



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 13 March 2025 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:44 P.M., 13 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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Questions marked thus **[R]** indicate that a relevant interest has been declared.

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

ANSWERS

BUSINESS AND TRADE

■ Construction: Licensing

Alison Bennett:

[\[36971\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what plans his Department has to introduce a licensing scheme for builders undertaking domestic building works.

Sarah Jones:

This Government is working to ensure we have a high-quality and professional construction industry, with consumer protection at the heart of this. TrustMark, sponsored by the Department and licenced by the Government, is the Government Endorsed Quality Scheme that covers work a consumer chooses to have carried out in or around their home. In addition, the Building Safety Act 2022 has introduced competence requirements for both individuals and businesses working in the built environment.

Any action that the Government takes on licensing to protect customers and standards needs to be robust, proportionate and evidence based.

■ Construction: New Businesses

Alison Bennett:

[\[36972\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if his Department will take steps with Companies House to create a database to enable consumers to check whether builders have previously liquidated their companies and opened new businesses under a new name.

Justin Madders:

Companies House does not have any plans to build a specific database for the purpose outlined.

Companies House is taking action to improve the quality of the information on the Register of Companies using powers made available by the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023.

The Act also provides for the compulsory identity verification of directors, persons with significant control and those acting on behalf of companies. This will ensure that consumers are able to more easily trace the previous appointments of company directors. The systems needed to enable the deployment of identity verification are currently being implemented.

■ Energy Intensive Industries: Ceramics

Gareth Snell:

[\[36726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of opening the Energy Intensive Industry Exemption scheme to all ceramics manufacturers.

Sarah Jones:

Eligibility for relief through the British Energy Supercharger scheme is based on an assessment of the electricity and trade intensity of an individual sector and how exposed it is to the risk of carbon leakage.

The list of eligible sectors is set out in legislation, meaning we are unable to add to it without a full public consultation. The Government plans to review eligibility of sectors in 2026 and my officials will keep interested stakeholders updated on developments.

■ Higher Education: Re-employment

Ms Stella Creasy:

[\[36640\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment he has made of the prevalence of the use of fire and rehire practices in higher education in England; and what steps he plans to take to address it.

Justin Madders:

The Government has published a comprehensive package of analysis on the impact of the Employment Rights Bill including an impact assessment of the Bill's measure to end the unscrupulous use of fire and rehire. The evidence on the prevalence of the practice of fire and rehire is limited, however. Department for Business and Trade analysis suggests that <1% of employers might engage in the practice each year.

We are strengthening the law in this area to make it clear that the unscrupulous use of fire and rehire and fire and replace are not acceptable and will be an automatically unfair dismissal.

■ Hong Kong: Security

Alex Sobel:

[\[35755\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps he is taking to (a) advise and (b) safeguard British-based (i) businesses and (ii) people operating in Hong Kong.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

The Department provides a range of services and advice to assist companies doing business in Hong Kong, through our extensive network, both in the UK and at our Consulate. Additionally, the Overseas Business Risk (OBR) service provides information on the political, economic and security risks to support and guide businesses when trading overseas.

FCDO Travel Advice provides information to help British nationals make informed decisions about foreign travel. Travel Advice for Hong Kong remains under regular review to ensure it reflects the latest assessment of risks to British nationals.

■ Hospitality Industry: Policy

Dr Luke Evans: [\[35762\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment he has made of the impact of the Hospitality Sector Council on informing wider government policy towards Pubs and the Hospitality Sector.

Gareth Thomas:

The Hospitality Sector Council is designed as a collaboration between government and the sector. The Council has several working groups led by business which work through specific issues and recommend policy initiatives as appropriate.

Through this collaboration, we are addressing strategic issues related to high street regeneration, skills, sustainability, and productivity. This includes expanding the Hospitality Sector-Based Work Academy Program - addressing high vacancy rates by providing jobseekers with bespoke training, work placements, and guaranteed interviews so that they are job ready. The program when piloted was highly successful with 80% of those who completed the course securing employment in the hospitality sector.

■ Import Duties: USA

Clive Jones: [\[36928\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the end of the US tariff rate quota on UK steel and aluminium exports from 12 March 2025 on (a) economic growth and (b) levels of exports in quarter (i) one and (ii) two of 2025.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

My Department continues to engage closely with the industries affected by the US' termination of its tariff rate quotas on steel and aluminium and to assess the potential impact on UK exports. We are resolute in our support for the UK steel and aluminium industry, which is vital to the UK economy. We have committed up to £2.5 billion to rebuild the steel sector. Our upcoming Steel Strategy will be published in the Spring. We will continue to make the case for a UK exemption to these tariffs.

Clive Jones: [\[36929\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make an assessment with Cabinet colleagues of the potential impact of the implementation of the US reciprocal tariffs proposal on UK steel and aluminium exports from 12 March 2025 on (a) economic growth and (b) levels of exports.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

My Department continues to engage closely with the industries affected by the implementation of the US' reciprocal tariffs proposal. We are resolute in our support for the UK steel and aluminium industry, which is vital to the UK economy. We have committed up to £2.5 billion to rebuild the steel sector and our upcoming Steel Strategy will be published in the Spring. We will continue to make a strong case for a UK exemption to these tariffs.

Clive Jones:[\[36930\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what representations he has made to the (a) US Department of Commerce and (b) Office of the US Trade Representative on (i) digital services tax, (ii) value added tax and (iii) other regulatory issues relevant to the US proposals for reciprocal tariffs.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

The Secretary of State has been having regular, constructive conversations with the US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick, and US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer, to make the case for stronger UK-US trade that benefits both our countries.

We will continue to work with the US and highlight the importance of free and open trade, and we will always do what is in the national interest for our economy, businesses and the British people.

■ Overseas Trade: Russia**Mr Will Forster:**[\[36313\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether his Department is taking steps to support British businesses that lawfully traded with now-sanctioned Russian (a) businesses and (b) people to help them to recover funds lawfully owed to them.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

Our sanctions are designed to minimise impact on the UK and avoid unintended consequences. The Department for Business and Trade has sought to minimise the impact on businesses through implementing appropriate exceptions, specific licences where appropriate, and wind-down periods when some sanctions are introduced. We have also published impact assessments alongside all Russia sanctions legislation.

The Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation has also issued General Licences to address a range of issues affecting stakeholders, including permitting activities related to recovering funds, under specific circumstances and conditions.

■ Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry**Sorcha Eastwood:**[\[35459\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what his expected timeline is for (a) receiving and (b) responding to the Post Office Horizon IT inquiry.

Gareth Thomas:

Sir Wyn Williams is committed to progressing matters as swiftly as he can. Now that the final Phase of gathering oral evidence is complete, Sir Wyn will look to deliver his report on what happened, what went wrong and why. He said in December 2024 that publication would take “many months”. Once the report is published, the Government will respond in due course.

■ **Public Holidays****Grahame Morris:**[\[35246\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 3 March 2025 to Question 31822 on Public Holidays, if he will make an estimate of the (a) cost of introducing an additional annual bank holiday on a permanent basis and (b) financial impact on each sector of the economy.

Justin Madders:

Under the Better Regulation Framework, the Department would be expected to produce an Impact Assessment estimating the costs of an additional, permanent bank holiday if the Government proposed one. However, since the current pattern of bank and public holidays is well established and widely accepted, the Government has no such plans.

The best available indication at present is from the [impact assessment](#) undertaken by the previous Government in 2022, estimating the cost of the one-off Platinum Jubilee bank holiday.

■ **Retail Trade: Fylde****Mr Andrew Snowden:**[\[35405\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps he is taking to support high street businesses in Fylde.

Gareth Thomas:

Revitalising our high streets is a priority for this government. We are delivering across government to create better conditions for high street businesses to thrive. The new Crime and Policing Bill will give better protection for businesses and retail workers, including those in Fylde, against assault and theft. We have introduced High Street Rental Auction powers for local authorities and before Christmas we opened the 100th Banking Hub – providing essential banking services for businesses and high street users. At the Budget the Chancellor announced plans to work with industry to design a new business rates system.

Our Small Business Strategy, to be published later this year, will set out this Government’s plan for further supporting small businesses across key areas, including on the high street.

Within Fylde constituency, Kirkham is benefitting from £6.29m from the Future High Street Fund and £3.27m from High Street Heritage Action Zone funding. This will help

Kirkham become a more vibrant destination through town centre regeneration, bringing benefits to businesses and residents in Fylde.

■ Trade Agreements

Clive Jones: [\[36931\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what recent discussions he has had with his Indian counterpart on free trade negotiations with that country.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

The Business and Trade Secretary travelled to New Delhi in February where he engaged closely with his counterpart, Minister Goyal, to relaunch and progress negotiations towards a deal that delivers on our mutual interests of economic growth.

Following from this they are continuing to work together closely to direct negotiating teams, capitalise on the positive momentum, and secure a deal that strengthens our trade and investment relationship.

■ Trade Agreements: USA

Wendy Morton: [\[35675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what plans he has to negotiate any new state-level trade agreements with the United States.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

The UK is exploring various avenues to strengthen UK-U.S. trade ties and support economic growth, in tandem with development of the Industrial and Trade Strategies. The UK continues to deliver against commitments in signed Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with individual U.S. states, to help UK businesses deepen their commercial links and facilitate trade.

The UK most recently signed an MoU concerning co-operation on economic relations, trade and investment with the State of Colorado on 27 January 2025

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Arts and Copyright: Artificial Intelligence

Terry Jermy: [\[36019\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment her Department has made of the most effective steps to protect copyright and the creative industries against the increase of artificial intelligence usage.

Chris Bryant:

The government recognises the importance of the UKs copyright regime to the economic success of the cultural and creative industries, one of eight growth-driving sectors as identified in our Industrial Strategy. We also recognise the basic principle that rights holders should have control over and seek payment for their work, including when thinking about the role of AI. The current UK Copyright Framework

enables creative right holders to prevent the use of protected works, but we are aware that this can be very difficult to implement in the context of AI, especially for individual firms and creators.

Responses to our consultation on the impact of AI on the copyright regime, which was published on 17 December and closed on 25 February, will inform our approach to the design and delivery of a solution to these issues. Our aim is to clarify the copyright framework for AI – delivering certainty through a copyright regime that provides creators with real control and transparency, and helps them licence their content, while supporting AI developers' access to high-quality material. We will now consider the full range of responses we have received through our consultation.

■ **Broadcasting Programmes: Children**

Ann Davies:

[\[36921\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a similar scheme to the former Young Audiences Content Fund.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Government has no plans to re-introduce a similar scheme to the Young Audiences Content Fund, which concluded on 31 March 2022. However, the Government is committed to the success of our world-leading TV production sector. UK-wide television and film tax reliefs, including for children's television programming, continue to play a vital role in driving production, with over £5.6 billion of expenditure supported in 2024.

■ **Culture**

Adam Jogee:

[\[35905\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on generating new funding streams for arts and culture initiatives in (a) Staffordshire and (b) the United Kingdom.

Chris Bryant:

On top of significant public investment such as the £444 million per year of funding via Arts Council England's National Portfolio, and the approximate £100 million per year through their National Lottery project grants, on 20th February the SoS announced an additional package of investment of over £270 million through the Arts Everywhere Fund for arts venues, museums, libraries and the heritage sector to boost growth and cement Britain's place as a cultural powerhouse.

The Arts Everywhere Fund includes, for example, £85 million of support via the Creative Foundations Fund to support urgent capital works; a fifth round of the Museum Estate and Development Fund worth £25 million; and a fourth round of the Libraries Improvement Fund worth £5.5 million. This investment will support organisations across the country, including those based in Staffordshire.

Alongside investment, we are looking at the way the arts and culture sector receives support to help strengthen it further, by reviewing Arts Council England and exploring how we can better encourage philanthropy to attract more funding to the places that need it most. We want to ensure that the UK has the best framework for philanthropy and that partnerships between government, philanthropists, businesses and civil society are maximised. DCMS will continue to work closely with our partners in the philanthropy sector, and with colleagues across government, including HMT, HMRC and the Office for Investment.

■ Department for Culture, Media and Sport: Equality

Joe Robertson:

[\[35959\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, how many staff in the Department for Culture, Media and Sport have been permitted to undertake diversity-related network time during core working hours.

Stephanie Peacock:

The majority of staff time spent on diversity staff networks is voluntary and unpaid. We have 11 staff in the Department for Culture, Media and Sport who have been permitted to undertake diversity-related network time during core working hours.

■ Film and Television: Northern Ireland

Jim Shannon:

[\[35652\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has had discussions with Northern Ireland Screen on funding for (a) television series and (b) films made in Northern Ireland.

Chris Bryant:

I have had no such specific discussions, but the Government supports film and TV production across the UK, including in Northern Ireland, through screen sector tax reliefs and the UK Global Screen Fund. The British Film Institute (BFI) works in partnership with Northern Ireland Screen on the BFI's Film Audience Network and the BFI's Northern Ireland Skills Cluster.

DCMS has funded the British Film Commission (BFC) with £6m over five years to support the growth of seven geographic production hubs across the UK. Through this, the BFC has provided ongoing support for Northern Ireland's expanding studio infrastructure, including support to four key studios: Belfast Harbour, Titanic, Loop and Silverwood.

The BBC, ITV and Channel 4 have all commissioned critically acclaimed television programmes set and produced in Northern Ireland. This includes Blue Lights, Breathtaking and Trespasses. The Government wants broadcasters, and other commissioners, to be more ambitious in growing the sector outside of London and the South East and to commission content from every part of the country, so that British storytelling reflects the full diversity of people, communities and experiences across the UK.

■ Gambling: Northern Ireland**Jim Shannon:**[\[35667\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of giving the Gambling Commission power to regulate the gambling industry in Northern Ireland.

Stephanie Peacock:

Gambling is a devolved matter for Northern Ireland and therefore regulation is a consideration for the Northern Ireland Executive. We stand ready to support the Northern Ireland Executive with its plans.

■ Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme: Cathedrals**Bradley Thomas:**[\[35916\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 6 February to Question 29771 on Churches, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of changes to the Listed Places of Worship scheme on Cathedrals.

Chris Bryant:

Based on the Department's analysis of previous data, 94% of applications between 2022-2024 have been under £25,000, and most of these claims were for under £5,000. We believe that the modifications were necessary and adequate given the tight fiscal challenges we face.

■ Theatres**Jim Shannon:**[\[35654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what recent steps her Department has taken to support community theatres.

Chris Bryant:

Community theatres are an important part of the UK's cultural ecosystem, and play a vital role in cultivating the creators and audiences of the future. They are the places where many actors, directors and designers learn their craft, and people experience their first live performance. Community theatres make a key contribution to their local communities, culturally, socially, and economically.

The government supports theatres predominantly through Arts Council England. Through their main funding programme, the 2023-2027 National Portfolio Investment Programme, ACE is providing over £100m in grants per year to around 195 theatres across the country.

Across all their funding programmes, including lottery schemes, for the financial year 2024-25, ACE awarded around £300 million to theatres/theatre based organisations.

Whilst all funded theatres play a key role in supporting local communities and engaging local audiences, ACE has funded work specifically with a community focus,

and has awarded circa £10m to community based theatre projects through National Lottery Project Grants over 2024/2025.

Community theatres also benefit from the support that the government provides the sector through Theatre Tax Relief (TTR). Since TTR was introduced in 2014, companies have made claims in relation to 24,700 productions and £645 million has been paid out.

The government has also recently announced over £270 million investment for our arts venues, museums, libraries and our heritage sector.

Community theatres are also supported through the work of the Theatres Trust, a DCMS arms-length body and the national advisory and advocacy organisation for theatres, which offers advice, skills support through its Sector Skills Bank, and has grant-giving programmes. The Theatres Trust awarded Community theatres £200,000 from 2021-2024.

DEFENCE

■ Air Force: Training

Mr Mark Francois:

[\[36610\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many RAF personnel were awaiting flying training on 10 March 2025.

Luke Pollard:

As of 3 March 2025, there were 35 RAF Aircrew who had completed their initial non-role specific RAF training and were awaiting commencement of formal flying training; consisting of 21 Officers and 14 Non-Commissioned Aircrew.

Mr Mark Francois:

[\[36612\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the average wait time is for a training slot for RAF trainee pilots for (a) Typhoons, (b) F35s and (c) Hawk jets.

Luke Pollard:

The average wait time for a training slot for RAF trainee pilots in Training Year 2024-25 has been:

- a. Six weeks for Typhoon
- b. 10 weeks for F35 Lightning
- c. Six weeks for Hawk T2

Mr Mark Francois:

[\[36613\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the average cost was of training a Royal Air Force pilot to Phase 2 Military Flying Training in each training year from 2019-20 to 2024-25; and whether the Department has conducted any further cost modelling since the 2021-22 financial year.

Luke Pollard:

In-depth cost modelling for UK military flying training was conducted in Financial Year 2021-22. There has been no requirement to update since 2021-22 but a review is expected as work commences to consider future options for UK Military Flying Training beyond the current contract in 2033.

The average cost of flying training for Royal Air Force (RAF) pilots in Financial Year 2021-22 was as follows:

RAF Fast Jet: £5,362,085

RAF Multi Engine: £ 953,817

RAF Rotary Wing: £1,041,843

The above figures include pay, support costs and costs within UKMFTS contract up to the point a trainee pilot commences training on a front line aircraft as part of an Operational Conversion Unit.

■ Ammunition: Manufacturing Industries**James Cartlidge:**[\[35342\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many new 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, (ii) Glascoed, Wales and (iii) the UK.

Maria Eagle:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) does not currently hold information about the number of 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 MOD, to provide updated figures. 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: Cadets**Dr Luke Evans:**[\[35770\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions he has had with local cadet forces on increasing the (a) offer and (b) size of those forces.

Dr Luke Evans:[\[35771\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will take steps to increase the (a) offer and (b) size of cadet forces in the context of proposed increases to defence expenditure.

Al Carns:

We want more young people to be able to become Cadets given the tremendous benefits which can be gained from the experience. We are committed to sustaining Cadet Forces across the UK, and we are looking to significantly grow Cadet numbers

and support youngsters throughout the UK to enrich their lives by choosing to join the Cadets.

To this end, I have directed that a review is carried out to look at how we can increase the size and offer of the Cadet Forces. Defence officials have engaged with a wide range of stakeholders to consider how we can deliver these aims. Input has been provided by advocates and subject matter experts including Cadet leaders within the Ministry of Defence, Lords Lieutenants, Cadet Honorary Colonels, through the Cadet Force chains of command, and from many other interested parties.

The review is closely aligned with the Strategic Defence Review and is undertaken in the context of recent announcements of increases in Defence spending. The resource requirements of any expansion will be evaluated in light of competing priorities, but our investment in Cadets is fantastic value for money. The total annual cost of the Cadets is fully covered if the life outcomes of just 1% of Cadets change each year so that they are in education, training, or employment.

■ **Armed Forces: Career Development**

Adam Jogee:

[\[35903\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has made a comparative an assessment of the career trajectories of (a) non-UK and (b) UK personnel.

Al Carns:

Work is ongoing to better understand and improve the careers and lived experience of all members of our Armed Forces.

Defence will only meet current and future security challenges and threats if all our people, regardless of background, are confident that their efforts and skills are properly recognised, their individuality and experience respected, and are able to achieve their full potential.

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

■ **Armed Forces: Gurkhas**

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[\[35830\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 3 March 2025 to Question 33147 on Armed Forces: Commonwealth, which (a) units and (b) independent sub-units form the Brigade of Gurkhas; and which regular armed forces units include Nepalese service personnel.

AI Carns:

The units and independent sub-units which form the Brigade of Gurkhas; and the Regular Armed Forces units that include Nepalese Service personnel are shown in the tables below.

Table 1: Units and Independent Sub-Units that form the Brigade of Gurkhas**UNIT / SUB-UNIT****Brigade of Gurkhas Capbadges**

1st Battalion, The Royal Gurkha Rifles (1 RGR)

2nd Battalion, The Royal Gurkha Rifles (2 RGR)

The Queen's Gurkha Engineers (QGE)

The Queen's Gurkha Signals (QG SIGNALS)

Queen's Own Gurkha Logistic Regiment (QOGLR)

Band of the Brigade of Gurkhas (Band BG)

Gurkha Staff & Personnel Support (GSPS)

Extra Regimentally Employed (ERE) Units

British Gurkhas Nepal (BGN)

Gurkha ARRC Support Battalion (GARRC Sp Bn)

ERE Sub-Units

Gurkha Company Catterick

Gurkha Company Babaji

Gurkha Company Sittang

Gurkha Company Tavoletto

Gurkha Company Mandalay

A (Krithia) Company, 1 RANGER

F (Falklands) Company, 2 RANGER

G (Coriano) Company, 4 RANGER

Table 2: Units in UK Regular Armed Forces which include Nepalese Service personnel

ARMY ARM/SERVICES

Army Air Corps

Adjutant General's Corps

Royal Army Physical Training Corps

Household Cavalry and Royal Armoured Corps

Infantry

Other

Royal Corps of Signals

Royal Regiment of Artillery

Royal Army Medical Services

Royal Corps of Army Music

Corps of Royal Engineers

Corps of Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers

The Royal Logistic Corps

Small Arms School Corps

Royal Navy/Marines

RN Engineer GS (OF)

RN Logistics GS

RN Royal Marines GS

RAF

RAF Engineering

RAF Logistics

Source: Analysis Tri-Service

Notes to Table 2

1. UK Regulars comprise of Full time Service personnel, including Nursing Services, but excluding Full Time Reserve Service (FTRS) personnel, Gurkhas, mobilised Reservists, Military Provost Guard Service (MPGS), Locally Engaged Personnel (LEP), Non-Regular Permanent Staff (NRPS), High Readiness Reserve (HRR) and

Expeditionary Forces Institute (EFI) personnel. Unless otherwise stated, includes trained and untrained personnel.

2. Nationality is as self-declared on the Joint Personnel Administration (JPA).
3. JPA data is based on primary nationality and people can have a second nationality recorded.
4. There are a large number of Gurkha personnel who have taken the opportunity to naturalise once they moved to the UK Regulars, some of these may have subsequently joined different Arm/Services than the ones listed in Table 2.

■ **Armed Forces: Protective Clothing**

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[35848\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of issuing the Peltor ComTac XP/XPI to service personnel as standard.

Maria Eagle:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 5 March 2025 to his Question 34362.

As advised, there is no 'standard' hearing protection therefore no assessment has been made regarding issuing the Peltor ComTac XP/XPI to Service personnel as standard.

■ **Armed Forces: Recruitment**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[35753\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the (a) accessibility and (b) consistency of information on (i) rights and (ii) entitlements available to non-UK recruits.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[35754\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of support available to non-UK armed forces personnel.

Adam Jogee: [\[35904\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to provide information for non-UK personnel at recruitment and transition about their rights and entitlements.

Al Carns:

There is a wide range of information and support available to non-UK recruits and Serving personnel on the Ministry of Defence website and intranet pages, from the single Services, the HIVE Information Centres, the Families Federations, Service Charities and on the Home Office website. This includes single Service guides and policy documents, briefings to personnel, articles in publications such as Welfare Matters and Soldier Magazine and information in:

- The Service Leavers Guide [Service leavers' guide - GOV.UK](#)

- Joint Service Publication 100: Defence Holistic Transition Policy [Defence Holistic Transition Policy](#)
- Discover My Benefits and the Families Hub [Discover My Benefits](#)
- The Home Office specific immigration rules for the Armed Forces and their families - the Appendix HM Armed Forces [Immigration Rules - Immigration Rules Appendix HM Armed Forces - Guidance - GOV.UK](#).

Information is kept under review and updated to ensure it is clear, concise and reflects current policy and rules.

■ Army Foundation College: Disciplinary Proceedings

Helen Maguire: [\[33343\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, on how many occasions staff at the Army Foundation College have been disciplined for violent behaviour against recruits in each year since 2013; and what the nature was of each incident.

Al Carns:

From 2013 to 2024, there have been 14 occasions where staff or former staff at the Army Foundation College Harrogate were convicted of an offence via Court Martial or Summary Hearing for violent behaviour against recruits.

The 14 occasions consisted of eight Court Martials and six Summary Hearings. A further break down of figures may be disclosive and trigger potential breaches of the Data Protection Act.

■ Bomb Disposal

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[35737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he plans to increase the UK's explosive ordnance disposal capacity.

Luke Pollard:

The Ministry of Defence has a world leading Explosive Ordnance Disposal and Search (EOD&S) capability, providing critical support not just to military operations, but also to UK resilience and security through established arrangements in support of the Home Office.

Future force designs of the Royal Navy and British Army will be part of the Strategic Defence Review (SDR) so it would be inappropriate to provide further detail until SDR decisions have been made.

■ Defence Equipment and Support: Staff

Mr Mark Francois: [\[36611\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people were employed in the UK Military Flying Training Systems Team at Defence Equipment and Support in each year from 2019 to 2024; and how many were employed on 10 March 2025.

Maria Eagle:

The number of Full Time Equivalent Defence Equipment and Support (DE&S) staff employed within the Military Flying Training Systems teams as at 31 March in each complete Financial Year since 2019 is detailed in the table below. The figures include civilian and military employees and workforce substitutes.

FINANCIAL YEAR	MILITARY FLYING TRAINING SYSTEM
2019-20	164.77
2020-21	162.81
2021-22	171.83
2022-23	180.12
2023-24	167

The number of Full Time Equivalent DE&S staff employed within the Military Flying Training Systems teams as of 10 March 2025 is 130. This figure represents data taken from a resource planning dashboard used temporarily whilst the resource management software is reconfigured to reflect DE&S' new Operating Model, and as such is not directly comparable with the figures in the table.

■ Defence: Expenditure

Wendy Morton:[\[36671\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what provisional allocation of defence spending he has made to cover the costs associated with the (a) Chagos Islands deal and (b) the transfer of sovereignty to Mauritius.

Luke Pollard:

The terms of the treaty and the associated funding arrangements are still being finalised, and no decision has been made at this time. This will be laid before Parliament in the usual way.

■ Defence: Pensions

James Cartlidge:[\[36706\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of reports that pension funds have chosen not to categorise investments in defence companies as ethical.

Maria Eagle:

We are rightly proud of our world-leading defence industry and recognise the vital role it will play in rising to the challenge of our more dangerous and contested world. The Defence Industrial Strategy Statement of Intent, published in December last year, identified the 'crowding-in' of private sector investment as critical to the

Government's agenda to grow our economy and strengthen our nation's defences. We continue to explore how we can create the conditions needed for the private sector to invest more, and proactively, in Defence, consulting with a wide range of defence and financial services stakeholders.

■ Foreign Relations: Development Aid

Mr Angus MacDonald: [\[36026\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department has taken to ensure that Britain's soft power (a) is maintained (b) continues to play a part in the defence of the UK and her allies, in the context of the reduction in ODA spending.

Luke Pollard:

The Strategic Defence Review will set out the roles, capabilities and reforms required by UK Defence to meet the challenges, threats, and opportunities of the twenty first century. This takes account of the commitment to increase spending on defence to 2.5% of GDP from April 2027 recently set out by the Prime Minister in Parliament.

■ Fylde: Defence

Mr Andrew Snowden: [\[35815\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of an increase in defence spending on investment in Fylde constituency.

Maria Eagle:

The increase in defence spending will fund critical investments in areas like autonomous systems, AI, cyber, rebuilding stockpiles and munition reserves, and therefore will support the security and resilience of the whole of the UK, including Fylde. The full details will be set out in the Strategic Defence Review.

■ Israel: Military Aid

Brendan O'Hara: [\[34275\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of the report by the British Palestinian Committee entitled British Military Collaboration with Israel, published on 28 January 2025.

Luke Pollard:

We will consider the report and continue to act in line with our obligations to International Law.

■ Military Aircraft: Crew

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[33536\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the number of Royal Air Force fighter pilots.

Luke Pollard:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) continually assesses pilot numbers to appropriately resource the Combat Air Force and are comfortable with the number of Royal Air Force fighter pilots against extant Defence Tasks. The MOD has a range of governance measures in place to analyse UK Military Flying Training System throughput to ensure pilot numbers meet the demand for Defence both now and in the future.

The MOD will continue to provide quarterly statistics to the Hon Gentleman's select committee on pilot training as agreed in the last Parliament.

■ Ministry of Defence: Public Appointments**James Cartlidge:** [\[36712\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 10 March 2025 to Question 33946 on Ministry of Defence: Public Appointments, what the proposed remuneration package for the new National Armaments Director is.

James Cartlidge: [\[36713\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 10 March 2025 to Question 33946 on Ministry of Defence: Public Appointments, when he plans to advertise for the National Armaments Director.

Maria Eagle:

The National Armaments Director will have significant experience in leading and transforming large organisations, and the ability to build strong, influential partnerships across the globe. We have therefore benchmarked the salary against Defence industry best practice and standards to offer a competitive remuneration package to attract the right candidate with the right skills.

The recruitment process for the role has begun, with a search for candidates underway. The application window for the post will open imminently, and the salary will be published alongside the advert.

■ NATO: Submarines**James Cartlidge:** [\[35728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent progress has been made on the NATO anti-submarine warfare barrier smart defence initiative.

Luke Pollard:

The Smart Defence Initiative is one part of our portfolio of work to maintain operational advantage in the underwater domain. Subject to Strategic Defence Review outcomes it will be deployed alongside other fixed and crewed systems and will be complimented by advanced technologies such as Artificial Intelligence and autonomy.

The NATO Anti-Submarine Warfare Smart Defence Initiative is UK led with a mandate to accelerate the exploitation of maritime uncrewed systems to support

theatre undersea capability. The UK is taking the lead on the flagship project, the Allied Underwater Battlespace Mission Network. Industry engagement is already underway and closes at the end of the month.

■ Russia: Unmanned Air Systems

Terry Jermy:

[\[36013\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to protect UK (a) military personnel and (b) armed forces bases from potential drone attacks from Russia.

Luke Pollard:

The UK employs a broad approach to deterring and defeating air and missile threats, including those from Uncrewed Air Systems (UAS or drones). The Ministry of Defence (MOD) collaborates closely with the Home Office on Homeland C-UAS issues, providing expertise on threat identification and capability requirements to ensure a whole of Government approach to defending against these threats.

We pursue counter-proliferation and military activities to counter threats before an attack is ever launched. However, if those approaches fail, we can employ a range of active and passive defence measures to intercept the threat and increase our resilience.

Given the significant threat posed by UAS to our personnel and bases, counter-UAS (C-UAS) remains a crucial component of our Defence approach. UK Defence has developed and procured a broad range of cutting-edge C-UAS capabilities, including from UK industries, much of which is now operationally proven. Alongside this we are perusing a variety of further C-UAS projects, for example the Navy's Dragonfire programme.

We are committed to enhancing our capabilities and modernising our Air Defence approach to ensure our Armed Forces have the capabilities they need to meet current and future threats. As part of this commitment, a Strategic Defence Review is being conducted with C-UAS capabilities forming a vital part of our inputs to this review.

■ Strategic Defence Review

Jeremy Corbyn:

[\[35627\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the red rating of the Core Production Capability programme by the Infrastructure and Projects Authority in its Annual Report on Major Projects 2023-24, published on 17 January 2025, on the Strategic Defence Review.

Maria Eagle:

Infrastructure and Projects Authority delivery confidence assessments reflect a judgement at a particular point in time. They do not represent the likelihood or not of successful delivery but are a representation of the level of risk and what further

mitigation may be required in order to reduce such risk. The Infrastructure and Projects Authority has confirmed ongoing actions are appropriate.

■ Tanks

Rupert Lowe: [\[35896\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many and what proportion of main battle tanks are operational to a deployment standard.

Luke Pollard:

I hope the hon. Member will understand that we do not routinely disclose figures relating to Challenger 2 Main Battle Tanks in the active fleet in the interests of security and operational effectiveness.

■ Trident Submarines: Procurement

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[36206\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the current status is of the Dreadnought-class submarine programme.

Maria Eagle:

The programme remains on track to manufacture four Dreadnought Class submarines within the original cost estimate of £41 billion, consisting of £31 billion and a contingency of £10 billion. The First of Class, HMS Dreadnought, will enter service in the early 2030s.

■ Ukraine: Ammunition

James Cartlidge: [\[35721\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many 5.56mm rifle rounds have been procured for Ukraine since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[35722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many 7.62mm rounds have been procured for Ukraine since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[35723\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many 9mm pistol rounds have been procured for Ukraine since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[35724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many 30mm cannon rounds have been procured for Ukraine since 5 July 2024.

Luke Pollard:

The UK has provided over six million rounds of small arms and light weapons ammunition to the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

We cannot comment on specific calibres of ammunition or more detailed procurement and delivery schedules due to operational security.

■ Ukraine: Intelligence Services

James Cartlidge: [\[36707\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions he has had with his US counterpart on sharing US-derived intelligence with the Government of Ukraine.

Luke Pollard:

The Defence Secretary regularly speaks with his US counterpart, most recently on 6 March 2025, regarding our collective support to Ukraine's armed forces in response to Russia's illegal and unprovoked invasion.

It is standard practice not to comment on the specifics of intelligence sharing matters.

■ Ukraine: Military Aid

Alex Burghart: [\[35733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his Department's press release entitled Historic £1.6bn deal provides thousands of air defence missiles for Ukraine and boosts UK jobs and growth, published on 2 March 2025, whether (a) an open prior information notice or (b) a voluntary ex-ante transparency notice was published in relation to the procurement.

Luke Pollard:

Neither a Prior Information Notice nor voluntary ex-ante transparency notice were published, noting that this procurement is excluded from applicable procurement legislation as it is pursuant to an international agreement between the UK and Ukraine.

■ Veterans

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[35837\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has considered appointing a veterans commissioner for England.

Al Carns:

This is a Government of service that will always stand up for those who serve our country, no matter which community they are based in. I am working across Government and with civil society to ensure veterans get access to the health, housing, employment and other support they need.

I work closely with the Veterans Commissioners for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. I have also asked officials to look holistically at the support available to veterans, how it is delivered and explore options for simplifying access to that support and also improving governance to increase institutional resilience. That governance work will look at what are the most appropriate requirements for support across both England and the United Kingdom.

EDUCATION**■ Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund**

James Cartlidge: [\[36711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to extend the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund beyond 31 March 2025.

Janet Daby:

I refer the hon. Member for South Suffolk to the answer of 29 January 2025 to Question [26025](#).

■ Apprentices

Connor Naismith: [\[35969\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps the Government takes to help ensure that apprentices are well-supported by their employers.

Janet Daby:

Apprenticeships deliver great outcomes for young people and adults, and apprentice and employer satisfaction is high.

High quality training is crucial and apprentices' success hinges on the commitment and collaboration of an employer, apprentice, and training provider.

The department has published a range of guidance on GOV.UK to help employers support their apprentices to make the most of their apprenticeship. This includes tips on how to support apprentices with mentoring, networking opportunities and wellbeing. On behalf of the department, the Learning and Work Institute has also produced a number of guides to support apprentices' on-programme experience, including a Line Manger Guide to apprenticeships.

The Apprenticeship Service gives employers and learners the opportunity to provide feedback on their experiences which we use to improve the apprenticeship experience. To support effective partnerships between employers and providers, employers can also see online reviews of training providers from other employers and apprentices before they choose a training provider to deliver their training.

In addition, the department's Apprenticeship Ambassador Network of 1,700 volunteer employers and providers enables sharing of best practice from apprenticeship experts. Our ambassadors are supporting 3,000 small employers taking their first steps on their own apprenticeship journey.

Apprentices who complete see the best outcomes from their experiences. The department's focus on driving up quality is resulting in year on year increases in achievement rates and will continue to drive up standards to ensure every learner gets the greatest benefit from their apprenticeship.

■ Breakfast Clubs: West Midlands**Liam Byrne:**[\[34779\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, by how much funding allocations for breakfast clubs in schools will increase in each (a) local authority and (b) parliamentary constituency in (i) Birmingham and (ii) Solihull in each year for which data is available.

Stephen Morgan:

The government is committed to introducing free breakfast clubs in every state-funded school with primary-aged pupils. The Autumn Budget 2024 confirmed over £30 million of funding for breakfast clubs for the 2025/26 financial year. This funding will enable us to fund up to 750 early adopters of the new breakfast clubs. Decisions about future funding for breakfast clubs will be taken as part of the next phase of the spending review.

All schools will receive £500 to cover initial set up costs and a lump sum of at least £1,000 per term, regardless of how many pupils are in attendance.

Schools will then receive a payment in arrears each term based on the number of pupils who accessed the club and the characteristics of pupils.

For the summer term this means there will be two payments. An initial fixed payment will be made to schools at the end of April 2025 for local authority maintained schools and at the beginning of May 2025 for academies. This will include the initial set up and lump sum payment. An arrears payment will be made to schools between October and December 2025, to cover the costs of running the breakfast club in the summer term 2025 (58 days).

■ Chemistry: Vocational Education**Charlotte Cane:**[\[32709\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department is taking steps to help increase access to (a) technical and (b) vocational pathways for (i) training and (ii) employment in the chemical sciences sector.

Janet Daby:

I refer the hon. Member for Ely and East Cambridgeshire to the answer of 19 February 2025 to Question [30787](#).

■ Meadowgate Academy: Admissions**Steve Barclay:**[\[35648\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will publish her Department's advice issued to Cambridgeshire County Council in relation to plans to expand the number of places at Meadowgate Academy in Wisbech.

Catherine McKinnell:

In February 2021, the department approved the expansion of Meadowgate Academy by 60 places. The department has not provided advice to Cambridgeshire County Council on plans to expand the number of places.

■ Pre-school Education: Finance**Matt Bishop:**[\[35998\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that funding for early years services meets the financial needs of providers.

Stephen Morgan:

The department has been clear in our commitment to the early years as our number one priority. It is our ambition that all families have access to high-quality, affordable and flexible early education and care, improving the life chances for every child and the work choices for every parent. That also means ensuring the sector is financially sustainable and confident as it continues to deliver the entitlements and high-quality early years provision going forward.

That is why, despite tough decisions to get our public finances back on track, the department is continuing to prioritise and invest, supporting early education and childcare providers with the costs they face.

In the 2025/26 financial year alone, this government plans to spend over £8 billion on early years entitlements and we announced the largest ever uplift to the early years pupil premium, increasing the rate by over 45%, compared to 2024/25 financial year, equivalent to up to £570 per eligible child per year. On top of this we are providing further supplementary funding of £75 million for the early years expansion grant to support the sector as they prepare to deliver the final phase of expanded childcare entitlements from September 2025, recognising the significant level of expansion needed and the effort and planning this will require.

We are also providing £25 million through the forthcoming National Insurance contributions grant for public sector employers in the early years.

■ Pupils: Absenteeism**Damian Hinds:**[\[34814\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what comparative assessment she has made of rates of school absence in academic year 2023-24 in England relative to the other home nations.

Stephen Morgan:

The department does not publish statistics on the other home nations besides England. The rates of school absence on the other home nations have been aggregated from the individual nations' government websites.

Jim Shannon:

[35663]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what is the current number of school-age children not in school.

Stephen Morgan:

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

The department publishes data on compulsory school-aged children in elective home education, and children missing education (children not registered at school or otherwise receiving suitable education). In autumn 2024/25, local authorities reported 111,700 children in elective home education and 39,200 children missing education. The latest figures are available at <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/elective-home-education> and <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/children-missing-education>.

■ Schools: Uniforms

Jim Shannon:

[35660]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has made a comparative assessment of the cost of (a) girls' and (b) boys' school uniforms.

Catherine McKinnell:

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

The department published its latest research on the cost of school uniforms in September 2024, which surveyed parents and carers of children aged 4 to 16 attending state-funded schools in England. It is published here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cost-of-school-uniforms-survey-2023>.

The research found that for secondary pupils, the average total costs of uniforms (including both daywear and PE kit) were broadly similar for boys and girls, with the average expenditure for girls being £4.80 greater. For primary pupils, the average total costs for both daywear and PE were £23.56 greater for girls. In general, daywear for girls is more expensive, whilst for boys, PE kit incurs a greater cost.

Too many families still tell us that the cost of school uniforms remain a financial burden. That is why the department is legislating to limit the number of expensive branded items of uniform and PE kit that schools can require.

■ Special Educational Needs: Devon

Martin Wrigley:

[35867]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of the number of special school places available in Devon.

Martin Wrigley: [\[35868\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to make additional increases in (a) funding and (b) placements for special schools in Devon .

Martin Wrigley: [\[35872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of the availability of SEND places in schools in Devon.

Catherine McKinnell:

Following the Autumn Budget 2024, the department is providing an increase of £1 billion for high needs budgets in England in the 2025/26 financial year, bringing total high needs funding for children and young people with complex special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) to £11.9 billion. Of that total, Devon County Council is being allocated over £125 million through the high needs funding block of the dedicated schools grant (DSG), an increase of £8.9 million on this year's DSG high needs block, calculated using the high needs national funding formula (NFF). This NFF allocation is a 7.7% increase per head of their 2 to 18-year-old population, on their equivalent 2024/25 NFF allocation.

Additionally, we have announced £740 million of capital for high needs funding in 2025/26. This can be used to deliver new places in mainstream and special schools, as well as other specialist settings. It can also be used to improve the suitability and accessibility of existing buildings. We will confirm allocations for the £740 million funding later in the spring.

Regarding special school places, in 2023 the department for the first time collected data from local authorities on capacity in special schools, SEND units and resourced provision in mainstream schools. This data is published at local authority level in the annual school capacity publication, which can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-capacity>. The latest available data shows that, as at 1 May 2023, there were approximately 1,830 special school places and 86 SEN Unit and resourced provision places in mainstream schools in Devon.

The statutory duty to provide sufficient school places, including for pupils SEND, sits with local authorities. The department supports local authorities to provide suitable school places for children and young people with SEND through annual high needs capital funding.

■ Special Educational Needs: Dyslexia

Adam Dance: [\[35923\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans she has to support technical colleges to provide specialist support for dyslexic students in (a) Somerset and (b) the South West.

Janet Daby:

We are the department for opportunity. As part of this we are committed to help every learner to achieve and thrive, through excellent teaching and high standards. This includes a focus on children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

The SEND Code of Practice is clear that all children and young people with SEND should be prepared for adulthood.

Preparation for adulthood means higher education and/or employment, independent living, participation in society and being as healthy as possible in adult life.

All local authorities must set out the support available to help children and young people with SEND move into adulthood as part of their local offer.

All education and training providers, including Technical Colleges, and other related service providers, have a duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people, so they are not disadvantaged compared to non-disabled students. This includes people with a learning difficulty. This duty is set out under section 20 of the Equality Act 2010, which is available at:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/20>.

There is a range of support on offer for dyslexic students. Students should discuss their needs with the college or education provider before the course begins. They will assess needs by consulting the student, their previous school and (if appropriate, and with permission) parents. Over the age of 16, the student should be fully involved in the discussions around special educational needs support.

The college must explain what support they will provide to meet the person's individual learning needs. They should regularly review this support, keep records of the student's progress and discuss this with them.

Support can include the use of additional time for tasks and exams, assistive technology, specialist tuition, note-takers and one-to-one or small group learning support.

The British Dyslexia Association offers advice and guidance on how students should be supported, which is available at: <https://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/advice/educators>.

Disability Rights UK have information available which describes how reasonable adjustments can be provided for students with disabilities. This can be accessed at: <https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/resources/adjustments-disabled-students-and-apprentices>.

■ Special Educational Needs: Transport**Jen Craft:****[35804]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that post-16 learners with SEND are able to access transport to education settings.

Jen Craft:

[35805]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the statutory framework for home-to-school transport for post-16 learners with SEND.

Catherine McKinnell:

I refer my hon. Friend for Thurrock to the answer of 11 September 2024 to Question [4162](#).

■ Teachers: Recruitment

Charlotte Cane:

[35471]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment she has made of the trends in the level of teacher recruitment.

Catherine McKinnell:

High-quality teaching is the biggest in-school factor that makes a difference to a child's education, so having sufficient expert teachers is critical to the government's mission to break down barriers to opportunity and boost the life chances for every child. This government has inherited a system with critical shortages of teachers, with numbers not keeping pace with demographic changes.

Information on the school workforce, including the number of teachers entering and leaving service in state-funded schools, is published in the 'School workforce in England' statistical publication which is available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england>.

Under the previous government, the rates and numbers of entrants to the state-funded teaching profession in England decreased in 2023/24, while the rates and numbers of leavers from the state-funded teaching profession in England remained stable. While leavers have returned to pre-pandemic levels, entrants have returned to figures similar to the 2021/22 academic year. Each year, the number of teachers entering state-funded schools in England is higher than those leaving.

With regards recruitment of trainee teachers, information on the numbers and characteristics of new entrants to initial teacher training (ITT) in England is published in the 'ITT census' statistical publication which is available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/initial-teacher-training-census>.

In 2024/25, there were 27,836 new entrants to ITT, a 6% increase compared to the revised figure of 26,376 in 2023/24. This reverses a trend of year-on-year decreases since the pandemic period with a high of 40,377 new entrants in 2020/21. Despite the increase in the latest year, numbers of entrants remain below pre-pandemic levels.

Postgraduate ITT targets for 2024/25 were set using analysis from the Teacher Workforce Model which can be viewed here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/postgraduate-initial-teacher-training-targets>.

The percentage of the postgraduate ITT target achieved for all subjects (secondary and primary) was 69%. This is an increase of 9 percentage points, up from 60% in 2023/24.

The department is committed to recruiting an additional 6,500 new expert teachers across our schools, both mainstream and specialist, and our colleges over the course of this Parliament, which is why this government accepted the School Teachers' Review Body's recommendation of a 5.5% pay award for teachers and leaders in maintained schools from last September. To further boost recruitment, we announced an ITT financial incentives package for the 2025/26 recruitment cycle worth £233 million, a £37 million increase on the last cycle. This includes a range of measures, including bursaries worth £29,000 tax-free and scholarships worth £31,000 tax-free, to encourage talented trainees to train in key subjects such as mathematics, physics, chemistry and computing.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

■ Biomethane: UK Emissions Trading Scheme

Wera Hobhouse:

[\[35731\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of treating biomethane in the same way as fossil gases under the UK Emissions trading scheme on (a) the anaerobic digestion and biogas sector and (b) the wider economy.

Kerry McCarthy:

Biomethane can play an important role in reducing reliance on imported gas, increasing our country's energy security, and helping to deliver net zero.

The UK Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) applies a zero emissions factor to biomethane combustion where it is supplied directly to ETS installations. Where biomethane is injected into the gas grid, there is not currently a mechanism to account for the use of biomethane.

The Department is considering stakeholder feedback from the 2024 Call for Evidence on the impacts of this to inform the next steps. The Department will provide an update in due course.

■ Boiler Upgrade Scheme

Gideon Amos:

[\[35946\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what estimate she has made of the number of additional homes that will need to apply to the Boiler Upgrade Scheme as a result of delays to the implementation of the Future Homes Standard.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

Future standards this year will ensure our new homes and buildings are fit for a net zero future. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is

reviewing feedback from the Future Homes and Building Standards consultation and will publish the standard specification in due course.

The Boiler Upgrade Scheme is a demand-led scheme, so uptake will depend on consumers' interest.

■ Business: Energy

Rebecca Smith:

[\[903168\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the level of energy costs on businesses.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

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 with less reliance on volatile international energy markets and help in our commitment to make Britain a clean energy superpower by 2030.

In the short-term, the Government wants to provide businesses with better protection from being locked into unfair and expensive energy contracts, and more redress when they have a complaint. Many businesses secure their energy contracts through Third-Party Intermediaries, such as energy brokers. Last year, the Government launched a consultation on introducing regulation of TPIs. This is aimed at enhancing consumer protections including to prevent opaque contracting practices or mis-selling, particularly for non-domestic consumers. A Government response will follow in due course once all feedback has been reviewed.

From 19 December 2024 Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) with fewer than 50 employees can now access free support to resolve issues with their energy supplier through the Energy Ombudsman. This means that 99% of British businesses can now access this service with outcomes ranging up to £20,000 in financial awards.

■ Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: Equality

Joe Robertson:

[\[35956\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to the Answer of 27 September 2024 to Question HL1116 on Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: Equality, how many staff in his Department have been permitted to undertake diversity-related network time during core working hours since 1 January 2025.

Michael Shanks:

The majority of staff time spent on diversity staff networks is voluntary and unpaid. All staff in the Department can take part in diversity-related network activities during core working hours with agreement from their line manager. There are currently 40 Chairs and Champions across 11 diversity networks. These staff are given a weekly pro-rata time allocation of 10% to support respective network activity.

The Department values its diversity networks and is committed to promoting Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in partnership with them.

■ Electricity Generation

Pippa Heylings:

[\[35409\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what plans he has for electricity market reform.

Michael Shanks:

The Review of Electricity Market Arrangements (REMA) is considering a range of reforms to unlock renewable investment and pass through the benefits of cheaper renewables to consumers. REMA's Autumn Update, published on 13 December, detailed the progress of policy development in the assessment of options. The Government is aiming to conclude the policy development phase of the REMA programme by mid-2025, after which the final decisions and timetable for implementation will be announced.

■ Electricity Interconnectors

Bradley Thomas:

[\[35915\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, pursuant to the Answer of 5 February to Question 29155 on Energy Resilience, when the robust plans to mitigate the impacts of a gas or electricity disruption were last updated.

Michael Shanks:

The National Emergency Plan for Downstream Gas and Electricity sets out the arrangements for the safe and effective management of downstream gas or electricity disruption. The National Emergency Plan for Downstream Gas and Electricity was last updated in July 2023 and is expected to be updated again this year.

■ Electricity: Prices

Mr Angus MacDonald:

[\[36031\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what recent discussions his Department has had with the utility companies on offering off-peak electricity prices at the same hourly rate applicable for charging an electric vehicle for people with electric storage heaters.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government is supportive of electricity suppliers offering tariffs which incentivise consumers, including electric vehicle owners, to consume energy at off peak times, as this benefits all consumers by reducing the need for additional grid capacity.

The Government continues to work with Ofgem to ensure that tariffs, such as Economy 7 tariffs used by households with storage heaters, are priced fairly. This includes ensuring there is an appropriate price cap for Economy 7 tariffs.

■ Energy Performance Certificates: Housing

Kevin Hollinrake: [\[35692\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, pursuant to the Answer of (a) 31 July 2024 to Question 1331 and (b) 21 February 2025 to Question 29088 on Energy Performance Certificates: Housing, what his planned timetable is for publishing proposals on energy requirements on owner occupied housing.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government's position on supporting owner occupiers remains as was set out in the Answer to Question [1331](#).

■ Energy Performance Certificates: Rented Housing

Caroline Voaden: [\[36266\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to support landlords to improve the EPC ratings of their properties.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government is now consulting on increasing minimum energy efficiency standards in the domestic private rented sector, including proposals for rented homes to achieve EPC C or equivalent by 2030. The consultation sets out proposals on maximum spend required from landlords and the exemptions regime to manage the cost burden placed on landlords and the impact on the rental market, whilst still achieving our ambition to deliver significant bill savings for tenants and lift households out of fuel poverty. We are considering how we can best support landlords to meet the new standards and welcome responses from landlords to the consultation.

■ Energy: Billing

Jim Shannon: [\[35659\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to support low-income households with energy bills in the next 12 months.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

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. However, we recognise that we need to support households struggling with bills whilst we transition to clean power by 2030.

On 25 February, we published a consultation on the expansion of the Warm Home Discount, giving more eligible households £150 off their energy bills. These proposals would bring around 2.7 million households into the scheme – pushing the total number of households that would receive the discount next winter up to around 6 million.

The Government has also extended the Household Support Fund in England by a further year until 31 March 2026 with an extra £742 million in support, with additional funding for the Devolved Governments through the Barnett formula.

Priti Patel:

[36628]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to his Department's press release entitled Households near new pylons to save hundreds on energy bills, published on 10 March 2025, when those measures will (a) be implemented and (b) come into effect; whether the Norwich to Tilbury Great Grid Upgrade will be in scope; how many (i) households and (ii) landowners would receive financial support along the route of the Norwich to Tilbury Great Grid Upgrade proposals; and what estimate he has made of the cost to the Norwich to Tilbury Great Grid Upgrade of implementing those reforms.

Michael Shanks:

The bill discount scheme will apply to eligible domestic residents and is planned to go live from 2026 once regulations have been laid, when Parliamentary time allows. Eligibility will be set out in regulations, but our aim is that major new transmission projects needed for 2030 will be eligible. Further impact analysis will be conducted prior to scheme introduction. The proposed funding mechanism is by an obligation on electricity suppliers, so it would not directly impact the cost of an infrastructure project. The Government has also published community funds guidance, which could apply to transmission projects yet to start construction.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/electricity-transmission-infrastructure-proposed-bill-discount-scheme>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/electricity-transmission-network-infrastructure-community-funds>

■ Energy: Business Premises

Kevin Hollinrake:

[35693]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what information his Department holds on the number of (a) offices, (b) shops and (c) warehouses which do not currently meet the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards for commercial buildings being proposed for 2030.

Sarah Jones:

Based on publicly available MHCLG data, approximately 87% of offices, 83% of shops, and 91% of warehouses have a valid EPC rated below EPC B - the minimum standard proposed in the 2019 consultation to strengthen the non-domestic Private Rented Sector Regulations. This data cannot be filtered by tenure and so figures shown relate to the whole non-domestic building stock, rather than the rented sector in scope of these regulations, which represents 40% of non-domestic buildings according to Building Energy Efficiency Survey (BEES) data.

The government has not yet published the response to the consultation, which is scheduled for the first half of 2025 when we will set out the updated standard and date for non-domestic buildings. We are reviewing the MEES timelines to ensure sufficient lead-in time. The regulations contain a number of exemptions to ensure that

properties only need to get to the highest EPC band where the improvements are practical and cost-effective.

■ Energy: Debts

Sir Desmond Swayne: [\[35631\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will implement an energy debt relief scheme available to all customers.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

In December, Ofgem published an updated debt strategy which included two consultations; one of which proposed an energy debt relief scheme for consumers who accrued debt during the energy crisis. The second consulted on ways to improve debt standards, guaranteeing high standards of care and customer service for those in debt. Both of these consultations have now closed and Ofgem will carefully consider the feedback received. We stand ready to work closely with them on their findings.

On 25 February, we announced that we will be working to accelerate work with Ofgem on this potential energy debt scheme, helping consumers in significant debt to bring down their level of debt down and support them to pay for their energy moving forward.

■ Energy: Housing

Stuart Anderson: [\[35758\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what support is available to retrofit homes in rural areas.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave on 18 February 2025 to Question [30705](#).

■ Energy: Infrastructure

Bradley Thomas: [\[35910\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, pursuant to the Answer of 6 February to Question 29770 on Chinese manufacturing, whether major energy infrastructure including wind turbines are categorised as critical national infrastructure when they are procured from foreign countries.

Michael Shanks:

The designation of sites, systems and assets that make up the UK energy sector as Critical National Infrastructure is based on the extent that the loss, damage or disruption of that infrastructure has a major detrimental impact on the availability, integrity or delivery of the essential services of the UK energy system. This approach to identifying Critical National Infrastructure means that we assess all infrastructure, regardless of its ownership.

■ Energy: Listed Buildings**Blake Stephenson:****[35852]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, pursuant to the Answer of 14 February 2025 to Question 29571, if he will publish the results of the package of research.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

Yes, the results of the package of research will be published in due course. The results will complement the research published in January 2024:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/defining-and-identifying-complex-to-decarbonise-homes>.

■ Energy: Prices**Ben Lake:****[35736]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to protect consumers from the impact of the recent increase in the energy price cap; and whether his Department plans to take steps to ensure that utility companies reflect falls in wholesale prices in consumer energy costs.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The energy price cap will rise for the period 1 April to 30 June 2025 due to an increase in international gas prices.

The Government believes the only way to protect consumers permanently is to speed up the transition towards homegrown clean energy. The creation of Great British Energy will help us 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.

We continue to monitor energy prices and the price cap and are working to ensure bills are affordable for consumers in the long-term, including through our work with Ofgem to reform standing charges, and through our Warm Homes Plan which will upgrade millions of homes to make them warmer and cheaper to run.

Gareth Snell:**[36728]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of the zonal electricity pricing consultation on UK ceramic manufacturers.

Michael Shanks:

We are analysing the potential impact of zonal pricing options on Energy Intensive Industries, including ceramic manufacturers, working closely with the Department for Business and Trade. We recognise concerns that zonal pricing may introduce some uncertainty and variability in the cost of electricity, and are carefully considering a range of possible mitigations for Energy Intensive Industries should they be deemed necessary.

■ Fuel Oil: Renewable Fuels

Jayne Kirkham:

[\[36969\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of using renewable liquid fuels to help oil-heated households decarbonise.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

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

However, the Government recognises that RLHFs could play a limited role in decarbonising heat off the gas grid.

■ Heat Pumps

Gideon Amos:

[\[35947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what estimate she has made of the number of heat pumps that will be required to be retrofitted to properties as a result of delays to the implementation of the Future Homes Standard.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

Future standards this year will ensure our new homes and buildings are fit for a net zero future. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is reviewing feedback from the consultation and will publish the standard specification in due course.

■ Infrastructure: Road Traffic

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[\[35840\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether planning approval for nationally significant infrastructure projects is dependent upon having a construction traffic management plan.

Michael Shanks:

As per The Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009, Regulations 5(2)(a), (k), and (o), all applicants seeking development consent for nationally significant infrastructure projects must include a plan identifying any new or altered means of access, stopping up of streets or roads or any diversions, extinguishments or creation of rights of way or public rights of navigation, means of vehicular and pedestrian access, and any car parking to be provided. It is not mandated that this must be called a 'construction traffic management plan' but these plans are often labelled as such.

■ Microgeneration: Government Assistance**Wera Hobhouse:** [\[35732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he plans to provide support to (a) anaerobic digestion plants and (b) other small energy producers.

Michael Shanks:

The Government is aware that the expiration of Renewables Obligation accreditation may affect the commercial viability of generators from a range of technologies, including anaerobic digestion plants and other small scale generators.

We are continuing to assess the situation to understand the impact of the end of Renewables Obligation support on security of supply, clean power 2030 and the environment.

■ Solar Power**Gideon Amos:** [\[35939\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will take steps with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to develop enhanced tariffs to incentivise rooftop solar generation.

Michael Shanks:

Incentivising rooftop solar is at the heart of the clean energy mission. Actions to support further deployment will be included in the Solar Roadmap, due to be published shortly.

■ Solar Power: Parking**Gideon Amos:** [\[35938\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will bring forward proposals to mandate rooftop solar generation through the construction of canopies over car parks.

Michael Shanks:

The increased deployment of rooftop solar is at the heart of the Government's clean energy mission.

As set out in the Clean Power Action Plan, the Government will assess the potential of solar canopies in car parks by launching a call for evidence on the issue. We expect to publish the call for evidence shortly.

■ UK Emissions Trading Scheme: Ceramics**Gareth Snell:** [\[36729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of being temporarily exempted from the UK emission trading scheme on UK ceramic manufacturers.

Sarah Jones:

The Government is committed to supporting UK industry to decarbonise, protecting thousands of jobs in regions across the UK and enabling growth and wealth creation.

The UK Emissions Trading Scheme (UK ETS) incentivises industries to find the most cost-effective solutions to decarbonise. UK ETS participants, including those in the ceramics sector, are provided with free allocations, to incentivise emissions reduction and protect energy intensive, trade exposed industries from the risk of carbon leakage.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ Environment Agency: Finance****Freddie van Mierlo:**[\[37093\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the new legal and financial processes required for a partnership funding model for Environment Agency projects.

Emma Hardy:

The Government inherited an outdated funding formula for allocating money to proposed flood defences. Established in 2011, the existing formula slows down the delivery of new flood schemes through a complex application process and also neglects more innovative approaches to flood management such as nature-based approaches and sustainable drainage.

We will be consulting on a new and simplified approach to funding floods projects in the coming months. This will include a review of the existing formula to ensure that the challenges facing businesses and rural and coastal communities are adequately taken into account when delivering flood protection.

The Floods Funding Policy consultation will be open to everyone, and we will be inviting all stakeholders to be part of the consultation. We will review all responses received to improve our approach to floods investment.

We will implement the new investment framework from April 2026.

■ Packaging: Recycling**Jayne Kirkham:**[\[37102\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he is considering an exemption to the new Extended Producer Responsibility for packing regulations for closed loop systems.

Mary Creagh:

The Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging and Packaging Waste) Regulations 2024, which reform the UK's producer responsibility system for packaging came into force on 1 January 2025. Extended Producer Responsibility is a major reform that will be iterated over several years to incentivise packaging

producers to reduce their material footprint and use more recyclable packaging. We are considering further improvements to the scheme, including how to treat businesses which run closed loop recycling systems for packaging that is commonly collected by Local Authorities, and my officials are reviewing options to bring forward an offset for closed loop recycling systems at the earliest opportunity.

■ **Water Supply: Costs**

Paula Barker:

[\[34001\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of trends in the level of water infrastructure costs on consumers.

Emma Hardy:

For too long, investment has not kept pace with the challenges of an ageing infrastructure system, a rapidly growing population and climate change. Bills will therefore now need to rise to invest in our crumbling infrastructure and deliver cleaner waterways.

Ofwat published their final determinations for Price Review 2024 on 19 December. This will deliver substantial, lasting, improvements for customers and the environment through a £104bn upgrade for the water sector.

These bill rises equate to around £3 additional per month on average. This will pay to fix crumbling infrastructure, which will dramatically reduce sewage spills and lead to cleaner rivers, lakes and seas.

Funding for vital infrastructure investment is ringfenced and can only be spent on upgrades benefiting customers and the environment. Ofwat will also ensure that when money for investment is not spent companies refund customers.

All water companies offer affordability support for customers struggling to pay their bills and companies have more than doubled the number of customers that will receive help through social tariffs, from 4% to 9%, between 2025-30. The Government is working with industry to keep current support schemes under review to ensure that vulnerable customers across the country are supported.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ **Afghanistan: Women**

Jim Shannon:

[\[35656\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department holds statistics on the number of educational (a) placements and (b) scholarships the UK has offered to Afghani women over the last twelve months.

Stephen Doughty:

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) does not hold records on the number of non-government placements and scholarships given to Afghan

women. In 2024, the FCDO awarded 13 Chevening scholarships to Afghan nationals to study in the UK. Out of the 13, four awards went to women.

■ **Aid Workers: Armed Conflict**

Wendy Morton: [\[35686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to enhance the safety and security of aid workers in conflict zones.

Stephen Doughty:

We recognise the vital role that aid workers play in conflicts, and the risks they face. In May 2024, the UK co-sponsored UN Security Resolution 2730. The resolution establishes a regular reporting mechanism to highlight the safety and security of all humanitarian personnel at the Security Council and provide recommendations on measures to protect and enhance the safety and security of humanitarian personnel, assets and premises and ensure accountability.

As a permanent Member at the UN Security Council, we will continue to use our position to protect aid workers, champion compliance with International Humanitarian Law and seek accountability for violations.

■ **Armed Conflict: Humanitarian Aid**

Wendy Morton: [\[35287\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to monitor the effectiveness of the Government's humanitarian aid response in conflict-affected regions receiving Official Development Assistance.

Stephen Doughty:

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) is committed to independently evaluating the relevance, effectiveness, impact, value for money and sustainability of its Official Development Assistance (ODA) and non-ODA programmes as required in the International Development Act (2015). The FCDO's Programme Operating Framework sets out the mandatory rules for FCDO programme delivery. This requires regular monitoring to provide performance and financial oversight and evaluate performance and impact. The Framework is published on GOV.UK and programme Annual and Closure Reviews are published on DevTracker.

■ **Balkans: Disinformation**

Mr James Cleverly: [\[33900\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much Official Development Assistance funding has been spent on countering disinformation in the Balkans in each of the last five years.

Stephen Doughty:

Over the past five years, we have supported efforts to counter information threats, including disinformation, in the Western Balkans. This includes, where appropriate, supporting projects through Official Development Assistance funding. Due to the risks posed to our partners and beneficiaries of these projects we do not publish detailed information about them.

■ British Indian Ocean Territory: Maldives**Ben Obese-Jecty:**[\[35006\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to resolve the dispute between the Republic of the Maldives's Economic Exclusion Zone and the British Indian Ocean Territory's (a) Fisheries Conservation and Management Zone and (b) Environment (Protection and Preservation) Zone in negotiations with the Government of Mauritius.

Stephen Doughty:

As we outlined in our joint statement of 3 October 2024, following two years of negotiation with the intention of resolving all outstanding issues between the UK and Mauritius concerning the Chagos Archipelago, the UK and Mauritius reached political agreement which is subject to the finalisation in a treaty and connected legal instruments. The agreement will be supported by an enhanced partnership between the UK and Mauritius under which the UK will support Mauritius' ambitions to establish a Marine Protected Area (MPA) that protects the globally significant ecosystems in the Chagos Archipelago. The UK was not a party to the 2021 International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea case between Mauritius and Maldives.

■ British Indian Ocean Territory: Mauritius**Ben Obese-Jecty:**[\[35008\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the UK's right to extend the 99-year lease on the Chagos Islands was renegotiated with the government of Mauritius in the period between his Oral Statement of 7 October 2024 on British Indian Ocean Territory: Negotiations, Official Report, column 45, and the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 25391 on Diego Garcia: Military Bases.

Stephen Doughty:

As we and Mauritius have repeatedly said, including in joint statements on 20 December and on 13 January, both sides remain committed to concluding a deal on the future of the Chagos Archipelago which protects the long-term effective operation of the joint UK-US base on Diego Garcia. The Treaty will last for an initial 99 years and may be extended for a further 40 years (and beyond) by agreement between the UK and Mauritius - after 99 years, the UK will also have the right to first refusal on the use of Diego Garcia which, if exercised, would prevent the use of the base by any other party. We continue to engage with Mauritius and are not going to provide a running commentary on the details.

■ British International Investment

Callum Anderson:

[\[35477\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps British International Investment is taking to align investment decisions with the Government's (a) missions and (b) development objectives.

Stephen Doughty:

British International Investment's (BII) investment decisions are taken within a framework agreed and aligned with the Government's mission and development objectives. BII is delivering on the Government's ambitions on growth, accelerating the clean energy transition, and unlocking private capital for development impact. In 2023 alone, BII-backed businesses operating in developing countries provided jobs for over one million people, paid \$2.4 billion in taxes in partner countries, and generated 59 TWh of electricity.

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and BII ensure this strategic alignment through governance arrangements that follow best practice guidance from Cabinet Office and HM Treasury with robust lines of accountability between FCDO and BII. We will continue to work with BII to focus and maximise the impact of its work in line with our missions and the wider geopolitical situation.

Callum Anderson:

[\[35478\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps British International Investment is taking to ensure that investments strengthen commercial relationships between the UK and partner countries.

Stephen Doughty:

British International Investment's (BII) investments are building markets in partner countries that are stimulating economic growth. This also develops future UK trade and investment opportunities.

BII invest in sectors where it can have the most developmental impact. These tend to also align with areas of UK commercial strength, including financial services, clean energy, and digital. Examples of this modern approach to development include BII's partnership with Standard Chartered Bank which has enabled \$10 billion in trade volumes across Africa and Asia since 2013 and BII's partnership with Vodafone that has brought down the cost of mobile services by up to 70 per cent in Ethiopia, and a new £100 million Mobilisation Facility to de-risk institutional investors such as those in the City of London to accelerate climate-focussed investments in developing countries. We will continue to work with BII to focus and maximise the impact of its work in line with our missions and the wider geopolitical situation.

■ Charities: Food Supply and Nutrition

Wendy Morton: [\[35273\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps is he taking to engage philanthropic organisations in (a) global nutrition and (b) food security investments.

Stephen Doughty:

The UK Government works closely with philanthropic organisations on food security investments and to deliver global nutrition outcomes.

On global nutrition, we partner with the Gates Foundation and the Children's Investment Fund Foundation, via the Child Nutrition Fund. The Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office co-chairs the Action Review Panel on Child Wasting which includes philanthropic organisations, to take action on acute malnutrition.

On food security investments, the UK co-funds agricultural research with the Gates Foundation. Over the last 15 years this collaboration, drawing on UK science and expertise, has led to significant impacts including climate resilient nutritious crops and livestock vaccines for smallholder farmers.

■ Chinese Embassy: Planning Permission

Kevin Hollinrake: [\[35703\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 20 January 2025 to Question 24157 on Chinese Embassy: Planning Permission, if he will list the organisations that the Department has received correspondence from.

Catherine West:

The planning application has been called in by the Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and she will make this decision independent from the rest of Government corresponding to her quasi-judicial role. As you would expect, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) has received correspondence relating to the planning application. We have no plans to release a list of the organisations, or individuals, that the FCDO has received correspondence from. The Foreign Secretary and Home Secretary's written representations to the Planning Inquiry are publicly available.

■ Commonwealth: Development Aid

Mr James Cleverly: [\[35289\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the reduction in Overseas Development Assistance on the Commonwealth realms; and what steps he is taking to help mitigate that impact.

Stephen Doughty:

The Prime Minister has set out a new strategic vision for government spending on defence and security and Official Development Assistance (ODA). Detailed decisions on how the ODA budget will be used will be worked through as part of the ongoing Spending Review based on various factors including impact assessments.

Democratic Republic of Congo: Human Rights**Carla Lockhart:**[\[36150\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to hold discussions with his counterpart in the Democratic Republic of the Congo on (a) the recent killing of Christians and (b) other ongoing human rights violations in that country.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

Recent attacks by IS-affiliated Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) are alarming and we are deeply saddened by the loss of life. Protection of civilians, promotion of respect between different religious and non-religious groups, and human rights are priorities for the UK. The UK continues to work through UN bodies and other multilateral fora to promote and protect these rights in the DRC. Ministers and senior officials including our Ambassador in Kinshasa regularly raise the importance of civilian protection with the Government of DRC. The UK continues to remind all parties of their obligations under international humanitarian law and make clear that all those who have committed human rights violations and abuses must be held accountable.

Development Aid**Wendy Morton:**[\[35285\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if his Department will publish a list of (a) programmes and (b) countries that have had their budgets adjusted since July 2024 including the reasons for each adjustment.

Stephen Doughty:

The former Minister for Development set out the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's (FCDO) indicative Official Development Assistance (ODA) programme allocations for 2024/25 in a Written Ministerial Statement (HCWS421) on 6 February 2025.

We will publish the FCDO's final ODA programme outturn for 2024/25 in the Annual Report & Accounts in summer 2025.

We will set out our spending plans for future years following the completion of the Spending Review and departmental resource allocation processes.

Wendy Morton: [\[35683\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure timely aid delivery to vulnerable populations; and what steps he is taking with international partners to remove barriers to that delivery.

Stephen Doughty:

The Foreign Secretary has been clear that the UK is committed to protecting the most at risk in situations of conflict and crisis, including civilians, refugees, internally displaced people, women and girls, and people with disabilities.

We work closely with international partners to remove barriers to delivery, both through diplomatic initiatives and in the way that we select delivery partners and approaches. This includes using our seat at the UN Security Council to promote access to aid and the protection of aid workers.

Anneliese Midgley: [\[35797\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether an impact assessment was carried out on the impact of cuts to Official Development Assistance.

Stephen Doughty:

The Prime Minister has set out a new strategic vision for government spending on defence and security, and official development assistance. Detailed decisions on how the Official Development Assistance (ODA) budget will be used will be worked through as part of the ongoing Spending Review on the basis of various factors including impact assessments.

Harpreet Uppal: [\[35979\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, which (a) sectors and (b) regions he plans to prioritise following changes to Official Development Assistance.

Stephen Doughty:

The Prime Minister has set out a new strategic vision for government spending on defence and security and Official Development Assistance (ODA). Detailed decisions on how the ODA budget will be used will be worked through as part of the ongoing Spending Review based on various factors.

Harpreet Uppal: [\[35980\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what consultations he plans to hold with (a) humanitarian and (b) international development (i) partners and (ii) stakeholders on changes to Official Development Assistance.

Stephen Doughty:

The Government remains fully committed to the UK playing a globally significant role on development; it is both in our national interest and in the interest of our partners across the globe.

We are currently working through the details of the Prime Minister's announcement, including engagement with a range of stakeholders. We will continue to work with British International Investment to focus and maximise the impact of its work in line with our missions and the wider geopolitical situation.

Mr Angus MacDonald:

[\[36025\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of the reduction in ODA spending on the UK's position on the United Nations Security Council.

Stephen Doughty:

The Prime Minister has set out a new strategic vision for government spending on defence and security and Official Development Assistance (ODA). Detailed decisions on how the ODA budget will be used will be worked through as part of the ongoing Spending Review based on various factors including impact assessments.

As a permanent member of the UN Security Council, the UK will continue to use its seat on the Council to advance our objectives on matters of international peace and security.

■ **Development Aid: Armed Conflict and Natural Disasters**

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[33986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of reductions to overseas aid on the levels of resilience to (a) conflict and (b) climate shocks among civilian populations in recipient countries.

Stephen Doughty:

The Prime Minister has set out a new strategic vision for government spending on defence and security, and Official Development Assistance (ODA). Detailed decisions on how the ODA budget will be used will be worked through as part of the ongoing Spending Review on the basis of various factors including impact assessments.

■ **Development Aid: Asylum**

Mr James Cleverly:

[\[34269\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the projected level of overseas development aid (ODA) expenditure on asylum accommodation is over the next three years; and whether he plans to ring-fence the amount of ODA available for that purpose.

Stephen Doughty:

The Government is committed to ensuring that asylum costs fall and has already acted. The Government has taken measures to reduce the asylum backlog, reform the asylum accommodation system to end the use of expensive accommodation in the next Spending Review (SR) period and increase detention capacity to facilitate more asylum removals.

Whilst there will always be volatility in asylum forecasts, we expect these decisions to drive down overall in-donor refugee costs over the next SR.

All UK Official Development Assistance (ODA) spending is consistent with the international rules agreed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD's) Development Assistance Committee. This includes ODA spent on in-donor refugee costs.

■ **Development Aid: Children**

Dave Doogan:

[\[34647\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what estimate he has made of the number of children globally who will be impacted by the funding cuts to Official Development Assistance.

Stephen Doughty:

The Prime Minister has set out a new strategic vision for government spending on defence and security, and Official Development Assistance (ODA). Detailed decisions on how the ODA budget will be used, including our work supporting children, will be worked through as part of the ongoing Spending Review based on various factors including impact assessments.

■ **Development Aid: Children and Women**

Anneliese Midgley:

[\[35796\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of cuts to Official Development Assistance on (a) women and (b) children.

Stephen Doughty:

The Prime Minister has set out a new strategic vision for government spending on defence and security, and Official Development Assistance (ODA). Detailed decisions on how the ODA budget will be used, including our work supporting women and children, will be worked through as part of the ongoing Spending Review based on various factors including impact assessments.

■ **Development Aid: Food Insecurity**

Richard Burgon:

[\[35708\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much funding his Department plans to provide for programmes to help tackle global hunger in each of the next five financial years.

Stephen Doughty:

The impact of the reduction in UK Official Development Assistance from 0.5 per cent to 0.3 per cent in 2027 is being worked through. Announcements on allocations will be made following the completion of the ongoing Spending Review and departmental resource allocation processes. We will continue to advocate for action on global

hunger, including through multilateral forums such as the G7, the G20, and as vice-chair of the Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty.

■ Development Aid: Food Supply

Richard Burgon: [\[35317\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the reduction in ODA spending on food insecurity in (a) Haiti, (b) Mali and (c) South Sudan.

Stephen Doughty:

The Prime Minister has set out a new strategic vision for government spending on defence and security and Official Development Assistance (ODA). He has been clear that the government will continue to play a key humanitarian role. Detailed decisions on how the ODA budget will be used will be worked through as part of the ongoing Spending Review based on various factors including impact assessments.

■ Development Aid: Gender Based Violence and Mortality Rates

Marsha De Cordova: [\[33985\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he makes of the potential impact of proposed reductions in official development assistance on future trends in the levels of (a) violence against women and girls and (b) preventable deaths among infants in recipient countries.

Stephen Doughty:

The Prime Minister has set out a new strategic vision for government spending on defence and security, and Official Development Assistance (ODA). Detailed decisions on how the ODA budget will be used will be worked through as part of the ongoing Spending Review.

The UK has placed empowering women and girls at the centre of our international work. We remain committed to tackling violence against women and girls around the world, and to supporting global efforts to end preventable maternal, child and newborn deaths in line with Sustainable Development Goal targets.

■ Development Aid: Impact Assessments

Wendy Morton: [\[35275\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has undertaken an impact assessment of changes to Official Development Assistance allocations in 2024-25.

Stephen Doughty:

The Prime Minister has set out a new strategic vision for government spending on defence and security and Official Development Assistance (ODA). Detailed decisions on how the ODA budget will be used will be worked through as part of the ongoing Spending Review based on various factors including impact assessments.

■ Development Aid: National Income

Mr James Cleverly:

[\[34270\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when he plans to restore Official Development Assistance to 0.7 percent of gross national income.

Stephen Doughty:

The Government remains committed to returning to spending 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI) on Official Development Assistance (ODA) when fiscal circumstances allow, in line with the International Development Act 2015. Reducing ODA now is a difficult but necessary decision to respond to the pressing security challenges.

The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR's) latest forecast shows that the ODA fiscal tests are not due to be met within the Parliament. The government will continue to monitor future forecasts closely, and each year will review and confirm, in accordance with the International Development (Official Development Assistance Target) Act 2015, whether a return to spending 0.7% GNI on ODA is possible against the latest fiscal forecast.

■ Development Aid: Reviews

Wendy Morton:

[\[35684\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to undertake further consultation with stakeholders following the completion of Baroness Shafik's Independent Development Review.

Stephen Doughty:

As my Rt Hon Friend the Member for Oxford East wrote in response to question 28558, the Foreign Secretary is considering his response to the three reviews he commissioned into the UK's Global Impact, Development and Economic Diplomacy. The Foreign Secretary and Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) Ministers will continue to meet key stakeholders on a wide range of issues, including international development, in the course of their duties, and as part of a commitment to harnessing a wide range of perspectives and integrating them into the FCDO's policy and strategy.

■ Development Aid: Russia

Martin Wrigley:

[\[34423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the proposed reduction in the proportion of gross national income spent on overseas development assistance on the influence of Russia in the countries from which aid would be withdrawn.

Stephen Doughty:

The Prime Minister has set out a new strategic vision for government spending on defence and security, and Official Development Assistance (ODA). Detailed decisions

on how the ODA budget will be used will be worked through as part of the ongoing Spending Review based on various factors including impact assessments. This government remains fully committed to a significant role on development.

■ Development Aid: Visual Impairment

Marsha De Cordova: [\[33984\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of proposed reductions in official development assistance on future trends in the level of preventable sight loss in recipient countries.

Stephen Doughty:

The Prime Minister has set out a new strategic vision for government spending on defence and security, and Official Development Assistance. Detailed decisions on how the ODA budget will be used will be worked through as part of the ongoing Spending Review on the basis of various factors including impact assessments.

■ Development Aid: Women

Mr James Cleverly: [\[34267\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will spend 80 percent of Official Development Assistance on women and girls.

Stephen Doughty:

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) is committed to putting women and girls at the heart of everything we do. We continue to work towards our target of at least 80 percent of the FCDO's bilateral aid programmes having a focus on gender equality by 2030. This commitment is measured by the proportion of programmes, rather than by spend, since this reflects our ambition for gender to be mainstreamed across all FCDO programmes.

■ Development Aid: World Bank

Mr James Cleverly: [\[34271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the reduction in overseas development assistance on the UK's (a) shareholding and (b) board membership of the World Bank.

Stephen Doughty:

The UK's shareholding at the World Bank is based on our paid in capital. We do not anticipate any reduction in our shareholding or any changes to our board representation as a result of the decision to reduce UK aid spending.

Detailed decisions on how the Official Development Assistance (ODA) budget will be used will be worked through as part of the ongoing Spending Review on the basis of various factors including impact assessments. We will set out spending plans

following the completion of the Spending Review and departmental resource allocation processes.

■ Falkland Islands: Development Aid

Wendy Morton: [\[35283\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what funding has been allocated from the Official Development Assistance budget for conservation projects in the Falkland Islands.

Stephen Doughty:

The Falkland Islands are financially self-sufficient and do not receive Official Development Assistance. The UK Government has partnered with the Falkland Islands on several conservation projects including those supported through Defra's Darwin Plus programme. These include projects to restore native habitats, strengthen marine mammal management, and build capacity to respond to the threat of wildfires.

■ Foreign Investment in UK

Callum Anderson: [\[33722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking with Cabinet colleagues to encourage inward investment into the UK.

Stephen Doughty:

The Foreign Secretary has tasked the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) to use its diplomatic influence to champion the UK economy overseas. Our diplomats will be the sales force for UK plc, working with colleagues from across government to ensure we are attracting investment to the UK. This includes directly working with businesses and partner governments, such as a recent Foreign Secretary hosted business roundtable with senior UK representatives from top Japanese firms who have invested in the UK.

In addition, the National Security and Investment Act (NSI) will also aid the UK's growth ambitions by allowing the Government to intervene in transactions that threaten national security.

■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Cost Effectiveness

Priti Patel: [\[32977\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans he has to deliver efficiency savings in his Department in (a) this financial year, (b) 2025-26 and (c) future financial years.

Catherine West:

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) has made efficiency savings in this financial year through initiatives outlined in the Government Efficiency Framework. This framework was agreed between the FCDO and HMT during the 2021 Spending Review, and set out efficiency targets of £84.8 million to meet by the

end of 2024-25. This was increased to £86.8 million during the 2023 Spending Review. The FCDO has met this target.

To help drive out waste and ensure all funding is focused on the Government's priorities, the FCDO plans to achieve future efficiency savings through digital innovation, workforce optimisation and corporate process reform.

■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Social Media

Josh Fenton-Glynn:

[\[35130\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, 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.

Catherine West:

The Government communicates across a range of media channels 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 communication and is used to inform the public directly about matters which may affect their lives or interests.

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) central communication team operates 15 active social media accounts for the department including foreign language and travel advice. We will spend £293.77 on subscription to X Premium+ in 2025. We report no spend on social media subscriptions in the preceding two years.

The below table captures social media advertising spend in support of key campaigns run by the FCDO central communication team from 2022 - 2025, broken down by platform.

YEAR	META	LINKEDIN	SNAPCHAT	YOUTUBE	REDDIT	PINTEREST	TOTAL
2022	£7,588.16						£7,588.16
2023	£129,940.59	£22,554.69	£102,625.31	£23,970.91		£59,940.06	£339,031.55
2024	£983,847.59	£717,368.33	£39,331.73	£52,648.02	£9,989.19	£9,990.01	£1,813,174.88
2025	£123,000.00	£111,999.76					£234,999.76
Total	£1,244,376.34	£851,922.78	£141,957.05	£76,618.92	£9,989.19	£69,930.07	£2,394,794.35

Our global network operates their own social media accounts, subscriptions and advertising locally to support bilateral relationships and international delivery of the Government's missions. Some FCDO policy teams also use social media to engage their audiences.

■ Health Services: Environment Protection

Wendy Morton:

[\[36070\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department plans to take to support the integration of greener practices in (a) global healthcare and (b) the surgical sector to meet net-zero emissions targets while improving patient outcomes.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

Since COP26, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) has promoted climate-resilient and sustainable health systems, including in the surgical sector. We co-founded the Alliance for Transformative Action on Climate and Health, with over 90 country members to drive implementation through best practice exchange and collective action. We have showcased UK practice and research, e.g. actions to meet NHS net-zero targets, including supply chains.

Our diplomatic efforts supported "climate and health" resolutions and declarations at World Health Assemblies and COPs. Through bilateral projects and the World Bank Health Systems Fund, we help partners undertake diagnostics, develop plans, and mobilise resources for resilient and sustainable health systems.

■ Middle East: Diplomatic Relations

Wendy Morton:

[\[35680\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure UK participation with regional partners on the Abraham Accords.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The United Kingdom warmly welcomed the normalisation agreements between Israel and Arab partners. The Abraham Accords are a historic milestone that bring us closer to the goal of shared prosperity and peace throughout the region. The UK is working with regional partners to ensure the Abraham Accords are an enduring success, and we continue to encourage other countries who have not yet normalised their relations with Israel to do so. We continue to support efforts to ensure normalisation also delivers benefits for the Palestinians.

■ Middle East: Visits Abroad

Brendan O'Hara:

[\[36083\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Middle East, North Africa, Afghanistan and Pakistan last visited the Middle East.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

I have conducted several visits to the region since my appointment in July 2024, most recently a visit to Ankara on 2-4 March for a UK-Turkey ministerial dialogue focused on the current situation in Syria.

■ Moldova: Disinformation**Mr James Cleverly:** [\[33898\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much Official Development Assistance funding has been spent on countering disinformation in Moldova in each of the last five years.

Mr James Cleverly: [\[33899\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much Official Development Assistance funding has been spent on countering disinformation in Georgia in each of the last five years.

Stephen Doughty:

Over the past five years, we have supported efforts to counter information threats, including disinformation, in Central and Eastern Europe. This includes, where appropriate, supporting projects through Official Development Assistance funding. Due to the risks posed to our partners and beneficiaries of these projects we do not publish detailed information about them.

■ National Security**Martin Wrigley:** [\[34673\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of Elon Musk's business interests in connection with his role as head of the US Department of Government Efficiency on UK national security.

Stephen Doughty:

The appointment of US officials is a matter for the US and not one in which we have a role. We have no plans to make an assessment along the lines proposed. The UK-US relationship has been the cornerstone of our security and prosperity for over a century. When the Prime Minister visited the White House on 27 February 2025, he discussed with President Trump the depth of the special relationship and their commitment to shared security and prosperity.

■ Russia: Crimes of Aggression**Mrs Elsie Blundell:** [\[35825\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will advocate for a Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against (a) President Putin and (b) the political leadership of the Russian Federation.

Stephen Doughty:

The UK continues to support work towards establishing a Special Tribunal on the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine, and is playing an active role in the Core Group established by Ukraine to progress this work. Senior UK legal and policy experts attended the most recent Core Group meeting in February in Brussels, and will attend further meetings this month in Strasbourg. Our focus within the Core Group is to

ensure that any legal instruments agreed for the establishment of a Special Tribunal are legally sound and able to attract broad international support.

■ **Russia: Ukraine**

Alicia Kearns: [\[36141\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the implications of the Budapest Memorandum for his policies.

Stephen Doughty:

In the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, in return for Ukraine giving up its nuclear weapons, Russia committed to "refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of Ukraine." Russia has clearly breached those commitments. When the war ends Ukraine will need robust security guarantees to ensure Russia is never able to invade again. The UK is ready to play a leading role in accelerating work on security guarantees, as well as further support for Ukraine's military.

■ **South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands: Development Aid**

Andrew Rosindell: [\[36376\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department is taking steps to help support the Commissioner for South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands following the grounding of iceberg A23a.

Stephen Doughty:

The Commissioner for South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands (SGSSI) has not requested any support from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) at this stage following the recent grounding of iceberg A23a off the island of South Georgia. The current assessment remains that the iceberg is unlikely to significantly affect the wildlife, and Southern Ocean shipping operators are currently easily able to avoid the iceberg as it hasn't yet started to break up. The FCDO will remain in close contact with the Commissioner for SGSSI and the British Antarctic Survey (BAS) about A23a to identify any support required as it starts to break up and melt. The Ministry of Defence are also seeking to monitor the grounding site when conditions allow.

■ **Syria: Civil Society**

Stephen Gethins: [R] [\[36085\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans his Department has to support civil society in Syria.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK has long supported Syrian civil society, and we will continue to do so. We engage regularly with a wide range of Syrian civil society actors on issues such as political participation, accountability and human rights, and provide funding through

our programme work. In January, I hosted a roundtable discussion with civil society representatives on the situation in Syria, and we have previously invited Syrian civil society representatives to brief the UN Security Council during the UK's Presidency. As I made clear in my Statement to the House on 10 March, the UK remains committed to the people of Syria and will continue to stand with them in building a more stable, free and prosperous future.

■ Syria: Reconstruction

Stephen Gethins: [R] [\[36084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans his Department has to support post-conflict stabilisation work in Syria.

Stephen Gethins: [R] [\[36086\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans his Department has to work with European partners to support post-conflict stabilisation work in Syria.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The situation in Syria remains fluid and fragile. We want to see a more stable Syria and are working closely with international partners, including European partners, to this end. Following the Foreign Secretary's public statement on 9 March, I made clear in my Statement to the House on 10 March that the interim authorities have a responsibility to ensure the protection of all Syrian civilians and to make progress towards an inclusive political transition.

Our priorities are to support an inclusive, Syrian-led political transition that leads to a representative and non-sectarian government, tackle security threats, including from Daesh, and support economic recovery. On 6 March, we announced the relaxation of sanctions on some Syrian entities in the transport, energy and finance sectors, as part of our efforts to help the people of Syria to rebuild their country and economy.

■ Ukraine: Children

Steve Darling: [\[35392\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to reports that around 20,000 Ukrainian children have been forcibly deported or transferred into Russia or Russian-held territories, what steps his Department is taking to help Ukraine reunite children with their families.

Stephen Doughty:

The UK continues to track Russia's deportation of Ukrainian children. Our efforts focus on communications, sanctions, and accountability. We have raised this issue at the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the UN and the Human Rights Council. The UK participated in the most recent meeting of the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children in October 2024 and continues to work closely with the Ukrainian government. In November 2024, we announced a third round of sanctions targeting those attempting to forcibly deport

and indoctrinate Ukrainian children. We were pleased to see another group of children returned via Qatari mediation in September 2024, and are grateful for Qatar's continued engagement.

■ **Ukraine: Rehabilitation**

Helen Maguire: [35587]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support his Department is providing for Ukrainian rehabilitation organisations.

Stephen Doughty:

The UK supports the strengthening of Ukrainian rehabilitation systems in various ways, including training and capacity building of Ukrainian healthcare staff; provision of rehabilitation equipment to facilities across Ukraine; and support on health and social policy. We support home-based care and rehabilitation services through our assistance to the Ukrainian Red Cross Society and funding via the Partnership Fund for a Resilient Ukraine for the Superhumans clinic, which provides innovative rehabilitation services to people who have been impacted by war.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ **Allied Health Professions: Recruitment**

Sonia Kumar: [35523]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase the allied health professional workforce.

Karin Smyth:

The refreshed Long Term Workforce Plan, which will be published in summer 2025, will deliver the transformed health service we will build over the next decade, and will ensure that the National Health Service has the right people, including allied health professionals, in the right places, with the right skills to deliver the care patients need, when they need it.

■ **Ambulance Services: East of England**

Nick Timothy: [35390]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will list (a) ambulance substations and (b) the number of ambulances permanently located in the East of England in (i) January 2025 and (ii) February 2025.

Karin Smyth:

The information requested is not held centrally. The location of ambulance stations is held locally by ambulance services. The East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust publishes a list of ambulance stations on its website, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.eastamb.nhs.uk/join-the-team/working-for-us/EEAST-station-list>

The East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust has reported that it provides services through 577 ambulances.

■ Ambulance Services: Standards

Leigh Ingham:

[\[36289\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the levels of ambulance delays for Category (a) 1, (b) 2, (c) 3 and (d) 4 calls; and what assessment he has made of the impact of ambulance delays on healthcare in Stafford constituency in the last 12 months.

Karin Smyth:

Ambulance services in Stafford are provided by the West Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Trust, with responsibility for commissioning services a matter for the local Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Integrated Care Board. Any assessment of the specific local actions needed to improve response times should be undertaken and agreed locally by National Health Service organisations in the best interests of the local population and patients.

At a national level, the Government and NHS England are committed to improving ambulance response times. The NHS 2025/26 priorities and operational planning guidance sets national priorities, which include improving accident and emergency waiting times and ambulance response times compared to 2024/25.

■ Brain: Tumours

Freddie van Mierlo:

[\[37096\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of commissioning of the use of Visualase for Inoperable brain tumours on the NHS.

Ashley Dalton:

The decision to commission new services sits with integrated care boards (ICBs), overseen by NHS England. For proposed new treatments which require additional investment, NHS England carries out a relative prioritisation process to determine which services will be routinely commissioned.

NHS England and the National Institution for Clinical Excellence have conducted literature reviews on the effectiveness of MRI-guided laser interstitial thermal therapy (MRgLITT), which includes Visualase, to treat different conditions relating to inoperable brain tumours. Studies have shown very low certainty of treatment success, and it was not possible to draw reliable conclusions about the clinical effectiveness, safety or cost effectiveness of MRgLITT compared with continued medical therapy.

However, the Government is invested in driving new lifesaving and life-improving research, supporting those diagnosed and living with brain tumours. The Department, NHS England, and the National Institute for Health Care and Research (NIHR) are

taking several steps to help improve outcomes for brain tumour patients to ensure the most promising research opportunities are made available to adult and child patients.

Furthermore, we will publish a new National Cancer Plan, which will include further details on how we will improve outcomes for cancer patients, including improvement treatment options for cancer patients.

■ Breast Cancer: Surgery

Jim Shannon:

[\[35661\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many women have had mastectomies in the last three years.

Karin Smyth:

The following table shows a count of Finished Consultant Episodes at hospitals in England for female patients where there was any procedure of mastectomy, from 2021/22 to 2024/25:

YEAR	TOTAL EXCISION OF BREAST, OR COMPLETE MASTECTOMIES	OTHER EXCISION OF BREAST, OR PARTIAL MASTECTOMIES
2021/22	16,941	44,123
2022/23	16,525	44,581
2023/24	16,994	44,145
2024/25	12,287	33,811

Source: Hospital Episode Statistics, NHS England.

The data for 2024/25 is provisional and covers the period from April to December 2024. Provisional data may be incomplete or contain errors for which no adjustments have yet been made. In addition, the data is a count of activity, not patients. A patient may have had more than one admission within this requested timeframe, and may therefore be counted multiple times.

■ Cannabis: Medical Treatments

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[35229\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS prescriptions for cannabis-based products have been issued in Romford constituency in each year since 2018.

Karin Smyth:

The following table shows the total number of cannabis-based medicines with a marketing authorisation, namely nabilone, sativex, and epidyolex, dispensed in the community in the North East London Integrated Care Board against a National Health Service prescription, each year from 2018 to 2024:

CALENDAR YEAR	NUMBER OF PRESCRIPTION ITEMS
2018	22
2019	27
2020	14
2021	30
2022	44
2023	61
2024	72

Source: NHS Business Services Authority.

Data on unlicensed cannabis-based medicines is withheld in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulations, due to the number of items attributed to fewer than ten patients and the enhanced risk of release of patient identifiable information.

■ Coronavirus: Research

Esther McVey:

[\[35647\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Prescription Medicines Code of Practice Authority case rulings with reference (a) AUTH/3815/8/23 and (b) 3886/3/24 on Moderna's NextCOVE trial in children, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of those rulings on the nature of his Department's future work with that company on mRNA (i) research and (ii) development.

Ashley Dalton:

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), the Health Research Authority, and the Research Ethics Committee (REC) review and approve clinical trials on the basis of the benefits and risks, in line with the UK Clinical Trials regulatory (UK CTR) framework.

The safety of those participating in clinical trials is the MHRA's first priority, and our oversight of trial conduct is informed by the trial's sponsor efficiently notifying us of safety issues during the conduct of their trial.

Sponsors and investigators involved in the conduct of clinical trials are expected to have robust processes to ensure compliance with The Medicines for Human Use (Clinical Trials) Regulations, which includes compliance with the provision and use of documentation that has been approved for use by a REC.

Where doubts about the safety, conduct, or scientific validity of a clinical trial are identified, the MHRA may take action, in line with the UK CTR, which could include requiring changes to be made to the trial protocol, or suspension or termination of a trial.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Food**Sir John Hayes:** [\[36359\]](#)

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

Karin Smyth:

During 2023/24, 72% of the food procured by the Department was produced in the United Kingdom.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Information Officers**John Cooper:** [\[30914\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 10 February 2025 to Question 27757 on DHSC: cost of external public affairs, how many communications staff work in his Department.

Karin Smyth:

The Department had 90 full-time equivalent staff in post working in the Communications Directorate at the end of January 2025; this is a reduction from a headcount of 110 in July 2021. Staff in this Directorate cover a broad range of communications roles including media relations, marketing and branding, public health and prevention campaigns, internal communications and external publishing on GOV.UK.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Media**Helena Dollimore:** [\[35071\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 4 February 2025 to Question 24568 on Department of Health and Social Care: Media, which Ministers received media training.

Karin Smyth:

Between 4 July 2022 and 4 July 2024, media training was received by Minister Caroline Johnson MP, the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Mental Health and Public Health, and Lord Markham, the then Parliamentary Under Secretary of State.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Workplace Pensions**Dr Luke Evans:** [R] [\[34655\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many Remedial Service Statements (a) are required in total (b) have been issued to date (c) are calculated and awaiting fulfilment and (d) still outstanding.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 6 March 2025]: The NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA), the scheme administrator, has identified that 381,920 remedial service statements are required for affected members who have retired. Of these, 21 statements have

been issued and 393 have been calculated and are awaiting fulfilment, and 381,506 are outstanding.

A revised delivery plan for remedial service statements is currently in production and will be communicated with affected individuals within the coming weeks. The Department recognises the importance of issuing the remedial service statements to members in a timely way and is working with the NHSBSA to increase delivery.

■ **Diabetes: Health Services**

Harpreet Uppal: [\[35982\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to include diabetes (a) care and (b) prevention in the NHS 10-year plan.

Ashley Dalton:

The 10-Year Health Plan will deliver the three big shifts our National Health Service needs to be fit for the future: from hospital to community; from analogue to digital; and from sickness to prevention. All of these are relevant to improving diabetes care in all parts of the country.

More tests and scans delivered in the community, better joint working between services, and greater use of apps and wearable technology will all help people manage their long-term conditions, including diabetes, closer to home. Moving from sickness to prevention will help us reduce the causes of the biggest killers, and provide treatment earlier, rather than only intervening when conditions deteriorate.

As part of the work to develop a 10-Year Health Plan, we have launched a significant public engagement process, and we would encourage all those with an interest in diabetes services to take part in that process so that we can fully understand what is not working as well as it should, and what the potential solutions are. Further information is available at the following link:

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

■ **Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder: Health Education**

Connor Naismith: [\[35968\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help raise awareness of fetal alcohol spectrum disorders in (a) hospitals, (b) schools and (c) local authorities.

Ashley Dalton:

The Government is committed to improving support for all children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities, including those with foetal alcohol spectrum disorders.

The Government recognises that foetal alcohol spectrum disorders can have a significant impact on the early years development of children. As a result, schools must use their best endeavours to make sure a child or young person gets the special educational provision they need. This includes monitoring the progress of

pupils regularly and putting support in place where needed, including arranging diagnostic tests where appropriate. To support all teachers, we are implementing a range of high-quality teacher development programmes, from initial teacher training and into early career teaching, through to the reformed suite of leadership and specialist national professional qualifications, to ensure that teachers have the skills to support all pupils to succeed.

The Department asked the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence to produce a Quality Standard in England for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) to help providers and commissioners improve both diagnosis and support for people affected by FASD. This includes guidance on individualised management plans, which help to coordinate care across a range of healthcare professionals, as well as education and social services, and improve outcomes. The Quality Standard also covers support during pregnancy to improve awareness and prevent the disorder. It was published in March 2022, and is available at the following link:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/qs204>

Healthcare providers advise pregnant women about the risks of alcohol consumption, document alcohol use, and refer children with probable prenatal alcohol exposure for assessment.

In addition, healthcare professionals conduct thorough neurodevelopmental assessments and develop tailored management plans for diagnosed individuals, aiming to improve early identification and provide comprehensive support to help children achieve their full potential.

■ Food: Labelling

Harpreet Uppal:

[35983]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to change food-labelling regulations to make sugar levels in in food products clearer.

Ashley Dalton:

The level of sugar in food and drink is already shown on food and drink packaging, in the majority of cases, which enables consumers to make informed choices. There are no plans at this time to change food labelling regulations regarding sugar levels in food. However, we continue to monitor the evidence on how food labelling impacts the choices and consumption habits of consumers.

General food labelling legislation sets out requirements for food labelling. It is mandatory for food and drink packaging to include a nutrition declaration, which shows the quantities of nutrients contained within them, including sugar. The legislation also allows for the inclusion of voluntary additional information on the packaging, which may help to inform consumers.

The United Kingdom has implemented the multiple traffic lights (MTL) label, which is a voluntary front-of-pack nutrition labelling system. It provides nutritional information for products at a glance in a simple and easy way that consumers can understand.

The MTL label shows the quantity of energy, fat, saturates, sugar, and salt contained in the food or drink. The UK was one of the first countries to introduce a national front-of-pack labelling system and it continues to be widely used by consumers and some businesses.

■ General Practitioners: Cancer

Terry Jermy: [\[36010\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure adequate (a) training and (b) support for GPs in helping to diagnose cancer.

Ashley Dalton:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to Question [28805](#) on 14 February 2025.

■ Gluten-free Foods: Prescriptions

Freddie van Mierlo: [\[36296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will direct NHS England to update the guidance on gluten-free food prescriptions in the document entitled Prescribing Gluten-Free Foods in Primary Care: Guidance for Clinical Commissioning Groups, published on 28 November 2018.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 12 March 2025]: NHS England currently has no plans to update the guidance. NHS England's guidance on prescribing gluten-free foods in primary care was developed in 2018 to communicate to the then clinical commissioning groups (CCGs). The guidance stated that CCGs may further restrict the prescribing of gluten-free foods by selecting bread and mixes only, or that they may choose to end the prescribing of such foods altogether, having considered whether it is appropriate for their population, taking account of their legal duties to advance equality and have regard of reducing health inequalities.

Decisions about the commissioning and funding of local health services are now the responsibility of local integrated care boards (ICBs), rather than the CCGs. NHS England's guidance should be taken into account when ICBs formulate local policies, and prescribers are expected to reflect local policies in their prescribing practice. The guidance does not remove the clinical discretion of prescribers in accordance with their professional duties.

The national prescribing position in England remains that gluten free bread and mixes can be provided to coeliac patients on a National Health Service prescription, and a wide range of these items continue to be listed in part XV of the Drug Tariff. This means that prescribers can issue NHS prescriptions, based on a shared decision between a prescriber and a patient, while also being mindful of local and national guidance.

■ Gynaecology: Waiting Lists

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhese:

[\[36115\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps his Department has taken to reduce gynaecology waiting lists.

Karin Smyth:

At the end of December 2024, the referral to treatment (RTT) gynaecology waiting list stood at 586,013 across England, with 55.4% of patient pathways waiting within 18 weeks.

As set out in the Plan for Change, we have committed to return to the National Health Service constitutional standard that 92% of patients, including those waiting for gynaecological care, wait no longer than 18 weeks from RTT by March 2029. We provided additional investment in the Autumn Budget that has enabled us to deliver an additional two million appointments as a First Step to achieving this, seven months ahead of schedule.

The Elective Reform Plan, published in January 2025, sets out the reform we will undertake to return to the 18-week standard, and ensure patients have the best possible experience while they wait. This includes commitments to offer patients care closer to home, in the community, including piloting gynaecology pathways in community diagnostic centres for patients with unscheduled bleeding on hormone replacement therapy. We have also committed to increasing the relative funding available to support gynaecology procedures with the largest waiting lists and reviewing support options from the independent sector.

■ Health Services: Children

Lee Barron:

[\[35558\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to tackle the shortfall in the children's health and therapy workforce across integrated care systems.

Karin Smyth:

The refreshed Long Term Workforce Plan, which will be published in summer 2025, will deliver the transformed health service we will build over the next decade, to treat patients on time again. We will ensure we have the staff we need so that children and their families are cared for by the right professional, when and where they need it.

This will take time, but we are committed to building a health service fit for the future with the workforce it needs.

■ Health Services: Standards

Steve Darling:

[\[36167\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, which Minister has oversight of the Getting It Right First Time programme.

Steve Darling:

[\[36169\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps should be taken prior to a test for change on a healthcare offer.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 12 March 2025]: The Getting It Right First Time (GIRFT) programme is a national NHS England programme designed to improve the treatment and care of patients through an in-depth review of services and benchmarking, and by presenting a data-driven evidence base to support change. This key Government priority sits within my departmental portfolio.

The GIRFT team is working with systems and regions to help the National Health Service embed best practice in elective care, to reduce waiting times, improve patient outcomes and, ultimately, to support delivery of the commitment that 92% of all patients will wait no longer than 18 weeks from referral-to-treatment by March 2029.

Responsibility for the delivery, implementation, and funding of healthcare services ultimately rests with the appropriate NHS commissioning body. All service changes should be based on clear evidence that they will deliver better outcomes for patients. All substantial planned service change is subject to a full public consultation and must meet the Government and NHS England's 'tests' to ensure good decision making.

■ James Paget University Hospital: Construction

Rupert Lowe:

[\[33700\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his Department's timetable is for the completion of the James Paget Hospital rebuild.

Karin Smyth:

The pre-construction activity for the James Paget Hospital scheme, which includes business case development and critical enabling works, is ongoing, with construction of the main hospital build expected to commence in 2027/28 as part of Wave 1 of the New Hospital Programme (NHP).

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

We have made clear that we will expediate reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) schemes in the NHP, including James Paget Hospital. To support this approach, my Rt. Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, has commissioned an updated site by site report, due in summer 2025, to inform decisions on the delivery of the replacement hospitals. The site-by-site report on all seven RAAC hospitals will help inform individual development plans, which includes continued mitigation works as well as addressing the highest risk elements as early as possible through phasing of works. The report will be based on an up-to-date assessment of the safety of the hospital site now, and in future.

■ Maternity Services: Forest of Dean

Matt Bishop:

[\[35999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support maternity services in the Forest of Dean constituency.

Karin Smyth:

Several steps are being taken to support maternity services in the Forest of Dean constituency, in addition to those being delivered nationally through the three-year delivery plan for maternity and neonatal services across England. These include, but are not limited to:

- the trust actively working to recruit additional staff and retain existing staff, including through the adoption of flexible working arrangements and a 'retire and return' scheme for midwives without on-call commitments, and with plans to recruit an additional 26 midwives by the end of March 2025;
- a new programme to manage predicted staff turnover and reduce reliance on temporary staffing; and
- dedicated support through the Maternity Safety Support Programme, following the Care Quality Commission's (CQC) Section 31 notice in March 2024. The maternity leadership team has been expanded to support staff and implement the improvements identified by the CQC.

■ Maternity Services: Standards

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[36114\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps he has taken to help improve the quality of maternity care in (a) Slough, (b) Berkshire and (c) England.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 12 March 2025]: NHS England's three-year delivery plan for maternity and neonatal services has made good progress across England by rolling out of new maternal mental health services, Saving Babies Live Care Bundles and families are being engaged more through additional funding for Maternity and Neonatal Voices Partnerships.

Improvement to Slough and East Berkshire maternity services include alignment with the three-year delivery plan which include but are not limited to: the recruitment of more midwives to significantly reduce vacancies and have minimal shortages by 2025; increased access to services through a new maternity hub in Crowthorne; piloting a perinatal pelvic health service that provides women with information about pelvic health risks, signs of pelvic floor dysfunction, and prevention strategies; the implementation of the MAMAs phone line, a triage service staffed by midwives with interpretation services; a Rapid Communication Aid being developed to assist in identifying patient needs in 30 languages; free midwife-led antenatal education classes in Urdu being launched, focusing on birth preparation for over 24 weeks gestation; a culturally competent genetics service being established to support

informed decision-making for Close Relative Couples; and equity training for staff on mandatory update day.

The Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust has focused on addressing inequalities by improving access to perinatal mental health services and antenatal and preconception information and promoting an increase in folic acid uptake.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[36116\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps his Department has taken to improve (a) maternity and (b) perinatal outcomes.

Karin Smyth:

NHS England's three-year delivery plan for maternity and neonatal services is making good progress in rolling out new services to improve maternity and perinatal outcomes. All local areas have published Equity and Equality action plans setting out local action to tackle ethnic inequalities in maternal and neonatal outcomes; all 150 maternity and neonatal units in England are currently part of the Perinatal Culture and Leadership programme; there are important improvements to safety through version three of Saving Babies Live Care Bundle; and families are being engaged more through additional funding for Maternity and Neonatal Voices Partnerships.

NHS England is also rolling out perinatal pelvic health services and maternal mental health services to reduce rates of perineal tears, provide additional mental health support and improve outcomes for women.

■ Musculoskeletal Disorders: Sick Leave

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[35748\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on the potential impact of untreated musculoskeletal conditions on levels of lost workdays.

Ashley Dalton:

Over 17 million people in England live with a musculoskeletal (MSK) condition, which are a leading cause of ill-health related economic inactivity, with 23.4 million working days lost across the United Kingdom in 2022 due to this. Improving health and work outcomes will help deliver the Government's missions to build a National Health Service fit for the future and kickstart economic growth.

The Get Britain Working white paper sets out the Government's plans to reform employment, health, and skills support, to tackle rising economic inactivity levels. The white paper announced the joint Department for Work and Pensions, Department of Health and Social Care, and NHS England Getting It Right First Time MSK Community Delivery Programme, which has been working directly with integrated care boards in England to reduce MSK community waiting times and enable referral pathways to wider support services.

As part of the mission led Government, regular cross Government collaboration takes place at both a ministerial and official level.

■ Musculoskeletal Disorders: Slough

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[35747\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce treatment times for musculoskeletal conditions in Slough.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[35749\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps he has taken to reduce waiting times for treatment for musculoskeletal conditions in (a) Slough, (b) Berkshire and (c) England.

Ashley Dalton:

Over 17 million people in England live with a musculoskeletal (MSK) condition.

The Government is delivering the joint Department for Work and Pensions, Department of Health and Social Care, and NHS England Getting It Right First Time MSK Community Delivery Programme, which will work directly with integrated care boards in England to further reduce MSK community waiting times, improve data, and enable referral pathways to wider support services.

On 6 January 2025, NHS England published the new Elective Reform Plan, setting out funding to boost bone density scanning (DEXA) capacity, to support improvements in early diagnosis and bone health. This is expected to provide an estimated 29,000 extra scans per year once all are fully operational. DEXA scans are a vital component for the early diagnosis of osteoporosis.

The Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care System (ICS), along with the Frimley ICS, which together cover the Berkshire area, is also working with all providers of MSK management to reduce waiting times and improve positive outcomes and experiences for patients requiring MSK care.

■ NHS: Fees and Charges

Rupert Lowe: [\[34084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what costs from the treatment of chargeable overseas visitors (a) are outstanding and (b) have been written off in 2024.

Karin Smyth:

The Department publishes data on the income identified from chargeable overseas visitors in England in its Annual Report and Accounts. The consolidated NHS provider accounts published cash payments received, and amounts written-off in-year by the National Health Service from overseas visitors.

The following table shows these amounts in 2023/24:

YEAR	2023/24
Aggregate income identified	£123,000,000
Cash payments received in-year	£42,000,000

YEAR	2023/24
Amounts written off in-year	£44,000,000

Source: Department of Health and Social Care Annual Report and Accounts and Consolidated NHS provider accounts.

NHS charges can be recovered up to six years from the date of invoice, and therefore the amount recovered in a year does not necessarily mean it was identified in the same financial year.

■ NHS: Finance

Tom Morrison:

[\[35010\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to support (a) the NHS Greater Manchester Integrated Care System and (b) other NHS bodies with (i) financial deficits and (ii) cash flow.

Karin Smyth:

NHS England has a range of mechanisms and guidance in place to support local organisations to improve their financial management. As part of the Oversight Framework, which is currently being refreshed, NHS England closely monitors the financial performance of providers and systems, intervening and providing support where there is concern about a risk of overspending against agreed plans.

The Investigation and Intervention programme was established in 2024/25 to help National Health Service systems that were facing significant risk to their finances. Following a comprehensive review, a series of actions and interventions are implemented to rectify the risks within their plan. The Greater Manchester Integrated Care System entered the Investigation and Intervention programme in July 2024 and has received external support to develop and implement a financial recovery plan that does not adversely impact patient care or service delivery.

Organisations with the largest financial challenges will enter NHS England's Recovery Support Programme (RSP) and will receive assistance from the National Intensive Support Team to strengthen financial control. Support for organisations who have entered the RSP can include, but is not limited to, specialist support to reduce use of agency staffing, implementation of cost controls, and full implementation of the grip and control checklist. The Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust entered the RSP in November 2022 and is currently being supported by its intensive support team to review its spending and recovery plans.

These support mechanisms should ensure the continuity of services and patient safety, and ultimately where NHS trusts need help with cash flow, the Department will provide cash support in the form of Public Dividend Capital. To date, NHS trusts within the Greater Manchester Integrated Care System have received £22.4 million of cash support in 2024/25, with the Stockport NHS Foundation Trust receiving £15.6

million and the Tameside and Glossop Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust receiving £6.8 million.

Terry Jermy:

[\[36012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to publish the outcomes from the 2025/26 NHS Payment Scheme consultation, which closed on 28 February 2025.

Karin Smyth:

The outcome of the consultation will be published shortly, once all responses received have been fully considered and any decisions made about the final payment scheme.

■ NHS: ICT

Freddie van Mierlo:

[\[35989\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to (a) ensure the interoperability of NHS IT systems and (b) reduce duplication across NHS IT systems.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 11 March 2025]: Regulations will be introduced shortly to Parliament to commence section 95 of the Health and Care Act 2022 and establish the process for preparing and publishing information standards, which will be mandatory for public and private health and adult social care providers. In addition, the Data (Use and Access) Bill, which is currently before Parliament, will make information standards mandatory for IT suppliers in the health and care system and will provide support for ensuring compliance.

Information standards define a common set of requirements that must be followed when health and adult social care information is used, processed, and shared. Mandatory information standards can be set to provide for interoperability between IT systems, allowing for information to be shared easily, in real time, between organisations that use different systems, to improve outcomes for patients, and the productivity of the National Health Service.

To achieve the vision of a digitised NHS by March 2026, the current patchwork of digitisation across the system must be remedied, to reduce duplication and ensure that the NHS is better able to harness the power of data and technology.

Through the NHS Federated Data Platform (FDP), we have been supporting trusts and integrated care boards to access the information they already hold in a single, secure place. The NHS FDP is software that sits across existing systems, making it possible to connect them, and thereby reducing duplication and improving efficiency.

Through the Frontline Digitisation programme, we are supporting levelling up integrated care systems (ICS) and trusts to a baseline level of digital capability, as defined in our Minimum Digital Foundation. The What Good Looks Like guidance sets

a common vision for good digital practice to empower frontline leaders to accelerate digital transformation in their organisations and reduce duplication.

The NHS App provides the digital front door for citizens to access whichever national or locally commissioned services will best meet their needs. Each ICS can use these channels to support the delivery of their own digital transformation programmes. We also provide services that can be utilised by health and care organisations through their own system solutions, for example NHS.UK website's syndicated content or the NHS App notification and messaging service. By enabling others to use our channels and services, we reduce duplication of investment and effort, and create efficiencies across the system.

■ Peripheral Arterial Disease: Health Services

Jim Shannon:

[\[35665\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 8 October 2024 to Question 5319 on Peripheral Arterial Disease, if he will make it his policy to ensure that hospitals revascularise patients with chronic limb-threatening ischaemia within five days of admission.

Karin Smyth:

In 2022, NHS England commissioned a two-year Commissioning for Quality and Innovation (CQUIN) scheme, which incentivised the adoption of the Vascular Peripheral Arterial Disease Quality Improvement Framework, to support timely interventions for revascularisation. This measures the proportion of patients who have a diagnosis of chronic limb threatening ischaemia (CLTI) who undergo revascularisation within five days of a non-elective admission to vascular providers.

NHS England commissions the National Vascular Registry (NVR) to provide information on the quality and outcomes of care for adults who have major vascular procedures. The NVR provides annual and quarterly reports for emergency and elective vascular procedures, including for those people with peripheral arterial disease who undergo either a lower limb angioplasty/stent, lower limb bypass surgery, or a major lower limb amputation. From quarter one of 2022 to quarter four of 2024, NVR data demonstrated that vascular providers achieving the CQUIN standard had increased from 47% to 55%. During this period, the number of providers submitting data to the NVR had increased by approximately 14%, and every National Health Service region showed an improvement in CLTI revascularisation quality.

Furthermore, NHS England has commissioned the NVR to facilitate an 'outliers' process, in which vascular providers are monitored on several key performance metrics, including CLTI revascularisation. NHS England continues to monitor all specialised vascular disease services via the NVR, working in collaboration with NHS England's regional teams and the integrated care boards.

■ Prescriptions: Fees and Charges

Anna Sabine: [36286]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to review prescription charges for long-term medication.

Anna Sabine: [36287]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the criteria is for medication for long-term illnesses to be exempt from prescription charges.

Karin Smyth:

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

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

People on low incomes can apply for help with their health costs through the NHS Low Income Scheme. People who need to pay and need many prescription items could save money with a prescription prepayment certificate (PPC). PPCs allow people to claim as many prescriptions as they need for a set cost, with three-month and 12-month certificates available. The 12-month PPC can be paid for in ten monthly direct debit instalments.

The list of specified medical conditions that provide exemption from prescription charges is available at the following link:

<https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/check-if-you-have-nhs-exemption/medical-exemption-certificates>

The exemption covers all the patient's prescriptions, not just those for the qualifying condition.

■ Quetiapine: Shortages

Martin Wrigley: [36243]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has had recent discussions with representatives from the pharmacy sector on the supply of Quetiapine modified-release tablets.

Martin Wrigley: [\[36244\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to notify patients in need of Quetiapine modified-release tablets when the current shortage is expected to end.

Martin Wrigley: [\[36245\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to ensure Quetiapine modified-release tablets are not in shortage for long.

Martin Wrigley: [\[36246\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the supply shortage of Quetiapine modified-release tablets on patients.

Karin Smyth:

The Department is aware of the supply issues affecting several brands and tablet strengths of quetiapine modified release tablets. Following the Department working with suppliers, there have been improvements in the supply through February and early March, with improvements in supply expected to continue through to May, and full resolution expected in October 2025. The Department continues to work with the suppliers of quetiapine modified release tablets to bring forward these future deliveries. Working with National Health Service specialists, we have provided comprehensive management advice for this supply issue, advising healthcare professionals on how to manage patients during this time, and are providing up to date information on the availability of the impacted medicines. The Department continues to engage with representatives from the pharmacy sector on the supply of quetiapine modified-release tablets. Any patient who is worried about their condition, or access to these medications, should speak to their clinician in the first instance.

■ Radiotherapy: Artificial Intelligence

Clive Jones: [\[R\] \[35482\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of AI radiotherapy auto-contouring on (a) patient outcomes, (b) productivity and (c) workforce retention.

Karin Smyth:

Artificial intelligence (AI) technologies have huge potential in improving productivity across the National Health Service by supporting clinicians with faster and more accurate diagnosis, enhancing clinical decision-making about treatment plans, and reducing the administrative burden faced by healthcare staff. The Department and NHS England are developing guidance for the responsible use of these tools and how they can be rolled out to make the day-to-day operations of the NHS more productive and provide better outcomes for patients.

The Department is focusing the £21 million AI Diagnostic Fund on the integration of AI technologies in key, high-demand areas such as radiology, particularly for chest x-

rays and chest computed tomography scans to enable faster diagnosis and treatment of lung cancer in over half of acute trusts in England. This will not only allow patients to be diagnosed and treated sooner, but will also lower the demands on NHS staff, improving morale and staff retention.

In addition, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), sponsored by the Department, evaluates new health technologies for NHS use, considering clinical effectiveness, value for money, and impacts on staff. As part of this, the NICE conducts Early Value Assessments (EVA) for developers, reviewing their AI tools before they are deployed. For the NHS, EVAs aim to give the NHS a clear signal about which innovations work, offer good value for money, and meet system needs, including productivity gains for staff.

The NICE has recommended that AI technologies can be used in the NHS to help with the contouring of computed tomography and magnetic resonance imaging scans, to plan radiotherapy treatment for people having external beam radiotherapy. Technologies such as these have been shown to contour images almost two and a half times faster than a human. This reduction in time could support the reduction of backlogs, ensure patients receive treatment sooner, save money, and allow healthcare professionals to spend more time with patients.

■ Rare Cancers: Gene Therapies

Brian Mathew:

[35930]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential of targeted mutation treatments through genetic treatment for rare cancers.

Ashley Dalton:

Improvements in genomic capabilities have accelerated the development of new precision medicines which can target genomic mutations, including for rare cancers. To help make precision medicines available to patients, the National Health Service has supported access to clinical trials, where the eligibility is based on genomic variants. They also support the adoption and spread of innovative medicines through an innovative genomic testing service and commercial medicines framework.

In October 2022, NHS England published the first NHS Genomics Strategy, Accelerating Genomic Medicine in the NHS, which outlines the vision for embedding genomics in the NHS over the next five years. The strategy includes a commitment to work with partners, including the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence and the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, to identify and prepare for the rapid introduction of companion diagnostic genomic testing. This is critical to ensuring easy access to innovative precision medicines and technologies. Further information on Accelerating Genomic Medicine in the NHS is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/B1627-Accelerating-Genomic-Medicine-October-2022.pdf>

Additionally, the National Cancer Plan will include further details on how we will improve outcomes for cancer patients, as well as speeding up diagnosis and treatment, ensuring patients have access to the latest treatments and technology, including genetic treatments.

■ Rare Diseases: Medical Treatments

Sadik Al-Hassan: [\[36556\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure the proposed changes to National Institute for Health and Care Excellence Highly Specialised Technology (HST) routing criteria aligns with the stated aim of HST to secure more equitable treatment access for very small populations with ultra-rare diseases.

Sadik Al-Hassan: [\[36557\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure the proposed changes to National Institute for Health and Care Excellence Highly Specialised Technology (HST) routing criteria aligns with the stated aim of HST to encourage (a) research on and (b) innovation for ultra-rare diseases when there are challenges in generating an evidence base that is robust enough to bring the product to market.

Sadik Al-Hassan: [\[36558\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential impact of National Institute for Health and Care Excellence proposed changes to its Highly Specialised Technology routing criteria on access to medicines for people living with rare diseases.

Karin Smyth:

Decisions on whether medicines should be evaluated by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) through its highly specialised technologies (HST) programme are taken by NICE itself against a set of published criteria that have been developed through public and stakeholder engagement.

NICE is currently reviewing its HST criteria and has recently closed its public consultation on proposed changes. NICE will discuss the updated criteria at its Public Board Meeting on 19 March 2025.

The purpose of the review is not to change the number or nature of the topics that are evaluated through the HST programme, but to ensure that the criteria are sufficiently clear and predictable for companies and patient groups and are aligned to the HST vision. The aims of the HST programme will remain unchanged. It is intended to: encourage research on, and innovation for, very rare conditions when there are challenges in generating an evidence base that is robust enough to bring the product to market; secure fairer and more equitable treatment access for very small populations with very rare diseases; and recognise that an approach that maximises health gain for the NHS may not always be acceptable; it could deliver results that are not equitable.

Since 2022/23, NICE has been able to recommend 13 out of 14 medicines that it has appraised through its HST programme.

■ Semaglutide

Jim Shannon: [\[35664\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people are being prescribed Ozempic for weight loss in the UK.

Karin Smyth:

Ozempic is only licenced for the treatment of type 2 diabetes and can only be prescribed off-label for use in weight management.

The data requested is not held centrally. Although the NHS Business Services Authority collects data on the number of prescriptions dispensed in England for Ozempic, they do not collect data on the clinical condition it is prescribed for.

■ Sexually Transmitted Infections

Paul Davies: [\[35994\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to tackle increasing rates of sexually transmitted infections in England; and whether he plans to allocate public health funding to this.

Paul Davies: [\[35995\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the uplift in the Public Health Grant is allocated effectively by local authorities to tackle the rising rates of sexually transmitted infections in England.

Ashley Dalton:

Dedicated local sexual health services play a key public health role in the diagnosis, early treatment, and management of sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Individual local authorities, funded through a ring-fenced Public Health Grant (PHG), are responsible for commissioning decisions about the sexual health services that best meet the needs of their local populations, including providing open-access sexual health testing and treatment services.

In 2025/26, we are increasing funding through the PHG to £3.858 billion, providing local authorities with an average 5.4% cash increase and a 3% real terms increase. This represents a significant turning point for local health services, marking the biggest real-terms increase after nearly a decade of reduced spending.

We continue to support the delivery of local sexual health services, including addressing rates of STIs, by providing guidance and data to support local decision makers. In October 2024, the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) published the STI Prioritisation Framework, which, combined with ongoing support from the UKHSA, will enable local systems to identify which combination of interventions to focus on for which populations, informed by the local situation.

The Department is also investing over £6 million to deliver a National HIV Prevention Programme between 2021 to 2026 to raise awareness of HIV, and STI testing and prevention strategies. Also, the Department, the UKHSA, NHS England, and a broad range of system partners are developing the new HIV Action Plan, which we aim to publish this year. A key objective of the plan will be to stabilise and support system enablers, including the wider sexual and reproductive health system.

HOME OFFICE

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Danny Beales:

[\[903163\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking with Cabinet colleagues to help tackle the international trading of stolen vehicles.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Vehicle theft is a serious crime that has a deeply damaging impact on vehicle owners, manufacturers and the insurance industry.

A network of vehicle crime leads has been established in every police force in England and Wales, ensuring forces share information and are better able to respond. The Crime and Policing Bill will ban the electronic devices used to steal vehicles, empowering the police and courts to target the criminals using, manufacturing, and supplying them.

Stolen vehicles often end up being sent overseas so we have provided £250,000 this financial year to provide additional staff and specialist equipment to help enforcement at ports and prevent stolen vehicles and vehicle parts being shipped abroad. We are also engaging international partners to explore what more can be done to disrupt the international marketplace for stolen vehicles.

■ Armed Forces: Foreign Nationals

Liz Jarvis:

[\[35798\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to remove barriers for families of non-UK Armed Forces personnel to stay in the UK.

Seema Malhotra:

HM Armed Forces personnel are exempt from immigration control in service. Those who do not naturalise as British during service, can apply for settlement under Appendix HM Armed Forces of the Immigration Rules on discharge when their exemption from immigration control ends, up to 18 weeks before their discharge, or for two years after.

HM Armed Forces personnel can be accompanied by their family members, and there are special Immigration Rules in place to ensure that those who serve, have served, or their family members are not disadvantaged due to that service. This takes into account the unique nature of their service, the Armed Forces Covenant, and the

recruitment and retention of HM Armed Forces personnel in order to maintain national security.

A manifesto commitment was made to “strengthen support for our Armed Forces communities by putting Armed Forces Covenant fully into law”, and to “scrap visa fees for non-UK veterans who have served for four or more years, and their dependants.”.

We continue to keep this policy under review in the context of our wider considerations of various aspects of the immigration system.

■ **Asylum: Contracts**

Rupert Lowe:

[\[35882\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many contracts awarded to outside companies for the provision of services related to (a) refugees and (b) asylum have gone over budget in the last ten years.

Rupert Lowe:

[\[35893\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department conducted any audits into services provided by contractors to refugees and asylum seekers in the last five years.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Home Office applies robust controls to the management of expenditure and performance in relation to all departmental contracts, including publishing on a quarterly basis the rating of the most important contracts against key performance indicators.

The specific information requested regarding a particular category of contracts is not centrally held, and could only be collected and verified for the purpose of answering this question at disproportionate cost.

■ **Asylum: Essex**

James McMurdock:

[\[36347\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much her Department has spent on housing asylum seekers in (a) Essex and (b) South Basildon and East Thurrock constituency since 2022.

Dame Angela Eagle:

Information on asylum expenditure is published on gov.uk in the Home Office Annual Report and Accounts.

■ Asylum: Finance**Rupert Lowe:**[\[35883\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much funding her Department has provided to local authorities for the provision of refugee and asylum services in each of the last five years.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Home Office publishes information on asylum and refugee expenditure on a regular basis in the Home Office Annual Report, available on gov.uk.

■ Asylum: Hong Kong**Luke Taylor:**[\[36230\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will offer asylum and temporary travel documents to pro-democracy activists in Hong Kong.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The UK has a proud history of providing protection for those who need it through a number of safe and legal routes, including a route for British National Overseas (BNO) passport holders coming from Hong Kong. However, those non BNO passport holders who need international protection should claim asylum in the first safe country they reach – that is the fastest route to safety.

■ Asylum: Temporary Accommodation**Kevin Hollinrake:**[\[36098\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to para 2.19 of the National Audit Office report entitled Local Government financial sustainability, published in February 2025, HC691, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of levels of demand for asylum accommodation on prices for local authorities to procure accommodation.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Home Office continues to work closely with local authorities to manage all the pressures arising from the provision of asylum accommodation including the impact on wider LA obligations and plans.

■ Crime**Bradley Thomas:**[\[35909\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to tackle crime that occurs on the border of multiple police forces.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Government is committed to ensuring that law enforcement has the resources it needs to tackle crime effectively, including when crimes occur on the border of multiple police forces.

When it does, the National Crime Agency (NCA), which leads the UK's fight to cut serious and organised crime, and policing's Regional Organised Crime Unit (ROCU) network have specialised intelligence and investigative teams that are deployed across the full range of threats to bring offenders to justice. This includes tackling 'borderless' serious crimes including fraud, cyber-enabled criminality, online child sexual exploitation and abuse and County Lines.

Both the NCA and ROCU network have been allocated significant resources to enhance their capacity and capability to continue tackling serious crime at both national and regional levels.

The Home Office is also funding the National County Lines Co-ordination Centre to monitor the intelligence picture and co-ordinate the national law enforcement response to County Lines. This is vital in strengthening the law enforcement response and enabling police forces to work together to tackle this complex issue.

■ Cybersecurity

Joe Robertson:

[\[35951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has had recent discussions with (a) technology companies, (b) legal experts and (c) privacy advocates on the potential implications for her policies of requiring companies to create backdoors into encrypted systems.

Dan Jarvis:

Home Office Ministers and senior officials regularly meet with key stakeholders, including technology companies, legal experts and privacy advocates, on a range of policies and issues.

Details of Ministerial meetings are published on a quarterly basis on gov.uk.

■ Deportation: Appeals

Steve Barclay:

[\[36391\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of (a) 14 February 2025 to Question 30619 on Deportation and (b) 25 February 2025 to Question 33426, how many appeals against deportation orders have sought to rely on rights under the ECHR in the most recent period for which figures are available for and in which a manual review would not be of disproportionate cost.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The information requested is not currently available from published statistics, and the relevant data could only be collated and verified for the purpose of answering this question at disproportionate cost.

■ Fire and Rescue Services: Workplace Pensions

Anna Sabine:

[\[36281\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what progress her Department has made on ensuring eligible retired firefighters receive due compensation under the McCloud remedy.

Dame Diana Johnson:

While the Home Office has responsibility for overarching policy and legislative changes to the firefighters' pension scheme regulations, the firefighters' pension scheme is locally administered by each individual Fire and Rescue Authority.

The Home Office continues to work with the fire sector to support the effective implementation of the McCloud remedy for all affected individuals.

As the designated scheme manager, it is for each Fire and Rescue Authority to determine their administrative timetable, in accordance with the Public Service Pensions and Judicial Offices Act 2022, including when remedy payments will be distributed.

■ Gender Based Violence

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[35752\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent steps her Department has taken to halve violence against women and girls in the next decade.

Jess Phillips:

We are committed to going further than ever before to deliver a cross-government transformative approach to tackling violence against women and girls, which will be underpinned by a new VAWG strategy later this year.

We are investing £13.1 million pounds next financial year (25/26) to set up a new National Policing Centre for VAWG and Public Protection to transform the police response to these devastating crimes. Alongside that, we have begun the roll-out of domestic abuse specialists in 999 control rooms as part of Raneem's Law, and launched new Domestic Abuse Protection Orders in selected police forces and courts.

We recently launched a package of six new measures to tackle stalking, including plans to give stalking victims the right to know the identity of online stalkers, following the formidable campaigning of Nicola Thorp.

Our Crime and Policing Bill will introduce a new criminal offence of spiking, new laws to tackle intimate image abuse, and stronger arrangements for the management of sex offenders.

These are just some of the crucial first steps we are taking as part of our unprecedented mission to halve VAWG in a decade.

■ Hate Crime: LGBT+ People

Steve Witherden:

[\[36269\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of introducing legislation to make anti-LGBTQ+ hate crimes an aggravated offence.

Dame Diana Johnson:

All hate crimes, including those targeting the LGBT+ community, are completely unacceptable. This Government is determined to tackle these appalling crimes, and we back the police in taking strong action against the perpetrators of these offences.

We have already committed to ensuring parity of protection for LGBT+ and disabled people under the aggravated offences and will implement this change in an appropriate legislative vehicle in due course.

The Government funds an online hate crime reporting portal, True Vision, designed so victims of all types of hate crime - including transgender hate crime - do not have to visit a police station to report. We are also continuing to fund the National Online Hate Crime Hub, which supports individual local police forces in dealing specifically with online hate crime, providing expert advice to police to support them in investigating these abhorrent offences.

■ Home Office: Annual Reports

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[\[35831\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 6 February 2025 to Question 28420 on Undocumented Migrants: Repatriation, when she plans to publish the Home Office annual report and accounts for 2024 to 2025.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Home Office's financial figures for 2024-25 will be subject to a full and detailed independent external audit by the National Audit Office, after the accounts close on 31st March 2025. Only after the conclusion of this audit, can the financial schedules and full report be completed, signed off, laid before Parliament and then published.

■ Home Office: Equality

Joe Robertson:

[\[35958\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Answer of 30 September 2024 to HL1115 Home Office: Equality, how many staff in his Department have been permitted to undertake diversity-related network time during core working hours since 1 January 2025.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The requested data is not readily available and could only be obtained for the purposes of answering this question at disproportionate cost.

The majority of staff time spent on diversity staff networks is voluntary and unpaid.

■ Home Office: Food**Sir John Hayes:** [\[35635\]](#)

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

Dame Diana Johnson:

I refer the Rt Honourable member to the answer he was given on 10 March 2025 to Question UIN 34773.

■ Home Office: Termination of Employment**Rupert Lowe:** [\[35894\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether any staff in her Department have had their employment terminated due to a failure to declare a conflict of interest when overseeing the granting of contracts in the last ten years.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Current Home Office ministers are not aware of any such cases, but to go back over the department's disciplinary process for the last decade to see if any such situation has featured in a termination case could only be done for the purposes of answering this question at disproportionate cost.

■ Immigration Controls: Age Assurance**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[35750\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the accuracy of age determination processes at the UK border.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[35751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the number of suspected age misidentifications at the UK border in each of the last five years.

Dame Angela Eagle:

There is no single age assessment technique, or combination of techniques, able to determine age with complete precision, but the Government continues to work to establish the best available processes and techniques to improve the accuracy of our age assessment results.

■ Immigration: Afghanistan**Ben Obese-Jecty:** [\[36867\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 10 March 2025 to Question 35834 on Immigration: Afghanistan, how many people who have been resettled or relocated under the Afghan Resettlement Programme were granted (a) Indefinite Leave to Enter and (b) Indefinite Leave to Remain (i) before and (ii) after 15th August 2021.

Seema Malhotra:

The Afghan Resettlement Programme (ARP) brings together existing Afghan resettlement ACRS & ARAP into a single, efficient pipeline.

Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) was launched on 1 April 2021. The UK formally opened the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) on 6 January 2022.

Statistics on individuals resettled or relocated under the Afghan schemes are available in the [Immigration System Statistics](#) release. For a summary of the data, see the resettlement section of the 'How many people come to the UK via safe and legal (humanitarian) routes?' chapter; for detailed data, see table Asy_D02 of the [asylum and resettlement datasets](#).

Afghan Operational Data is published quarterly and is viewable at: [Afghan Resettlement Programme: operational data - GOV.UK](#)

The latest release was on the 27 February 2025.

■ Immigration: Ukraine

Martin Wrigley: [\[35860\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will offer indefinite right to remain for Ukrainians on the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

Seema Malhotra:

The Ukraine Permission Extension Scheme opened to applications on 4 February 2025, which enables Ukrainians in the UK under the Ukraine visa schemes to apply for a further 18 months' temporary permission to remain in the UK.

We recognise the Ukrainian government's desire for the future return of its citizens to Ukraine to assist in the rebuilding of the country. It is important our approach respects these wishes.

This is why the temporary sanctuary Ukraine visa Schemes do not lead to settlement in the UK.

There are other routes available for those who wish to settle in the UK permanently, if they meet the requirements.

■ Marshall Bioresources: Audit

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[35843\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 4 March 2025 to Question 33153 on Marshall Bioresources, when the last (a) announced and (b) unannounced audit of Marshall BioResources in Huntingdon was undertaken by the Animals in Science Regulation Unit.

Dan Jarvis:

The last announced audit at Marshall BioResources occurred in September 2021. The last unannounced audit occurred in April 2024.

The Animals in Science Regulation Unit conducts both announced and unannounced audits to ensure establishments are compliant with the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 and the terms of their licences and the Code of Practice.

Each establishment that holds specially protected species, such as dogs, will be audited at least once every year. All other establishments will receive an audit at least every three years.

■ **Migrant Workers: Care Workers**

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[36753\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of exempting the adult social care sector from proposed increases in the certificate of sponsorship fee.

Seema Malhotra:

Fees for immigration and nationality applications are kept under review.

However, there are no current plans to exempt the adult social care sector from the certificate of sponsorship fee increase.

A provisional estimate of the impact of increasing sponsorship fees is a less than 0.2% increase in the cost of hiring an average skilled worker.

■ **Mobile Phones: Theft**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[35743\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions she had with local police forces on smartphone thefts.

Dame Diana Johnson:

I refer the Hon. Member to my response to UIN 33968 and 33969 on 7th March 2025.

■ **Offenders: Foreign Nationals**

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[35845\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many foreign national offenders were (a) in prison and (b) living in the UK in the latest period for which data is available.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Ministry of Justice publishes information which includes the number of foreign national offenders (FNOs), in the [Offender management statistics quarterly - GOV.UK](#) release, within the [latest release of which covers the period up to 31 December 2024](#) data release.

The Home Office publishes the number of FNOs subject to deportation and living in the community within its Immigration Enforcement quarterly transparency release.

The latest release can be found at: [Immigration Enforcement data: Q4 2024 - GOV.UK](#).

The Home Office works tirelessly to clear legal barriers, secure documentation or overcome other impediments to a return, and between 5 July 2024 and 31 January 2025, there were 2,925 enforced and voluntary returns of FNOs. This is an increase of 21% compared to 2,422 FNO returns in the same period 12 months prior.

The Home Office continues to work closely with HMPPS (HM Prisons and Probation Service) to focus on driving up the returns of FNOs direct from prison, delivering 1,557 early removal scheme (ERS) returns, which is a 26% increase compared to 1,231 in the same period 12 months prior.

■ Palestine Action

Luke Akehurst: [\[36351\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if her Department will take steps to help stop (a) Palestine Action's direct action training days and (b) the spread of violent direct action training materials.

Luke Akehurst: [\[36352\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will review the adequacy of legislation related to the policing of the operations of (a) Palestine Action and (b) other direct action groups.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Whilst the right to protest is a fundamental part of our democracy, this right does not extend to activities that promote violence or criminal damage.

The decision to investigate potential criminal activity is a matter for the police, who are operationally independent of government. Home Office Ministers cannot interfere in operational decisions of this nature, as to do so could undermine their independence.

However, the Government will always support the police in using their powers as robustly as possible to prevent crime and maintain public order and safety where appropriate.

■ Police Community Support Officers: Crewe and Nantwich

Connor Naismith: [\[35967\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to increase the number of police community support officers in Crewe and Nantwich constituency.

Dame Diana Johnson:

In January 2025, the Government announced a total of £200 million in 2025/26 to support the first steps of delivering 13,000 more neighbourhood policing personnel in communities across the country.

Our approach to delivery in 2025/26, which will be year 1 of a 4-year programme, is designed to deliver an initial increase to the neighbourhood policing workforce in a

manner that is flexible and can be adapted to the local context and varied crime demands.

This means the precise workforce mix is a local decision. More information will be available in due course.

■ Police Covenant Oversight Board

Matt Bishop:

[\[35997\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans her Department has to reconvene the Police Covenant Oversight Board; and if she will include the National Association of Retired Police Officers in the membership of that Board.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Police Covenant Oversight Board was most recently convened in January, with the next meeting planned for the Spring.

Beyond the oversight board, interested organisations, such as the National Association of Retired Police Officers, are engaged on the Covenant through a consultation group.

Individual organisations may be invited to attend the oversight board, as they have in the past, where specific discussions are of particular relevance to the interests of those they represent.

■ Police: Artificial Intelligence

Clive Lewis:

[\[35712\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has sought legal advice on the compatibility of the use of (a) predictive policing and (b) risk prediction systems by police forces with (i) national and (ii) international human rights obligations.

Clive Lewis:

[\[35713\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to monitor the compliance of use of predictive policing and risk prediction systems by police forces with the UK's national and international human rights obligations.

Dame Diana Johnson:

AI, and other technologies, can provide a wide range of benefits to improve efficiency and productivity in policing, as well as boosting public confidence by improving the prevention, detection and investigation of crime. However, the procurement and deployment of AI technology to assist with forecasting potential areas of crime or disorder, commonly known as 'predictive policing', must always be subject to strong safeguards.

The AI Covenant for Policing was agreed at National Police Chiefs Council in September 2023. This provides practical high-level principles that, if followed, will ensure that the police develop and use AI tools that are lawful, transparent,

explainable, responsible, accountable and robust. The Home Office has provided funding to support the National Police Chiefs Council AI Portfolio to drive consistency and create guidance for forces to develop and deploy AI tools, and we are undertaking further detailed work in this area. There are a number of essential wider protections in place, including the Public Sector Equality Duty, to ensure that all Government policies take account of the human rights impacts on individuals.

■ **Police: Misconduct**

Helen Hayes:

[\[35716\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to review regulations allowing police forces to remove officers suspected of gross misconduct.

Dame Diana Johnson:

In October last year, the Home Secretary announced a package of reforms to strengthen police misconduct.

That included a presumption of dismissal for proven gross misconduct, specified criminal offences automatically amounting to gross misconduct, and a presumption of accelerated hearings for former officers.

These changes to regulations are expected to be laid as soon as practicable in the coming months

■ **Refugees**

Kirsty Blackman:

[\[36656\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people were granted statelessness status by her Department in (a) 2024 and (b) 2025.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The information requested is not available from published statistics and could only be collated and verified for the purposes of answering this question at disproportionate cost.

■ **Refugees: Employment**

Rupert Lowe:

[\[35884\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to her Department's contract entitled Refugee Employability Programme - Lot 2 (North East), procurement reference CF-0333500D5800000L5A4EAK, what the total number of service users is.

Rupert Lowe:

[\[35885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to her Department's contract entitled Refugee Employability Programme - Lot 5 (East Midlands), procurement reference CF-0334000D5800000L5A4EAK, what the total number of service users is.

Rupert Lowe: [\[35886\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to her Department's contract entitled Refugee Employability Programme - Lot 6 (East of England), procurement reference CF-0334100D5800000L5A4EAK, what the total number of service users is.

Rupert Lowe: [\[35887\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to her Department's contract entitled Refugee Employability Programme - Lot 8 (South West), procurement reference CF-0334500D5800000L5A4EAK, what the total number of service users is.

Rupert Lowe: [\[35888\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to her Department's contract entitled Refugee Employability Programme - Lot 4 (West Midlands), procurement reference CF-0333700D5800000L5A4EAK, what the total number of service users is.

Rupert Lowe: [\[35889\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to her Department's contract entitled Refugee Employability Programme - Lot 3 (Yorkshire & Humber), procurement reference CF-0333600D5800000L5A4EAK, what the total number of service users is.

Rupert Lowe: [\[35890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to her Department's contract entitled Refugee Employability Programme - Lot 1 (North West), procurement reference CF-0319600D5800000L5A4EAK, what the total number of service users is.

Rupert Lowe: [\[35891\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to her Department's contract entitled Refugee Employability Programme - Lot 7 (London), procurement reference CF-0334200D5800000L5A4EAK, what the total number of service users is.

Rupert Lowe: [\[35892\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to her Department's contract entitled Refugee Employability Programme, procurement reference CF-0276700D5800000L5A4EAK, what the total number of service users is.

Seema Malhotra:

I refer the Honourable Member to my response to Question 30479 dated 21st February 2025.

■ Resettlement: Afghanistan

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[35844\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 4 March 2025 to Question 34060 on Afghanistan: Resettlement, what the (a) required entry clearance processes and (b) relevant suitability requirements are that need to be met in order for family members to obtain entry clearance to the UK.

Seema Malhotra:

Applicants for the ARAP, including family member applicants, apply to the MoD for eligibility consideration. If found eligible, the MoD make an application for entry clearance to the Home Office on behalf of each eligible person, part of which requires the applicant to attend a visa application centre to submit their biometrics.

Suitability requirements are set out in Part 9 of the Immigration Rules: [Immigration Rules - Immigration Rules part 9: grounds for refusal - Guidance - GOV.UK](#).

■ Undocumented Migrants

Sir Julian Lewis: [\[36573\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what (a) restrictions on freedom of movement and (b) other preventative measures are placed on migrants who have (i) arrived in the UK illegally and (ii) been identified as supporters of foreign terrorist organisations.

Dame Angela Eagle:

We have a range of powers at our disposal including prosecution, detention and removal and will not seek to hesitate to use those, as appropriate, against individuals who arrive here illegally and seek to threaten the security of our country.

■ Undocumented Migrants: Organised Crime

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[35832\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 3 March 2025 to Question 32366 on Undocumented Migrants: Organised Crime, if she will publish the agreed deliverables of the UK/Italy Illicit Finance Taskforce.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The taskforce is in the process of agreeing deliverables. As part of this we will consider what it may be possible to publish noting the critical importance of safeguarding the integrity of operational activity.

■ Women: Homicide

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[35746\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Home Affairs on the prevention of femicide.

Jess Phillips:

The scale of violence against women and girls in our country is intolerable and this Government has set out a mission to halve these crimes over the next decade. This is an ambitious aim that will require a transformative approach to the way we work together across Government through the safer streets mission.

We will be publishing a new Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy later this year, which will cover all forms of violence and abuse which disproportionately impact women, including femicide.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**■ Community Development and Housing: Gloucestershire****Dr Simon Opher:**[\[36815\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, which housing and community development projects have received Government funding in Gloucestershire in financial year 2024-25.

Alex Norris:

These projects received funding from HMG through 2024/25 to develop housing and communities in Gloucestershire:

- Three sites across Forest of Dean, Cotswolds and Stroud have received funding through the Levelling Up Home Building Fund.
- Three projects across Cotswold and Tewkesbury supported through the Land Assembly Fund to accelerate the development of strategic sites.
- Fourteen sites across Gloucester City, Stroud and Tewksbury received support through the Affordable Homes Programme.
- The Tewkesbury Garden Town project has been awarded support through a Homes England Grant for infrastructure design.
- A Stroud housing project has received support through Homes England as part of the THBF scheme.
- Cheltenham Borough Council have been awarded £20,000,000 as part of the Levelling Up Round 3 for the Golden Valley Development
- Gloucester City Council have been awarded £11,000,000 as part of the Levelling Up Round 3 for the Greyfriars Regeneration
- The Chalford Hill Old Neighbourhood Pub in Stroud was awarded £299,400 as part of the Community Ownership Fund Round 4.
- Forest of Dean District Council and Gloucester City Council have continued to receive HMG funding as part of their ongoing Levelling Up Round 1 projects.

■ Embassies: Planning Permission

Kevin Hollinrake: [\[35701\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what powers the Government has to enforce breaches of planning conditions by foreign embassies.

Matthew Pennycook:

Responsibility for planning enforcement rests with local planning authorities. It is for them to decide how and when to use their enforcement powers depending on the particular circumstances of each case.

■ Housing: Carbon Emissions

Ellie Chowns: [\[35935\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when she plans to publish the updated Future Homes Standard.

Gideon Amos: [\[35936\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to mandate new homes to zero carbon via revisions to building regulations.

Gideon Amos: [\[35937\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to require minimum levels of (a) rooftop solar and (b) other renewable generation on new buildings.

Alex Norris:

The Government understands the urgency of introducing new energy efficiency standards so that as many homes as possible are built to be zero-carbon ready. We are committed to implementing the Future Homes Standard this year, and we are taking the time to set the technical requirements at a level which is ambitious and keeps us on track to achieve our net zero ambitions, while also being achievable across all sites.

In the meantime, please rest assured that an uplift to the energy efficiency standards in 2021, which came into effect in June 2022, set high standards for home energy efficiency. New homes built between now and the Future Homes Standard coming into force will likely be built to these 2021 standards. They should therefore have excellent fabric quality, including insulation, and are likely to include low-carbon technologies, such as solar panels or heat pumps.

■ Housing: Lead

Terry Jermy: [\[36009\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the potential implications for her policies of the Housing

Ombudsman suggesting in January 2025 that there should be a pilot study to test and sample properties for levels of lead.

Matthew Pennycook:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the Question UIN [27855](#) on 6 February.

■ **Housing: Older People**

Rachel Blake:

[\[35962\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to accept the recommendations on hidden event fees in retirement properties in the report by the Law Commission entitled Event Fees in Retirement Properties, published on 31 March 2017.

Matthew Pennycook:

The government is committed to enhancing provision and choice for older people in the housing market and we will continue to consider this issue as we develop our long-term housing strategy, which will be published later this year.

We are giving careful consideration to the recommendations in the final report of the Older People's Housing Taskforce, including its recommendation that government should implement the Law Commission's 2017 recommendations to regulate event fees.

■ **Listed Buildings**

Liz Jarvis:

[\[35799\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make it her policy to allow heritage-appropriate alternative materials to be used for listed properties in instances where traditional materials are (a) unavailable and (b) prohibitively expensive.

Matthew Pennycook:

It is for local planning authorities to determine applications for proposed works to listed buildings, including what materials should be used. Each case will be different and needs to be considered on its own merits. As such, the government does not intend to make changes to national policy in this area.

■ **Local Government Finance: Disadvantaged**

Jas Athwal:

[\[36954\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department is taking to ensure areas with higher levels of deprivation receive adequate funding.

Jim McMahon:

The final Local Government Finance Settlement for 2025-26 makes available over £69 billion for local government in England, which is a cash-terms increase of 6.8% in

Core Spending Power on 2024-25. The most relatively deprived areas of England will receive 23% more per dwelling in Settlement funding than the least deprived areas.

The government is directly accounting for deprivation in the way it allocates funding, such as through the new one-off 'Recovery Grant', worth £600 million. The Recovery Grant will start to correct the unfairness of the current system by putting councils in the areas with greater need and demand for services on a more stable footing. This will lay the foundations for more fundamental funding reform, including an updated assessment of need, from 2026/27.

■ Local Government: Devolution

Lewis Cocking:

[R] [\[35802\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to encourage public participation in Devolution Priority Programme consultations.

Jim McMahon:

On 17th February, the government launched six consultations, one for each area on Devolution Priority Programme. The government is encouraging everyone who lives and works within these areas to participate and make their voices heard. The government has brought the consultation to the attention of a variety of local stakeholders, including local councils, community groups, and businesses, to ensure the consultation reaches the widest possible audience. We are utilising a range of communication methods, including social media and physical promotional materials to publicise this activity, which is also being reported by local media. Engagement is being actively monitored and we are putting in place plans to encourage maximum participation across all communities in these areas.

■ Local Government: Lancashire

Mr Andrew Snowden:

[\[36191\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will arrange local referenda before proceeding with local government reorganisation in Lancashire.

Jim McMahon:

There are no plans to require local referendums on proposed local government reorganisations. Proposals for local government must meet local needs and be informed by local views. It is for councils to decide how best to engage locally in a meaningful and constructive way and this engagement activity should be evidenced in a proposal.

Once a proposal has been submitted it will be for the Government to decide on taking a proposal forward and to consult as required by statute.

Local Government: Reorganisation**Kevin Hollinrake:** [\[36089\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 27 February 2025 to Question 31882 on Local Government: Reorganisation, what the threshold is for her to submit a formal request for a structural review to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.

Jim McMahon:

As part of the process for changing from two tiers to a single tier of local government, where the Secretary of State receives a proposal in response to an invitation, the Secretary of State may, under section 4 of the 2007 Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act, request the Local Government Boundary Commission England to advise on any matter that relates to the proposal and is specified in the request.

Kevin Hollinrake: [\[36414\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to restructure London Boroughs.

Jim McMahon:

On 5 February 2025 the Government formally invited unitary proposals from all the councils in two tier areas and their neighbouring small unitaries. No London Boroughs were included in this invitation.

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Social Media**Josh Fenton-Glynn:** [\[35132\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, 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.

Alex Norris:

a) MHCLG Communications operate four social media accounts for MHCLG. Comms do not hold any subscriptions for these accounts

b) The MHCLG Communications costs to date (excluding VAT) of advertising on each social media platform over the last 3 years:

2022/23:

Meta - £591,780.28

LinkedIn - £215,043.04

Twitter - £150,037.83

NextDoor - £35,132.37

2023/24:

Meta - £508,648.87

LinkedIn - £199,990.22

Reddit - £160,410.28

Nextdoor - £38,999.29

2024/25:

Meta: £220,533.63

LinkedIn - £493.83

Reddit - £92,056.91

NextDoor - £32,271.44

The total cost of the LinkedIn for recruitment for the years 2023-24 and 2024-25 was £42,034.80 (excluding VAT) per year. The cost includes a recruiter licence, 21 job slots, MHCLG LinkedIn Careers page and dashboard manager seats

■ New Towns

Gideon Amos: [\[35940\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether proposed New Towns will (a) be zero carbon and (b) support biodiversity.

Gideon Amos: [\[35941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether housing in new towns will contribute to local authority housing targets.

Gideon Amos: [\[35942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department is planning to take to engage local communities in the development of new towns.

Gideon Amos: [\[35943\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of giving the final decision on planning decisions for a new town to local authorities.

Gideon Amos: [\[35944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what proportion of homes in a new town will be social rented housing.

Gideon Amos: [\[35945\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions she is having with the Secretary of State for Transport to ensure new towns are developed with (a) public transport networks and (b) a mode share pathway promoting a sustainable transport mix.

Matthew Pennycook:

The government has tasked the New Towns Taskforce, an independent expert advisory panel chaired by Sir Michael Lyons, with developing recommendations to ministers on suitable locations for new towns, as well as how to fund and deliver them. The Taskforce will submit its final report this summer.

As set out in its Terms of Reference, which can be found on gov.uk [here](#), the New Towns Taskforce will work in partnership with local leaders and communities, but its selection of sites will be made in the national interest.

Not least because construction of the next generation of new towns will only begin toward the end of this Parliament, the government has been clear that they will deliver over and above the targets produced by the standard method. However, we will make sure that the right incentives are in place to support proactive local authorities to work with us to bring new towns forward and will keep under review how the Taskforce's forthcoming recommendations on new towns interact with housing targets across England.

New towns will be well-connected, well-designed, environmentally sustainable, and attractive places where people want to live and have all the infrastructure, amenities and services necessary to sustain thriving communities, including a gold standard aim of 40% affordable and social housing, with an emphasis on social rent.

■ Park Homes: Utilities**Stuart Anderson:****[35756]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will take steps to support park home residents with the cost of utilities.

Matthew Pennycook:

Park home residents on low incomes are eligible for support with their household bills. The government has extended the Household Support Fund in England until 31 March 2026 with an extra £742 million in support, with additional funding for the Devolved Governments.

Park home residents are also eligible for a one-off £150 discount off electricity bills under the Warm Home Discount scheme. The payment is in addition to other payments such as the Cold Weather Payment and Winter Fuel Payment.

Any park home resident who is struggling with their energy bills contracts can contact their local authority to see what support they can receive.

The government's mission to deliver clean power by 2030 is the best way to break our dependence on global fossil fuel markets and protect billpayers permanently, including park home residents. This, combined with our Warm Homes Plan to upgrade millions of homes to make them warmer and cheaper to run, is how we will drive down energy bills and make cold homes a thing of the past.

■ Tree Preservation Orders: Appeals

Pippa Heylings: [\[36841\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an estimate of the number of Planning Inspectorate appeals related to Tree Protection Orders that have been overdue in financial year 2024-25.

Matthew Pennycook:

Between 1 April 2024 and 31 December 2024, 177 decisions were made on Tree Preservation Order works appeals that missed the ministerial target. This does not include cases due between these dates - but were still awaiting a decision.

JUSTICE

■ Court of Protection

Freddie van Mierlo: [\[37091\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of Court of Protection in (a) issuing granted orders and (b) training for staff.

Alex Davies-Jones:

Court orders in the Court of Protection are prepared and approved by the Judiciary before being sealed and sent to the parties by HM Courts & Tribunals Service. Regular management checks are conducted to review court processes, with additional training provided as necessary. Furthermore, the implementation of a new case management system in July 2024 provided extra training for all administrative teams concerning order production.

■ Driving: Disqualification

James Wild: [\[36455\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of amending legislation so that driving disqualification periods commence at the end of any custodial sentence imposed.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Courts can impose a driving disqualification for any offence committed after 01 January 1998.

Driving bans generally start from the day they are imposed at sentencing. This is because, if the offender's ban was set to commence at the usual point of release, an offender released earlier (on an electronic tag for example) would be able to drive before the ban came into effect. However, Courts have a statutory duty to take into account the impact of a custodial sentence when imposing a driving ban at sentencing. Judges will therefore extend the disqualification period based on the custodial point of release, for all types of sentences including life sentences.

■ Ministry of Justice: Communication**John Cooper:**[\[36333\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how much (a) her Department and (b) each of its arm's length bodies has spent on external communications through (i) Crown Commercial Service agreement RM6125 and (ii) other agreements since 5 July 2024; and which firms have received funding.

Alex Davies-Jones:

The Ministry of Justice does not hold any active contracts awarded under Crown Commercial Service (CCS) agreement RM6125, nor have any contracts been awarded under this agreement in the time period specified.

■ Ministry of Justice: Food**Sir John Hayes:**[\[36361\]](#)

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

Alex Davies-Jones:

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 spend each year on public sector catering contracts.

■ Prisons: Repairs and Maintenance**Bradley Thomas:**[\[36924\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether she plans to publish the assessment made by her Department with the Cabinet Office of prison maintenance undertaken in 2023.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The assessment carried out in partnership with the Cabinet Office in 2023, was conducted in line with Cabinet Office guidance and was consistent with the options appraisal approach prescribed by HM Treasury.

The information contained within the assessment is commercially sensitive and as such there is no intention to publish the assessment as this may prejudice future procurement exercises.

■ Public Sector: Death

Mrs Elsie Blundell:

[\[35823\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether she has considered establishing an independent national oversight mechanism for deaths involving (a) state and (b) law enforcement bodies.

Alex Davies-Jones:

The Government is committed to improving transparency and accountability in the state's response to learning from investigations involving state-related deaths and more widely. To this end, we are actively considering how we can most effectively address concerns about the lack of oversight and monitoring of recommendations and findings from public inquiries, inquests and other investigation processes.

For example, in the context of the recent response to the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 2 report ([Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 2 Report: Government response \(HTML\) - GOV.UK](#)), we have undertaken to establish a publicly accessible record of all recommendations made by public inquiries since 2024; we will ensure that this becomes standard practice for all future public inquiry reports; and will consider putting the requirement to maintain such a record on a statutory footing.

In addition, the Ministry of Justice is undertaking a programme of work in light of the Justice Committee's recent recommendations for the coroner service, including those aimed at better learning from death investigation and other fact-finding processes. This will include further work to improve accessibility to information from coroners' Prevention of Future Death reports; and to ensure, particularly across government, that lessons from these reports are learned; that learning is disseminated as quickly and widely as possible; and that it is effectively monitored and evaluated. We are also working with the Chief Coroner to identify ways to further improve the transparency and availability of the published reports and accountability for responses to them.

■ Special Educational Needs: Appeals

Terry Jermy:

[\[36014\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps she is taking to tackle the First-tier Tribunal (Special Educational Needs and Disability) backlog in (a) England and (b) South West Norfolk constituency.

Alex Davies-Jones:

Although the First-tier Tribunal (SEND) has responded well to the significant increase in appeals it has experienced in recent years, we acknowledge that more needs to be done to reduce the time parents and young people have to wait to have their appeals determined. An additional 70 judges have been recruited for this chamber and began sitting from September 2024, with further recruitment scheduled.

The pressures facing the Tribunal are indicative of wider pressures in the SEND system. We are working with the Department for Education in the longer term to reduce the demands on the tribunal so that the outstanding caseload, and the time

within which the tribunal can determine appeals, reduces in accordance with our key performance indicators.

Terry Jermy: [\[36015\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many parents or young people have taken Norfolk City Council to appeal at a tribunal against an Education, Care and Health Plan decision in each of the last five years; and what (a) number and (b) proportion of those appeals were (i) determined in favour of the appellants, (ii) determined in favour of the local authority, (iii) withdrawn, (iv) conceded before the hearing and (v) still awaiting a hearing.

Terry Jermy: [\[36016\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what information her Department holds on the number of education, health and care plan tribunals that were lost by Norfolk County Council in each year since 2019.

Alex Davies-Jones:

Information about appeal outcomes to SEND is published at: [Tribunals statistics quarterly: July to September 2024 - GOV.UK](#).

Appeal outcomes are not broken down by Local Authority in the routinely published data as requested in this PQ. These data are provided for academic years September to August as follows:

NORFOLK CITY(1) COUNCIL					
	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
(i) Number and proportion of those appeals determined in favour of the appellants	68 76%	161 67%	165 67%	219 70%	281 56%
(ii) Number and proportion of those appeals determined in favour of the local authority(2)	1 1%	3 1%	4 2%	8 3%	5 1%
(iii) Number and proportion	12 13%	50 21%	52 21%	35 11%	54 11%

NORFOLK CITY(1) COUNCIL	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
of withdrawn appeals					
(iv) Number and proportion of appeals conceded before the hearing	6 7%	22 9%	22 9%	49 16%	48 10%
(v) Number and proportion of appeals still awaiting a hearing	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	2 1%
Total number of appeals to the tribunal(3)	89	241	246	315	502

1. Data for Norfolk is held locally as Norfolk County Council.

2. (ii) is the total of cases where the appellant wins the majority of the appeal (i.e. the appellant may be successful in 2 out of the 3 sections they appeal against).

3. In addition to the categories requested appeals can be struck out. This is included in the total number of appeals.

The information provided has been extracted from local management information.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Omar Bombing Inquiry

Alex Burghart:

[\[36745\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, with reference to his oral contribution of 26 February 2025, Official Report, column 763, by when he plans to have signed a memorandum of understanding with the Irish government on their co-operation with the Omagh Inquiry.

Hilary Benn:

The Government has the deepest sympathy for all of those affected by the Omagh bomb in August 1998. It was a terrible atrocity committed by the Real IRA at a time when the people of Northern Ireland were looking to a future without violence,

causing immeasurable damage to the families who lost loved ones and those who were injured.

I welcome the Irish Government's public commitments to cooperate with the Omagh Bombing Inquiry, through the memorandum of understanding which will be agreed directly between the Inquiry and Irish Government in the coming weeks. The Inquiry is independent of Government, however as sponsoring Minister, I see this as a positive step in enabling the Inquiry to fulfil its important role.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

■ Artificial Intelligence: Arts

Mr Angus MacDonald:

[\[36027\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps his Department plans to take to ensure that creative industries and their intellectual property rights are (a) protected and (b) strengthened, in the context of increasing use of Artificial Intelligence.

Feryal Clark:

The Government's consultation on Copyright and Artificial Intelligence (AI) closed on 25th February.

This consultation sought views on a range of approaches to clarify copyright law for both the creative industries and AI innovators. The Government's priority now is to review all responses to the consultation, gathering the evidence to inform its next steps. The Government will continue to engage extensively before setting out proposals in due course.

■ Artificial Intelligence: Employment

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[35644\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he has made an estimate of the number of jobs at risk due to the adoption of artificial intelligence in (a) industries reliant on manual labour and (b) other industries.

Feryal Clark:

We are already witnessing AI's impact within the labour market: transforming the workplace, demanding new skills and displacing old ones. We remain mindful of this impact and its effect on the UK workforce, whilst working to harness the benefits that AI can bring – such as productivity gains, rising living standards, and improved worker wellbeing.

The Get Britain Working White Paper from DWP, HMT and DfE sets out how government will address key labour market challenges. We continue to work closely with these and other government departments through the AI Opportunities Action Plan to monitor this rapidly developing area.

■ Artificial Intelligence: New Businesses

Mark Swards:

[\[35900\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps his Department is taking to support AI startup businesses outside of London and the South East with investments and funding.

Feryal Clark:

The Government is committed to removing barriers to growth for SMEs and ensuring that they have access to resources and expertise needed to develop and scale. Over the last 2 years, Innovate UK has awarded £5.2 billion funding to more than 7,000 businesses across the UK, of which 86% were SMEs.

We are supporting UK tech startups by harnessing the benefits of AI, investment, skills, regulation, data and procurement.

The AI Action Plan sets out our intention to encourage AI development across the UK. We are already working with devolved administrations and local authorities on AI Growth Zones, to ensure all parts of the UK benefit from the investment in critical AI infrastructure.

Mark Swards:

[\[35902\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that small AI startups in the UK receive adequate support and resources to compete effectively.

Feryal Clark:

The Government is committed to supporting the digital economy, removing barriers to inclusive economic growth, and ensuring that the UK remains one of the best places in the world for our great tech businesses to start, scale and stay.

Programmes such as the SEIS/EIS schemes and R&D Tax Credits demonstrate the UK's commitment to supporting tech companies in thriving in the UK.

The AI Action Plan sets out our intention to support the growth ambitions of businesses across the AI sector. Initiatives include opening the AI Research Resource to a wider pool of SMEs to drive forward new AI-enabled innovations, fostering national champions within the UK startup ecosystem, and unlocking data assets for startups to access.

■ British Antarctic Survey: Finance

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[\[35842\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, pursuant to the Answer of 4 March 2025 to Question 34051 on Antarctic: Finance, how much funding his Department has provided to the British Antarctic Survey in the latest period for which data is available.

Feryal Clark:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave on 5th March to Question UIN 33658.

■ Broadband: Devon and Somerset**Martin Wrigley:**[\[35864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to Connecting Devon and Cornwall's news story Airband's full fibre broadband delivery for CDS scaled back, published on 31 October 2024, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the amendment to Airband's contract to reduce the number of properties in Somerset and Devon that will receive full fibre broadband.

Chris Bryant:

Last year, Airband and Connecting Devon and Somerset (CDS) took the decision to descope premises from their Superfast contracts in the region. Approximately 6,000 premises will remain under contract to gain access to a gigabit-capable broadband connection from Airband. Other premises have since been included in suppliers' commercial rollout, and we are working swiftly to identify alternative solutions for the remaining, approximately 13,000, descoped premises.

Eligible descoped premises have been made available for connection via the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme. Several projects are currently under review. Any premises that are not included in voucher projects will be considered for inclusion in our Project Gigabit contracts in Devon and Somerset being delivered by the supplier Openreach.

■ Broadband: South Devon**Martin Wrigley:**[\[35863\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if he will have discussions with (a) the hon. Member for Newton Abbott, (b) Devon County Council, (c) Project Gigabit and (d) Airband on improving broadband speeds in (i) Ideford, (ii) Newton Abbot, (iii) Ashburton, (iv) Teignmouth, (v) Ipplepen, (vi) Holcombe and (vii) Dawlish.

Chris Bryant:

The hon. Member has recently met with Openreach and my officials in Building Digital UK (BDUK) and my officials are in the process of organising a further meeting with the hon. Member to discuss broadband connectivity across his constituency in greater detail.

■ Copyright: Artificial Intelligence**Terry Jermy:**[\[36017\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he is taking to ensure copyright protections remain (a) robust and (b) fit for purpose from artificial intelligence.

Feryal Clark:

Copying protected material in the UK will infringe copyright unless it is licensed, or an exception to copyright applies.

The Government recently consulted on several topics relating to the interaction between copyright and artificial intelligence (AI), including seeking views on a range of approaches to clarify copyright law for both the creative industries and AI innovators.

This consultation closed on 25th February.

The Government's priority now is to review all responses to the consultation, to help inform its next steps. The Government will continue to engage extensively on this issue and its proposals will be set out in due course.

Terry Jermy:

[\[36018\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, when he plans to publish the Copyright and Artificial Intelligence Governance consultation.

Feryal Clark:

The Government published its consultation on Copyright and Artificial Intelligence (AI) on 17 December 2024. This closed on 25 February 2025.

The Government's priority now is to review all responses to the consultation, to help inform its approach to copyright and AI. The Government will continue to engage extensively as it considers next steps, and its proposals will be set out in due course.

■ **Intimate Image Abuse: Artificial Intelligence**

Mark Pritchard:

[\[32958\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if he will ensure that law enforcement agencies have sufficient resources and training to identify and prosecute creators of non-consensual deepfake content.

Feryal Clark:

Non-consensual sexually explicit deepfakes are degrading and harmful. We refuse to tolerate the violence against women and girls that stains our society, which is why we've brought forward legislation in the Data (Use and Access) Bill to ban their creation as quickly as possible.

The Home Office is funding the police to detect and remove illegal deepfake images and are working closely with them to improve officers understanding of this emerging threat.

■ **Social Media: Advertising**

Luke Myer:

[\[36256\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what plans his Department has to reform regulations on social media advertising to prevent the promotion of products that breach UK product regulations.

Feryal Clark:

UK product safety law is clear that all products placed on the market must be safe. However, the Government keeps regulatory frameworks under regular review. The

Department for Business and Trade has recently introduced the Product Regulation and Metrology Bill to update the UK's regulatory framework on product safety. It will support business and economic growth whilst providing greater protection for consumers.

■ Space: EU Action

Charlie Dewhirst: [\[35906\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what discussions he has had with his EU counterparts on UK participation in the EU Space Programme.

Chris Bryant:

A Government priority is for a 'reset' in relations with the European Union, with a particular focus on driving economic growth, and improving our security and trade relationship.

Space has a fundamental role to play in achieving these ambitions, and we will continue to work closely with EU counterparts to identify areas to strengthen our space cooperation for mutual benefit. Discussions are taking place across Government regarding future UK participation in the next EU Space Programme, ahead of the next Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF). We will continue to engage with the EU Commission as this work progresses.

■ Technology: Equality

Samantha Niblett: [\[36913\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he is taking to support the technology industry in adopting data-led practices to improve diversity in the sector; and whether the Department plans to support an industry diversity accreditation scheme.

Feryal Clark:

The Government is committed to promoting diversity in the tech sector and is doing so in a number of ways. DSIT is supporting the Tech Future Taskforce on Social Mobility, which includes helping companies to collect and act upon data to promote tech workforce diversity. As committed in the AI Opportunities Action Plan, DfE and DSIT will collaborate with industry to publish a plan to improve the diversity of the AI talent pool.

More widely, the Employment Rights Bill and Equality (Race and Disability) Bill will strengthen reporting and action on gender, race and disability by large companies, which includes tech companies.

SPEAKER'S COMMITTEE ON THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION**■ General Election 2024: Expenditure****Kevin Hollinrake:**[\[36678\]](#)

To ask the Right hon. Member for Kenilworth and Southam, representing the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission, if he will ask the Electoral Commission to publish (a) invoices and (b) receipts relating to its spending by the Labour Party on its battlebus during the 2024 general election campaign.

Sir Jeremy Wright:

The use of a battlebus by the Labour Party was reported in its return submitted to the Electoral Commission in January.

The Commission will publish the spending returns for parties and campaigners that spent over £250,000 at the 2024 general election in the coming months.

As part of this, it will publish invoices and receipts for any payment over £200, which parties have to submit with the details of their spending.

This is an important part of the Commission's work to provide voters with transparency over the money spent and received at the election.

TRANSPORT**■ A21: Accidents****Mike Martin:**[\[36937\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many people were killed in road traffic collisions on the A21 in Tunbridge Wells constituency in each year since 2019.

Lilian Greenwood:

The number of people killed in reported road collisions on the A21 in the Tunbridge Wells constituency in each year since 2019 are shown in the table. The latest year for which data is available is 2023.

YEAR	NUMBER OF FATALITIES
2019	2
2020	2
2021	1
2022	0
2023	1

■ A21: Litter**Mike Martin:** [\[36936\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, which body is responsible for clearing litter alongside the A21 in Tunbridge Wells constituency.

Lilian Greenwood:

The responsibility for litter clearing on the A21 near Tunbridge Wells, falls to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.

■ Airports and Ports: Infrastructure**James MacCleary:** [\[37076\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much her Department has spent on infrastructure upgrades for (a) ports and (b) airports in preparation for the implementation of the Entry/Exit System.

Lilian Greenwood:

EES will need to be implemented at the juxtaposed controls in the UK. In general, ports are expected to provide infrastructure relating to border controls without government funding. Given the specific issues caused by the need to implement EES, the previous Government awarded a £3.5m grant to each of Port of Dover, Eurotunnel and Eurostar to assist with achieving the optimum implementation models at these juxtaposed controls.

My Department, National Highways and Kent County Council are working with Port of Dover on minor capacity improvements to the A20/Union Street junction to support the port's new Western Docks EES processing facility. This is being led by Kent County Council.

British airports, and maritime ports other than Port of Dover, will not be implementing EES, as these ports do not host juxtaposed controls.

■ Airports: Construction**Mr Paul Kohler:** [\[37077\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has made a comparative assessment of the potential impact of expanding (a) Heathrow and Gatwick airports and (b) regional airports on (i) the economy, (ii) connectivity, (iii) the environment, (iv) health and (v) inequalities.

Mike Kane:

The Government has invited proposals for a third runway at Heathrow to be brought forward by the summer. Once proposals have been received, the government will review the Airports National Policy Statement, which provides the basis for decision making on granting development consent for a new runway at Heathrow. The Government has been clear that any airport expansion proposals need to demonstrate that they contribute to economic growth, can be delivered in line with the

UK's legally binding commitments on carbon and meet strict environmental requirements on air quality and noise pollution.

On 27 February the Secretary of State has said she is 'minded to approve' the expansion of Gatwick Airport. Gatwick Airport is now asked to respond to the Secretary of State on the matters raised by 24 April 2025. The Secretary of State will make her final decision on or before 27 October. As this is a live planning application and the Secretary of State has a quasi-judicial role in this process we therefore cannot comment on it further.

■ Airports: Parking

Mrs Elsie Blundell:

[\[35824\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her Department plans to introduce an independent organisation to (a) monitor and (b) control parking fees at airports.

Mike Kane:

As commercial businesses it is for airport operators to manage and justify the amount and advertising of parking charges. Parking arrangements are subject to contractual agreements between airport operators, car parking companies and covered by consumer laws. While there are no plans to introduce an independent organisation to monitor or control parking fees at airports, the Department for Transport expects car parking at airports to be managed appropriately.

■ Avanti West Coast: Standards

Mr Andrew Snowden:

[\[36175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions she has had with Avanti West Coast services on the number of delays between London Euston and Preston.

Simon Lightwood:

The Secretary of State met Avanti West Coast (AWC) in January to discuss plans to address industrial action. The Rail Minister also met AWC and Network Rail bosses in January to challenge poor performance and demand immediate action to deliver urgent improvements. While the performance of AWC is improving, it is still not good enough, with too many cancellations and delays. Poor Network Rail infrastructure reliability has also contributed significantly to the disruption felt by passengers.

■ Cars: Insurance

Mr Paul Kohler:

[\[37057\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the car insurance taskforce has been formally established; and whether its remit has been defined.

Mr Paul Kohler:

[\[37058\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will publish the (a) objectives, (b) timeline and (c) interim findings of the car insurance taskforce.

Lilian Greenwood:

The cross-Government motor insurance taskforce was launched in October. It is comprised of ministers from relevant government departments and the Financial Conduct Authority and Competition and Markets Authority. The taskforce is supported by a separate stakeholder panel of industry experts representing the insurance, motor, and consumer sector.

The taskforce has a strategic remit to set the direction for UK Government policy, identifying short- and long-term actions for departments that may contribute to stabilising or reducing premiums, while maintaining appropriate levels of cover. It will look at the increased insurance costs on consumers and the insurance industry, including how this impacts different demographics, geographies, and communities.

We will provide updates on the taskforce's work in due course.

■ **Cycleways: Repairs and Maintenance**

Mike Martin:

[\[36938\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, which body has responsibility for the maintenance and upkeep of the cycle path between Pembury Hospital and Tonbridge.

Simon Lightwood:

Local highway authorities have a duty under Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980 to maintain the highways network in their area, including cycle paths. Kent County Council is responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the non-motorised user route that runs from Pembury Hospital to Vauxhall Lane, Tonbridge.

This Government takes the condition of our country's roads very seriously and is committed to supporting local authorities in maintaining and renewing the local highway network and tackling the maintenance backlog. The Government has already announced a funding uplift of £500 million for the 2025/26 financial year compared to 2024/25, with Kent County Council receiving an additional £14.2 million for highway maintenance.

■ **Department for Transport: Food**

Sir John Hayes:

[\[35633\]](#)

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

Mike Kane:

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.

■ Govia Thameslink Railway: Fares

Blake Stephenson:

[\[35853\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans her Department has to reduce fares on Thameslink services through its Great British Railways proposals.

Simon Lightwood:

Whilst it is our ambition through public ownership to deliver a more affordable railway, any long-term changes or concessions made to rail fares policy require balancing against the potential impacts on passengers, taxpayers and the railway. Through future legislation, we will set out the role Great British Railways (GBR) will have in fares, ticketing, and other operational aspects of the Railway. Fares and ticketing will continue to be the responsibility of train operators until GBR is established.

The Government's plans for rail reform will deliver an accountable and integrated public body, GBR, which will take decisions on the use of the railway in the public interest and deliver Government priorities. GBR will plan and implement an achievable, reliable timetable, so that the services promised to passengers are delivered. Better coordination of the timetable will reduce delays, improve reliability and reduce costs.

Waste, inefficiency, and fragmentation on today's railways is costing the taxpayer dearly. Reforming our railways will make them more efficient, providing better services for passengers and better value for the taxpayer.

Once all franchises are in public ownership, up to £150 million could be saved every year in fees alone that would have been paid to private sector owning groups. Instead, under public ownership, every penny can be spent for the benefit of passengers.

■ Govia Thameslink Railway: Standards

Blake Stephenson:

[\[35854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans her Department has to increase reliability on Thameslink services through its Great British Railways proposals.

Blake Stephenson:[\[35855\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans her Department has to increase capacity on Thameslink services through its Great British Railways proposals.

Simon Lightwood:

Currently all train operators are required to plan services and timetables designed to meet both current and future passenger demand, while also ensuring value for money for the taxpayer.

Improving railway performance is a top priority for this Government. We have been clear with Govia Thameslink Railway, who operate Thameslink services, that we will not tolerate poor performance and will continue to hold them to account through a range of measures.

The Government's plans for rail reform will deliver an accountable and integrated public body, Great British Railways (GBR), which will take decisions on the use of the railway in the public interest and deliver Government priorities. GBR will plan and implement an achievable, reliable timetable, so that the services promised to passengers are delivered. Better coordination of the timetable will reduce delays, improve reliability and reduce costs.

■ Railways: Standards**Blake Stephenson:**[\[35856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her plans for Great British Railways will end the practice of cancelling stops to make services run faster once trains have set off.

Simon Lightwood:

The Government's plans for rail reform will deliver an accountable and integrated public body, Great British Railways (GBR), which will take decisions on the use of the railway in the public interest and deliver Government priorities. GBR will plan and implement an achievable, reliable timetable, so that the services promised to passengers are delivered. Better coordination of the timetable will reduce delays, improve reliability and reduce costs.

We understand that missing stops will be inconvenient, but sometimes it is the best way to quickly recover a reliable service for all users.

■ Refuges: Public Transport**Daisy Cooper:**[\[36781\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has made an assessment of the potential implications for her policies of the affordability of public transport for (a) women and (b) children residing in women's refuges.

Simon Lightwood:

Delivering safe and affordable public transport are key considerations for the Government and our ambitious reforms of the bus system and railway will ensure services better meet the needs of communities.

The Department supports the Rail Delivery Group funded Rail to Refuge scheme which provides those fleeing domestic abuse (and any children who may be required to travel with them) free rail travel to a refuge. This support is crucial in providing essential access to transport for those in need.

We are also investing over £150 million to deliver a £3 cap on single bus fares in England outside London from 1 January until 31 December 2025 to help millions of people. We will continue to explore more targeted options that deliver value for money to the taxpayer, to ensure affordable bus travel is available for the groups who need it the most.

■ Taxis

Tom Morrison: [\[36489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department has taken to protect small taxi businesses from the potential impact of ride-hailing companies operating in local authority-licensed areas.

Tom Morrison: [\[36490\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what guidance her Department is providing to local authorities on ensuring ride hailing companies comply with local authority fare regulations for private hire vehicles.

Tom Morrison: [\[36491\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions her Department has had with local authorities on the public safety risks associated with ride-hailing firms operating outside their licensed areas.

Simon Lightwood:

Legislation has always allowed taxis and private hire vehicles to carry pre-booked fares outside the area in which they are licensed. This allows the sector to work more flexibly to meet the needs of their passengers.

All licensing authorities in England have a duty to ensure that any person to whom they grant a PHV driver's licence or a PHV operator's licence is fit and proper to hold such a licence. Licensing authorities have the flexibility to set the standards they consider appropriate for applicants to demonstrate this. To promote consistency in licensing requirements and policies for both taxis and private hire vehicles the Department for Transport has issued statutory and best practice guidance to assist authorities in setting high safety standards, and to promote proportionate regulation in relation to other requirements.

Licensing authorities in England are required by law to share safeguarding or road safety concerns about taxi and private hire vehicle drivers licensed in other areas with

the authority that issued the licence. The authority that issued the licence must then consider whether to suspend or revoke the driver's licence.

Licensing authorities do not have the power to regulate private hire vehicle fares, as such services must be pre-booked passengers are able to compare prices and other factors prior to booking the service.

The Government recognises concerns around out-of-area working and is considering options to strengthen the regulation of the sector.

■ **Taxis: Uber**

Max Wilkinson: [\[35803\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her Department has a policy on Uber taxi drivers operating outside the local authority area in which those drivers have a licence.

Simon Lightwood:

Legislation allows taxis and private hire vehicles to operate outside of the area in which they are licensed. Taxis can only ply for hire (pick up passengers at taxi ranks or be hailed in the street) in the area in which they are licensed. Pre-booked work by private hire vehicles and taxis can be undertaken anywhere. This allows the sector to work flexibly to meet the needs of their passengers.

The Government however recognises concerns around out-of-area working and is considering options to strengthen the regulation of the sector.

■ **West Coast Main Line: Standards**

Mr Andrew Snowden: [\[36178\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to communicate upcoming service cancellations on the West Coast Mainline to (a) passengers and (b) potential passengers.

Simon Lightwood:

The department expects train operators and Network Rail to communicate service changes to passengers in a timely and accessible way to minimise disruption to their journeys.

TREASURY

■ **Banking Hubs**

Lewis Cocking: [\[35800\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 3 March 2025 to Question 33105 on Banking Hubs, whether she has the power to change the assessment criteria used by LINK to establish new banking hubs.

Blake Stephenson:[\[35858\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 10 February 2025 to Question 28664, whether it is her Department's policy to ask retail banks to keep High Street branches open during their discussions with them.

Emma Reynolds:

Banking has changed significantly in recent years with many customers benefitting from the ease and convenience of remote banking. While branch closures are commercial decisions for banks, the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) guidance expects firms to carefully consider the impact of planned branch closures on their customers' everyday banking and cash access needs and put in place alternatives where reasonable. This seeks to ensure that branch closures are implemented in a way that treats customers fairly.

Where firms fall short of expectations, the FCA may ask for closures to be paused or other options to be put in place. Where alternative services have been recommended, a branch cannot close until any recommended services are in place.

The Financial Services and Markets Act 2023 granted the FCA the responsibility and powers to seek to ensure the reasonable provision of cash withdrawal and deposit facilities. Under the FCA's regime, LINK, the operator of the UK's ATM network, is responsible for undertaking access to cash assessments. When a cash service such as a bank branch closes, or if LINK receives a request directly from a community, LINK assesses a community's access to cash needs and can recommend a new service, such as a banking hub.

The Government has no powers to intervene in decisions to open new banking hubs, and the criteria for access to cash assessments is a matter for LINK, the financial services sector and the FCA. The FCA is required by law to keep its access to cash rules under review and is monitoring the impact of these rules on an ongoing basis to ensure they deliver the right outcomes for businesses and consumers.

■ Business: Taxation**Neil O'Brien:**[\[36128\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the new VAT legislation for private schools led to HMRC amending or redefining the scope of input tax recovery for business who made exempt supplies prior to registration.

James Murray:

VAT incurred prior to registration is not input tax. However, HMRC has discretion under the provisions of Regulation 111 of the VAT Regulations 1995 (SI 1995/2518) to allow such VAT to be treated as input tax, subject to the normal rules. There was therefore no need to amend or redefine the scope of input tax recovery following the introduction of VAT on private school fees.

■ Culture: Wales

Ann Davies:

[\[36922\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the press notice entitled Major investment to boost growth and cement Britain's place as cultural powerhouse, published on 20 February 2025, what consequential funding through the Barnett formula will be provided to Wales.

Darren Jones:

The Barnett formula is applied when departmental budgets change – not when departments announce how they are spending their budgets. The Barnett formula was applied in the usual way, as set out in the Statement of Funding Policy, when the Department for Culture, Media and Sport's budget changed at Phase 1 of the Spending Review 2025.

The Welsh Government's Phase 1 Spending Review 2025 settlement for 2025-26 is the largest in real terms of any Welsh Government settlement since devolution. The Welsh Government is receiving at least 20% more funding per person than equivalent UK Government spending in England. That translates into over £4 billion more in 2025-26.

The published Block Grant Transparency document provides a detailed breakdown of how the block grants are calculated and the next iteration will be published in due course.

■ Enterprise Management Incentives

Kanishka Narayan:

[\[36159\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment her Department has made of the suitability of the current asset and employee number eligibility caps for the Enterprise Management Incentive in supporting the fastest-growing tech startups in the UK.

James Murray:

The Enterprise Management Incentive (EMI) scheme is a tax-advantaged share scheme, which allows SMEs to attract and retain high productivity workers that they otherwise would not be able to recruit due to insufficient cashflow compared to larger, more established companies. The asset and employee number eligibility caps ensure the scheme is targeted at those small companies most affected by this issue.

At Spring Budget 2022, a review of EMI concluded that the scheme and its limits remain "effective and appropriately targeted." Following this evaluation, Company Share Option Plan (CSOP) was expanded from April 2023 in order to support companies as they grow beyond the scope of EMI.

The Government keeps all tax reliefs under review, to ensure they continue to meet their policy objectives in a way that is fair and effective.

■ Film: Business Rates

Blake Stephenson:

[\[36218\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to her Department's news story entitled, Lights, Camera, Action! 40% business rates relief for film studios rolled out, published on 16 February 2025, whether her announcement on film business rates of 16 February 2025 is in addition to fiscal measures outlined in Autumn Budget 2024.

James Murray:

At Autumn Budget 2024, the Government announced that it intends to introduce permanently lower tax rates for retail, hospitality, and leisure (RHL) properties, with rateable values below £500,000, from 2026-27. This permanent tax cut will ensure that they benefit from much-needed certainty and support. The Government intends to fund this by introducing a higher multiplier on all properties, including film studios, with a rateable value (RV) of £500,000 and above.

The Government has announced that it is proceeding with 40 per cent relief for eligible film studios in England on their gross business rates bills until March 2034. The costing was published at Spring Budget 2024.

Business rates bills are calculated by applying the relevant multiplier first and so film studios will receive 40 per cent relief on their total liability.

The Government will confirm the rates for the new multipliers at Budget 2025.

■ National Insurance Credits

Steve Darling:

[\[36828\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the policy paper entitled Simplification update – January 2024, published 16 January 2024, when she plans to implement changes to National Insurance credits for parents who did not claim Child Benefit.

James Murray:

I can confirm that the new National Insurance (NI) credit for parents who did not claim child benefit due to the High-Income Child Benefit Charge will be implemented as planned from April 2026 to ensure that affected parents and carers do not miss out on building entitlement to the State Pension.

■ Private Education: VAT

Neil O'Brien:

[\[36127\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether independent schools under the new interpretation of VAT entities following the Autumn Budget 2024 are their own class of business.

James Murray:

Taxpayers who are required to register for VAT can usually do so online.

The 'Business activity' section of the VAT registration form requires a full description of all the taxpayer's business activities, including the type of goods and/or services that they supply. HMRC guidance is for private schools to enter 'Private Education Provider' in this section.

When registering for VAT, taxpayers are also required to provide Standard Industry Classification (SIC) codes that best describe their business activities. These will depend on their individual circumstances.

Patrick Spencer: [\[36547\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the forecasts for input VAT reclaimable by private schools are in line with Revenue and Customs Brief 16 being issued.

Patrick Spencer: [\[36554\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the forecasts for input VAT reclaimable by private schools are in line with Revenue and Customs Brief 16 (2016) being issued.

James Murray:

Revenue and Customs Brief 16 (2016) clarified that VAT incurred prior to registration can be recovered as input tax, subject to the normal rules. The approach taken to VAT recovery by private schools, including projection of taxable use, is in line with the policy as clarified in the brief.

Patrick Spencer: [\[36551\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she plans to adapt the VAT penalty regime for private schools in the context of the publication of comprehensive guidance by HMRC.

Patrick Spencer: [\[36552\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she plans to introduce leniency provisions for private schools through the initial implementation of VAT.

James Murray:

Since 1 January, all education services and vocational training provided by private schools in the UK for a charge have been subject to VAT at the standard rate of 20 per cent. This also applies to boarding services provided by private schools.

Since the announcement on 29 July, HMRC has taken action to support private schools through the change: providing detailed guidance, creating a bespoke mailbox for technical queries, running webinars, and allocating additional resource to process VAT registration applications.

HMRC guidance on VAT penalties and interest is available here: [VAT penalties and interest - GOV.UK](#). This includes guidance that a penalty may be cancelled or amended if the taxpayer has a reasonable excuse. It also explains that the late submission penalty rules do not apply to your first VAT return if you are newly VAT registered.

■ Small Businesses: Employers' Contributions

Wendy Morton:

[\[36077\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she has had discussions with Cabinet colleagues on the potential merits of introducing a phased reduction in employer National Insurance contributions for businesses with fewer than 50 employees.

James Murray:

The Government has taken a number of difficult but necessary decisions on tax, welfare, and spending to fix the public finances, fund public services, and restore economic stability after the situation we inherited from the previous administration.

One of the toughest decisions we took was to raise the rate of employer National Insurance contributions (NICs) from 13.8% to 15%, whilst reducing the per-employee threshold at which employers start to pay National Insurance (the Secondary Threshold) from £9,100 to £5,000.

The Government decided to protect the smallest businesses from these changes by increasing the Employment Allowance from £5,000 to £10,500. This means that next year, 865,000 employers will pay no NICs at all, and more than half of all employers will either gain or will see no change. It means employers will be able to employ up to four full-time workers on the National Living Wage without paying a penny of employer NICs.

■ VAT

Neil O'Brien:

[\[36126\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for what reason the publication of new VAT guidance in October 2024 was following the Budget.

James Murray:

Since 1 January 2025, all education services and vocational training provided by private schools in the UK for a charge have been subject to VAT at the standard rate of 20 per cent.

Since the announcement of this policy, HMRC has taken action to support private schools through the change.

On 10 October 2024, HMRC published bespoke guidance for private schools, which can be found here: [Registering for VAT](#) and [Charging and Reclaiming VAT](#). HMRC published initial guidance ahead of the Budget to maximise the amount of time private schools had to prepare for this policy taking effect. This guidance was updated on 30 October 2024 to reflect the final policy design. Details of guidance updates are available on GOV.UK.

As with all guidance, HMRC is keeping the guidance for private schools under review. HMRC continues to engage with private schools and the organisations that represent them.

Neil O'Brien: [\[36130\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the compatibility of changes to VAT legislation with the principal of fiscal neutrality.

James Murray:

Fiscal neutrality is a key feature of the VAT system, and helps to ensure market distortions are minimised by equalising the tax treatment of supplies which are identical or sufficiently similar from the point of view of the consumer.

When changing VAT legislation the Government considers issues of fiscal neutrality as part of the policy making process.

Patrick Spencer: [\[36553\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if HMRC will extend the 30-day challenge period for instances where they disallow VAT.

James Murray:

Taxpayers can challenge certain decisions from HMRC.

For indirect tax, including VAT, HMRC will offer the taxpayer a review in the decision letter. They will have 30 days from the date of the offer to either accept the offer of a review or appeal to the tax tribunal. This is explained in HMRC guidance, available here: [Disagree with a tax decision or penalty: Disagree with a tax decision - GOV.UK](#).

If taxpayers miss the deadline to accept the offer of a review, they will need to provide a reasonable excuse. Further information on what may count as a reasonable excuse is available here: [Disagree with a tax decision or penalty: Reasonable excuses - GOV.UK](#).

If taxpayers want a review but need more time (for example, to gather information to give to the review officer), they can ask HMRC to extend the deadline. They must ask within 30 days of the offer date. Taxpayers cannot get an extension on the deadline to appeal to the tax tribunal.

■ Wholesale Trade: Business Rates

Gregory Stafford: [\[36037\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps she plans to take to ensure the business rates system supports the sustainability of food and drink wholesalers.

Gregory Stafford: [\[36038\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate she has made of the potential impact of the higher multiplier on properties with RV of £500,000 and above on the food and drink wholesale sector.

James Murray:

To deliver our manifesto pledge, from 2026-27, we intend to introduce permanently lower tax rates for high street retail, hospitality, and leisure (RHL) properties, with

rateable values below £500,000. This permanent tax cut will ensure that they benefit from much-needed certainty and support.

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 a rateable value 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.

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 – to take effect in the 2026-27 billing year – HM Treasury intends to publish analysis of the effects of the new multiplier arrangements.

The Government published the 'Transforming Business Rates' Discussion Paper at Budget setting out priority areas for reform. This paper invites industry to help co-design a fairer business rates system that supports investment and is fit for the 21st century. Further information regarding the Discussion Paper can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transforming-business-rates> .

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Equality

Joe Robertson:

[35960]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many staff in her have been permitted to undertake diversity-related network time during core working hours.

Andrew Western:

Currently 7 National Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Networks are given pro rata time allocation annually to support respective network activity. Each Committee has 2 Co-Chairs and up to 10 Committee members.

Two members of staff also have 5% pro-rata time allocation to lead a Civil Service staff Network.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Food

Sir John Hayes:

[36357]

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

Andrew Western:

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.

■ Disability Living Allowance: Children

Pippa Heylings: [\[36192\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will ensure that Mandatory Reconsiderations relating to decisions on Child Disability Living Allowance claims are dealt with within 28 days.

Sir Stephen Timms:

In law there is no time limit within which a Mandatory Reconsideration (MR) decision must be made. This reflects the overarching policy that the focus should be on making the right decision and not the speed of clearance. Decisions should be made without delay, but if the decision maker considers that more time is needed to gather or consider evidence, they must give themselves that time to ensure they are confident that the decision made is correct. The department is also recruiting decision makers to increase the resources available for DLA-C MR cases.

Pippa Heylings: [\[36193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will publish information on success rates for (a) Mandatory Reconsideration of decisions on Child Disability Living Allowance (DLA) applications and (b) Tribunals relating to decisions on Child DLA applications.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is unable to provide the specific information requested on Mandatory Reconsiderations for Child Disability Living Allowance (DLA) applications. We hold data on Mandatory Reconsiderations, but only for the combined elements of those undertaken on "applications" (new claims) and those undertaken on changes in circumstance. The data does not split out the two to enable us to report to you the applications element only.

In regards to Tribunal outcomes, His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service are responsible for publication of statistics.

Pippa Heylings: [\[36194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what proportion of claims for Child Disability Living Allowance were decided within the target timeframe of 45 working days in (a) 2024 and (b) so far in 2025.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The most recent information on processing times for Disability Living Allowance for children was published in the [DWP annual report and accounts 2023 to 2024](#) -

[GOV.UK](#) (ARA) on 22nd July 2024. This shows that in 2023/24 DWP cleared 3.5% of Disability Living Allowance for children claims within the planned 40 working day timescale. The next publication of the ARA will include the percentage of claims processed in the Financial Year 2024 to 2025, which is due for publication in the summer.

Although, DWP has seen improvements in processing times across many service lines during 2023-24, continued high demand has meant that the Department's ability to process claims consistently in a timely manner across all its services has come under considerable pressure, with performance remaining below standard in some areas including in Child DLA where demand has increased in recent years and is significantly higher than pre-pandemic volumes. During 2020-21 DWP deferred reviewing existing cases to focus on processing new claims. Since then, the high volumes of both new claims and the deferred renewal work has resulted in longer processing times. Additional resources have been deployed and cases are being cleared in date order to ensure fair customer service.

■ **Employment Schemes: Disability**

Helen Whately:

[\[36109\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the press notice entitled Government bolsters employment support to unlock work for sick and disabled people, published on 6 March 2025, how this policy will relate to the Additional Work Coach Time programme.

Alison McGovern:

DWP announced on the 6th March that we will deploy 1000 work coaches to help people with health conditions and disabled people towards and into work. This will build and expand on existing measures like additional work coach support that delivers personalised support for some customers on the health journey.

■ **Employment: Disability**

Kim Johnson:

[\[34931\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, which bodies provide independent validation of organisations seeking Disability Confident Leader status or renewal of that status.

Kim Johnson:

[\[34932\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department has taken to ensure that bodies providing independent validation of organisations seeking Disability Confident Leader status or to renewal of that status are fit for purpose.

Kim Johnson:

[\[34933\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many complaints the Disability Confident policy team in her Department has had concerning a Disability Confident employer failing to comply with the Disability Confident criteria in the last three years.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The Disability Confident scheme has over 19,000 members and they report over 12 million employees working in their organisations. The scheme is designed as a learning journey with all employers starting at Level 1 and encouraged to progress through the scheme to Levels 2 and 3. As they progress on their learning journey, we expect they will continue to increase and share their understanding with employees and put in place effective and inclusive policies and procedures in support of disability employment.

The range of suitable validators of organisations seeking Disability Confident Leader status or renewal of that status is explained in the [scheme guidance](#). Most validations are undertaken by existing Disability Confident Leaders, although the full list is:

- [existing Disability Confident Leaders](#)
- disabled employees, customers or people in the local community
- local diversity and inclusion groups
- local disability organisations or network groups
- disabled people's user led organisations (DPULOs)
- recognised accreditation organisations whose accreditation covers the components of the Disability Confident Employer self- assessment
- disabled stakeholder groups or forums
- national disability network groups
- national disability organisations
- internal diversity and inclusions groups/forums

The scheme encourages businesses to choose an organisation suited to their business size, that can provide a proportionate level of challenge based on their own knowledge, lived experience, skills and expertise.

Disability Confident Leaders have had their own self-assessment independently validated and demonstrated a high level of commitment and success in creating inclusive workplaces. This experience equips them to be able to support others through the process sharing their knowledge and skills, to assess and validate other organisations effectively.

Other organisations able to validate businesses seeking to become or renew Disability Confident Leader status have specific expert knowledge of disability related issues in the workplace and / or have lived experience of disability.

As part of the work, we have begun to strengthen the scheme, we are considering options to make the validation process more robust, including improving the guidance for validators and reviewing the types of bodies permitted to undertake validations.

The overall number of complaints received by the Disability Confident policy team in the period 2022 to 2024 is approximately 220. Where the Department is made aware

of any complaint raised against a Disability Confident employer for not meeting the scheme criteria, we would apply the process described in the [Disability Complaints](#) procedure. If after further examination, we consider the employer is failing to comply with any of the scheme criteria, the Department will give the employer an opportunity to remedy the situation. There have been no instances where an employer was given the opportunity to remedy the situation and failed to respond.

■ Poverty: Children

Richard Burgon: [\[36700\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether the child poverty strategy will consider the potential impact of reforms to health and disability benefit on child poverty.

Richard Burgon: [\[36701\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential impact of proposals for reform of health and disability benefits on child poverty.

Alison McGovern:

Delivering our manifesto commitment to tackle child poverty is an urgent priority for this Government, and the Ministerial Taskforce is working to publish a Child Poverty Strategy which will deliver lasting change.

The Strategy will look at levers across four key themes of increasing incomes, reducing essential costs, increasing financial resilience; and better local support especially in the early years. This will build on the reform plans underway across government and work underway in Devolved Governments.

As part of the Strategy's development, the Taskforce is considering the potential impact of policies across government on child poverty.

■ Social Security Benefits: Disqualification

Helen Whately: [\[36107\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether it is her Department's policy to stop (a) Universal Credit, (b) New Style Jobseeker's Allowance and (c) income-based Jobseeker's Allowance claims of people who refuse to (i) engage with a Jobcentre and (ii) accept a job offer.

Alison McGovern:

Apart from those with exceptions, all customers must accept a Claimant Commitment as a condition of entitlement. The requirements any customer is asked to meet will be clearly set out in their Claimant Commitment, including attending appointments and undertaking work-related activities.

Where the Department has evidence that a customer has failed to undertake their agreed work-related requirements without good reason, we will look into whether a sanction – which is a reduction in the amount of benefit paid – is applicable.

Where a customer in receipt of income-based Jobseeker's Allowance fails to attend their Work Search Review and fails to make contact within 5 working days, their entitlement to benefit will also cease.

■ Social Security Benefits: Fraud

Jade Botterill: [\[36963\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking with Cabinet colleagues to help tackle fraud in the welfare system by serious and organised criminal gangs.

Andrew Western:

DWP works collaboratively across Government Departments and Law Enforcement Agencies on investigations into benefit fraud carried out by organised crime gangs.

New powers in the Public Authorities (Fraud, Error and Recovery) Bill will strengthen our capability to tackle organised crime by modernising and enhancing our investigation powers and ensuring those defrauding the public sector face appropriate consequences.

■ Unemployment: Lancashire

Mr Andrew Snowden: [\[36836\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of recent trends in the level of in the unemployment rate in (a) Fylde constituency and (b) Lancashire.

Alison McGovern:

The information requested is published and available at:

<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/default.asp>

Guidance for users can be found at: <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/home/newuser.asp>

■ Universal Credit: Care Leavers

Bobby Dean: [\[36203\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to support care leavers applying for Universal Credit for the first time.

Andrew Western:

We understand the challenges care leavers face and that is why the department works closely with Local Authorities' Leaving Care teams and provides additional dedicated support through a series of safeguards and easements aimed at simplifying care leavers' interaction with the benefit system.

This support includes care leaver's Single Points of Contact in every jobcentre and an Advanced Claims Process where Local Authorities Leaving Care teams can assist care leavers to prepare their claim to Universal Credit up to 28 days before and including their 18th Birthday.

Although the claim can't be submitted until the care leaver's 18th birthday, they can be viewed and checked in advance of submission by making a pre-claim appointment with the Jobcentre to help ensure the care leaver has the required documents to make their claim and that all relevant support is in place as early as possible.

Under the new Youth Guarantee, all young people aged 18-21 years in England will be able to access support to enter employment, education and training opportunities. This includes care leavers who may benefit from more tailored support to ensure a smoother transition to independence as they leave the care provided by their Local Authority.

■ Winter Fuel Payment

Mr Andrew Snowden:

[\[36835\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of means testing the Winter Fuel Payment on levels of pensioner poverty in (a) Fylde constituency and (b) Lancashire.

Torsten Bell:

On 19 November 2024, the Secretary of State wrote to the Work and Pensions Select Committee to share internal government modelling produced by the Department outlining the number of pensioners in the UK estimated to move into poverty as a result of the policy change. This letter is available here [Winter Fuel Payments eligibility change - Letter from the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions](#).

It is not possible to provide poverty breakdowns at a constituency or county level.

■ Winter Fuel Payment: Lancashire

Mr Andrew Snowden:

[\[36838\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has had discussions with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on the potential impact of means testing the Winter Fuel Payment on NHS services in (a) Fylde and (b) Lancashire.

Torsten Bell:

The Government has had to make difficult decisions in view of the state of the public finances that it inherited, including the decision to target the Winter Fuel Payment on those on the lowest incomes. The decisions mean we are able to provide additional investment in the NHS. This is to the benefit of everyone, including pensioners, who rely on its services. The Government is working to reform the NHS in England through the 10-year health plan, to build a health service that is fit for the future. As a first step, at the Autumn Budget, the Government announced a £22.6bn increase in day-to-day health spending in England and a £3.1bn increase in the capital budget over this year and next.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

BUSINESS AND TRADE

■ Board of Trade

Secretary of State for Business and Trade (Jonathan Reynolds): [\[HCWS517\]](#)

I am delighted to announce that I have appointed a new Board of Trade.

The newly formed Board will be an advocate for UK businesses at home and abroad, championing the country's 5.5 million SMEs and realising their export potential. This will help super-charge growth for the economy as part of the Plan for Change.

The newly appointed advisers have been handpicked for their deep sector expertise and knowledge, representing some of the UK's most successful businesses. They will play a crucial role in supporting the department's growth priorities, focusing on supporting small businesses and boosting exports.

The Secretary of State is pleased to appoint:

- Omar Ali
- Mike Hawes OBE
- Dame Vivian Hunt DBE
- Allison Kirkby
- Paul Lindley OBE
- Catherine McGuinness CBE
- Michelle Ovens CBE
- Mike Soutar
- Sarah Walker
- Dr Charles Woodburn CBE

In addition to the following *ex officio* advisers:

- Secretary of State for Scotland, The Rt Hon Ian Murray MP
- Secretary of State for Wales, The Rt Hon Jo Stevens MP
- Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, The Rt Hon Hilary Benn MP
- The Lord Mayor of London, Alastair King
- Minister of State for Investment, Baroness Gustafsson of Chesterton CBE
- Minister of State for Industry, Sarah Jones MP
- Minister of State for Trade Policy and Economic Security, The Rt Hon Douglas Alexander MP

- Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment Rights, Competition and Markets, Justin Madders MP
- Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Services, Small Business and Exports, Gareth Thomas MP
- Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Future Digital Economy and Online Safety, Baroness in Waiting (Government Whip), and Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Minister for Legislation), Baroness Jones of Whitchurch

The role as a Board of Trade adviser is unpaid and voluntary.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ The 80th Anniversaries Of Victory In Europe And Victory Over Japan

Minister for Sport, Media, Civil Society and Youth (Stephanie Peacock):

[\[HCWS520\]](#)

The Government has announced plans to mark the 80th anniversaries of VE and VJ Day with a series of events and celebrations. It is my intention that we, as a nation, come together to mark this pivotal moment in our shared history.

Victory in Europe (VE Day), which takes place on Thursday 8 May 2025, marks the Allied Victory in Europe. The news resulted in millions celebrating the end of the war, with street parties, dancing and singing across the country. The war in the Far East did not end until 15 August 1945 with Victory over Japan (VJ) Day.

The Second World War touched every aspect of life and had a devastating impact on those who experienced it, and for the generations after. From the sailors, soldiers and aviators who fought, to children who were evacuated, and all those who stepped into essential roles on the home front, we owe it to the Second World War generation who 80 years ago fought for our freedom and paid the ultimate sacrifice in giving generations lasting peace.

Through a series of national and local events, we will unite to pay tribute to the millions of people across the UK and Commonwealth who served in the Second World War. VE and VJ Day 80 will be an opportunity for celebration, as it was across the streets of Britain in 1945, but also of commemoration as it will be one of the last opportunities to honour our living Second World War veterans. There is also a younger generation for whom the events of the Second World War - the sacrifices made, and the reasons for them - seem like distant history. It will be a time for us to come together to listen to their stories and reflect on their values that ensured the Allied victory - service and selflessness across our nation.

The Government has announced a programme of events and activities that will mark these anniversaries and reach into and connect communities across the country through educational outreach, and cultural and creative activity. This will include a military procession and flypast on Monday 5 May, Westminster Abbey Service and VE Day Concert on Thursday 8 May, and a service at the National Arboretum in partnership with the Royal British Legion, to commemorate VJ Day on 15 August. I am pleased today to announce further details of a truly inclusive National Engagement Programme that will complement this series of events; and I am delighted to be working with the Devolved Governments of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to ensure the commemorations are UK-wide. There are many exciting ways that Members of both Houses of Parliament, and members of the public, can get involved.

To ensure that all communities across the UK feel engaged in the stories of VE and VJ Day, the Government has already announced plans for UK-wide street parties on Monday 5 May through the Great British Food Festival, supported by The Big Lunch and Together Coalition. Street parties, BBQs and community get togethers will be held across the UK, made easy with the launch of The Big Lunch Guide to Bringing People Together, full of event planning resources and tips, craft activities and conversation prompts for communities hosting local celebrations. Funding has been made available through the National Lottery Community Fund Awards For All programme for organisations to bid for grants to host events, activities and projects this year for communities to come together.

In order to prepare for those events I'm delighted to announce the introduction of Tip Top Towns, where we are inviting communities across the UK - whether town, village or city - to share how they are coming together for VE Day 80. We want the public, volunteer networks and community groups to take part in activities that will get them in the community spirit ready for 5th May, whether that be preparing community gardens, hosting craft events to create street party decorations, sprucing up their local areas or encouraging children to draw pictures to put in their windows. The public are invited to share their pictures of activity on our webpage and across social media using the #VE80 hashtag, with VE Day certificates available to all who participate. Young people will be at the heart of this, including Uniformed Youth groups with a special VE Day commemorative badge being introduced by the Scouts.

The value of these commemorations lies in their ability to connect generations. It is vital that our young people understand the impact of the Second World War, and that they have the opportunity to hear the stories of our living Second World War veterans first hand before it is too late. This is an opportunity for us to come together, to listen to the stories of those who lived through this period and to reflect on the values that secured the Allied victory.

The government has announced a number of new ways young people will be able to engage with veterans' stories as part of the VEVJ Day 80 commemorations. It is my strong commitment that every young person has the opportunity to learn about and connect with the stories of their forebears, ensuring that the sacrifices and experiences of those who served are remembered and passed on to future generations through VE Day 80: Our Shared Story.

As part of the government's national engagement programme, The National Theatre is developing a new production and film titled *The Next Morning*, which will focus on the hopes, dreams and ambitions of young people after the war and what that means for young people today. Written by James Graham, the fantastic writer of *Dear England*, it will offer a poignant opportunity for young people to really consider what the end of the Second World War means for their own lives, and their own ambitions.

The Imperial War Museums is also launching today a new initiative, *Letters to Loved Ones*, which will invite school children to explore their own family histories to find stories from the war and share them. This will culminate in a joint event at Imperial War Museum North on Wednesday 7 May alongside the National Theatre.

To supplement this activity, a brand new collection of educational resources to support young people's engagement with VE and VJ Day 80 both inside and outside the classroom will be developed. *VE Day 80: Our Shared Story* will include a range of resources, including the Royal British Legion's *I'll Remember - Discovering the Stories of VE and VJ Day 80*, the Imperial War Museum's *Learning from Letters*, and Atlantic Productions' new web-based augmented reality experience that brings moments from VE day to life, *VE Day 80: Immersive*.

In this 80th anniversary year, we must remember that whilst VE Day brought an end to the European war, the war continued to play out in Asia until Victory over Japan Day on 15 August.

It is vital we remember and honour those soldiers who continued to fight and to sacrifice, and within this we must not forget the hugely significant role played by the Commonwealth in Allied victory. I am hugely grateful to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and the Imperial War Museums for all they are doing to work with us to ensure the stories of VJ Day are preserved and honoured for future generations.

I am pleased to announce that the Commonwealth War Graves will be undertaking a brand new UK and international tour, "For Evermore". A mobile exhibition, it will travel across the UK and the globe to the Pacific, bringing the stories of the Second World War

to life. Their brand new app “For Evermore” will be updated to offer interactive tours of key Commonwealth War Graves sites, allowing the public to explore history and connect with personal stories. At the heart of the tour will be the Torch of Peace - an enduring symbol which honours those who gave their lives, the importance of preserving their legacy, and a baton to share and pass stories to future generations.

In an increasingly uncertain and fragmented world, this anniversary has never been more important. It is only by learning from conflicts such as the Second World War and listening to their devastating effects from those who experienced them that we bring the realities of conflict to life. We must ensure that their stories live on not just in books, or paper, but in the hearts and minds of future generations. On this anniversary, we reaffirm our shared commitment to preserving the memory of the men and women across the UK and Commonwealth who served and sacrificed.

I look forward to seeing the exciting and creative ways in which communities choose to mark the 80th anniversaries of VE and VJ Day this year. Together, we will be able to make sure the stories and legacies of those who gave their lives will always have the same profound impact, as we continue to tell them to the generations to come.

The Department would welcome the support of colleagues across both Houses.

HOME OFFICE

■ Government response to Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation report

The Minister of State for Security (Dan Jarvis):

[\[HCWS521\]](#)

I would like to update the House on the report commissioned by the Home Secretary and published today by the Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation into law in the wake of the Southport attack.

The barbaric murder of three young girls in Southport last Summer is a scarring moment in our history. We think of those little girls, Elsie Dot Stancombe, Bebe King and Alice da Silva Aguiar, whose lives were devastatingly cut short. We think of their families’ agony. And we think of those who survived the attack but live with physical and emotional scars.

In January, the perpetrator was sentenced to 52 years in prison for his horrifying crimes. It is highly likely he will never be released.

As the Prime Minister said, the responsibility for this barbaric act lies with the vile individual who carried it out, but that provides no comfort.

When the Home Secretary addressed the House on this matter in January, she set out the next steps the Government would take – including on establishing a public inquiry, on reforms to Prevent and on the legislative framework.

The inquiry will examine the issues raised in this case but also wider challenges around the rising levels of predominantly young men and boys fixated with extreme violence who

may pose a risk to society. We are moving swiftly to set up the inquiry. It is expected to begin within weeks, once we have completed the important consultation with the families and victims. We intend to announce further details by the end of this month.

Within the wider Prevent system, we are learning lessons to get ahead of this changing threat, and to ensure we have the early intervention capabilities we need to keep the public safe. The Home Secretary has previously announced new measures to strengthen Prevent decision-making.

Since then, we have extended Channel multi-agency support to new cohorts, launched new pilots to ensure those below Prevent thresholds get the support they need, and appointed an interim Prevent Commissioner to bring robust independent oversight.

The appalling attack in Southport terrorised an entire community. The police and CPS determined that it was not an act of terrorism under the legal definition of terrorism set out in the Terrorism Act 2000, because there is no evidence that the perpetrator's purpose was to advance a political, religious, racial, or ideological cause. The court accepted that conclusion.

However, we should be in no doubt about its seriousness. The judge described the attack as 'equivalent in its seriousness to terrorist murders'. And as the Prime Minister and Home Secretary have set out, this case comes against a backdrop of growing numbers of cases of violence-fixated individuals and young people being drawn into extreme violence and radicalisation.

The Met Commissioner has warned of "young men who are fixated on violence... grazing across extremist and terrorist content", whilst Five Eyes counter-terror partners have also warned about growing radicalisation of minors.

The most significant terror threat remains from Islamist extremism, followed by extreme right-wing activity, and we must be continually vigilant against these ideological threats.

But we also need to ensure that the legal framework is strong enough to respond to extreme violence where ideology is not apparent or is less clear.

In the light of this serious and growing problem, the Home Secretary announced to Parliament in January that she had asked the Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation to examine the legal framework around terrorism and the powers available to tackle this kind of extreme violent attack. The Reviewer has published that report today.

Firstly, we are grateful to the Independent Reviewer for his thorough analysis of the terrorism framework in response to this horrific attack and his important conclusion which the Government accepts that the law does need to change to respond to the rise in extreme violence in cases where ideology is unclear or cannot be proven.

Jonathan Hall KC concludes that the legal definition of terrorism is already wide and should not be changed any further. The Government accepts his conclusion.

However, the Independent Reviewer considers there is a gap in the wider criminal law. The Prime Minister has been clear that if the law needs to change to recognise this new and dangerous threat, then we will change it – and quickly.

The Reviewer notes there is no offence currently for possession of an article in private with intent to carry out a mass casualty attack, or other offence of extreme violence.

We are grateful for his consideration of this point and his conclusion that this point is already being addressed by a new measure, currently before Parliament in the Crime and Policing Bill. This will make it an offence to possess a bladed article with intent to cause unlawful violence and applies whether the possession is in public or private.

The Reviewer also concludes that within existing criminal law, 'there is a real and not theoretical gap for lone individuals who plan mass killings'. On that basis, he recommends that Government consider creating a new offence where an individual intends to kill two or more persons and prepares for such an attack. We accept and strongly support this recommendation. I can confirm we will fix the legislation to close the gaps identified.

Finally, the Independent Reviewer draws attention to the challenges of communicating transparently and effectively following an act of extreme violence in the digital age.

It is a cornerstone of our democracy and our tradition of trial by jury that trials are fair, and justice is served. For that reason there have long been restrictions on what can be said before and during a trial.

However, the tragic events in Southport in July last year showed how social media is putting those long-established rules under strain, especially where partial or inaccurate information appears online.

That's why the Home Secretary, the Lord Chancellor and the Attorney General have asked the Law Commission to expedite elements of their ongoing review into Contempt of Court, and why Counter Terrorism Policing are also already considering what information can be released in the aftermath of major incidents.

The Government has been clear that we wish to maximise transparency and ensure that public authorities are able to take into account the wider risks to public safety to counter misinformation and disinformation. We are grateful to the Law Commission for agreeing to accelerate their consideration of this important issue and will carefully consider their findings when they are published later this year.

I would like to reiterate our thanks again to the Independent Reviewer for his comprehensive report and contribution to our efforts to fully learn the lessons of this terrible case. As the Home Secretary has already set out, today's report is an important step in the search for answers, and to tackle horrific acts driven by a fixation on extreme violence.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Post Activation Review of the Flood Recovery Framework

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Local Growth and Building Safety (Alex

Norris):

[\[HCWS518\]](#)

I would first like to thank all of those who supported local communities in the wake of severe flooding following Storm Babet in October 2023 and Storm Henk in January 2024 and who have done so again after more recent flooding. My thoughts remain with householders and business owners impacted by flooding, which is a devastating experience for all those affected. It is important that we recognise the enormous amount of effort that has gone into supporting households, businesses, farms and communities to repair and recover from these floods.

In the days that followed Storms Babet and Henk, government activated the Flood Recovery Framework to provide funding support to households, businesses and farms in the worst affected areas of England.

To date, across all of the Framework's schemes (Community Recovery Grant, Business Recovery Grant, council tax discount, business rates relief and the Property Flood Resilience Scheme) the government has supported over 8,500 homes and businesses across 130 local authorities, re-imbursed over £8.2m and committed a further estimated £18m in future payments. In addition, the Farming Recovery Fund has provided £57.5m to 13,000 farmers via a one-off recovery payment to support recultivating productive agricultural land, following Storms Babet and Henk and the exceptional winter weather in late 2023 and early 2024.

As is normal practice following events of this scale, a post activation review has been undertaken which has identified a number of administration process changes and policy questions for further consideration.

In response to feedback from local authorities and Honourable Members, we have acted swiftly, agreeing measures to enable faster identification of eligible areas by allowing local authorities to provide verified flooded property data directly to government, extending the time to claim business and community recovery grants by one month so that support can be provided to all those in need, reducing the administrative burden on local authorities by reducing the frequency of reporting, and improving communications with councils through targeted, regular engagement and direct links into Departments.

We will keep under review our support for those who have had their homes and businesses devastated by flooding. Climate change means we are likely to see more frequent severe weather and flooding and it is vital that we have the right measures in place to support communities.

TREASURY

■ Tax exemption for Horizon Shortfall Scheme appeals process

The Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury (James Murray):

[\[HCWS519\]](#)

As the Minister for Services, Small Business and Exports (Gareth Thomas) has previously announced, the Department for Business and Trade is introducing an independent Horizon Shortfall Scheme Appeals (HSSA) process to ensure all claimants

have a fair opportunity to receive full compensation, in line with the recommendations of the Horizon Compensation Advisory Board.

The Government is committed to taking swift action to ensure affected postmasters receive the financial redress they are owed, with minimal administrative burden. To this end, the Government will ensure that no income tax, Capital Gains Tax, National Insurance contributions, corporation tax, or inheritance tax will be payable on any compensation received through the appeals process.

The Government will legislate via secondary legislation to formalise this tax exemption shortly.