operational pressures at the border and resulted in frontline resource being diverted from other operational priorities.

The decision to introduce a visa requirement has been taken solely for migration and border security reasons. Our relationship with our Commonwealth partner Trinidad and Tobago remains a strong and friendly one. Any decision to change a visa status is not taken lightly and we keep the border and immigration system under regular review to ensure it continues to work in the UK national interest.

### **Changes to the Ukraine Scheme**

The Ukraine Permission Extension Scheme (UPE) opened on 4 February 2025, and allows Ukrainians, and their eligible family members, who have been living in the UK with permission under one of the existing routes within Appendix Ukraine Scheme, or outside the Immigration Rules in specified circumstances, to apply for a further period of 18 months' permission to stay in the UK. The launch of UPE reflects our commitment to providing further support for Ukrainians in the UK whilst the conflict with Russia continues.

We are making some minor changes to UPE to extend the validity requirements further. This will include bringing in scope children under 18 who were granted Leave to Enter the UK outside the Immigration Rules so they could join or stay with their parents who already held Ukraine Scheme permission. Going forward, a change to the Homes for Ukraine Scheme guidance that was published on 31 January will enable eligible parents to sponsor their children to come to UK under the Homes for Ukraine route. However, making this change to the UPE requirements now will enable children who have already been granted Leave Outside the Rules in these circumstances to align their status with their parents by enabling them to apply to UPE when their current permission is due to expire. This will provide further reassurance and certainty about their status in the UK.



There will also be some minor drafting changes to the eligibility rules for UPE to better reflect the existing policy intention.

We are also making changes to the Homes for Ukraine (HfU) scheme, to include the 'approved sponsor' requirements for eligible minors in both validity and eligibility sections of the Rules. This will enable decision makers to determine applications which do not have an approved sponsor. We will also align the definition of parent across HfU and UPE, so it is consistent with the wider immigration system. In order to preserve the integrity of the broader immigration system, we will also introduce a requirement that parents who wish to be joined by their children in the UK under the HfU scheme must be lawfully resident in the UK.

Finally, changes to the Immigration Rules were laid in November 2024 (HC 334) to end the use of 'permission to travel' (PTT) letters on the Ukraine schemes from 13 February onwards. The Rules currently allow PTT arrivals to vary their permission in country within 6 months of their arrival. As there will be no further PTT arrivals from 13 February, no one will be able to vary their permission in this way from 13 August onwards. We are consequently making a change to the Rules to remove this provision from that date, as it will no longer be required.

These changes to Appendix Ukraine Scheme do not constitute a reduction of support for Ukraine and the UK government remains steadfast in its commitment to Ukraine and the Ukrainian people.

### **Changes relating to the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS)**

The EUSS enables EU, other European Economic Area (EEA) and Swiss citizens living in the UK before the end of the post-EU exit transition period at 11pm on 31 December 2020, and their family members, to obtain the immigration status they need to continue living in the UK, consistently with the Citizens' Rights Agreements.

The main changes enable a non-EEA national applicant to use a UK-issued biometric residence card or permit which has expired by up to 18 months as proof of their identity and nationality; confirm that a person with a pending administrative review of an EUSS decision, who has not left the UK or has been granted entry into the UK (except on immigration bail), will not be removed from the UK; and enable an application to be refused on suitability grounds, without a deportation or exclusion order being in place, where the applicant's conduct before the end of the transition period meets the relevant EU law public policy test applicable under the Agreements.

### **Changes relating to care workers in the Skilled Worker route**

The Government values the important contribution care workers from overseas make to social care services. However, too many providers have recruited care workers to the UK and failed to provide them with the work they were promised, or have subjected them to appalling exploitation. We have a duty to protect people against destitution, exploitation and modern slavery, and the best way to do so is through secure, properly paid work and employment conditions.



We are therefore making changes to address the growing pool of care workers and senior care workers in this route who no longer have sponsorship, because their sponsors have been unable to offer sufficient work and/or have lost their sponsor licences.

The changes require providers to try to recruit from this pool of workers who are seeking new employment, before seeking to sponsor new recruits from other immigration routes or from overseas.

The changes do not apply to workers outside England, or where providers are seeking to sponsor someone switching from another immigration route who has already been working for them for at least three months. We will keep the geographic coverage of this requirement under close review.

### **Changes to the minimum salary for Skilled Worker visas**

A routine change is being made to update the minimum salary floor from £23,200 per year (or £11.90 per hour) to £25,000 per year (or £12.82 per hour). It is standard practice to update this and other salary requirements across work visa routes each year, using the latest Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS). This ensures these salary requirements continue to reflect the latest pay situation for UK workers. As the Government intends to shortly publish an Immigration White Paper, the changes are being limited to only updating the minimum salary floor. This is to ensure it reflects the latest ASHE data and remains significantly above the National Living Wage, which is also increasing in April 2025.

### **Appendix ETA – exemption for British Nationals (Overseas)**

We are removing British Nationals (Overseas) from the list of nationalities requiring an electronic travel authorisation (ETA) for travel to the UK.

This means that holders of a BN(O) passport will be able to travel to or transit via the UK without requiring an ETA. We will keep this exemption under review.

These changes to the Immigration Rules are being laid on 12 March 2025. For the changes that introduce a Visa requirement on Trinidad and Tobago, due to safeguarding the operation of the UK's immigration system, those changes will come into effect at 15:00 GMT on 12 March 2025. For the changes relating to the Ukraine Scheme, those changes will come into effect on various dates from 2 April 2025, as detailed in the Statement of Changes. All other changes will come into effect on 9 April 2025.