



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 14 March 2025 and the information is correct at the time of publication (05:29 P.M., 14 March 2025). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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**Notes:**

Questions marked thus [R] indicate that a relevant interest has been declared.  
 Questions with identification numbers of **900000 or greater** indicate that the question was originally tabled as an oral question and has since been unstarred.

## ANSWERS

### BUSINESS AND TRADE

#### ■ Carbon Emissions: UK Trade with EU

**Ben Maguire:** [36328]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to support small businesses to meet the carbon reporting requirements of the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism.

**Ben Maguire:** [36329]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of compliance with the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism requirement for accurate carbon emissions data from complex supply chains on small manufacturers.

**Mr Douglas Alexander:**

We recognise that reporting requirements of the EU Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) are having incidental impacts on some UK businesses exporting to the EU.

EU CBAM implementation and guidance remains fundamentally a matter for the European Commission. The Commission have proposed changes to EU CBAM which are intended to exempt most small businesses and make reporting requirements easier to comply with. The Commission intends to undertake a full review of its CBAM later this year, which we will watch closely.

The Commission website is the most up to date source of information for businesses seeking guidance on requirements: [https://taxation-customs.ec.europa.eu/carbon-border-adjustment-mechanism\\_en](https://taxation-customs.ec.europa.eu/carbon-border-adjustment-mechanism_en).

#### ■ Microsoft: Prices

**Chi Onwurah:** [37148]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 5 March 2025 to Question 34611 on Microsoft: Prices, what assessment he has made of the implications for consumer.

**Justin Madders:**

The Government expects all firms to treat their customers fairly, and there is a strong framework of consumer rights in the UK that underpin this. At the same time, businesses are generally free to set the price of their products as they wish. The UK competition regime encourages open and competitive markets which produces lower prices for consumers. The Government has strengthened both competition and consumer protection regimes in the recent Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act.

## ■ Night-time Economy: Employers' Contributions

**Mr Andrew Snowden:**

[\[36172\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the potential impact of changes to employers National Insurance contributions on independent nightlife; and if he will make representations on the potential merits of scaled National Insurance contributions based on turnover.

**Gareth Thomas:**

We continue to work closely with HM Treasury on the challenges facing high street and other businesses including those within the nighttime economy.

The Government is protecting the smallest employers by increasing the Employment Allowance to £10,500, and removing the £100,000 eligibility threshold, meaning all eligible employers benefit. This means that in 2025-26 865,000 employers will pay no National Insurance Contributions at all, and more than half of employers will see no change or will gain overall from this package.

We are creating a fairer business rate system, reducing alcohol duty on qualifying draught products and transforming the apprenticeship levy to support business and boost opportunities.

## ■ Trade Agreements: India

**Kanishka Narayan:**

[\[36160\]](#)

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

**Mr Douglas Alexander:**

The Business and Trade Secretary was in Delhi in February to relaunch negotiations for a trade deal with India and made good progress in building momentum towards a deal that will strengthen economic growth across the UK.

A trade deal with India could improve our access to the fastest growing economy in the G20; cut red tape for business, support jobs, and boost wages in UK.

Our negotiating team is working to capitalise on the positive momentum and secure a deal that strengthens our trade and investment relationship.

## CABINET OFFICE

## ■ Emergencies: Planning

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[36651\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he has taken to improve national resilience to global events.

**Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:**

The first duty of the Government is to keep the country safe and we are working to strengthen our national resilience, including by working with international partners.

In April the UK Resilience Academy will be launched and will train over 4000 people a year and later this year we will undertake a full national pandemic response exercise.

The review of national resilience continues. Updates will be given in due course.

**Government Departments: Digital Technology****Chi Onwurah:**[\[37146\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 3 March 2025 to Question 33871 on Government Departments: Digital Technology, whether these discussions included the digitalisation of Government.

**Georgia Gould:**

As per the previous answer, the Cabinet Office regularly discusses Civil Service workforce matters with trade unions. These matters are wide ranging and include the use of new technology.

**Ministers: Travel****Joe Robertson:**[\[36275\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to his Answer to the Question from the hon. Member for Isle of Wight East of 6 March 2025, Official Report, if he will publish the letter.

**Pat McFadden:**

Yes, please find the letter attached.

**Attachments:**

1. Letter to Joe Robertson MP [20250306-Joe\_Robertson\_PQ.docx (2).pdf]

**Office for National Statistics: Industrial Disputes****Charlie Dewhirst:**[\[37425\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the status is of the industrial action in the Office for National Statistics over workplace attendance.

**Georgia Gould:**

The Trade Unions PCS and Prospect are currently taking industrial action short of a strike with the Office for National Statistics.

**Senior Civil Servants: Performance Appraisal****Mike Wood:**[\[36677\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what changes he is making through the Performance management framework for the Senior Civil Service for 2025-26.



**Georgia Gould:**

The Senior Civil Service (SCS) performance management framework for the 2025-26 performance year has been [published](#) and the changes have been set out within the document. They will take effect from the 1st April 2025.

**CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT****■ Crime: Gambling****Steff Aquarone:****[35899]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of implementing the recommendations from the Commission on Crime and Gambling Related Harms, published in April 2023 on the use of the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

Under the licensing objectives of the Gambling Act 2005, the Gambling Commission requires operators to prevent gambling being a source of crime or disorder, being associated with crime and disorder, or being used to support crime.

The Home Office has introduced legislation in the Crime and Policing Bill to make improvements to the confiscation regime, including to ensure that a confiscation order more accurately reflects the benefit from crime. The draft bill contains no specific provisions for certain sectors, including the gambling sector. However, the Home Office will engage the gambling sector on how the legislative changes will be implemented in their sector in due course.

The introduction of a statutory levy on gambling operators will, however, represent a generational change to funding arrangements and a renewed commitment to improving efforts to further understand, tackle and treat harmful gambling. As set out in our public consultation, the prevention stream could see investment directed for projects to build capacity and expertise in frontline settings to increase responsiveness to gambling harm, including criminal justice settings.

**■ Gambling: Addictions****Mr Louie French:****[36797]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, how much funding her Department allocated to gambling addiction support services in the financial year 2025-26.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

As set out in the Government's [response](#) to the consultation on the statutory levy, the levy will come into force in April 2025 and 50% of levy funding (up to £50 million) will be allocated to NHS services in England, and the appropriate bodies in Scotland and Wales, for support and treatment services in the financial year 2025/26.

**■ Olympic Games and Paralympic Games: Digital Technology****Andy MacNae:**[\[36253\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the oral contribution of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State of 4 November 2024 on Olympic and Paralympic Games: Team GB, HL Deb, c1307, what her Department's timetable is for setting out its position on digital rights and listed events.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

The Government is currently moving forward with implementation of the Media Act 2024. That Act includes several important reforms to the listed events regime. The Government will set out its position in relation to on-demand ("digital") rights in due course.

**■ Rugby: Women****Mr Louie French:**[\[34944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to prevent ticket touts from selling tickets to the Women's Rugby World Cup at inflated prices.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

The Government has published a [consultation](#) on introducing new consumer protections on the resale of live events tickets, including sporting events such as the 2025 Women's Rugby World Cup. The consultation, which closes on 4th April, includes a range of proposals, including a price cap on resales and new requirements on resale platforms.

Over 220,000 tickets have already been sold for the 2025 Women's Rugby World Cup, double the number bought for the previous tournament in New Zealand 2022. These early ticket sales demonstrate the demand for women's sport in this country.

World Rugby have urged fans to only buy tickets for the tournament via official channels. Fans purchasing tickets from unofficial sources risk having match tickets cancelled and being refused entry to match venues. Tickets will be issued and distributed closer to the tournament, and an official resale service will be available in the coming months.

**■ Tourist Attractions: Employers' Contributions****Dr Luke Evans:**[\[35768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the increase of employer National Insurance on the (a) operational costs and (b) financial profitability of small and medium sized tourist attractions.

**Chris Bryant:**

The Government recognises the vital role that small and medium-sized tourist attractions play in supporting local economies and driving economic growth across all

regions of Great Britain. The increase in employer National Insurance contributions will affect businesses across all sectors, which is why the Government has put in place mitigations to protect smaller businesses. The Government remains committed to supporting the tourism industry, and my department will continue working with the sector to understand cost pressures.

## ■ Video Games: Scotland

**Graham Leadbitter:**

[\[37469\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what estimate her Department has made of the contribution of the Scottish video games sector to the UK economy in the last three years.

**Chris Bryant:**

The UK Government supports the video games sector across the UK, including in Scotland, through the video games tax relief and the Dundee-based UK Games Fund.

DCMS estimates the UK video games sector generated £3.7bn in GVA in 2021, £2.1bn in 2022, and £2bn in 2023, expressed in 2022 prices accounting for inflation. While these figures have declined since 2021, this is largely due to unprecedented demand during the Covid-19 pandemic, and represents over 300% growth in GVA since 2014. We recognise that due to existing Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) code structures, this figure may not fully reflect the sector's value.

A breakdown of these figures for Scotland is not available. Culture, including video games, is a devolved matter.

## ■ Youth Organisations: Ukraine

**Martin Wrigley:**

[\[36247\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if her Department will promote engagement with Ukrainian youth organisations.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

Under the ambitious 100 Year Partnership with Ukraine, signed by the Prime Minister and President Zelenskyy on 16 January 2025, the Department for Education (DfE) and Department for Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) will assist in the engagement of UK and Ukrainian young people.

DfE has launched the UK-Ukraine Schools Partnership Programme which aims to foster cross-cultural understanding, enhance English language skills, and promote collaboration and interaction between students and educators from both countries. Using digital platforms, it will create meaningful connections and facilitate knowledge exchange at a critical time in the relationship between our countries.

DCMS will be working with the Ukrainian Government and partners over the coming months, and will increase opportunities for young Ukrainians residing in the UK through encouraging participation in youth-focused programmes.

## DEFENCE

■ **Armed Forces****Carla Lockhart:**[\[36148\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what personnel levels are in the (a) Army, (b) Royal Navy, (c) Royal Air Force and (d) reserve forces.

**Luke Pollard:**

Statistics on the strength of UK service personnel are published on gov.uk at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/quarterly-service-personnel-statistics-2025>

As at 1 January 2025, the latest date for when data is available, Table 3c shows the Full-Time Trained Strength (FTTS) (Royal Navy & Royal Marines and Royal Air Force) and Full-Time Trade Trained Strength (FTTTS) (Army).

Table 6a shows the Trained Futures Reserves 2020 Strength.

Table 3c

FULL-TIME TRAINED STRENGTH (FTTS)	127,036
Royal Navy/Royal Marines (FTTS)	28,085
Army (FTTTS)	71,151
Royal Air Force (FTTS)	27,800

Table 6a

TRI SERVICE FUTURE RESERVE FR20	29,265
Maritime Reserve	2,610
Army Reserve	23,897
Royal Air Force Reserve	2,758

■ **Armed Forces: Protective Clothing****Ben Obese-Jecty:**[\[37367\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost of the Tactical Hearing Protection System has been (a) since 2015, (b) in 2023-24 and (c) in 2024-25.

**Maria Eagle:**

The total spend on the Tactical Hearing Protection System since 2015 is £46,374,163. The spend in Financial Year 2023-24 was £7,293,676 and the spend in Financial Year 2024-25 was £3,698,207. All figures are inc-VAT.

## ■ Armed Forces: Sexual Offences

**Ben Obese-Jecty:**

[35846]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 4 March 2025 to Question 33145 on Armed Forces: Sexual Offences, if he will provide a breakdown of the Service personnel charged with sexual assault between 2014 and 2024 by (a) rank and (b) year of the offence.

**Ben Obese-Jecty:**

[35847]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 4 March 2025 to Question 33145 on Armed Forces: Sexual Offences, how many of those incidents occurred (a) before and (b) after the implementation of the zero tolerance policy toward inappropriate sexual conduct.

**Al Carns:**

To provide an answer at this point would breach the Pre-Release Order for the Official Statistic 'Murder, Manslaughter and Sexual offences in the Service Justice System'. The latest edition covers 2023 and the next edition covering 2024 is scheduled for release in April 2025. The collection of statistics can be found at the following address: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/sexual-offences-in-the-service-justice-system#editions>.

I will write to the hon. Member in due course, and will place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

## ■ Defence: Finance

**James Cartlidge:**

[37252]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 7 March 2025 to Question 33956 on Defence: Finance, what the increase to defence spending is in real terms.

**Maria Eagle:**

The Government's commitment to increase defence investment to 2.5% of GDP by 2027 will result in a £13.4 billion increase to defence spending in cash terms in 2027/28 compared to 2024/25.

## ■ Defence: Procurement

**James Cartlidge:**

[37239]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has authorised changes to the financial threshold for procurement contracts since 25 February 2025.

**Maria Eagle:**

The Department currently has no financial thresholds for procurement contracts. There continue to be a number of internal review and approval processes before procurement is undertaken, as is normal practice.

**■ Defence: Republic of Ireland****Dave Doogan:**[\[36749\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the effectiveness of the implementation of the 2015 memorandum of understanding between Ireland and the UK on defence.

**Luke Pollard:**

The Defence MOU between the United Kingdom and Ireland underscores the breadth of our bilateral relationship with Ireland. Since it was signed in 2015, we have enhanced cooperation in exchanging information, exercises and training, UN mandated International peacekeeping, crisis management operations, capability developments, and cyber defence and security, among many other areas of cooperation. The Ministry of Defence keeps effectiveness of these arrangements these under regular review including through staff talks.

**■ Diego Garcia: Military Bases****Ben Obese-Jecty:**[\[36214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the UK's role is in maintaining Naval Support Facility Diego Garcia; and which other nations maintain that Facility.

**Luke Pollard:**

The Naval Support Facility Diego Garcia is a United States defence facility. The UK provides the overarching governance to the island of Diego Garcia, including jurisdiction, wider civic responsibilities, and working with US authorities to ensure the security of the island and the safety of its contractor community. Engagement of contractors for the maintenance of the Naval Support Facility Diego Garcia is the responsibility of the United States. Apart from the UK and the US there are no other nations with responsibilities for the Naval Support Facility Diego Garcia.

**Wendy Morton:**[\[36670\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what financial arrangements have been made for the continued lease of the Diego Garcia military base; and what estimate he has made of the annual costs of that base.

**Luke Pollard:**

There is no lease with respect to Diego Garcia. US presence and operations in the British Indian Ocean Territory are governed by a series of international agreements, beginning with a 1966 Exchange of Notes between the US and UK

The direct cost to the Ministry of Defence (MOD) for running the UK element of the UK-US military base in the British Indian Ocean Territory in financial year 2023-24 was £3.8 million. This excludes minor costs incurred directly by, for example, visiting units or HQ elements in the UK. Any costs incurred by other government departments cannot be provided by MOD

With regard to the agreement reached between the UK and Mauritius, details of the proposed treaty will come before Parliament for scrutiny in the usual manner following its signature.

### ■ **Military Aircraft: Helicopters**

**Joe Robertson:**

[\[36276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 5 March 2025 to Question 34447 on Military Aircraft: Helicopters, what estimate he has made of the annual cost of operating the new helicopter service for (a) Ministers and (b) senior (i) officials and (ii) military personnel.

**Maria Eagle:**

The cost to the Ministry of Defence for use of the Cabinet Office provided helicopter transport service depends on the usage. Entitlement to use rotary wing air transportation has been tightened significantly by the Defence Secretary to reduce usage.

### ■ **Ministry of Defence: Communication**

**John Cooper:**

[\[36331\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much (a) his 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.

**Maria Eagle:**

The total MOD, including DE&S, spends since 5 July 2024 against RM6125 Framework via call off contracts is: £3,550,081.59. The suppliers are Identity events Management Limited and Occam Group LTD.

The MOD, including DE&S, total spends since 5 July 2024 for external communications, not against RM6125 Framework via call off contract is: £32,702,226.04. The suppliers are listed in the table below.

23RED LIMITED
ALL ENGLAND NETBALL ASSOCIATION LIMITED
BE THE BRAND EXPERIENCE LIMITED
BFBS
CABINET OFFICE
CALDER CONFERENCES LIMITED
CAPITA BUSINESS SERVICES LTD
CISION GROUP LIMITED
COGENT SKILLS LIMITED
DEPARTMENT FOR BUSINESS AND TRADE
DRUMGRANGE LTD
E3 MEDIA LIMITED
ENGINE PARTNERS UK LLP
FOREIGN COMMONWEALTH & DEVELOPMENT OFFICE
FORELAND SHIPPING LTD
GATENBYSANDERSON LIMITED
GOVERNMENT PROPERTY AGENCY
IDENTITY EVENTS MANAGEMENT LIMITED
KORN FERRY (UK) LIMITED
LEONARDO UK LTD
LES CONTAMINES TOURISME
LINKEDIN IRELAND UNLIMITED COMPANY
MACE CONSULT LIMITED
MALVERN OPTICAL LIMITED
MINISTRY OF JUSTICE
NEXT 15 GROUP PLC
OFFICE DE TOURISME DE PRALOGNAN LA VANOISE
OFFICE DE TOURISME DE SERRE CHEVALIER
OMD GROUP LIMITED
OPINION RESEARCH SERVICES LIMITED
OPTICALMEDIA LTD
PA CONSULTING SERVICES LTD
PEOPLESCOUT LIMITED
PRESS DATA LIMITED
PRICEWATERHOUSECOOPERS LLP



REPUTATION (RI) UK LTD
RUHPOLDING TOURISMUS KU
RUNTIME COLLECTIVE LIMITED
SHUTTLEBERG GMBH & CO KG
STANDING WITH GIANTS
TALKWALKER SARL
TELEPERFORMANCE LTD
THE PCC OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL PARISH OF ST MARTIN-IN-THE-FIELDS, LONDON
TOWERS WATSON LIMITED
TURNER & TOWNSEND PROJECT MANAGEMENT LTD
WAVEMAKER LIMITED
WILLIS LIMITED

The MOD ALB contractual data is not captured centrally on the Contracting Purchasing & Finance (CP&F) system.

#### ■ **Ministry of Defence: Israel**

**Brian Leishman:**

[\[36262\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 14 February 2025 to Question 29341 on Ministry of Defence: Israel, which Israeli officials visited his Department on 5 February 2025.

**Luke Pollard:**

Brigadier General Yaval Harel, Israeli Air Force Head of Personnel Division, led an Israeli Air Force delegation of nine personnel as part of a three-day HR-focussed visit to the UK.

#### ■ **Ministry of Defence: Lost Property and Theft**

**James Cartlidge:**

[\[37241\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 7 March 2025 to Question 33948 on Ministry of Defence: Lost Property and Theft, where phones were last located before being (a) misplaced and (b) stolen by region since 5 July 2024.

**Luke Pollard:**

This information is being withheld for the purpose of safeguarding national security. The Ministry of Defence takes the security of our assets extremely seriously and we have robust measures in place to assure the integrity of these arrangements. When any type of security incident is raised, it is reviewed by security personnel and subjected to an initial security risk assessment, with further action taken on a proportionate basis.

**James Cartlidge:**

[\[37242\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 7 March to Question 33948 on Ministry of Defence: Lost Property and Theft, if he will provide details on the two specific incidents referred to in the answer.

**Luke Pollard:**

The incidents of lost and stolen devices both occurred in the Navy which introduced strengthened accounting processes and completed a comprehensive audit of mobile devices.

In total the two incidents account for 259 mobile phones lost or stolen between 5 July 2024 and 27 February 2025, of which 222 were obsolete (running unsupported operating systems, so would not be able to join our network) and would have been disposed of. Obsolete smartphones cannot be used to access Ministry of Defence systems and cannot be used for any other purpose.

#### ■ **Palestinians: Military Aid**

**Brian Leishman:**

[\[36260\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the (a) purpose, (b) strength and (c) budget is of the British Support Team in Ramallah.

**Luke Pollard:**

As part of our commitment to stability in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, the UK provides the Palestinian Authority with professional support in helping develop capable and responsible security institutions that respect human rights and are accountable to the Palestinian people.

Support to the Palestinian Authority Security Forces is paid for by Ministry of Defence core funds and the UK's Integrated Security Fund (ISF). The amount spent by the UK's ISF in the Financial Year 2024-25 will be published in due course in the respective ISF annual review of 2024-25.

The number of personnel is being withheld in order to protect the security of those personnel and to avoid prejudicing international relations.

**Brian Leishman:**

[\[36261\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, where his Department has recently published information about the British Support Team Ramallah.

**Luke Pollard:**

The Ministry of Defence has not published information about the British Support Team in Ramallah.

#### ■ **Rifles**

**Ben Obese-Jecty:**

[\[36210\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) L119A1 and (b) L119A2 rifles are held by the armed forces.

**Maria Eagle:**

It has not been possible to provide the answer. I will write to the Hon. Member as soon as practical and will place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

**■ Ukraine: Depleted Uranium****Brian Leishman:**[\[36263\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether UK-supplied Challenger tanks being deployed by Ukraine in the Kursk region of Russia are equipped with shells containing depleted uranium.

**Luke Pollard:**

We have sent thousands of rounds of Challenger 2 ammunition to Ukraine, including depleted uranium armour-piercing rounds. For operational security reasons, we will not comment on Ukrainian usage rates for the rounds provided.

**Brian Leishman:**[\[36264\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when the UK last supplied Ukraine with tank shells containing depleted uranium.

**Luke Pollard:**

We have sent thousands of rounds of Challenger 2 ammunition to Ukraine, including depleted uranium armour-piercing rounds. For operational security reasons, we will not comment on Ukrainian usage rates for the rounds provided.

**■ US Air Force: RAF Lakenheath****Ben Obese-Jecty:**[\[36207\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the role is of USAF 48th Fighter Wing's Operations Group stationed at RAF Lakenheath.

**Luke Pollard:**

The 48<sup>th</sup> Operations Group oversees the operation support, execution and sustainment of all flight and airfield operations for the 48<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing. It maintains combat-ready forces in support of operations and deterrence for U.S. European Command, U.S Africa Command and NATO operations.

**■ USA: Military Alliances****Ben Obese-Jecty:**[\[36208\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent assessment he has made of the ongoing commitment of the United States to the European Reassurance Initiative.

**Luke Pollard:**

The Secretary of State has not discussed the US' European Reassurance Initiative with the new US Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth. When the Secretary of State met with Secretary Hegseth in Washington DC last week he discussed working together to achieve peace and security in Europe, including bringing an end to the war in Ukraine and building sustainable deterrence on the continent.

**■ Veterans: Visas****Mr Calvin Bailey:** [\[36166\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what progress his Department has made on waiving visa fees for (a) non UK nationality veterans who have served for four or more years and (b) dependents of those veterans; and whether he plans to introduce such waivers prior to the planned extension of the Armed Forces Covenant Duty to further authorities.

**Joe Morris:** [\[36199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what progress his Department has made on removing visa fees for (a) non-UK armed forces veterans who have served for four or more years and (b) their dependents.

**Al Carns:**

This Government is committed to scrapping visa fees for non-UK veterans who have served our country for four or more years, and their dependents.

The Ministry of Defence is actively working with the Home Office to take this forward.

**EDUCATION****■ Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund****David Chadwick:** [\[36545\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether an emergency fund will be made available to adoption and special guardianship therapy providers to ensure there is no break in existing therapy work with children and families.

**David Chadwick:** [\[36546\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will consider a permanent fund for therapeutic support for adoptive and special guardianship families.

**Janet Daby:**

I refer the hon. Member for Brecon, Radnor and Cwm Tawe to the answer of 29 January 2025 to Question [26025](#).

**■ Home Education: Local Government****Tony Vaughan:** [\[35808\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to work with Local Authorities to improve the teaching quality of Education otherwise than in a school packages.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

This government's ambition is that all children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities or who are in alternative provision, including those

receiving education otherwise than in a school (EOTAS), receive the right support to succeed in their education and as they move into adult life.

Last year, the department published a consultation titled 'Strengthening protections in unregistered alternative provision', which sought views on proposals intended to improve practice and raise standards for children in non-school settings, including those with education, health and care plans that gave them support through EOTAS. We are committed to improving the outcomes for vulnerable children being educated in this way and will set out the government's response to the consultation and next steps in due course.

## ■ Pupils: Active Travel

### Pippa Heylings:

[36843]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of children travelling to school by (a) walking, (b) wheeling and (c) cycling on learning.

#### Catherine McKinnell:

The publication 'Physical activity guidelines: UK Chief Medical Officers' report', states that the benefits for young people of doing regular physical exercise include improved learning and attainment. The full publication can be read here:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5d839543ed915d52428dc134/uk-chief-medical-officers-physical-activity-guidelines.pdf>.

Active Travel England (ATE) is the government's executive agency responsible for promoting walking, wheeling and cycling as the preferred choice of travel in England. They are responsible for a number of schemes which promote active travel to school. For instance, ATE has published School Streets guidance for local authorities in England. A School Street is a road outside a school with a restriction on motorised traffic at the start and end of the school day. The guidance can be found online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-streets-how-to-set-up-and-manage-a-scheme>.

Additionally, they provide funding for the Modeshift STARS education scheme, which recognises schools and other educational establishments that have shown excellence in supporting cycling, walking and other forms of sustainable and active travel. More information on the Modeshift STARS education scheme can be found here: <https://modeshiftstars.org/education/>.

ATE also provides funding for Bikeability, the government's national cycle training programme. More information on Bikeability can be found here: <https://www.bikeability.org.uk/>.

Local authorities have a duty to promote the use of sustainable travel on journeys to and from places of education in their area. They must publish a sustainable modes of travel strategy which aims to provide health benefits for children and their families through active journeys and environmental improvements through reduced congestion and improved air quality. Further information is available in the

department's statutory guidance for local authorities, which can be accessed at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/home-to-school-travel-and-transport-guidance>.

## ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

### ■ Carbon Emissions: Renewable Fuels

**David Smith:** [\[36268\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of steps taken by the (a) Scottish Government, (b) Northern Ireland Executive and (c) Irish Government to commit to using renewable liquid fuels as part of their decarbonisation strategies.

**Miatta Fahnbulleh:**

I refer my hon Friend to the answer I gave on 6 March 2025 to my hon Friend the Member for Truro and Falmouth to Question UIN [35113](#).

### ■ Data Centres: Energy

**Mary Kelly Foy:** [\[36137\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment his Department has made of the impact of data centres on regional energy usage, in the context of increases in the use of AI.

**Michael Shanks:**

The Government supports AI development in the UK and the economic growth it could bring. The Department is working closely with the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology in setting up the AI Energy Council that will have senior representatives from both the energy industry and the AI industry to look at where best to locate AI data centres and to ensure the growth of AI and data centres in the UK is done in a way that supports our clean power mission and longer-term decarbonisation goals. For example, looking to seize opportunities that support grid balancing, reduce network costs, and utilise excess renewable energy.

### ■ Electricity: Infrastructure

**James McMurdock:** [\[36340\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether compensation schemes are available to businesses whose operations are impacted by the construction of (a) new electricity pylons and (b) electricity related infrastructure.

**Michael Shanks:**

Landowners, businesses and homeowners that have electrical equipment, such as pylons or towers, sited on their land have the right to compensation for the value of their land, as well as for any losses or expenses incurred. Acquiring authorities can also put in place discretionary schemes offering additional compensation.

We have published [guidance](#) on community funds for electricity transmission infrastructure which outlines government's recommendations on how to communities living near clean energy infrastructure can benefit.

## ■ Energy Supply

**James McMurdock:** [\[36339\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether his Department has considered alternative energy transmission methods.

**Michael Shanks:**

The National Energy System Operator considers a range of different technologies when conducting strategic network planning to make the most optimal recommendations for electricity transmission infrastructure.

It is the responsibility of the developers of electricity network projects to propose the detailed route design, including technology choice, and obtain planning permission. The Government sets the rules for a robust and independent planning process that communities can participate in.

## ■ Energy Supply: Rural Areas

**Mary Kelly Foy:** [\[36751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment his Department has made with Ofgem of the potential merits of allocating more funding to local power grids to help ensure the reliability of levels of power supplied to rural communities.

**Michael Shanks:**

The Government is engaging with Ofgem to ensure that the distribution price control enable the required local infrastructure to power local communities. The current electricity distribution price control (RIIO-ED2 2023-2028) has allowed £22.2bn for upfront investment in low voltage networks, including £3.1bn for network upgrades. For the next price control ED3 (2028 to 2033), Ofgem will rely on Regional Energy Strategic Plans (RESPs) to inform distribution network investment plans and will accommodate forecasted electricity demand to ensure reliable local power grid fit for the net zero transition.

## ■ Energy: Fylde

**Mr Andrew Snowden:** [\[36187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of Great British Energy on household energy bills in Fylde.

**Michael Shanks:**

In an unstable world, the only way to guarantee energy security and protect billpayers is to accelerate the transition away from fossil fuels. That is why government has a mission to make Britain a clean energy superpower.

We have a sustainable, long-term plan to protect all UK billpayers, including the people of Fylde, from volatile international gas markets. Backed by £8.3 billion, Great British Energy is part of this plan, driving the deployment of the clean, homegrown energy we need to boost our energy independence. As a publicly-owned company, Great British Energy will ensure UK taxpayers, billpayers, and communities reap the benefits of this.

## ■ Energy: Meters

**Neil Duncan-Jordan:** [\[35602\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an estimate of the number of households that are dependent on the Radio Teleswitch Service for energy meter connections in Poole constituency.

**Neil Duncan-Jordan:** [\[36028\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how many households use the radio teleswitch service for their energy meter connections in Poole constituency.

**Miatta Fahnbulleh:**

The Department does not hold constituency level data on remaining RTS meters, but we are regularly engaging with energy suppliers, Ofgem and the industry body Energy UK to review local plans for the switch-off.

Energy suppliers have contacted all premises with RTS meters and Ofgem is encouraging customers to book an appointment to ensure they are provided with a replacement meter ahead of the switch-off.

## ■ Energy: Prices

**Mr Angus MacDonald:** [\[36350\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether his Department has set a financial target for the reduction of energy bills by 2030.

**Miatta Fahnbulleh:**

The Government is determined to cut bills as far and as fast as we can.

In October 2023, independent experts modelled the effect of a clean power system on electricity bills. Based on the latest renewable generation costs available at the time, they found electricity bills could be up to £300 cheaper by 2030 when compared with the cost of electricity in July-September 2023, which was higher than today's levels.

The independent NESO set out pathways to a clean power system in 2030, and confirmed it was deliverable, more secure, and could see a lower cost of electricity, and lower bills.



## ■ Geothermal Power: County Durham

**Mary Kelly Foy:**

[\[36136\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment his Department has made of the potential across the Durham Coalfield for producing sustainable geothermal energy from disused mines.

**Kerry McCarthy:**

To achieve net zero at lowest cost, we must look at how to accelerate all low carbon technologies including geothermal. The mine water from coal mines shows good potential as a renewable source for heat networks. The government is therefore supporting mine water schemes at Gateshead and Seaham Garden Village through the Heat Network Investment Project and the Green Heat Network Fund. Whilst no specific assessment has been made of the Durham Coalfield potential the Northeast Local Enterprise Partnership published a report in 2021, assessing options to increase deployment and the Mining Remediation Authority has released opportunity maps.

## ■ Heat Pumps

**Pippa Heylings:**

[\[36845\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he plans to incentivise heat pump adoption through (a) tax breaks and (b) low-interest loans.

**Miatta Fahnbulleh:**

Private finance can play a key role in helping us achieve our decarbonisation ambitions. As part of the Government's ambitious Warm Homes Plan, officials are exploring the role of incentives and private finance to support homeowners with the upfront costs of energy efficiency improvements and low carbon heating. This includes engaging with the finance sector on the potential for low interest loans.

## ■ Hydrogen: Energy Intensive Industries

**Gareth Snell:**

[\[37254\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has had discussions with ceramics manufacturers on the viability of hydrogen as a fuel for energy intensive industries.

**Sarah Jones:**

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

## ■ Imports: Ceramics

**Gareth Snell:**

[\[37255\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has had discussions with (a) Ceramics UK, (b) the Secretary State for Business and Trade and (c)

the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the exclusion of imported ceramics from the scope of the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism.

**Michael Shanks:**

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State has regular discussions with Ministerial Colleagues on a number of issues. Details of Ministers' and Permanent Secretaries' meetings with external individuals and organisations are published quarterly in arrears on GOV.UK.

Products from the ceramics sector will not be in scope of the UK CBAM upon implementation in 2027. The ceramic sector is, on average, less emissions intensive than those sectors within scope of the UK CBAM, and therefore relatively less exposed to carbon leakage risk.

■ **Infrastructure: Land**

**Ben Obese-Jecty:**

[\[37376\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, pursuant to the Answer of 10 March 2025 to Question 35839 on Infrastructure: Land, what is the maximum permissible quantity of best and most versatile land allowed for an energy development classed as a nationally significant infrastructure project.

**Michael Shanks:**

National Policy Statement EN-1 and EN-3 set out the policy for the consideration of the use of best and most versatile land for energy development, but state that “applicants should, where possible, utilise previously developed land, brownfield land, contaminated land and industrial land. Where the proposed use of any agricultural land has been shown to be necessary, poorer quality land should be preferred to higher quality land (avoiding the use of “Best and Most Versatile” agricultural land where possible). The decision as to whether the amount of best and most versatile land to be used is appropriate is one for the Secretary of State in the consideration of individual planning applications.”

■ **Pylons: Construction**

**James McMurdock:**

[\[36341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has had recent discussions with the National Grid on the potential merits of establishing (a) financial compensation and (b) support for businesses impacted by pylon developments.

**Michael Shanks:**

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

## ■ Solar Power

**Dr Roz Savage:**

[\[36330\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what the total acreage of land is in the UK that is currently covered by solar farms; and what the acreage is for which planning permission for solar farms has been granted.

**Michael Shanks:**

According to a report on energy trends published by DESNZ, as of September 2024 ground-mount solar PV panels covered an estimated 21,200 hectares (52,000 acres), which is only around 0.1 per cent of the total land area of the UK. While such information is not currently available for projects that have been granted planning permission, we are working on expanding the coverage of the data to all projects in the pipeline.

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6762f035e6ff7c8a1fde9b48/Land\\_utilised\\_by\\_solar\\_PV\\_September\\_2024.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6762f035e6ff7c8a1fde9b48/Land_utilised_by_solar_PV_September_2024.pdf)

## FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

### ■ Africa: Climate Change

**Wendy Morton:**

[\[35270\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to collaborate with African nations on the Kampala Declaration.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

Through the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's Africa Food Trade and Resilience programme, we have been working with the Africa Union Commission on the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) process that led to the Kampala Declaration, including supporting the delivery of the Summit itself in January.

This collaboration has been through our engagement in the Development Partners Coordination Group (DPCG) as well as working with African institutions to support the continent's food systems transformation. We will continue to strengthen our long term partnerships by working with African nations and institutions to progress their implementation of the Kampala Declaration and its objective to unlock growth through a stronger and more resilient African food and agriculture sector, that is also critical for our own and global supply chain security.

### ■ Democratic Republic of Congo: Humanitarian Aid

**Richard Burgon:**

[\[35318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the reduction in ODA spending, what steps his Department plans to take to provide humanitarian support to the Democratic Republic of Congo.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

During the Foreign Secretary's recent visit to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Rwanda, the Foreign Secretary announced an uplift of £14.6 million of humanitarian support for at least 480,000 more people in eastern DRC. This brings our humanitarian assistance in Eastern DRC to over £79 million this year. These funds support essential emergency assistance, and provide access to clean drinking water, treatment for malnourished children and life-saving sexual and reproductive health services. The UK remains committed to supporting those most in need in this critical humanitarian situation. Detailed decisions on how the Official Development Assistance budget will be allocated in future years will be worked through as part of the ongoing Spending Review, based on various factors, including impact assessments.

**Development Aid: Malnutrition****Wendy Morton:**[\[35685\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to tackle increasing malnutrition rates around the world through its international development programs.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office is taking steps to prevent, detect, and tackle malnutrition through our Child Wasting Innovation Programme (CWIP), the Child Nutrition Fund (CNF) and through our approach to integrating nutrition objectives alongside other policy objectives on sectors such as health, food and agriculture, humanitarian, and climate.

**Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Food****Sir John Hayes:**[\[35219\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what proportion of food procured by his Department is sourced in the UK.

**Catherine West:**

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.

## ■ Gaza: Children

**Tahir Ali:**

[\[34923\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the merits of establishing a medical evacuation team for children in Gaza requiring urgent treatment.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

Officials from all relevant Whitehall departments are exploring avenues to ensure our support best meets the needs of the critically ill in Gaza, including children, and we continue to support the provision of healthcare in Gaza and the region. The Government is keeping our humanitarian programme and existing policies on medical evacuations and visa pathways under review in response to events in Gaza.

We have announced £1 million for the Egyptian Ministry of Health and Population, delivered through World Health Organisation (WHO) Egypt, to support medically evacuated Palestinians from Gaza. The UK is also supporting the provision of essential healthcare to civilians in Gaza, including support to UK-MED who have now provided vital care to over 330,000 Gazans since the start of the conflict.

## ■ Humanitarian Aid

**Wendy Morton:**

[\[35277\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with international partners on increasing humanitarian aid to Sudan and its neighbouring countries.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The UK is playing a leading role in response to the crisis in Sudan. Through a commitment of £226.5 million, we are delivering lifesaving aid to over one million people. Next month, the Foreign Secretary will convene Foreign Ministers in London to host an event marking the two year anniversary of the conflict. The event aims to increase international attention to the human cost of the conflict and to help deliver a more effective and scaled-up humanitarian response. The UK is doing all it can, in concert with our international partners, to address the crisis and its toll on the people of Sudan.

## ■ James Scott Rhys Anderson

**Ben Obese-Jecty:**

[\[36204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to secure the release of James Anderson from Russian custody.

**Stephen Doughty:**

We strongly condemn the sentencing of British national James Anderson in a Russian court on false charges. Under international law, prisoners of war cannot be prosecuted for participating in hostilities. We demand that Russia respect its obligations under the Geneva Conventions, including that prisoners of war are treated

humanely. We condemn the exploitation of prisoners of war for political and propaganda purposes. The UK regularly raises Mr Anderson's case with our Ukrainian partners, and at every opportunity with senior Russian officials. We remain in close contact with Mr Anderson's family and are providing consular support.

### ■ Nigeria: Food Supply

**Wendy Morton:** [\[35669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions his Department has had with the Nigerian government on bilateral cooperation to improve food security.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The UK has raised food security with Federal and State Government representatives in Nigeria. This includes discussions on supporting food availability, access, utilisation and stability, including through relevant Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) programming. Officials have discussed efforts to address food insecurity in recent meetings with Nigeria's Presidential Food Systems Coordination Unit, Nigeria's new Federal Ministry of Livestock and Development, and Kaduna State Government. Officials and other development partners have stressed to the Nigerian Government the importance of implementing the World Bank funded Social Safety Nets programme as a matter of urgency to help address food insecurity.

### ■ Nigeria: Food Supply and Nutrition

**Wendy Morton:** [\[35278\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to increase funding for food security and nutrition programmes in conflict-affected regions in Nigeria.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The UK is committed to tackling the important issue of food insecurity in Nigeria. Firstly, we are supporting the World Bank provide assistance to deliver essential nutrition services through health facilities. Secondly, the UK is supporting a nutritious and resilient food system by scaling the production and consumption of biofortified crops in Nigeria. Thirdly, the UK is incentivising domestic resource allocation for nutrition via investment in the Child Nutrition Fund which several states as well as the federal government have accessed matched funding through for key nutrition commodities. The UK recently contributed £7.4 million towards a wider \$30 million match by the federal government for the scale up of essential services to prevent and treat malnutrition.

## ■ Nigeria: Humanitarian Aid

**Wendy Morton:**

[\[35279\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to provide humanitarian support to Northwest Nigeria.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The UK's Humanitarian and Resilience Programme (HARP) provides support to those in urgent need of assistance in the North-East of Nigeria, one of the world's largest humanitarian crises. Through HARP, we have reached approximately one million people, reducing mortality and increasing resilience for people with the most severe humanitarian needs in the North-East, including those displaced by conflict and violence. We are also working closely and regularly engage the Government of Nigeria on the best ways to meet the challenge of rising displacement and growing humanitarian need.

## ■ Nigeria: Internally Displaced People

**Satvir Kaur:**

[\[35521\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of trends in the number of Nigerians living in makeshift internally displaced person camps who have been displaced due to violence and religious persecution.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

Internal displacement in Nigeria remains high and is largely concentrated in North-East Nigeria. Through our Humanitarian and Resilience Programme (HARP), we have reached approximately one million people, reducing mortality and increasing resilience for people with the most severe humanitarian needs in the North-East, including those displaced by conflict and violence. Additionally, through the UK-Nigeria Security and Defence Partnership (SDP), the UK is working with Nigeria's security forces to tackle violence against civilian communities. Our Strengthening Peace and Resilience programme ('SPRING') is working to reduce rural violence in northwest and north-central Nigeria, including by supporting collaboration and productive livelihoods for both farmers and pastoralists, and strengthening conflict early warning, management and response.

## ■ Russia: Syria

**David Taylor:**

[\[37049\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what information his Department holds on the level of Russian involvement in the attack by pro-Assad forces prior to the outbreak of violence on the west coast of Syria in March 2025.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The events in Syria at the start of March 2025 were deeply concerning, and reports that large numbers of civilians have been killed are horrific. We are working as

quickly as possible to establish from reliable sources of information what exactly happened and who was responsible.

■ **Sudan: Cholera**

**Jim Shannon:** [\[35658\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department offers support to Sudan to help combat the spread of cholera.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The conflict in Sudan and the widespread destruction of sanitation and health services has caused a devastating cholera outbreak. In response, the UK is supporting UNICEF and others who are delivering lifesaving emergency health interventions including cholera treatment and prevention. We are also contributing to an ongoing cholera vaccination campaign in Kosti and Rabak, targeting one million people. UK aid is also addressing related needs across the region given the cross-border risks of Sudan's cholera outbreak. We continue to urge all parties in Sudan to facilitate humanitarian access so that aid reaches those most in need.

■ **Sudan: Humanitarian Aid**

**Harpreet Uppal:** [\[35977\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps his Department is taking to help ensure that conflict parties in Sudan facilitate consistent humanitarian access through (a) cross-border and (b) crossline routes.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The UK is playing a leading role in response to the crisis in Sudan, including efforts to facilitate more consistent humanitarian access. Through a commitment of £226.5 million we are delivering lifesaving aid to over one million people. In April, the Foreign Secretary will convene Foreign Ministers in London to host an event marking the two year anniversary of the conflict. The event aims to increase international attention to the human cost of the conflict and to help deliver a more effective and scaled-up humanitarian response, including more consistent cross-border and crossline access. In February, the former Minister for Development also convened a meeting with her counterparts which sought to strengthen the UN-led international humanitarian response and improve aid access.

**Harpreet Uppal:** [\[35978\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department is taking diplomatic steps to encourage conflict parties in Sudan to remove (a) travel permits, (b) internal travel notifications for humanitarian staff, (c) unpredictable visa procedures and (d) other bureaucratic barriers to humanitarian access.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The UK continues to raise the critical issue of humanitarian access and the bureaucratic impediments placed by the warring parties on relief agencies. At the UN



Security Council in December 2024 and again in January this year, we called for the warring parties to lift bureaucratic impediments and let aid get to those who need it. The former Minister for Development also engaged directly with the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, Tom Fletcher, on the UN response and the bureaucratic obstacles it faces. In recent bilateral engagements with the head of the Sudanese Armed Forces, General Burhan, the UK lobbied against impediments including lengthy delays in the provision of visas for international humanitarian personnel.

## ■ Syria: Foreign Policy and Humanitarian Aid

**Wendy Morton:**

[\[36073\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of relaxing restrictions on the (a) energy, (b) transport and (c) finance sectors in Syria on the UK's (i) foreign policy objectives and (ii) humanitarian efforts in the region.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

As I said in my statement to the House on 10 March, the Government is committed to helping to support the Syrian people in re-building their country and to promoting security and stability. We are focusing amendments to the Syria sanctions regime on energy, transport and finance as sectors of Syria's economy where international expertise, trade and investment has the greatest potential to contribute to meeting the immediate needs of the Syrian people. We are clear with the interim authorities in Damascus that they have a responsibility to ensure the protection of all Syrian civilians and to make progress towards an inclusive political transition. We will judge them by their actions, not their words.

## ■ Syria: Minority Groups

**Mary Glendon:**

[\[36642\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of the recent reports of attacks on Alawite communities in Syria.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The events in Syria at the start of March 2025 were deeply concerning and reports that large numbers of civilians have been killed are horrific. We are working as quickly as possible to establish from reliable sources of information what exactly happened and who was responsible. 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. We will judge them by their actions.

**■ Syria: Offenders****Wendy Morton:** [\[36074\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps is he taking to ensure continued accountability for people responsible for crimes committed during Bashar al-Assad's regime.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The Foreign Secretary has raised the need for accountability directly with Syrian interim Foreign Minister Shaibani. We continue to support partners who are playing a pivotal role in developing a credible evidence base to record atrocities committed by the former regime and others. This financial year, we have committed £1.15 million to accountability and documentation-related programmes. Following the collapse of the Assad regime, we announced a further £240,000 in funding to help secure and preserve vital evidence.

**■ Syria: Sanctions****Wendy Morton:** [\[36072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to adapt the Syria sanctions regime.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

As the Minister of State for Europe, North America and Overseas Territories announced in Parliament on 13 February, we are making changes to the Syrian sanctions regulations to support the Syrian people in re-building their country and promote security and stability. On 6 March, the Government lifted asset freezes on 24 Syrian entities, including the Central Bank of Syria, that were previously used by the Assad regime to fund the oppression of the Syrian people. This follows the Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation publishing on 12 February a General Licence, allowing payments that support humanitarian assistance in Syria. As I made clear in my Statement to the House on 10th March, we keep our sanctions under close review to ensure they are used as a responsive tool. Where there are changes to the Syria Regulations, Members of Parliament will have the opportunity to debate in line with the made affirmative procedure for sanctions Statutory Instruments.

**HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE****■ Autism: Diagnosis****Dr Luke Evans:** [\[35763\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the opportunities available to improve diagnosis times for autism spectrum disorder.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

It is the responsibility of the integrated care board (ICBs) to make available appropriate provision to meet the health and care needs of their local population,

including autism assessments and diagnosis, in line with relevant National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines.

On 5 April 2023, NHS England published a national framework and operational guidance to help ICBs and the National Health Service to deliver improved outcomes for children, young people, and adults referred to an autism assessment service. Since publication, NHS England has been supporting systems and services to identify where there are challenges for implementation, and how they might overcome these.

In 2024/25, £4.3 million is available nationally to improve services for autistic children and young people, including autism assessment services. NHS England is also working with research organisations to explore evidence-based models that support improved outcomes for those people waiting for an autism assessment.

As part of the Government's five long-term missions, we have launched a 10-Year Health Plan to reform the NHS and make it fit for the future. Department officials recently convened a roundtable with autistic people and people with a learning disability to listen to their views on the future of the NHS as part of 10-Year Health Plan.

## ■ Autism: Women

**Manuela Perteghella:**

[\[36506\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to review autism assessment questionnaire to be inclusive of female autism.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

Autistic characteristics in women and girls may differ from those of other autistic people. Integrated care boards and health professionals should have due regard to National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines when commissioning and providing health care services, including autism assessment services. NICE guidelines and quality standards set out evidence for good practice in autism assessments. This includes the recommended autism assessment tools and processes employed.

In 2023, NHS England published a national framework and operational guidance for autism assessment services which identifies the stages and processes of undertaking an autism assessment and places an emphasis on gathering sufficient information and evidence to reach a robust clinical opinion.

Clinicians may use questionnaires to support identification, screening, and triage, as well as structured or semi-structured interview tools and/or schedules to support assessments. NHS England has commissioned Autistica to review tools used for screening and triage in the autism assessment pathway, and to produce a set of criteria that services can use when deciding which tools are appropriate for use in their service.

The NICE guidelines on autism diagnosis for people under 19 years old also set out considerations for clinicians, which includes recognition that they should pay attention to the potential under-diagnosis of girls when assessing for suspected autism.

## ■ Brain: Tumours

**Mr Angus MacDonald:** [\[36024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of developing a National Brain Tumour Strategy.

**Ashley Dalton:**

My Rt. Hon friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, has announced that a National Cancer Plan for England will be published this year. The National Cancer Plan will have patients at its heart and will cover the entirety of the cancer pathway, from referral and diagnosis to treatment and ongoing care. It will seek to improve every aspect of cancer care to improve the experience and outcomes for people with cancer, including brain tumour patients. Research is also a key focus of the plan, and we will work closely with partners including the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) on this.

We realise that there are currently limited treatment options available for people who have been diagnosed with brain tumours, and we recognise the significant impact this rare cancer can have on patients, carers and their families. The government is invested in driving new lifesaving and life-improving research, supporting those diagnosed and living with brain tumours.

Furthermore, the Department, NHS England and 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.

## ■ Cancer: Genomics

**Brian Mathew:** [\[35929\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department will allow UK oncologists to test for genetic weaknesses by carrying out Whole Genomic Sequencing.

**Ashley Dalton:**

Genomic testing in the National Health Service in England is provided through the NHS Genomic Medicine Service and delivered by a national genomic testing network of seven NHS Genomic Laboratory Hubs (GLHs). The NHS GLHs deliver testing as directed by the National Genomic Test Directory, which includes tests for over 7,000 rare diseases and over 200 clinical indications of cancer. Testing can be delivered using a range of technologies, including whole genome sequencing (WGS) or Next Generation Sequencing technology, large cancer gene panels, to ensure that a patient receives the most appropriate genomic testing depending on their individual circumstances.

The National Genomic Test Directory sets out the eligibility criteria for patients to access testing as well as the genomic targets to be tested and the method that should be used. For most cancers, the National Genomic Test Directory outlines that large gene panels inclusive of targets for treatments should be offered as the first line option. WGS can then be offered to any cancer patient that requires it to determine their next stage of treatment.

## ■ **Cancer: Screening**

**Dr Simon Opher:**

**[35792]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that cancer screening programmes recommended by the National Screening Committee are (a) funded and (b) available to patients as quickly as possible.

**Ashley Dalton:**

The UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC) Secretariat works closely with NHS England. This means NHS England is aware of conditions that the committee is considering for a screening programme. The costs and workforce requirements of potential screening programmes are considered when setting budgets so that when a positive recommendation is made by the UK NSC and accepted by Ministers, the National Health Service can begin work on implementing the screening programme.

The roll out of a screening programme needs to be done systematically and at a pace that the NHS's capacity can cope with to ensure safety for those members of the public who accept the screening offer.

## ■ **Disability: Medical Examinations**

**Tony Vaughan:**

**[35807]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that disability related expenditure assessments are being undertaken by local authorities.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

Where local authorities decide to charge for the provision of care and support, they must follow the Care and Support Statutory Guidance, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-act-statutory-guidance/care-and-support-statutory-guidance#Chapter8>

This guidance sets out that, where disability-related benefits are taken into account during a financial assessment, the local authority should make an assessment and allow the person to keep enough of their benefit payments to pay for necessary disability-related expenditure, to meet any needs which are not being met by the local authority.

**■ General Practitioners: Finance****Ben Obese-Jecty:**[\[36475\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 7 March 2025 to Question 34376 on NHS: Finance, how the Carr-Hill formula applies to over-subscribed GP surgeries.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

The Carr-Hill formula is designed to ensure that practices are reimbursed for their expected workload, that is, practices are paid more if their registered patients are expected to use services more based on past usage patterns of patients with similar characteristics. It considers a range of factors, including patient list turnover, to account for the fact that patients in their first year of registration in a practice tend to have more consultations than other patients.

Other factors considered by Carr-Hill include: the sex and age of patients; the additional needs of patients relating to morbidity and mortality and the Standardised Mortality Ratio for those aged under 65 years old; and unavoidable costs based on geographical area, specifically the additional costs of delivering services in a rural area, and in areas where staff costs are higher.

When general practice surgeries become over-subscribed, they may apply to their integrated care board to not accept temporarily any new patient registrations for specific reasons, including for example practices' staffing or recruitment issues.

**■ Huntington's Disease: Surrey****Monica Harding:**[\[36981\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase the availability of specialist clinical provision for people with Huntington's Disease in Surrey.

**Ashley Dalton:**

Working under the UK Rare Diseases Framework, the Government is committed to improving the lives of those living with rare diseases, such as Huntington's Disease.

Integrated care boards (ICBs) are responsible for working with their local communities to understand the needs of the local populations and make decisions about how best to commission services that meet those needs, including the treatment of Huntington's Disease, in partnership with other local commissioners and organisations. Details on local clinical provisions are best answered by the ICB, in this case NHS Surrey Heartlands.

**■ Independent Commission into Adult Social Care****Kevin Hollinrake:**[\[35705\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 21 February 2025 to Question 29991 on Independent Commission into Adult Social Care,

what his planned timetable is for responding to the 2028 Phase 2 report; and whether he plans that social care reforms will be (a) legislated for and (b) delivered in this Parliament.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

Chaired by Baroness Casey, the Independent Commission on adult social care will be undertaken in two phases. Phase one, reporting in 2026, will identify the biggest challenges in adult social care and recommend practical changes to improve people's lives over the next decade. Phase two, reporting by 2028, will make longer-term recommendations for the transformation of adult social care, addressing demographic change, how services should be organised to deliver this, and how to best create a fair and affordable adult social care system.

The Government will consider and respond to the commission's recommendations, including any legislative implications, when it reports. The Government recognises the pivotal role adult social care plays in nurturing local communities and helping people live as independent and fulfilling lives as possible.

■ **Memory Clinics: Expenditure**

**Joe Robertson:**

[\[36542\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the annual average integrated care board spend on memory assessment services has been for each year between 2014 and 2024.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

It is the responsibility of integrated care boards (ICBs) to work with the third sector in their geographical area to offer services that meet the needs of their population. NHS England would expect ICBs to take account of the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's guidelines when commissioning services for their local population.

■ **Mental Health Services: Administration of Justice**

**Jim Dickson:**

[\[36940\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) volunteer and (b) paid peer support worker positions were created in the NHS England (i) liaison and diversion and (ii) RECONNECT service since peer support was first included in the liaison and diversion national service specification.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

*[Holding answer 14 March 2025]:* The information requested is not collected centrally by NHS England. The national service specifications set an expectation that the workforce composition will include volunteer and paid peer-support roles within each liaison and diversion and RECONNECT service. However, the service specification does not stipulate the number or ratio of volunteer or peer support roles per service. It is a matter for the provider to satisfy the regional commissioner that the overall workforce plan is appropriate to meet the needs of the patient population.

## ■ Pancreatic Enzyme Replacement Therapy: Shortages

**Dr Rupa Huq:**

[\[36703\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with manufacturers of Pancreatic Enzyme Replacement Therapy medication on supply shortages.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Department is in regular discussion with all suppliers of pancreatic enzyme replacement therapy (PERT) on latest stock availability and the actions that are being taken mitigate the supply issue that is affecting the whole of the United Kingdom. Through these discussions we have managed to secure additional volumes of PERT for 2025 for the UK. We are continuing to work with all suppliers to understand what more can be done to add further resilience to the market. The Department has also reached out to specialist importers who have sourced unlicensed stock to assist in covering the remaining gap in the market.

In the longer term, the Department has had interest from non-UK suppliers wishing to bring their products to the UK and, along with colleagues in the Medicine and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, we are working with these potential suppliers; if authorised these products could further diversify and strengthen the market.

## ■ Pharmacy

**Luke Myer:**

[\[36517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to engage with independent pharmacy owners to (a) address financial pressures and (b) prevent pharmacy closures.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

The Government recognises that pharmacies are an integral part of the fabric of our communities, as an easily accessible 'front door' to the National Health Service, staffed by highly trained and skilled healthcare professionals.

The Government is committed to expanding the role of pharmacies and to better utilising the skills of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians. That includes making prescribing part of the services delivered by community pharmacists. To support these private contractors, NHS England is providing fully funded national training opportunities to help them deliver quality NHS services.

The Department and NHS England are working at pace with Community Pharmacy England to ensure that the funding we have available is used to support community pharmacy in the best way possible. Community Pharmacy England is recognised by the Government as the body that we consult on the community pharmacy contract and is formulated to represent the views of all pharmacy contractors including independent pharmacies.



## ■ Pharmacy: Contracts

**Jayne Kirkham:**

[\[37101\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when negotiations on the 2024-5 and 2025-6 community pharmacy contractual framework will be agreed.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

*[Holding answer 14 March 2025]:* We are working at pace with Community Pharmacy England to ensure that the funding we have available is used to support community pharmacy in the best way possible to support them in dispensing medicines to patients and to offer a range of clinical services including Pharmacy First.

We will announce the outcome of the consultation in the usual manner, by letter to contractors, when the consultation has concluded.

## ■ Pharmacy: Disadvantaged

**Luke Myer:**

[\[36518\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of community pharmacy closures on patient access to NHS services in deprived areas.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

The Government recognises that pharmacies are an integral part of the fabric of our communities, as an easily accessible front door to the National Health Service, staffed by highly trained and skilled healthcare professionals.

We are aware of the reduction in the number of pharmacies in recent years and recognise that pharmacy closures can impact on local communities. Despite closures in recent years, access to pharmacies continues to be better in the most deprived areas when compared with the least deprived. Local authorities are required to undertake a pharmaceutical needs assessment (PNA) every three years to assess whether their population is adequately served and must keep these assessments under review. Integrated care boards give regard to the PNAs when reviewing applications from the new contractors. Contractors can also apply to open a new pharmacy to offer benefits to patients that were not foreseen by the PNA.

The Pharmacy Access Scheme provides additional funding to further support pharmacies where another pharmacy is more than 0.8 miles in the most deprived areas and more than one mile in other areas. Additionally, in rural areas where there is no pharmacy, general practitioners are permitted to dispense medicines. Patients can also choose to access medicines and pharmacy services through any of the nearly 400 NHS online pharmacies that are contractually required to deliver prescription medicines free of charge to patients.

## ■ Pharmacy: Registration

**Helen Morgan:**

**[36807]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an estimate of the number of pharmacies that have been registered in each integrated care board area for each year since financial year 2021-22.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

*[Holding answer 14 March 2025]:* NHS England maintains the lists of National Health Service pharmacies in each Health and Wellbeing Board area. As high volumes of changes take place each month, the consolidated pharmaceutical list is produced and validated on a quarterly basis. Since the second quarter of 2022/23, the consolidated lists are published on the NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA) Open data portal, which is available at the following link:

<https://opendata.nhsbsa.net/dataset/consolidated-pharmaceutical-list>

The following table shows the number of community pharmacies included in the fourth quarter consolidated pharmaceutical list for each integrated care board (ICB) between 2021/22 and 2023/24:

ICB	31 MARCH 2022	31 MARCH 2023	31 MARCH 2024	31 DECEMBER 2024
Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire ICB	146	148	138	138
Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes ICB	158	159	151	149
Birmingham and Solihull ICB	317	312	304	301
Black Country ICB	280	275	267	263
Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire ICB	167	167	156	156
Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West ICB	264	265	249	248

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ICB	31 MARCH 2022	31 MARCH 2023	31 MARCH 2024	31 DECEMBER 2024
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough ICB	149	151	141	140
Cheshire and Merseyside ICB	585	578	542	540
Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly ICB	98	99	94	90
Coventry and Warwickshire ICB	196	194	184	181
Derby and Derbyshire ICB	209	206	198	197
Devon ICB	224	225	204	203
Dorset ICB	144	143	138	135
Frimley ICB	137	137	130	129
Gloucestershire ICB	110	110	105	105
Greater Manchester ICB	656	653	631	626
Hampshire and the Isle of Wight ICB	305	300	284	283
Herefordshire and Worcestershire ICB	122	121	118	116
Hertfordshire and West Essex ICB	286	286	269	266
Humber and North Yorkshire ICB	324	323	300	297
Kent and Medway ICB	325	323	308	305

ICB	31 MARCH 2022	31 MARCH 2023	31 MARCH 2024	31 DECEMBER 2024
Lancashire and South Cumbria ICB	395	390	368	367
Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland ICB	228	227	222	222
Lincolnshire ICB	117	115	112	114
Mid and South Essex ICB	217	214	199	198
Norfolk and Waveney ICB	182	181	171	169
North Central London ICB	299	295	290	290
North East and North Cumbria ICB	651	648	614	613
North East London ICB	380	382	371	368
North West London ICB	502	500	477	475
Northamptonshire ICB	127	126	125	125
Nottingham and Nottinghamshire ICB	227	226	221	216
Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin ICB	83	83	82	79
Somerset ICB	101	100	91	91
South East London ICB	336	338	326	323
South West London ICB	292	293	278	272

ICB	31 MARCH 2022	31 MARCH 2023	31 MARCH 2024	31 DECEMBER 2024
South Yorkshire ICB	310	312	305	304
Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent ICB	240	238	233	232
Suffolk and North East Essex ICB	170	171	162	162
Surrey Heartlands ICB	176	175	162	160
Sussex ICB	310	311	291	290
West Yorkshire ICB	545	543	514	505

Source: NHSBSA

Note: The consolidated pharmaceutical list for the fourth quarter of 2024/25 will be published once the validation process is completed, so the third quarter data of 2024/25 has been provided instead.

### ■ Prisoners: Mental Illness

**Sarah Edwards:**

[\[35786\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of prisoners are diagnosed with mental health conditions by region.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

The following table shows the mental health population by region and as a percentage of the prison population:

REGIONS	PERCENTAGE
East Midlands	8%
East of England	8%
London	7%
North East and Yorkshire	7%
North West	8%
South East	8%

REGIONS	PERCENTAGE
South West	7%
West Midlands	8%
Grand Total	8%

Source: NHS England.

These figures are for severe and enduring mental health conditions such as bipolar and schizophrenia, and do not include conditions such as anxiety and depression.

## ■ Social Services

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:**

[\[37283\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the proposed increase in the certificate of sponsorship fee on the adult social care sector; and if he will hold discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on making more funding available to support the adult social care sector.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

The Immigration and Nationality (Fees) (Amendment) Order 2025, laid on 21 January 2025, sets out increases to the fee maxima that applies to the Certificate of Sponsorship from £300 to £525. These changes were agreed via collective agreement. If fees increase as set out in the Explanatory Memorandum to this Order, an Impact Assessment will be produced by the Home Office.

International recruitment has played a valuable role in helping grow the adult social care workforce. The Government recognises the scale of reforms needed to make the adult social care sector attractive, to support sustainable workforce growth and improve the retention of the domestic workforce. The Government is making available up to £3.7 billion of additional funding for social care authorities in 2025/26, which includes an £880 million increase in the Social Care Grant.

Adult social care is a central part of local government's responsibilities. Decisions about the funding of all local government priorities will be taken in the round at the Spending Review.

## ■ Social Services: Finance

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:**

[\[36752\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made with Cabinet colleagues of the potential impact of proposed changes to the level of the certificate of sponsorship fee per worker on the adequacy of the funding settlement for adult social care announced in the Autumn Budget 2024.

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:**

[\[36754\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the proposed increase in the certificate of sponsorship fee on recruitment in the social care sector.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

*[Holding answer 14 March 2025]:* The Immigration and Nationality (Fees) (Amendment) Order 2025, laid on 21 January 2025, sets out increases to the fee maxima that applies to the Certificate of Sponsorship from £300 to £525. These changes were agreed via collective agreement. If fees increase as set out in the Explanatory Memorandum to this Order, an Impact Assessment will be produced by the Home Office.

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## HOME OFFICE

### ■ **Apple: Cryptography**

**Alison Bennett:**

[\[36544\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to ensure the protection of personal data in the context of Apple's withdrawal of Advanced Data Protection.

**Dan Jarvis:**

The UK has a strong track record of protecting people's privacy whilst also ensuring action can be taken against child sexual abusers and terrorists.

The Investigatory Powers Act contains robust safeguards and independent oversight to protect privacy and ensure that data is only obtained on an exceptional basis and only when it is necessary and proportionate to do so.

The Home Office does not comment on operational matters. This has been the longstanding position of successive UK Governments for reasons of national security.

### ■ **Cannabis: Crime**

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:**

[\[37288\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an estimate of the annual cost of policing cannabis-related offences.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

It is not possible from the available data to separate out the costs of policing these particular offences from other policing responsibilities, including in relation to other controlled substances.

**Counter-terrorism****Sir Julian Lewis:**[\[37105\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of establishing a single independent inquiry into the (a) effectiveness of the Prevent programme and (b) adequacy of the handling of the cases involving (i) Axel Rudakubana and (ii) Ali Harbi Ali.

**Dan Jarvis:**

Significant improvements have been made to Prevent over the last few years and a further package of work to strengthen Prevent was announced by the Home Secretary in December 2024. New reforms include the creation for the first time of an independent Prevent Commissioner role. This dedicated permanent oversight function will provide continuous independent scrutiny of Prevent legislation, policy and delivery to maximise Prevent's effectiveness. To begin this work swiftly, Lord David Anderson KC was announced as the interim Commissioner on 21 January.

In relation to the cases raised by the Rt Hon member, we have published the Prevent Learning Reviews into each case and tasked Lord Anderson with conducting a rapid review of both cases. Lord Anderson will identify whether there is further learning regarding the specific handling of each case; examine improvements made to Prevent since each case and determine whether they have sufficiently strengthened the Prevent system; and identify any remaining gaps or shortcomings that require further improvement. This review will be published and swift action will be taken to implement the findings.

The Home Secretary has already announced a public inquiry into the Southport attack. We are moving swiftly to set up the inquiry and we expect to announce further details later this month, after consultation with families and others most affected.

**Crime****Wendy Morton:**[\[36081\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that police forces are sufficiently resourced to tackle crime rates.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

The 2025-26 final police funding settlement provides funding of up to £19.6 billion for the policing system in England and Wales. This is an overall increase of up to £1.1 billion when compared to the 2024-25 and represents a 6% cash increase and 3.5% real terms increase in funding.

The Government is committed to ensuring police forces are supported to effectively tackle crime. That is why we have committed £200 million to kickstart the recruitment



of 13,000 additional neighbourhood police officers and PCSOs in communities across the country.

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

**Juliet Campbell:**

[\[36827\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of bringing flooding under the statutory duties of English firefighters.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

Fire and Rescue Authorities have duties under the Civil Contingencies Act (2004) to prepare for emergencies, including major flooding. Fire Rescue Authorities also have discretionary powers to respond to incidents under their general powers in the Fire and Rescue Services Act (2004) and in response to the risks set out in their Community Risk Management Plans prepared under the National Framework.

The Home Office is undertaking further work alongside Defra, National Fire Chiefs Council and other relevant stakeholders to understand in more detail if there are gaps in the Fire and Rescue Services flooding response and resilience system.

#### ■ **Hate Crime: Transgender People**

**Steve Witherden:**

[\[36270\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans her Department has to help tackle hate crimes against trans people in England and Wales.

**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: Training**

**Kirsty Blackman:**

[\[36658\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will outline the (a) content and (b) frequency of statelessness-specific training for her Department's statelessness determination unit.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

Statelessness Determination training for caseworkers new to this work, consists of two weeks classroom training covering the Statelessness Convention and the relevant immigration rules and how these apply to statelessness casework with case studies.

After the initial classroom training, there is approximately nine weeks of mentoring where caseworkers complete statelessness casework with a mentor and are assessed with the aim to transition to independent case working.

After completing initial training and mentoring, caseworkers receive ongoing support and assessment through quality assurance from their technical specialist who is also available to assist with cases and casework queries. If new rules or legislation are introduced, training is delivered as and when required.

**■ Knives: Crime**

**Wendy Morton:** [\[37177\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to support community-led initiatives focused on preventing knife crime.

**Wendy Morton:** [\[37178\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps his Department is taking to improve educational support and engagement for vulnerable young people at risk of becoming involved in knife crime.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

The Home Office has committed to the creation of a new Young Futures Programme, which will establish a network of Young Futures Hubs and Young Futures Prevention Partnerships, to ensure at risk children and young people are supported in a more systematic way. The Government recognises the vital role community voices can play in the effective delivery of crime reduction initiatives.

This is why the Prevention Partnership model, and its associated functions will be designed in partnership with the communities it intends to support. As we continue to design the Young Futures Programme, we want to ensure that it learns from and builds on the work of the existing Violence Reduction Units in this regard. In 2025/26 we are investing £49.7m in Violence Reduction Units, including making over £4.3m available to the West Midlands this year, and £14.4m to Serious Violence Duty Partnerships nationally.

Violence Reduction Units and Serious Violence Duty partnerships bring together key partners, including the local community, to understand and tackle the drivers of serious violence in their area. As part of the 'whole system' approach to violence prevention, they are required to operate 'with and for' the community. This involves support for community-led and grass-roots organisations to deliver interventions that help to prevent violence, including knife crime.

The Prime Minister has also launched a Coalition to tackle the scourge of knife crime. The Coalition brings together key stakeholders, including community leaders, to help the Government develop an extensive understanding of what causes young people to be drawn into violence.

## ■ **Motorcycles: Crime**

**Luke Myer:**

[\[36516\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to prevent the illegal use of off-road bikes.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

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

On 25 February 2025, the Crime and Policing Bill was introduced in Parliament. The Bill includes proposals to give the police greater powers to clamp down on off-road bikes and other vehicles involved in anti-social behaviour, with officers no longer required to issue a warning before seizing vehicles.

This will allow the police to quickly remove anti-social vehicles and send a clear message to antisocial drivers that their behaviour will not be tolerated.

## ■ **Police Stations: Closures**

**Wendy Morton:**

[\[36080\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of proposed closures of (a) Aldridge Police Station and (b) other local police stations on community safety.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

The Home Office does not collect data on the number or location of police stations, or the impact of their closure. Police stations are just one of the ways people can access their local police services, including reporting online and by phone 24/7.

It is up to Chief Constables and directly elected Police and Crime Commissioners (or equivalents) to make decisions on local resourcing and estates, including police stations. They are best placed to make these decisions based on their local knowledge and experience.

As part of the Safer Street Mission to reduce crime and increase public confidence in policing, the Government has introduced a Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee to transform neighbourhood policing. Each neighbourhood will have a named, contactable officer dealing with local issues.

We have also provided £200 million in FY 25/26 to support the first steps of delivering 13,000 more neighbourhood personnel. This increase in neighbourhood policing, alongside the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee, will strengthen the connections between the police and the communities they serve.

**■ Police: Firearms****Ben Obese-Jecty:** [\[36205\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the complete list is of different firearms types currently in service with police forces in England and Wales.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

The types of firearms held by police forces are determined by individual chief constables in line with their assessment of threats and risks.

National capability is kept under constant review by individual police chiefs at a local level and by the National Armed Policing Lead and National Armed Policing Coordination Centre at a national level.

**■ Refugees****Kirsty Blackman:** [\[36657\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people were refused 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.

**Kirsty Blackman:** [\[36659\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department employs anyone to work exclusively on statelessness determination applications.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

The Home Office employs a small team which covers the issue of statelessness applications, but also routinely covers different, or additional work, as business needs and priorities require.

**■ Refugees: Palestinians****Anna Dixon:** [\[35970\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the need for a resettlement scheme to support Palestinian refugees seeking asylum in the UK.

**Seema Malhotra:**

The UK has a long history of providing protection through various resettlement routes to supporting the most vulnerable people in the world.

We keep all existing pathways under review and we are closely monitoring the events in Gaza,

Palestinians who wish to settle in the UK can do so via the existing routes available which allow a person to apply to work, study, settle or join family in the UK. Further

information can be found on the GOV.UK website: [Visas and immigration - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk).

## ■ Unexplained Wealth Orders

**Liam Byrne:**

[36049]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an estimate of the number of unexplained wealth orders that have been (a) requested by and (b) granted to the National Crime Agency each year from 2020 to 2024.

**Dan Jarvis:**

Between 2020 to 2024, the National Crime Agency (NCA) submitted two applications for unexplained wealth orders (UWOs) in 2023 with one being granted within the same year and the other being granted in 2024.

There are a number of variables which impact an operational decision to seek a UWO including: the ease with which evidence can be obtained from overseas; whether it would be proportionate to go to the High Court; and suitability of alternative investigatory powers.

The NCA has several other well-established powers under Part 8 of the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002, which they may use to compel information regarding the ownership of asset during an investigation such as Production Orders and Disclosure Orders. The NCA continues to review whether cases are suitable for a UWO.

The Government committed to report on the number of UWOs applied for and obtained each year under the Economic Crime Transparency and Enforcement Act 2022.

The report covering the 2023-24 period can be found at: [Unexplained wealth orders: 2023 to 2024 annual report - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)

## HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

### ■ House of Commons: Security

**Mark Pritchard:**

[34239]

To ask the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent and Rhymney, representing the House of Commons Commission, if the Commission will bring forward proposals to agree sanctions against (a) hon. Members and (b) members of staff employed by (i) the House of Commons and (ii) hon. Members who share security advice received from House authorities with (A) media organisations, (B) third parties and (C) other external audiences.

**Nick Smith:**

The security of Parliament and its Members is a priority for the Commission, and it expects everyone in the parliamentary community, including Members, Members' staff and House Administration staff, to support this aim and manage sensitive information appropriately. As the Commission and parliamentary authorities have

repeatedly made clear, unauthorised disclosure of confidential security advice can pose a direct risk to the security of those we are trying to protect.

The House of Commons Commission has not discussed sanctions on Members who share security advice. However, unauthorised disclosures may also amount to a breach of the Code of Conduct for Members, in which case it would be for the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards or the Committee on Standards to consider penalties on a case-by-case basis.

House Administration staff who make an unauthorised disclosure would be subject to disciplinary action as set out in the House of Commons staff handbook.

Staff employed by Members are not the direct responsibility of the Commission, as they are employed by their Member. However, the Commission would call upon the Member to set standards for conduct and behaviour, and to determine disciplinary action where appropriate. Unauthorised disclosure of confidential information by their staff could be considered gross misconduct.

Beyond formal sanctions, the Parliamentary Authorities engage extensively with Members, their staff and House Administration staff to ensure they understand the crucial role they have to play in the security of the parliamentary community, including information security.

## ■ Political Parties: Finance

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

[\[35704\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent and Rhymney, representing the House of Commons Commission, what guidance the Commission has provided on whether the provisions on hon. Members being required to report linked donations and declaring the identity of the ultimate donor, under Category 2(a), includes donations made through unincorporated associations or members' associations which in turn have been funded by a third party donor; and whether such ultimate donors should be permissible donors.

**Nick Smith:**

The Commission does not issue guidance on the registration of Members' Financial interests. The Committee on Standards periodically reviews the Code of Conduct and Guide to the Rules relating to the Conduct of Members and makes recommendations for changes for the House to consider.

The rules on registering donations under both Category 2(a) and 2(b) are set out in [paragraphs 14 to 20](#) of The Guide to the Rules relating to the Conduct of Members. Those rules do not require the provision of information on individuals or organisations that donate to unincorporated associations or members' associations which in turn, make donations to Members.

The Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards has issued an Advice Note on the [transparency of registration of income, donations and other financial interests](#) which explains the importance of transparency when registering financial interests. Advice

Notes are designed to supplement, and not supersede or contradict, specific provisions of the Code.

The permissibility of donors is a matter for the Electoral Commission, not the Commission.

## HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### ■ Chinese Embassy: Planning Permission

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

[\[36092\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether a heritage impact assessment has been conducted on proposals to move the Chinese Embassy to the former Royal Mint building.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

An appointed Inspector held a public inquiry which heard a range of evidence for and against the proposals in question. As this case will come before ministers in MHCLG to determine, it would not be appropriate to comment further.

### ■ Council Housing and Housing Revenue Accounts

**Paula Barker:**

[\[33580\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department is taking to help councils (a) re-establish Housing Revenue Accounts and (b) become the direct provider of new council homes.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

If a local authority has over 199 social and affordable homes, it must open a Housing Revenue Account (HRA), and we invite any council that is considering this to engage with the Department.

We know from our engagement with non-HRA holding councils, that many would like to increase their current levels of housing delivery, but that the cost of opening a HRA can make this difficult. That is why I have asked my officials to explore whether the current threshold is set at the right level, or if a different threshold would enable councils to reach a level of housing provision that would better enable them to meet the costs of opening and managing an HRA.

In 2023-24, councils delivered just over 8,950 affordable homes. We want to support all councils – both HRA holding and non-HRA holding – to boost their levels of direct delivery so that we can achieve the biggest increase in social and affordable housebuilding in a generation. We have begun this process through a series of measures designed to enhance councils' capacity, capability, and confidence to build again at scale, as detailed in my answer to Question UIN [31737](#) on 27 February 2025.

**■ Green Belt****Wendy Morton:** [\[37173\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to National Planning Policy Framework, published in December 2024, what role will local communities play in the assessment of land designated as grey belt.

**Wendy Morton:** [\[37174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the National Planning Policy Framework published in December 2024, whether her Department has conducted an environmental impact assessment on the proposed development of grey belt land.

**Wendy Morton:** [\[37175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to take legislative steps to ensure there is consultation with local communities before any developments are approved on grey belt land.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

I refer the right hon. Member to the answers to Question UIN [26011](#) on 31 January 2025; UIN [26507](#) on 5 February 2025; and UIN [36395](#) on 12 March 2025. It is for individual local authorities to plan and make decisions regarding the location and potential impacts of new development in their areas.

**■ Heat Pumps: Permitted Development Rights****Alex Sobel:** [\[36120\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what her Department's timetable is for the implementation of changes to permitted development rights for air source heat pumps.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

Further announcements on permitted development rights for air source heat pumps and electric vehicle charging points will be made in the coming months.

**■ HM Land Registry: Buildings****Kevin Hollinrake:** [\[36095\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 20 December 2024 to Question 19964 on Land Registry: Buildings, how many staff attended on average the Land Registry's Croydon office each week in November 2024.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

Week Croydon office staff who attended in each week.

04/11/2024 - 08/11/2024 333

11/11/2024 - 15/11/2024 346



18/11/2024 - 22/11/2024 337

25/11/2024 - 29/11/2024 333

Weekly average 337.25

These figures do not include staff on short term leave. Staff are asked to manage their attendance over the course of a month, so there will be some natural variance on a weekly level.

## ■ Homes for Ukraine Scheme: Children

**Alex Sobel:**

[36119]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what safeguards her Department has put in place to help protect unaccompanied children from Ukraine through the Homes for Ukraine Scheme.

**Rushanara Ali:**

The Homes for Ukraine scheme supports eligible unaccompanied minors to safely arrive, and to live and thrive in the UK without their parent or legal guardian, supported by a sponsor that they know and trust.

Eligible Minors are protected by robust safeguarding measures. Parental or legal guardian consent is required before a sponsorship arrangement is agreed, and sponsors must pass safeguarding checks before a visa is issued. Councils must comply with safeguarding responsibilities and statutory duties. Local authorities receive an enhanced tariff for each eligible minor arrival, recognising the increased safeguarding support needed.

Detailed guidance for councils, sponsors, and parents/legal guardians must be adhered to, is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homes-for-ukraine-guidance-for-councils-children-and-minors-applying-without-parents-or-legal-guardians#eligibility-criteria>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homes-for-ukraine-guidance-for-sponsors-children-and-minors-applying-without-parents-or-legal-guardians#sponsor-eligibility:~:text=Must%20agree%20to,to%20adult%20life>

## ■ Houseboats

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

[28057]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department is taking to increase the availability of (a) houseboats and (b) houseboat moorings.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

It is for individual local authorities to assess whether any existing or new waterway should accommodate houseboats, and to grant such permissions as are necessary to change land-use or authorise access and service connections to boats.

However, the National Planning Policy Framework asks local authorities to assess the housing need of different groups in the community and reflect the need in their planning policies, and that could include the need for houseboat moorings.

Moreover, the duty under s.8 of the Housing Act 1985 for local authorities to consider the needs of people residing in their district, including those in houseboats, also requires the authority to assess the need for 'further' housing, which could include additional houseboats or mooring places.

## ■ Housing: Construction

**Blake Stephenson:**

**[36220]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make a comparative assessment of the cumulative housing target for (a) Tower Hamlets, (b) Broxtowe, (c) Nottingham, (d) Greenwich, (e) Oldham and (f) Tameside under (i) the new housing targets and (ii) the housing targets under the previous system.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

The government published the revised standard method for assessing local housing need on 12 December 2024. This aligns with our ambition for 1.5 million new homes to be delivered over this parliament and better directs new homes to where they are most needed and least affordable.

The new standard method supports a more strategic approach to housing growth, distributing growth across wider city regions, and not just to the largest urban authority within our largest cities, as was the case under the previous method.

Further detail on the new standard method is set out in the government's response to the proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system consultation and the revised Planning Practice Guidance on housing and economic needs assessments. These are available on gov.uk.

Local housing need figures for each local authority and region arising from the revised standard method can be found [here](#).

**Blake Stephenson:**

**[36221]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what she expects the average density per hectare to be of housing developments built during this Parliament.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

Development density is influenced by a range of factors, such as the type of land use, building types and form, and building heights. The National Design Guide and National Model Design Code provide guidance on these elements.

Local Design Guides and Design Codes may set out densities or ranges of density, that take account of local context.

**Blake Stephenson:**[\[36228\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an estimate of the number of homes expected to be built between July 2024 and July 2025.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

The government do not routinely publish a supply forecast or projected profiles of housing delivery.

Our Plan for Change includes an ambitious milestone of building 1.5 million safe and decent homes in England in this Parliament. Progress will be measured through the number of net additional dwellings, and we will update Parliament in the usual manner.

**■ Islamophobia****Kevin Hollinrake:**[\[36101\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the written statement of 3 March 2025, HCWS487, on Anti-Muslim Hate/Islamophobia Definition Working Group, what the criteria was used to select (a) the chair and (b) the working group members.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**[\[36102\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the written statement of 3 March 2025, HCWS487, on Anti-Muslim Hate/Islamophobia Definition Working Group, when the (a) terms of reference and (b) membership will be deposited.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**[\[36103\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the written statement of 3 March 2025, HCWS487, on Anti-Muslim Hate/Islamophobia Definition Working Group, what interests the chair of the working group on delivering a definition of Anti-Muslim Hatred/Islamophobia has declared; and whether he will be remunerated.

**Alex Norris:**

The Anti-Muslim Hate/Islamophobia Definition Working Group Chair and Members are technical experts, and have been selected for their ability to deliver against the group's objectives. All members must follow The Seven Principles of Public Life and the Government retains the right to end the relationship if any member does not abide by the principles. All appointments are subject to assessment of any potential or actual conflicts of interest, which must be fully disclosed to the Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government. Group members will not be remunerated but will be able to claim expenses for travel and/or costs incurred whilst carrying out their role. Further detail of the group's membership and Terms of Reference will be published after the public appointment process has concluded.

## ■ Land Use

**Blake Stephenson:**

[\[36219\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the land use breakdown of (a) the average Parliamentary constituency, (b) Ashton-under-Lyne constituency, (c) Oldham West, Chadderton & Royton constituency, (d) Greenwich & Woolwich constituency, (e) Nottingham North & Kimberley constituency and (f) Bethnal Green & Stepney constituency.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

The Department publishes an annual release entitled “Land use statistics: England”, which presents summary statistics showing how different land uses are distributed across England, as at 2022.

This is broken down into regions, local authorities, and Parliamentary constituency level analysis, with constituency breakdowns available in Live Tables P404a (proportion) or P404b (hectarage) on gov.uk [here](#).

These proportions shown for England Live Table P404a can, in effect, also be regarded as the breakdown for the average English Parliamentary constituency.

## ■ Local Government Finance

**James McMurdock:**

[\[37069\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of local government reorganisation on council finances in the context of existing financial pressures.

**Jim McMahon:**

The English Devolution White Paper set out that Government will facilitate a programme of local government reorganisation. This can help strengthen local leadership, improve local services, save taxpayers’ money, and improve local accountability.

In 2020 a PwC report, “Evaluating the importance of scale in proposals for local government reorganisation”, for the County Councils Network, estimated that reorganisation of the then 25 two-tier areas to a single unitary structure would have a one-off cost of £400 million, with the potential to realise £2.9 billion over five years, with an annual post-implementation net recurring saving of £700 million. The unitary proposals submitted in relation to the most recently established unitary councils identified a range of efficiencies that could be achieved where council services are brought together in one organisation. For North Yorkshire Council, established in April 2023, unitarisation has enabled the council to manage financial pressures through structural changes and service transformation which are expected to achieve more than £40 million in savings by March 2026.

However, it is important to note that the scale of savings are dependent on the size and number of unitary authorities which are created. It is for local areas to develop

proposals which are then submitted to government. Scale and efficiency will be an important element in those considerations, alongside a range of other factors.

In our invitation we have set out guidance to support councils as they develop proposals that are in the best interests of their areas. This includes guidance on issues of size, sensible geographies, efficiencies and financial sustainability. The criteria we will assess proposals against include the ability to achieve financial efficiencies.

## ■ Local Government: Buildings

**Helen Morgan:**

[\[37333\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what support she is providing to local authorities which own buildings in need of repair due to the presence of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete.

**Alex Norris:**

The issues with reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) are longstanding and well known.

All building owners are responsible for managing building safety and performance risks of all kinds in their buildings, including RAAC, in a proportionate, risk-based, and evidence-based manner, and acting where they deem necessary. To do so, they should continue to follow guidance published by the Institution of Structural Engineers (IStructE) to identify, assess, and manage RAAC.

Local authorities are responsible for managing their own budgets and delivering on their responsibilities, including their duty as building owners.

## ■ Local Government: Surrey

**Zöe Franklin:**

[\[37490\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the debate following her oral statement of 5 February 2025 on English Devolution and Local Government, Official Report, column 780, if she will meet the hon. Members for constituencies in Surrey to discuss the potential impact of council debt in Surrey on her proposals for local government reorganisation before 21 March 2025.

**Jim McMahon:**

It is for Surrey councils to develop a proposal or proposals in line with the criteria and guidance set out in the invitation. This should include for Surrey, as an area covering a council in Best Value intervention, demonstrating how reorganisation may contribute to putting local government in the area as a whole on a firmer footing and what area-specific arrangements may be necessary to make new structures viable. The invitation is also clear that councils should engage locally and that we also expect and encourage local leaders to engage their Members of Parliament, on any proposals being developed.

**Local Government: Worcestershire****Bradley Thomas:** [\[35908\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to Answer of 13 February 2025 to Question 29763 on Discussions with Members from Worcestershire on local government reform, what discussions (a) Ministers and (b) senior officials have had with hon. Members from Worcestershire on local government reform.

**Jim McMahon:**

Neither ministers nor senior officials have had discussions with hon members from Worcestershire on local government reform. The Minister wrote to Worcestershire council leaders on 5th February 2025 to formally invite proposals for local government reorganisation. The invitation is clear that councils should engage locally and that we also expect and encourage local leaders to engage their Members of Parliament on any proposals being developed, before these are submitted to Government.

**Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Trade Union Officials****Kevin Hollinrake:** [\[36096\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 27 February 2025 to Question 31042 on MHCLG: Trade Union Officials, whether the level of facility time provided to the trade unions in her Department has increased since 4 July 2025.

**Alex Norris:**

Paid facility time is captured and published in line with the Cabinet Office guidance on statutory reporting requirements [Public-sector trade union facility time data - GOV.UK](#). Facility time for 2024 to 2025 will be published in line with this at the end of the reporting period.

**Neighbourhood Boards****Wendy Morton:** [\[37170\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the oral statement by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Local Growth and Building Safety of 4 March 2025 on Plan for Neighbourhoods, Official Report, columns 210-212, what (a) involvement and (b) engagement the Neighbourhood boards will have with (i) Councillors, (ii) Mayors and (iii) hon. Members.

**Alex Norris:**

MPs whose constituencies sit within the boundary of the place must sit on the board. In Scotland and Wales the appropriate constituency MSP or MS should also sit on the board. Councils in Northern Ireland are encouraged to invite the MLAs to the board and should ensure that representation is balanced. In areas where there are 2 tiers of local authorities, there should be one councillor from each tier. In unitary authorities, there should be 2 councillors from the authority. Mayoral representatives may be invited to sit on the board.

## ■ New Towns

**Kevin Hollinrake:** [\[36088\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 16 December 2024 to Question 16954 on New Towns, whether a requirement to have a New Town will be imposed on local planning authorities if (a) they do not consent to the proposed development and (b) the town development is not currently in their Local Plan.

**Kevin Hollinrake:** [\[36091\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 16 December 2024 to Question 16954 on New Towns, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the willingness of local authorities to participate in the New Towns programme.

**Kevin Hollinrake:** [\[36093\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 16 December 2024 to Question 16954 on New Towns, what the planning mechanism is by which a New Town area will be designated; and what the role of (a) site-specific national planning policy, (b) development corporations and (c) strategic authorities is in this process.

**Blake Stephenson:** [\[36224\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to her Department's press release entitled Government unveils plans for next generation of new towns, published on 13 February 2025, if she will publish a list of all proposals received.

**Blake Stephenson:** [\[36225\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to her Department's press release entitled Government unveils plans for next generation of new towns, published on 13 February 2025, whether any of the proposals received cover Mid Bedfordshire constituency.

**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.

As there may be political or commercial sensitivities to information submitted regarding prospective developments, the New Towns Taskforce will not be sharing information about the evidence base of locations prior to publication of the final report.

**Blake Stephenson:** [\[36226\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Press Release Government unveils plans for next generation of new towns, published on 13 February 2025, if she will publish a list of the sites unlocked through the New Homes Accelerator.

**Blake Stephenson:** [\[36227\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to her Department's press release entitled Government unveils plans for next generation of new towns, published on 13 February 2025, if she will publish a list of the 350 sites stuck in the system referenced.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

To date, ten sites with a combined capacity to deliver over 35,900 homes have been announced as benefitting from site-specific government support through the New Homes Accelerator. These are: Liverpool Central Docks, Northstowe, Worcestershire Parkway, Langley Sutton Coldfield, Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community, Stretton Hall, Biggleswade Garden Community, Beam Park, South of Cayton, and Frome Gateway.

Through intensive engagement with other government departments and statutory consultees, the Accelerator, as a convener and broker, has also helped progress a number of other sites with the capacity to deliver more than 20,000 homes, including Cowley Hill in Liverpool and Wolborough in Devon.

We are unable to provide information on other sites which were submitted as part of the call for evidence and that have not been publicly announced as that information was provided on a confidential basis.

## ■ Planning Permission

**Blake Stephenson:** [\[36222\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an estimate of the amount of land in hectares which has an active planning permission.



**Blake Stephenson:**

[36223]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an estimate of the number of houses that would be built if all active planning permissions were approved.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

The Department does not hold the information requested.

■ **Regeneration: Whitchurch**

**Helen Morgan:**

[37332]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will provide capital funding to support the regeneration of Whitchurch Civic Centre.

**Alex Norris:**

I understand the difficulties constituents are facing due to the closure of the building. The building is owned by Shropshire Council. The Council is responsible for managing their own budgets and delivering on their responsibilities. This includes their duty as building owners to assess their buildings and keep them safe. Councils are independent, democratic bodies who are best placed to understand what is needed to deliver local priorities and are accountable to local people.

■ **Social Rented Housing: Middlesbrough**

**Luke Myer:**

[36254]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Regulator of Social Housing's statistics entitled Private registered provider social housing stock and rents in England 2023 to 2024, published on 29 October 2024, for what reason 544 private registered provider properties in Middlesbrough are not available to let; and what steps she is taking to ensure that those properties are let.

**Luke Myer:**

[36255]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to introduce (a) targets and (b) incentives to reduce the number of long-term vacant social housing properties in (i) Middlesbrough and Redcar, (ii) Cleveland and (iii) other areas with above-average vacancy rates.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

Units are likely to be reported as temporarily unavailable when works are being carried out as part of Private Registered Providers' stock condition remediation and energy efficiency works.

This is set out in the Regulator of Social Housing's "Private Registered Provider Social Housing Stock In England – Sector Characteristics and Stock Movement" report for 2023-24, available on gov.uk [here](#).

Those reported as permanently unavailable may be scheduled for significant work, restructure, or demolition.

Variation in the number of permanently unavailable units will be driven by multiple factors such as re-development programmes and individual approaches by Private Registered Providers to asset management.

The government encourages social housing providers to develop solutions that make best use of the social housing stock and minimise void periods where possible.

## ■ Trading Standards: Local Government

**Charlie Maynard:** [\[35569\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the current level of resources for local trading standards services based within local authorities in Great Britain.

**Jim McMahon:**

Local authorities are independent of central government and are responsible for managing their own services and financial positions.

The final Local Government Finance Settlement for 2025-26 makes available over £69 billion for local government, which is a 6.8% cash terms increase in councils' Core Spending Power on 2024-25. The majority of the Local Government Finance Settlement is unringfenced recognising that local leaders are best placed to identify local priorities, including for local trading standards services.

## JUSTICE

### ■ Juries: Compensation

**Anna Sabine:** [\[36284\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of increasing the compensation offered to jurors on jury service for (a) mileage and (b) subsistence.

**Anna Sabine:** [\[36285\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps she plans to take to increase jurors' compensation in line with inflation.

**Sarah Sackman:**

Jury service is an important civic duty, and we want to help jurors feel supported as they undertake this important job. The Government will keep under review all support provided to jurors throughout their service. This includes measures to assist those who may suffer financial hardship. People who are not paid by their employer whilst they are on jury service can claim a loss of earnings allowance from the court, and jurors can apply for a deferral or excusal based upon financial hardship.

## ■ Juries: Mental Health Services

**Munira Wilson:**

[\[36138\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether the pilot scheme to provide support for jurors on the most traumatic cases will be (a) continued and (b) widened to include more courts.

**Sarah Sackman:**

The pilot to test the need for enhanced support will conclude at the end of March and the results will be evaluated to help assess long term support needs for jurors. Those suffering distress as a result of their service are provided with guidance advising them of other services they can access, including the NHS 111 National Mental Health Helpline.

## ■ Pre-sentence Reports

**Lee Anderson:**

[\[36135\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will overrule changes to sentencing guidance which will place greater emphasis on pre-sentence reports.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

The Sentencing Council has issued new guidance which the last Government was consulted on between November 2023 and February 2024, and then publicly welcomed.

The Lord Chancellor has been clear that these guidelines do not represent this government's views, and she asked the Council to reconsider them.

The Lord Chancellor and the Chairman of the Sentencing Council have since had a constructive discussion. It was agreed that the Lord Chancellor will set out her position more fully in writing, which the Sentencing Council will then consider before the guideline is due to come into effect

## ■ Prison Sentences

**Kim Johnson:**

[\[37323\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people serving imprisonment for public protection sentences were (a) classified as Category A prisoners and (b) in Category A prisons on 11 March 2025.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

Category A prisoners are those that are considered to pose the highest risk to the public, the Police or national security. High security establishments are designed to mitigate those risks and to prevent escape.

Some Category B prisoners are held in high security prisons, though they are not treated as Category A prisoners. They are assessed as posing a high or very high risk to the public if held in other types of establishments. High security prisons also provide specific interventions that are only provided within these establishments and

therefore IPP prisoners are there to receive the support required to progress or manage the continued risk that they pose. This Government is committed to ensuring those who can make progress through their sentence are supported to do so, but not in a way that impacts public protection.

The information provided below is from the latest published snapshot for breakdowns of the prison population, as at 31 December 2024. More recent data cannot be provided because it could give an early indication of future Accredited Official Statistics.

**Table 1: Number of IPP (Imprisonment for Public Protection) prisoners(1) classified as Category A prisoners(2), as at 31st December 2024, in England and Wales**

NUMBER OF CATEGORY A IPP PRISONERS(3)	20
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**Table 2: Number of IPP prisoners(1) held in predominant function Category A (High security) establishments(4), as at 31st December 2024, in England and Wales**

NUMBER OF PRISONERS	154
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Notes:

1. The figures presented in these tables include both unreleased and recalled IPP prisoners.
2. The data presented in this table includes prisoners classified as Provisional category A.
3. The figure presented in this table constitute a subset of the figure presented in Table 2.
4. A number of prisons have multiple functions (e.g. a prison could have both "Reception" and "Category C" functions). For these prisons, the predominant function has been used.
5. For more information see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prisons-and-their-resettlement-providers>.
6. Data sources and quality: The figures in these tables have been drawn from administrative IT systems which, as with any large scale recording system, are subject to possible errors with data entry and processing. Source: Prison NOMIS.

■ **Stalking: Criminal Proceedings**

**Tony Vaughan:**

**[35809]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps she is taking to support victims of stalking through the criminal justice system.

**Alex Davies-Jones:**

The Government was elected with a landmark mission to halve violence against women and girls (VAWG) in the next decade. To do so, the Government is committed to better supporting and protecting victims and survivors of VAWG, including stalking.

The Ministry of Justice provides funding for victim and witness support services. This includes community-based domestic abuse and sexual violence services, in addition to the core funding the Ministry of Justice provides to Police and Crime Commissioners to allocate at their discretion, based on their assessment of local need. This can include services specifically for victims of stalking.

On 3 December, the Government announced a raft of new measures to tackle stalking by putting victims first and making sure they can be protected at the earliest opportunity. Through the Crime and Policing Bill, the Government is introducing provisions which, once implemented, would provide for the courts to impose Stalking Protection Orders (SPOs) on conviction and acquittal of their own volition. SPOs are an essential tool that are designed to protect victims of stalking at the earliest possible opportunity and address the perpetrator's behaviours before they become entrenched or escalate in severity.

The Government is also introducing provisions to issue: multi-agency statutory guidance on stalking to set out for the first time a robust framework for how agencies such as the police, local authorities and healthcare should define stalking and work together to pursue perpetrators and support victims; and statutory guidance to set out the process by which the police should release identifying information about online stalking perpetrators to victims so appropriate safeguards can be put in place. In addition, the Government is conducting a review of the stalking legislation to determine whether the law could be changed to support a better understanding and better identification of stalking.

**NORTHERN IRELAND****■ Business: Northern Ireland****Robin Swann:****[37021]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to the Answer of 4 March 2025 to Question 34541 on Business: Northern Ireland, when the remainder of the Transformation Fund will be allocated.

**Fleur Anderson:**

The Public Sector Transformation Board will run a further process to assess proposals from Northern Ireland departments and will make recommendations on those that are judged to have potential for transformation. Following a decision by the Executive, the remainder of the Government's funding for transformation can be allocated.

**Robin Swann:**[\[37022\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to the Answer of 4 March 2025 to Question 34541 on Business: Northern Ireland, whether the Northern Ireland Office Permanent Secretary briefed him on Board meetings prior to the announcement of Transformation Funding.

**Fleur Anderson:**

Officials advised the Secretary of State on the recommendations made by the interim Board to the Northern Ireland Executive on transformation projects. These projects and their respective funding allocations were announced by the Northern Ireland Minister of Finance on 4 March.

■ **Terrorism: Northern Ireland****Tonia Antoniazzi:**[\[37265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, when he has held meetings with the Chief Constable of the Police Service of Northern Ireland to discuss his policy on legacy since July 2024; and what was discussed at each meeting.

**Hilary Benn:**

I have met the Chief Constable of the PSNI on a number of occasions since I was appointed Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, including this week, to discuss a range of issues including the Government's approach to legacy reform. This is in addition to written correspondence between the Chief Constable and I regarding legacy matters.

Northern Ireland Office officials have also regularly met police officers in the PSNI's Legacy Investigation Branch to discuss mutually relevant issues relating to legacy.

**SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY**■ **Internet: Pornography****Rebecca Smith:**[\[36297\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what plans he has to strengthen the regulation of online pornography platforms hosting violent and extreme content.

**Feryal Clark:**

From 17 March 2025 services in scope of the Online Safety Act must take action to tackle illegal pornographic content. Publishers of pornography online also have a duty to use highly effective age assurance to prevent children from accessing pornographic content. By summer, all user-to-user services that allow sharing of pornographic content should also use highly effective age assurance if necessary to prevent children from accessing such content.

The Government published the final report of the Independent Pornography Review on 27 February 2025 and issued an initial statement in response addressing the important issues it raised. A further update will be provided in due course.

## ■ Social Media: Children

**Terry Jermy:**

[\[36319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he is taking to help protect the use of children's personal data on social media.

**Chris Bryant:**

We are taking steps in the Data (Use and Access Bill) to require the ICO to have regard to the fact that children merit specific protection because they may be less aware of the risks in relation to the processing of their personal data. The ICO will need to take account of the new duty when carrying out its regulatory functions – for example, when providing guidance for organisations and enforcing the legislation.

We have also placed a similar duty on Information Society Service providers likely to be accessed by children. These providers will now have clear legal duties to consider how best to protect and support children when designing their data processing activities. Providers will be assisted to comply with the new duty by the ICO's Age Appropriate Design Code, which provides practical guidance for relevant providers on complying with their obligations under the data protection legislation in relation to children who are likely to access those services.

## ■ Social Media: Subversion

**Ben Maguire:**

[\[36325\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps her Department is taking to prevent foreign actors from influencing UK democratic processes through social media.

**Feryal Clark:**

The Government takes the integrity and security of our democratic processes seriously, including the threat of influence from foreign actors.

The UK's Online Safety Act, will capture disinformation aimed at disrupting elections where it is a criminal offence in the scope of the regulatory framework. This includes the Foreign Interference Offence, which will shortly be in force, requiring all in-scope companies to take action against a range of state-linked disinformation and interference online.

DSIT, as a member of the government's Defending Democracy Taskforce, also supports ongoing work to protect the democratic integrity of the UK from threats of foreign interference.

**SCOTLAND****■ Defence: Public Expenditure****John Lamont:**[\[37264\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what meetings he has had with Cabinet colleagues on increased Government defence spending in Scotland.

**Ian Murray:**

The Prime Minister has made it clear that we must strengthen our defence capabilities, which is why this Government has committed to increasing defence spending to 2.5% of GDP by 2027.

Scotland's world-class defence industry is well-positioned to meet the growing demands for national security. This increase in defence spending will support highly skilled jobs and apprenticeships across the UK, including in Scotland.

The new UK Government support for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) will include specific SME spending targets for defence.

I recently had the pleasure of visiting JFD, a Scottish SME and world leader in underwater capabilities. This visit underscored our commitment to ensuring that these businesses benefit from the historic increase in defence spending. I am proud of Scotland's defence sector and will continue to advocate for the industry and its workforce.

**■ Farming: Scotland****John Lamont:**[\[37262\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what he last met with representatives of the Scottish farming sector in Scotland.

**Ian Murray:**

Scotland Office Ministers regularly engage with a range of stakeholders from the sector. I spoke at a Seafood Scotland event in the House of Commons on 26 February. That same day, Minister McNeill met the Scottish Fisherman's Federation as a follow up from a joint visit organised between her and Home Office Minister Seema Malhotra on 3 February, where they met a number of industry representatives and discussed issues such as access to labour at length.

My department remains committed to continuing to engage with both the wild caught and aquaculture sectors to support the seafood industry in Scotland, and I continue to promote the sector around the world through my Brand Scotland work.

**■ Infected Blood Compensation Scheme****John Lamont:**[\[37260\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what recent discussions he has had with the Scottish Government on infected blood compensation payments.



**Ian Murray:**

The UK Government is working closely with devolved governments and existing support schemes in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The Minister for the Cabinet Office met the Scottish Minister for Public Health on 3 March 2025 to discuss compensation payments for victims of the infected blood scandal, and he is committed to engaging further with the Scottish Government as we progress this work.

**■ Scotland Office: Food****Sir John Hayes:**[\[36362\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what proportion of food procured by his Department is sourced in (a) the UK and (b) Scotland.

**Ian Murray:**

The Department does not operate any catering outlets. It holds a small number of official functions for which food is served. Catering for these is provided by third parties, who source and procure all supplies. The Department does not hold any data about the origin of any of the food procured or served by those third parties.

The Department hosts trade promotional events supporting Brand Scotland, where Scottish food producers and suppliers serve their products to invited guests.

**■ Seafood: Scotland****John Lamont:**[\[37261\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, when he last met with representatives of the Scottish seafood sector in Scotland.

**Ian Murray:**

Scotland Office Ministers regularly engage with a range of stakeholders from the sector. I spoke at a Seafood Scotland event in the House of Commons on 26 February. That same day, Minister McNeill met the Scottish Fisherman's Federation as a follow up from a joint visit organised between her and Home Office Minister Seema Malhotra on 3 February, where they met a number of industry representatives and discussed issues such as access to labour at length.

My department remains committed to continuing to engage with both the wild caught and aquaculture sectors to support the seafood industry in Scotland, and I continue to promote the sector around the world through my Brand Scotland work.

**TRANSPORT****■ Gobowen-Oswestry Railway Line**

**Helen Morgan:** [\[37330\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will hold discussions with rail companies on reopening of the Oswestry to Gobowen railway line.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The Chancellor's statement of 29 July 2024 confirmed that the Restoring Your Railway programme would be brought to a close, which included the proposed scheme to reopen the line between Oswestry and Gobowen. Proposals from the former Restoring Your Railway programme will be considered in the current Spending Review. There are no proposals to consult with rail operators on schemes whilst the Spending Review is ongoing.

**■ Great Western Main Line: Electrification**

**Anna Sabine:** [\[36282\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress her Department has made on the electrification of the line between Bristol and Chippenham.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

Passengers using the line between Bristol Temple Meads and Chippenham are benefiting from the bi-mode rolling stock introduced in 2019 as part of the Great Western Route Modernisation programme. These trains are delivering faster and more reliable end to end journeys for passengers.

**Anna Sabine:** [\[36283\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the (a) financial and (b) time impact of the deferred electrification between Bristol and Chippenham on commuters.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

Electrification of the line between Bristol Temple Meads and Chippenham was deferred in 2016. Passengers on this line are benefiting from the bi-mode rolling stock introduced in 2019 which are delivering faster and more reliable end to end journeys. No subsequent assessment has been made since the deferral of electrification on this line.

**■ M25: Repairs and Maintenance**

**Zöe Franklin:** [\[37087\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, for what reason hon. Members representing local constituencies were recently informed of delays to the completion of M25 junction 10 works; and what the cost to the public purse is of those delays.

**Zöe Franklin:**

[\[37088\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she plans to provide support to local businesses potentially impacted by delays to the completion of M25 junction 10 works.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

The project has been delayed due to a number of factors. Severe weather, with unexpected heavy rainfall since October 2023 caused poor ground conditions. This postponed planned winter work and required a redesign of embankments and drainage. Additionally, the discovery of unexpected underground utilities along the A3 have further complicated progress, leading to extended relocation and design adjustments. Works on the M25 at junction 10 are expected to complete by late summer 2025, helping to alleviate traffic queues. The scheme is due to complete in Spring 2026. National Highways is working with its supplier to assess the full impact of delays and to minimise costs. Given the project's scale and complexity, the final cost will only be determined upon completion.

In terms of the support available for local businesses, National Highways provides compensation as established in legislation across all its projects, ensuring appropriate use of taxpayers' money. National Highways can only consider compensation in line with legislation, for example where it takes land during scheme delivery, but not for loss of earnings during temporary road works.

## ■ Northern Rail: Standards

**Mr Andrew Snowden:**

[\[36177\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to ensure reliable Sunday services on Northern Rail train services in Fylde constituency.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The Rail North Partnership, through which the department and Transport for the North manages Northern's contract, required the operator to produce a detailed improvement plan. The plan includes:

- introducing a temporary reduced timetable on Sundays in the North West, with more bus support and ticket acceptance;
- resolving the Sunday arrangements with conductors to deliver a customer-focussed seven-day railway;
- focussing on fleet, traincrew deployment and strengthening resources in engineering, control and operations; and
- developing a fit-for-purpose structure, including improving governance and processes across the business to improve sickness management.

Northern is in regular discussions with its staff and the unions and ministers are monitoring this progress closely.

**■ Railway Stations: Disability****Mr Paul Kohler:**[\[37494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential causes of the underspend of the Access for All Scheme.

**Simon Lightwood:**

After Network Rail's failure to deliver a large number of Access for All projects between 2014 and 2019, various reviews of the Access for All programme have been undertaken by the Department for Transport and Network Rail. A number of changes to the programme have been implemented around Network Rail resourcing, governance and supply chain engagement. We are starting to see the benefits of these changes with the programme due to complete 27 projects in financial year 24/25.

**Mr Paul Kohler:**[\[37495\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she plans to publish her Department's review of the Access for All Scheme.

**Simon Lightwood:**

Various reviews of the Access for All programme have been undertaken by the Department for Transport, the Government Internal Audit Agency and Network Rail. A number of changes to the programme have been implemented around Network Rail resourcing, governance and supply chain engagement. We are starting to see the benefits of these changes with the programme due to complete 27 projects in financial year 24/25.

The review has been completed in full. However, any decision regarding its publication will be a matter for the Government Internal Audit Agency (GIAA). The report has found that the governance structures are generally strong, with only minor recommendations for improvement.

**■ Railway Stations: Disability Aids****Mr Paul Kohler:**[\[37492\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many and what proportion of train platforms have tactile platforms.

**Simon Lightwood:**

Using £75m of government funding, Network Rail have recently completed a programme to install platform edge tactiles at all mainline stations that did not have them in place or where they were planned to be installed as part of another enhancement or renewal project. This leaves 20 stations across Britain without tactiles out of a total of 2585 stations, with the majority of these to be installed this year or early in 2026.

**■ Raynes Park Station: Disability****Mr Paul Kohler:**[\[37493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress she has made on the feasibility study for installing lifts at Raynes Park station under the Access for All programme; and what her planned timetable is for the completion of those lifts.

**Simon Lightwood:**

Feasibility work for step free access at Raynes Park station is underway. We expect all 50 of the feasibility studies announced last year to be complete in April. We expect to be able to confirm which stations will move forward over the summer.

**■ West Coast Main Line: Standards****Mr Andrew Snowden:**[\[36176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential impact of rail delays on the West Coast Mainline on the economy of Fylde constituency.

**Simon Lightwood:**

Ministers have been clear that rail services have been failing passengers; we need to improve services for passengers and deliver better value for money for the taxpayer. The Rail Minister is meeting with the Managing Directors of all train operators, and their Network Rail counterparts, to address poor performance and demand immediate action to raise standards. The Department is in regular contact with local stakeholders, including Lancashire County Council and Transport for the North, on how to improve rail services to support the growth of the regional economy.

**■ Whitchurch Station: Access****Helen Morgan:**[\[37331\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Answer of (a) 24 July 2024 to Question 835 and (b) 25 November 2024 to Question 15073 on Whitchurch (Shropshire) Station: Access, what progress she has made on providing step-free access at Whitchurch Railway Station in Shropshire.

**Simon Lightwood:**

Network Rail have completed an option selection report for step-free access at Whitchurch railway station. This will be reviewed alongside 49 other stations across Britain to determine which should progress.

**TREASURY****■ Agriculture: Inheritance Tax****Wendy Morton:**[\[37168\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she has considered implementing a phased introduction of planned Inheritance Tax changes for agricultural properties, in the context of support for smaller farms.

**James Murray:**

The Government set out its policy at Autumn Budget 2024. The Government believes its reforms to agricultural property relief and business property relief from 6 April 2026 get the balance right between supporting farms and businesses, and fixing the public finances. The reforms reduce the inheritance tax advantages available to owners of agricultural and business assets, but still mean those assets will be taxed at a much lower effective rate than most other assets. Despite a tough fiscal context, the Government will maintain very significant levels of relief from inheritance tax beyond what is available to others and compared to the position before 1992.

The reforms are expected to result in up to 520 estates claiming agricultural property relief, including those also claiming business property relief, in 2026-27 paying more inheritance tax. Almost three-quarters of estates claiming agricultural property relief, including those that also claim for business property relief, will not pay any more tax as a result of the changes in 2026-27, based on the latest available data.

**■ Bank Services: Visual Impairment****Mr Andrew Snowden:**[\[36179\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps she is taking to support blind people to access cash when local bank branches close.

**Leigh Ingham:**[\[36291\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the impact of the (a) closure of local banks and (b) opening of banking hubs on people who are elderly or disabled.

**Emma Reynolds:**

Banking has changed significantly in recent years with many customers benefiting 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.

The FCA requires firms to provide a prompt, efficient, and fair service to all of their customers. This includes special considerations for vulnerable customers, such as

the elderly and disabled. Additionally, under the Equality Act 2010, banks must make reasonable adjustments to ensure their services are accessible to all.

The Government understands the importance of face-to-face banking to communities and high streets and is committed to championing sufficient access for all as a priority. This is why the Government is working closely with industry to roll out 350 banking hubs across the UK. The UK banking sector has committed to deliver these hubs by the end of this Parliament. Over 200 hubs have been announced so far, and over 100 are already open.

The FCA introduced regulatory rules for access to cash in September 2024. Its rules require the reasonable provision of free cash withdrawal and deposit facilities for personal current accounts.

Where a branch closure is announced or a community has submitted a cash access assessment request, LINK (the operator of the UK's largest ATM network) assesses a community's access to cash withdrawal and deposit needs, and can recommend a new service if necessary.

Where a resident, community organisation or other interested party feels access to cash in their community is insufficient, they can submit a request for a cash access assessment. Further information about submitting a cash access request can be found on LINK's website.

Alternative options to access everyday banking services can be via telephone banking, through digital means such as mobile or online banking and via the Post Office. The Post Office Banking Framework allows personal and business customers to withdraw and deposit cash, check their balance, pay bills and cash cheques at 11,500 Post Office branches across the UK.

## ■ Banks: Cash Dispensing

**Stuart Anderson:**

[\[37281\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of bank closures on access to (a) cash and (b) in-person banking services.

**Robbie Moore:**

[\[37326\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps she is taking to help improve access to cash.

**Emma Reynolds:**

Banking has changed significantly in recent years with many customers benefiting 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.

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## ■ Business Rates: Tax Allowances

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

[\[36094\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of (a) the withdrawal of the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure multiplier and (b) imposition of the new £500,000 multiplier on the marginal tax rate on business rate bills from April 2026 at the £500,000 Rateable Value; and what assessment she has made of the potential merits of tapering the multipliers in the same manner as small business rate relief.

**James Murray:**

As set out at Autumn Budget 2024, the Government intends to introduce permanently lower tax rates for retail, hospitality, and leisure (RHL) properties, 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 with a rateable value (RV) of £500,000 and above.

The Government will confirm the rates for the new multipliers at Budget 2025, taking account of the outcomes of the 2026 revaluation as well as the broader economic and fiscal context.



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.

## ■ **Ceramics: Manufacturing Industries**

**Gareth Snell:**

[\[37256\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of not including imported ceramics in the scope of the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism from 1 January 2027 on UK ceramics manufacturers .

**James Murray:**

Products from the ceramics sector will not be in scope of the UK CBAM upon implementation in 2027. The ceramic sector is, on average, less emissions intensive than those sectors within scope of the UK CBAM, and therefore relatively less exposed to carbon leakage risk. The sector also raised feasibility concerns in relation to potential implementation. The government will continue to work with industry to address these concerns and will consider potential inclusion at a later date.

The domestic ceramic sector participates in the UK Emissions Trading Scheme. Under the UK ETS, installations in sectors deemed at risk of carbon leakage receive free allowances. The UK ETS Authority is committed to ensuring adequate carbon leakage protection for participating sectors, and is conducting a review into the allocation of free allowances (Free Allocation Review) are better targeted to sectors most at risk of carbon leakage.

## ■ **Companies: Tax Allowances**

**Mr Peter Bedford:**

[\[37028\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of introducing tax relief for companies that employ young people who are not in (a) education, (b) employment or (c) training.

**James Murray:**

There are existing reliefs available to support and encourage youth employment.

This includes the employer National Insurance contribution (NICs) relief for employers who provide apprenticeships to young people under 25 and employers who employ individuals under the age of 21.

These reliefs remove the requirement for employers to pay secondary Class 1 NICs on earnings up to the Upper Earnings Limit for eligible employees.

## ■ Corruption and Human Rights: Sanctions

**Martin Wrigley:**

[\[36248\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will bring forward legislative proposals to enable the repurposing of assets seized from sanctions violations to fund reparations for victims of serious (a) human rights and humanitarian law violations and (b) corruption.

**Emma Reynolds:**

UK sanctions legislation does not provide powers to seize frozen assets. Assets owned or controlled by a designated person are frozen immediately by the person in possession or control of them. An asset freeze does not involve a change in ownership of the frozen funds or economic resources, nor are they transferred to HM Treasury.

## ■ Counter-terrorism and Money Laundering

**Liam Byrne:**

[\[36046\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if her Department will publish its response to its consultation on Reforming anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing supervision, published on 30 June 2023.

**Emma Reynolds:**

The Treasury's consultation on reforming the UK's Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorism Financing supervisory regime closed in September 2023. The Department is continuing to analyse responses to this consultation and remains committed to announcing next steps in due course.

## ■ Debts

**Mary Kelly Foy:**

[\[37282\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential (a) impact of (i) banks, (ii) finance and (iii) debt collection companies' practices on consumers and (b) merits of bringing forward regulation to prevent overcharging when debts are reclaimed.

**Emma Reynolds:**

The Government expects fair treatment of individuals in debt and recognises the important role of responsible practices for debt recovery. We likewise recognise the negative impact that aggressive pursuit of debt can have on individuals.

For financial services debts, such as a bank loan, the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) requires firms to treat their customers fairly and offer a range of appropriate forbearance options. Debt collection firms must also follow FCA rules when collecting financial services debts, and the FCA has a broad enforcement toolkit to penalise firms which breach them.

More broadly, the FCA requires that consumer credit firms provide credit in responsible manner. Under FCA rules, firms must assess a potential borrower's creditworthiness before extending credit to them. Firms must also only offer credit

that is suitable for a potential borrower's needs and circumstances and ensure that the credit does not lead to over-indebtedness.

The Government remains committed to improving debt collection practices across sectors. In March 2024, the FCA published a joint letter alongside Ofgem, Ofwat, and Ofcom setting out their shared expectations for how firms should support customers in financial difficulty and rules governing this in their respective sectors.

## ■ Employers' Contributions: Employment

**Wendy Morton:** [\[37164\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what impact assessment she has undertaken on the potential impact of the planned increase in employers' National Insurance contributions on levels of employment.

**James Murray:**

The Office for Budget Responsibility's October 2024 Economic and Fiscal Outlook expects that the Employer National Insurance Contributions package will lead to a reduction in the participation rate by 0.1 per cent from 2025-26 onwards. Overall, once the impact of all the Budget measures are taken into consideration, the OBR expect the employment level to increase from 33.1 million in 2024 to 34.3 million in 2029.

## ■ Employers' Contributions: Reform

**Wendy Morton:** [\[36076\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of (a) introducing targeted relief for and (b) reforming employer National Insurance contributions.

**James Murray:**

The Government has taken difficult but necessary decisions to deliver long-term growth. Fixing the public finances is essential for providing long-term stability in which businesses can invest and thrive.

The Government recognises the need to protect the smallest employers, which is why we have decided to more than doubled the Employment Allowance to £10,500. This means more than half of businesses with NICs liabilities either gain or see no change in 2025/26. Businesses will still be able to claim employer NICs reliefs including those for under-21s and under-25 apprentices.

## ■ Foreign Relations: China

**Sir Iain Duncan Smith:** [\[36039\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many meetings between Chinese and UK officials took place between October 1 2024 and March 1 2025.

**Emma Reynolds:**

UK officials regularly engage with Chinese counterparts in order to further UK interests, cooperating on areas of mutual interest and challenging on areas where we disagree. This government is taking a consistent, long-term and pragmatic approach to managing the UK's relations with China. It is only right that we engage with China where there are clear UK and global interests, including on international stability, climate, health and bolstering our trade relationship.

**Income Tax and National Insurance Contributions****Mr Peter Bedford:**[\[37029\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she has considered merging employee National Insurance Contributions and Income Tax.

**James Murray:**

Merging income tax and National Insurance contributions would be a major upheaval in the tax system with consequences for the labour market and impacts for a large number of individuals and businesses.

As such, the Government has no plans to combine income tax and NICs.

**Individual Savings Accounts****Mr Peter Bedford:**[\[37027\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of reducing the ISA allowance on pensioner savings.

**Emma Reynolds:**

The Government is committed to incentivising saving and investment, helping people to save for their future goals and build greater financial resilience. Individual Savings Accounts (ISAs) support people of all incomes and at all stages of life to save, and the flexibility of the existing ISA framework allows older individuals to save for future life events such as retirement or care needs.

The Government keeps all aspects of the tax system under review.

**Mortgages: Government Assistance****Sarah Edwards:**[\[37337\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps her Department is taking to help support mortgage prisoners.

**Emma Reynolds:**

The Government understands the challenges that mortgage prisoners face and will work with regulators and the industry to ensure that this issue is properly considered.

There are significant measures in place to protect vulnerable mortgage borrowers across the mortgage market, including mortgage prisoners. Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) rules require lenders to engage individually with their customers who are struggling or who are worried about their payments in order to provide tailored

support. Closed book lenders must also comply with the FCA's Consumer Duty, which ensures firms prioritise fair treatment and good outcomes for their customers.

Additionally, the Government has a number of measures in place to help people to avoid repossession, including Support for Mortgage Interest (SMI) loans for those in receipt of an income-related benefit; the Housing Loss Prevention Advice Service (HLPAS); and protection in the courts through the Pre-Action Protocol, which makes it clear that repossession must always be the last resort for lenders.

## ■ Private Education: VAT

**Neil O'Brien:**

[\[36129\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how private schools who were not previously VAT-registered but did produce taxable supplies that were under the registration threshold will be treated under the new VAT guidance.

**James Murray:**

A private school, or any other business, making taxable supplies under the threshold has no requirement to register for VAT. Once the value of taxable supplies made exceeds the VAT registration threshold, which currently stands at £90,000, they must register for VAT.

On 1 January 2025 supplies of education by private schools become subject to VAT at the standard rate of 20%. These fees must be included with the value of all other taxable supplies in calculating taxable turnover.

If the taxable turnover of a private school now exceeds the threshold, either due to supplies of education alone or a mix of education with other taxable supplies, they must register for VAT. This requirement extends to any person over the threshold and to taxable supplies of any nature.

The change in legislation and new guidance applies only to supplies of education by a private school and does not affect other taxable supplies.

## ■ Public Sector: Pay

**Wendy Morton:**

[\[36400\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps she is taking to help mitigate the impact of public sector pay settlements for 2025 on inflation.

**Darren Jones:**

For 2025-26, public sector pay awards for most frontline sector workforces are subject to the ongoing Pay Review Body (PRB) process. The majority of PRBs are required, per their terms of reference, to consider the government's inflation target when forming their recommendations. The Chancellor has also been clear that departmental settlements for 2025-26 and beyond will need to fund these public sector pay awards, given that additional borrowing to fund pay awards could increase inflationary pressures.

**■ Taxation: USA****David Smith:**[\[36267\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will have discussions with her US counterpart on the impact of the US Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act on the privacy rights of UK citizens who have US citizenship but have never resided in that country.

**Emma Reynolds:**

US law subjects all US citizens to US taxation, regardless of where they reside. This can include US citizens who were born in the US but who may have left at a young age and have few remaining ties with the country. US tax policy is a matter for the US, and it is not within the power of the UK government to change this.

In 2010, the US introduced the US Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA) to combat tax evasion by US tax residents using foreign accounts. FATCA does not create new tax liabilities nor change the basis of US taxation; it is rather a reporting mechanism.

In September 2012, the UK Government signed an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with the US to implement FATCA in the UK. As such, HMRC requires UK financial institutions to report information to HMRC on account holders who are US resident or US citizens and exchanges this information with the IRS annually. In return HMRC receives information about UK tax residents' accounts in the US.

All of the information exchanged is covered by the secrecy provisions of the UK/US Double Taxation Convention.

**■ Treasury: Staff****Mr Peter Bedford:**[\[37030\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans she has to reduce (a) headcount and (a) payroll costs in her Department, in the context of Cabinet Office guidance on this matter.

**James Murray:**

Spending Review 2025 Phase 2 will set the future budgets for HM Treasury. The Spending Review has not yet concluded, so it is not possible to say what the specific headcount and payroll plans are for the department.

**WALES****■ Wales Office: Food****Sir John Hayes:**[\[36363\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what proportion of food procured by her Department is sourced in (a) the UK and (b) Wales.

**Jo Stevens:**

The Wales Office does not procure food directly.

## WORK AND PENSIONS

### ■ Child Poverty Taskforce

**Helen Whately:**

[\[36440\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, which organisations have presented to the Child Poverty Taskforce ministerial advisory sessions; and on what topics.

**Alison McGovern:**

The Taskforce has consulted external experts seven times on the four pillars of the strategy: increasing incomes, reducing essential costs, increasing financial resilience, and better local support, especially in the early years. Experts have come from a range of organisations, including local and regional government, charities, think tanks, businesses, and the public sector. More details will be set out in the strategy publication.

### ■ Department for Work and Pensions: Staff

**Kim Johnson:**

[\[37320\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to revisions to the Immigration Rules, updated on 19 February and 14 March 2024, what recent discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for the Home Department on the potential impact of its salary calculations on the continued employment of staff from her Department on workplace visas.

**Andrew Western:**

Whilst the impact of changes to the Skilled Worker Salary threshold, introduced in April 2024, is affecting a very small proportion of staff within the Department, visa expiry and potential options for obtaining a future work visa are specific to individuals' circumstances and the Home Office legislation which applies at the time that their current visa expires.

As current employees' Visa expiry dates span several years and not all will be impacted by the changes to the skilled worker salary thresholds, the department does not expect changes to the Skilled Worker salary threshold to negatively impact on service levels.

### ■ Employment: Lancashire

**Mr Andrew Snowden:**

[\[36837\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has had discussions with the Secretary of State for Business and Trade on the potential impact of the Employment Rights Bill on employment rates in (a) Fylde and (b) Lancashire.

**Alison McGovern:**

As part of the Government's ambition to achieve an 80% employment rate, the Employment Rights Bill will make work more secure, boost wages, and help working people thrive.

In Fylde, our Jobcentre Employer and Partnership Teams work with a range of employers and partners to enhance the skills and employment support available locally. An example of this includes working closely with local employers, partners and providers to hold job fairs and events to support recruitments and supporting customers into sustainable employment.

The Jobcentre also collaborates with the Local Authority, as well as other government departments and further education providers to improve employment opportunities for the people of Lancashire.

**■ Lone Parents: Maternity Leave****Kim Johnson:**[\[35376\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many single parents on maternity leave have had benefit payments capped.

**Sir Stephen Timms:**

The requested statistics are not available as the Department does not hold information on the maternity leave status of single parents that have had benefit payments capped.

**■ Pension Credit: Age****Wendy Morton:**[\[36661\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential impact on people of the planned increase in the Pension Credit qualifying age; and what steps she is taking to (a) inform and (b) support those affected.

**Torsten Bell:**

The qualifying age for Pension Credit is linked to State Pension age and will therefore increase to age 67 over a two-year phasing period, 2026 to 2028, as a consequence of the increase to State Pension age over the same period. The changes were legislated for by the previous Government in Pensions Act 2014, as part of which an Impact Assessment on changes to State Pension age was published in May 2014.

People due to reach State Pension age during the phasing period were sent letters informing them of the change between December 2016 and May 2018.

Entitlement to Pension Credit is based on the circumstances of people at the point they make a claim and only established once a valid claim is made, which cannot be done automatically. It is not possible to identify people who will benefit from Pension Credit in advance. Information about Pension Credit, including the qualifying age, is available on gov.uk. Since September the Department has been running a campaign



to promote Pension Credit and the work to raise awareness of Pension Credit continues through this year.

## ■ Pension Credit: Internet

**Wendy Morton:**

[36401]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to reduce potential barriers to accessing Pension Credit for pensioners who do not have access to digital services or face challenges with online applications.

**Torsten Bell:**

The Department is in the process of modernising the Pension Credit delivery and consideration of accessibility, having previously introduced online claims, in addition to telephone and paper claims. Claims for Pension Credit can be made online at: [www.gov.uk/pension-credit/how-to-claim](http://www.gov.uk/pension-credit/how-to-claim). The service is available to use 24/7, and provides those who may struggle to make their claim alone the flexibility to have a friend or family member to support them when making their claim at a time that is most convenient to them. Pension Credit claims can also be made through the Freephone telephone number 0800 99 1234, and there is an option to complete a paper application form.

DWP Agents and third-party organisations are also available to support customers with the application process. For customers who are unable to complete forms themselves a home visit from a visiting officer can be arranged. For customers who are deaf and use British Sign Language a Video Relay Service (known as VRS) is available and for customers who cannot hear or speak on the phone, can use Relay UK service. Further information can be found on [Gov.uk Pension Credit easy read](#).

DWP staff are trained to identify those who may need additional support, and Jobcentres will continue to provide face-to-face support as business as usual for those who cannot access support through telephony and digital channels. The Jobcentre will also consider whether the individual should be referred to specialist support within their geographical area.

## ■ Pension Credit: Winter Fuel Payment

**Mr Gregory Campbell:**

[37135]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the total amount paid per week is to people who have started claiming Pension Credit since the changes to the eligibility criteria for the Winter Fuel Payment were announced.

**Torsten Bell:**

The latest available data shows that, for all Pension Credit recipients, at August 2024, the average weekly amount of Pension Credit paid was £83.01. (Source: [Stat-Xplore](#)).

The next iteration of the DWP Benefit Statistics publication has a provisional release date of 13 May 2025 which will include data up to November 2024 and will be

published on Stat-Xplore. [DWP benefits statistics: May 2025 - Accredited official statistics announcement - GOV.UK](#).

## ■ Poverty: Disability

**Richard Burgon:** [\[37231\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an estimate of the number and proportion of disabled households that will be in poverty by financial year (a) 2025-26, (b) 2026-27, (c) 2027-28 and (d) 2028-29.

**Alison McGovern:**

Making an estimate of future disability poverty rates is difficult to do robustly. It would involve both projecting forward the impact of economic conditions on every household's income and individual circumstance, and future trends in disability prevalence and distribution.

Statistics on the number of people in families with a disabled person are published annually in the Households Below Average Income (HBAI) statistics publication, available here: [Households below average income \(HBAI\) statistics - GOV.UK](#). The latest statistics show that in 2022/23 there were 6.2m (24%) people in families where someone is disabled in relative poverty after housing costs (AHC).

Data for 2023/24 will be published on 27th March 2025.

## ■ State Retirement Pensions

**Mr Gregory Campbell:** [\[37136\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 23 January 2025 to Question 23268 on State Retirement Pensions, what information her Department holds on the number of people who are (a) eligible for the Category D pension payment and (b) live in the UK who have not yet applied for the pension.

**Torsten Bell:**

DWP is responsible for the State Pension administered in Great Britain while the Department for Communities is responsible for the State Pension administered in Northern Ireland.

As of the quarter ending August 2024, there were a total of 89,360 people in receipt of the Category D pension payment. This represents 87,938 people in Great Britain and 1,418 overseas.

Source: [DWP Stat-Xplore Please note that numbers do not sum due to rounding](#).

No estimate is available for those living in the UK who have not yet applied for the Category D pension. Those who are ordinarily resident in Great Britain on their 80<sup>th</sup> birthday and who meet the required residency conditions will receive the increase automatically without having to make a claim if their basic State Pension is less than £101.55 a week (£105.70 from April 2025). Those who are getting no State Pension at age 80 or who get Graduated Retirement Benefit only, will need to make a claim.

## ■ Universal Credit

**Bobby Dean:**

[\[36202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a single adult rate for Universal Credit.

**Sir Stephen Timms:**

There are currently no plans to make such an assessment.

The lower rate of Universal Credit for those aged under 25 reflects the fact that the majority of young people live in someone else's household and are therefore likely to have lower living costs.

Younger workers also typically earn less as they are earlier in their careers, with the lower rate maintaining the incentive for younger people to find and progress in work.

**Ann Davies:**

[\[37438\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment on the potential merits of reviewing Universal Credit rates to provide a protected minimum amount of support based on the cost of essentials.

**Sir Stephen Timms:**

There are currently no plans to make such an assessment.

The Government recognises the critical role Universal Credit has to play in tackling poverty and making work pay and has already taken steps to help those in need.

The Fair Repayment Rate, to be introduced from April, will reduce Universal Credit overall cap on deductions from 25% to 15%. This measure will help approximately 1.2 million of the poorest households benefit by an average of £420 a year.

Benefit rates are reviewed each year, increasing by 6.7% in April 2024 and by a further 1.7% from April 2025, in line with inflation. Around 5.7 million Universal Credit families are forecast to benefit from uprating in financial year 2025 to 2026, with an average annual gain for a family estimated to be £150.

## ■ Universal Credit: Care Leavers

**Bobby Dean:**

[\[36201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of care leavers under the age of 25 receiving the higher rate of Universal Credit.

**Sir Stephen Timms:**

We understand the challenges care leavers face and that is why the department continues to provide additional dedicated support through a series of safeguards and easements aimed at simplifying their interaction with the benefit system.

This includes, for example, single care leavers being exempt from the lower, Shared Accommodation Rate and qualifying for the more generous one-bedroom Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate until their 25th birthday; an advanced claims process

where Local Authorities' Leaving Care teams can assist care leavers to prepare their claim for Universal Credit up to 28 days before and including their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday; and for those aged 18-21, access to Universal Credit and housing support if they wish to take up full-time study in non-advanced education.

## MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

### HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

#### ■ Stem Cells: Donors

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:**

[\[33072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what percentage of haemopoietic stem cell transplant performed by the NHS were from UK registered donors between 1 October 2024 to 31 December 24 or the last three months for which data is available.

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 5 March 2025. The correct answer should have been:**

**Ashley Dalton:**

For the third quarter of 2024/25, registered donors in the United Kingdom provided by the Aligned Registry accounted for 253% (n=22973) of the total unrelated, allogeneic haematopoietic stem cell transplants (n=9311) for UK patients.

### SCOTLAND

#### ■ Farming: Scotland

**John Lamont:**

[\[37262\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what he last met with representatives of the Scottish farming sector in Scotland.

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 14 March 2025. The correct answer should have been:**

**Ian Murray:**

~~Scotland Office Ministers regularly engage with a range of stakeholders from the sector. I spoke at a Seafood Scotland event in the House of Commons on 26 February. That same day, Minister McNeill met the Scottish Fisherman's Federation as a follow up from a joint visit organised between her and Home Office Minister Seema Malhotra on 3 February, where they met a number of industry representatives and discussed issues such as access to labour at length.~~

~~My department remains committed to continuing to engage with both the wild caught and aquaculture sectors to support the seafood industry in Scotland, and I continue to promote the sector around the world through my Brand Scotland work.~~

**Supporting Scottish farmers and crofters is a priority for this Government and my department regularly engages with the industry at Ministerial and official levels. Most recently, Minister McNeill delivered a keynote speech at the National Farmers' Union Scotland annual conference, where she announced**

that the Scotland Office would host a Food and Farming roundtable soon. Preparations for it are ongoing, in collaboration with the Scottish Government.

Earlier that same week, Minister McNeill accompanied Home Office Minister Seema Malhotra on a visit to a farm in Aberdeenshire, accompanied by NFUS representatives. Prior to that she met with crofters' representatives in Stornoway.

## WRITTEN STATEMENTS

### BUSINESS AND TRADE

#### ■ **Appointment of Lord Evans of Sealand as UK Trade Envoy to Brazil**

**Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Services, Small Business and Exports) (Gareth Thomas):** [\[HCWS523\]](#)

The Secretary of State has today appointed Lord Evans of Sealand to the United Kingdom's Trade Envoy programme as the UK Trade Envoy to Brazil.

The United Kingdom's Trade Envoys will play an integral role in the Government's growth mission and delivering our Plan for Change by helping to create opportunities for UK business to compete abroad, break into new markets and attract greater inward investment from their markets.

Lord Evans of Sealand will play a crucial role in supporting my Department's growth priorities, in particular through helping deliver the industrial and trade strategies and attracting foreign direct investment to every region in the UK.

The role as a United Kingdom Trade Envoy is unpaid and voluntary with cross-party membership from both Houses.

### CABINET OFFICE

#### ■ **Government Response to Infected Blood Inquiry 13 March Announcement**

**Paymaster General and Minister for the Cabinet Office (Nick Thomas-Symonds):** [\[HCWS525\]](#)

Yesterday, the Infected Blood Inquiry set out its intention to publish an additional report. The Inquiry also published a number of witness statements, including ones provided by the Cabinet Office, the Infected Blood Compensation Authority and a number of people directly impacted by the Infected Blood scandal and their representatives.

The victims of the Infected Blood scandal have suffered unspeakably and their needs continue to remain at the forefront of our work. The Government will give careful consideration to the statements published by the Inquiry. I am committed to continuing to build trust with people who are impacted by this scandal, and to engage further with representatives of the infected blood community on the Government's response. We will continue to cooperate with the Inquiry over the coming months.

The Government is determined to deliver justice for people who are infected and affected as a result of the Infected Blood Scandal. That is why, in the Autumn Budget, we set aside £11.8 billion to compensate victims of the Infected Blood scandal. This is one of the biggest compensation schemes in our country's history - and that is entirely right given the scale of this injustice. In line with our commitment, in December last year the Infected Blood Compensation Authority began delivering this compensation. As of Friday 21

February, 204 people have been invited to start their claim, and IBCA is on track to meet its commitment for 250 people to start their claim by the end of March.

Before the end of March, both Houses will have the opportunity to debate the draft regulations for people who are affected including partners, parents, children, siblings and, in some instances, carers. Once in force, the draft Infected Blood Compensation Scheme Regulations 2025 will provide IBCA with the powers it needs to begin making payments to eligible affected people. We have committed that payments to affected people will start by the end of 2025.

The Government also recognises that delivering justice is much more than financial compensation. I am continuing to work with the Department of Health and Social Care, taking forward the Inquiry's recommendations to ensure that everything is done to prevent further such tragedies in the future.

My personal commitment to this work, and the people impacted by it, remains steadfast. The Government is acting on the findings of the Inquiry. We will continue to work with the Infected Blood Compensation Authority to ensure compensation is delivered as swiftly and compassionately as possible to everyone who so greatly deserves it.

#### ■ **Membership of the UK-EU Parliamentary Partnership Assembly**

**Paymaster General and Minister for the Cabinet Office (Nick Thomas-Symonds):**  
[\[HCWS524\]](#)

The Lord Kirkhope of Harrogate has been appointed as a full representative of the Parliamentary Partnership Assembly in the place of the Lord Lamont of Lerwick.

## DEFENCE

#### ■ **The Implementation from 1 April 2025 of New Profit Rates for Single Source Defence Contracts**

**Minister for Defence Procurement and Industry (Maria Eagle):** [\[HCWS522\]](#)

I am today announcing on behalf of the Secretary of State for Defence that the baseline profit rate for single source defence contracts will be set at 8.56%, in line with the rate recommended by the Single Source Regulations Office (SSRO). This is an increase of 0.32% from 2024-25. The Secretary of State has accepted the methodology used by the SSRO to calculate these figures. A full explanation of the SSRO methodology is published on their website.

The SSRO's recommendation on the Capital Servicing Allowance to be applied to single source defence contracts has also been accepted and these rates are set out in Table 1. These rates have been published in the London Gazette, as required by the Defence Reform Act 2014.

All of these new rates will come into effect from 1 April 2025.

**Table 1: Recommended Rates by the Secretary of State for Defence**



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ELEMENT	2024-25 RATES	2025-26 RATES
Baseline Profit Rate (BPR) (% on contract cost)	<b>8.24%</b>	<b>8.56%</b>
Baseline Profit Rate to apply to contracts between the Secretary of State and a company wholly owned by the UK Government and where both parties agree (% on contract cost)	<b>0.00%</b>	<b>0.00%</b>
Fixed Capital Servicing Rate (% on Fixed Capital employed)	<b>3.26%</b>	<b>3.64%</b>
Working Capital Servicing Rate (% on positive Working Capital employed)	<b>3.1%</b>	<b>4.69%</b>
Working Capital Servicing Rate (% on negative Working Capital employed)	<b>1.61%</b>	<b>3.21%</b>