



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 19 March 2025 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:57 P.M., 19 March 2025). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

ATTORNEY GENERAL

■ Attorney General: Hakluyt

Jon Trickett: [\[37126\]](#)

To ask the Solicitor General, how many staff her Department has seconded from Hakluyt since July 2024.

Lucy Rigby:

Secondments are one way of bringing talent and experience into the Civil Service for short periods of time and has been used by successive governments.

Secondments are arranged at a business unit level and data is held at business unit Level.

Since July 2024, the Attorney General's Office has not seconded any staff from Hakluyt.

BUSINESS AND TRADE

■ Aerospace Industry and Defence: Exports

Callum Anderson: [\[37448\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to promote exports from (a) defence and (b) aerospace manufacturers.

Sarah Jones:

DBT works with defence and aerospace companies to open markets, tackle trade disputes, provide SME support, and connect business to export opportunities.

Through the Aerospace Growth Partnership and Aerospace Technology Institute programme we support industry to increase supply chain productivity, competitiveness, innovation and exports. In defence, we work with industry to develop campaigns which pursue a ten-year pipeline of global opportunities. In 2023 the UK won £14.5bn defence orders; and in 2024 exported £23bn of domestically produced aerospace goods.

The Industrial Strategy will set out our further support for these sectors.

■ Carbon Monoxide: Alarms

Paul Davies: [\[37060\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to help prevent the online sale of carbon monoxide alarms that do not comply with UK trading standards.

Justin Madders:

All consumer products placed on the UK market must be safe. Businesses that produce or import products have obligations to ensure they are safe before placing them on the market, and relevant British Standards can assist those making carbon monoxide alarms available to comply.

The Office for Product Safety and Standards undertakes market surveillance and engages with online marketplaces to remove unsafe products and reduce the risk of non-compliant products being sold online. The Product Regulation and Metrology Bill will also give the Government powers to introduce new duties on online marketplaces to increase the safety of products available online.

■ Construction: Employers' Contributions**Blake Stephenson:**[\[37785\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 13 February 2025 to Question 28604 on Construction: Employers' Contributions, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of changes to employers' National Insurance contributions on employment in the construction industry.

Blake Stephenson:[\[37786\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 13 February 2025 to Question 28604 on Construction: Employers' Contributions, whether he has held discussions with the construction industry on the potential impact of changes to employers' National Insurance contributions on the workforce available to that industry.

Sarah Jones:

The vast majority of firms in the construction sector are small or microbusinesses, which will see no gain or change overall. The Government has protected small businesses and charities from the impact of the increase to Employer National Insurance by increasing the Employment Allowance from £5,000 to £10,500, and 865,000 employers will pay no NICs in 2025-26. Eligible employers will be able to employ up to four full-time workers on the National Living Wage and pay no employer NICs.

■ Department for Business and Trade: Hakluyt**Jon Trickett:**[\[37116\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how many staff his Department has seconded from Hakluyt since July 2024.

Justin Madders:

The Department for Business and Trade has hosted no secondees from Hakluyt since July 2024.

■ Department for Business and Trade: Secondment**Jon Trickett:** [\[36588\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how many of his Department's officials have been seconded from (a) the Institute for Economic Affairs, (b) the Policy Exchange, (c) the Adam Smith Institute and (d) Labour Together since July 2024.

Justin Madders:

Thank you to my Hon. Friend for his question. I can inform him that the Department for Business and Trade has hosted no secondees from (a) the Institute for Economic Affairs, (b) the Policy Exchange, (c) the Adam Smith Institute and (d) Labour Together since July 2024.

■ Export Controls: Russia**Martin Wrigley:** [\[37401\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 7 March 2025 to Question 34072 on Export Controls: Russia, if he will list every export licence granted by his Department for exports of medicinal and pharmaceutical to Russia since September 2023.

Martin Wrigley: [\[37403\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 7 March 2025 to Question 34072 on Export Controls: Russia, if he will list every export licence granted by his Department for exports of organic chemicals to Russia since September 2023.

Martin Wrigley: [\[37404\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 7 March 2025 to Question 34072 on Export Controls: Russia, if he will list every export licence granted by his Department for exports of cars to Russia since September 2023.

Martin Wrigley: [\[37405\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 7 March 2025 to Question 34072 on Export Controls: Russia, if he will list each export licence granted by his Department for exports of toilet and cleansing preparations to Russia since September 2023.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

Between 1 September 2023 and 30 September 2024, the latest period covered by official statistics in development, no export licences were issued for goods for a) medicinal and pharmaceutical, b) organic chemicals, c) cars, or d) toilet and cleaning preparations to Russia.

The Export Control Joint Unit publishes information on these types of export licences on a quarterly basis as part of the Strategic export controls: licensing statistics quarterly reports. This includes the number of licence outcomes (issued, refused, revoked) each quarter by licence type. The latest quarterly statistics in development

publication covers licence information up to 30 September 2024:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/strategic-export-controls-licensing-statistics-1-july-to-30-september-2024>.

Licensing decisions between 1 October and 31 December 2024 are planned to be published in May 2025 as part of the next quarterly statistics publication.

Martin Wrigley: **[37402]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 7 March 2025 to Question 34072 on Export Controls: Russia, if he will list every export licence granted by his Department for exports of insurance and pensions to Russia since September 2023.

Martin Wrigley: **[37406]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 7 March 2025 to Question 34072 on Export Controls: Russia, if he will list every export licence granted by his Department for exports of travel services to Russia since September 2023.

Martin Wrigley: **[37407]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 7 March 2025 to Question 34072 on Export Controls: Russia, if he will list every export licence granted by his Department for exports of insurance and pensions to Russia since September 2023.

Martin Wrigley: **[37408]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 7 March 2025 to Question 34072 on Export Controls: Russia, if he will list every export licence granted by his Department for exports of other business services to Russia since September 2023.

Martin Wrigley: **[37409]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 7 March 2025 to Question 34072 on Export Controls: Russia, if he will list each export licence granted by his Department for exports of telecoms and computer information services to Russia since September 2023.

Martin Wrigley: **[38464]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 12 March 2025 to Question 35024 on Overseas Trade: Russia, if the Department will publish the licenses issued on trade insurances by UK-based companies with a final destination of Russia.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

Between 1 September 2023 and 31 December 2023, the latest period covered by statistic publications covering licensing decisions for Professional and Business Services (PBS) and Individual Financial Services, no licences were issued for insurance services, and 9 licences were issued for PBS. The PBS licences also cover

IT consultancy and design services. The Russia Sanctions statutory guidance sets out specific PBS activities which DBT deems likely to be consistent with the aims of the sanctions and may consider licensing. Pensions and Travel Services are not directly caught under the Russia sanctions.

The Russia Sanctions Statutory Guidance outline what goods and services are sanctioned: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/russia-sanctions-guidance>.

The Export Control Joint Unit publishes information on services licences linked to trade sanctions on an annual basis as part of the United Kingdom Strategic Export Controls Annual Report which includes PBS and Individual Financial Services licences. The 2023 Report is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-strategic-export-controls-annual-report-2023>. The 2024 Annual Report is due to be published before Summer Recess.

■ Fair Work Agency

Sir John Hayes: [\[37529\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what estimate he has made of the potential cost to the public purse for establishing the Fair Work Agency.

Justin Madders:

The Employment Rights Bill is the first phase of delivering our plan to Make Work Pay, supporting employers, workers, and unions to get Britain moving forward.

Establishing the Fair Work Agency will create a strong, recognisable single brand so individuals know where to go for help and lead to a more effective use of resources

We are committed to ensuring that the Fair Work Agency is established on a sound financial footing and operates effectively in fulfilling its mandate. We will set out details about the approach we will take to implementation and annual costs in due course.

■ Foreign Investment in UK

Callum Anderson: [\[37447\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of foreign direct investment screening mechanisms on UK economic sovereignty.

Sarah Jones:

The UK balances an open investment environment to facilitate growth while protecting the areas of our economy that are the most sensitive to national security. The National Security and Investment Act supports our economic sovereignty by giving us power to intervene where we need to, while allowing the vast majority of inward investment to proceed.

The NSI Act was inspired by, and brought the UK's approach to investment screening in line with, many other countries, including our close allies. The Act is a product of

close international cooperation to ensure the UK's investment screening regime draws on global best practice.

■ **Industry: Scotland**

Dr Scott Arthur:

[\[36534\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he has had discussions with Scottish universities on the development of an industrial strategy.

Sarah Jones:

The Government recognises the crucial role of universities in the UK's innovation ecosystem and in delivering the skills needed to drive growth as part of the Industrial Strategy. My officials have discussed our Industrial Strategy plans with Universities Scotland.

■ **Labour Turnover and Redundancy: Wales**

David Chadwick:

[\[37055\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what funding is available from his Department to support (a) Welsh companies making redundancies, (b) Welsh employees at risk of redundancy and (c) Welsh companies in retaining employees.

Justin Madders:

The Government aims to respond to any job losses from company distress cases swiftly and coherently, to reduce the local impact and support people back to work.

Through the Redundancy Payments Service (RPS), part of the Insolvency Service, employers can access funding for redundancies, if required. For employers who are considering making 20 or more employees redundant at any one site, the RPS also notify the appropriate government departments and agencies, in confidence. This includes Jobcentre Plus and other service providers in their local area who will reach out with offers of assistance during the notification/consultation period.

The Department for Work and Pensions locally deploy the Rapid Response Service to provide support to people affected by redundancy, regardless of whether they are receiving benefits. The aim is to help people into new employment as quickly as possible. The service supports people during their notice period and up to 13 weeks after they leave work.

Additionally, the Welsh Government directly delivers services supporting redundant workers. ReAct Plus is a grant programme, offering tailored support to those trying to re-enter the labour market by removing barriers and providing grant support for vocational training, travel costs and care (including childcare) related to training.

■ Midlands Engine**James Naish:** [\[34959\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether his Department has made an assessment of the contribution of Midlands Engine to (a) attracting international investment and (b) supporting export growth for Midlands businesses.

Gareth Thomas:

Midlands Engine have undertaken a range of valuable work and have supported collaboration on shared growth opportunities. This has included launching the Midlands Engine Investment Portfolio at The UK's Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum in May 2024 and holding a Midlands Wide Kings Awards Event to encourage more firms to export.

Following the recent consultation, the Government has confirmed its decision not to extend core funding for Midland Engine and other pan-regional partnerships. We are moving to a different model of economic collaboration, where we are keen to support new models driven by mayors and their partners.

■ Post Offices: Rural Areas**Stuart Anderson:** [\[37273\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will take steps to help protect Post Office services in rural areas.

Gareth Thomas:

We recognise the key role Post Offices play in their communities, and branches in some rural areas are particularly important as the Post Office often acts as a community hub. We are listening carefully to stakeholders to ensure the whole network, including these important rural branches, is sustainable.

The Government-set Access Criteria ensures that however the network changes, services remain within local reach of all citizens. Government's minimum access criteria for Post Offices mean that 99% of the UK population must be within three miles of their nearest post office outlet and 90% must be within one mile of their nearest post office outlet.

■ Products: Safety**Martin Wrigley:** [\[37795\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will take steps to ensure that UK General Product Safety Rules (GPSR) are compliant with EU GPSR rules.

Martin Wrigley: [\[37796\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of aligning UK General Product Safety Rules (GPSR) with EU GPSR rules.

Justin Madders:

The UK enjoys a high level of product safety. As outlined in the Government's response to the Product Safety Review consultation, undertaken by the previous Government, we will now develop options for further consultation on updating the UK's product safety framework. Decisions taken by the Government on regulations will be focused on supporting growth across the UK. We will draw on evidence gathered through our strong relationships with stakeholders, including industry, trade associations and consumer groups when considering any future changes to product safety regulation.

Small Businesses: Finance**Wendy Morton:**[\[37181\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps are being considered to reduce financial burdens on small and independent high street businesses.

Gareth Thomas:

This government is committed to creating a fairer business rates system for small businesses on the high street. From 2026-27, we will introduce permanently lower tax rates for retail, hospitality, and leisure (RHL) properties with rateable values of less than £500,000.

We recognise that businesses will need support during this period of transition. RHL relief will be extended for one year at 40% and the small business multiplier will be frozen for one year. This package is worth over £1.5 billion in 2025-26 and is aimed at supporting the most vulnerable businesses.

Our new Business Growth Service will make it easier for businesses across the UK to get the help, support and advice they need. It will bring together existing offers including Business Support Service and the network of local Growth Hubs across England. Our forthcoming Small Business Strategy will set out how we intend to further support small businesses on the high street and beyond.

Trade Agreements: Israel**Tom Morrison:**[\[37381\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of a free trade agreement between the UK and Israel on the use of (a) surveillance and (b) cybersecurity technologies manufactured by UK businesses in Gaza.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

Any export of controlled items requires approval under the UK's Export Controls regime - this is not affected by whether there is an FTA in place or not.

CABINET OFFICE**Bluesky: Government Departments**

Charlie Dewhirst: [\[37815\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 13 December 2024 to Question 18214 on 10 Downing Street: Social Media, which Civil Service organisations have a Blue Sky social media channel; and what guidance has GCS given on joining Blue Sky.

Georgia Gould:

The Government uses a range of channels to reach and engage the public. Any use of these platforms is assessed against the high standards for digital safety set out in the Government Communication Service (GCS) SAFE framework.

Individual departments make their own decisions on the best platforms to communicate with the public within the GCS SAFE framework.

Business: Wales

David Chadwick: [\[37474\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many active businesses were registered in Wales on the Companies House register in each of the last five financial years.

Georgia Gould:

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

A response to the Hon gentleman's Parliamentary Question of 11th March is attached.

Attachments:

1. Letter from the National Statistician [PQ37474_37475 (1).pdf]

Cabinet Office: Hakluyt

Jon Trickett: [\[37125\]](#)

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

Georgia Gould:

Secondments are part of a range of ways of bringing talent and experience into the civil service for short periods of time and have been used by successive governments. Secondments are arranged at a business unit level and must follow the processes as set out in the Civil Service Recruitment Principles. However based on the information held centrally, there is no record of any secondees from Hakluyt.

■ Cabinet Office: Secondment

Jon Trickett:

[\[36587\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many of his Department's officials have been seconded from (a) the Institute for Economic Affairs, (b) the Policy Exchange, (c) the Adam Smith Institute and (d) Labour Together since July 2024.

Georgia Gould:

Secondments are part of a range of ways of bringing talent and experience into the civil service for short periods of time and have been used by successive governments. Secondments are arranged at a business unit level and must follow the processes as set out in the Civil Service Recruitment Principles. However, based on the information held centrally, there is no record of any secondees from the above mentioned organisations.

■ Cabinet Office: Staff

Charlie Dewhirst:

[\[37429\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 29 January 2025 to Question 25452 on Cabinet Office: Staff, what the longest period of time is that a member of the Skills Match Hub has been signed up excluding maternity leave.

Georgia Gould:

I refer the hon. member to the answer of PQ 25452, given on 29 January 2025.

■ Civil Servants: Redundancy

Charlie Dewhirst:

[\[37430\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he plans to reduce barriers to making civil servants redundant who do not deliver efficiency savings.

Georgia Gould:

The Government remains committed to the 2016 Protocol and the need to avoid compulsory redundancies as far as possible.

Separately to redundancies, the Government has set out plans to introduce mutually agreed exits to allow Civil Service employers to come to a sensible and pragmatic agreement with an employee regarding their future when it is clear that things aren't working.

■ Emergencies: Planning

Kevin Hollinrake:

[\[37574\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the (a) terms of reference are and (b) timetable is of his Department's resilience review.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

As the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster set out in his statement to the House on Friday 19 July, this government is committed to undertaking a comprehensive review of long-term resilience.

The resilience review is considering established practices and policies to improve UK resilience against the full spectrum of risks we face. It is evidence based and is identifying what should be kept, changed or improved to ensure we are best prepared now and into the future. It is considering recommendations from recent inquiries including the Covid-19 Module 1 report and the Grenfell Tower tragedy to ensure the needs of communities and individuals – in particular vulnerable people – are better addressed.

The review will conclude later this year.

■ Government Departments: Social Media**Charlie Dewhirst:**[\[37435\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether his Department provides guidance to departmental social media accounts on liking party political posts by (a) Ministers and (b) hon. Members.

Georgia Gould:

The Government Communication Service has published guidance on propriety in digital and social media. It states that official social media accounts managed by departments must not be used for the further dissemination of messages from party political or otherwise partisan accounts.

The guidance can be found at <https://gcs.civilservice.gov.uk/guidance/professional-standards/propriety/propriety-in-digital-and-social-media/>.

■ Grenfell Tower Inquiry**Kevin Hollinrake:**[\[36420\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 2 Report: Government response, published on 26 February 2025, what her planned timetable is for the publicly available record of public inquiry recommendations.

Kevin Hollinrake:[\[36693\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to para 144 of the UK Government Response to the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 2 Report, CP1248, published in February 2025, what his planned timetable is for the publicly accessible record, and whether it will be hosted on gov.uk.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

As confirmed in the government's response to the Grenfell Tower Inquiry's recommendation 25, the government will establish a record on GOV.UK of all recommendations made by public inquiries since 2024, and will consider making this an enduring legal requirement. We will update parliament about this in due course.

■ Innovation Fund

Charlie Dewhirst: [\[37436\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much and what proportion of the Innovation Fund he plans to allocate to (a) staffing, (b) logistics, (c) management of the test-and-learn teams and (d) other administrative costs.

Georgia Gould:

The Government is committed to reforming the state to deliver better public services. The work underway includes the £100 million Public Service Reform and Innovation Fund, which will be deploying Test and Learns teams around the country over the next three years to design and test innovative solutions to our biggest public service challenges in partnership with local places – and ensuring that local learning informs national policy decisions.

The Cabinet Office will be working across government and with local partners to codesign the detailed approach to the allocation of the Innovation Fund.

■ Mission Boards

Charlie Dewhirst: [\[37816\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish the dates that each Mission board meets.

Ellie Reeves:

It is a long-established precedent that information about the discussions that have taken place in Cabinet and its committees - including mission boards - including how often they have met, is not normally shared publicly.

■ Mission Boards: Membership

Charlie Dewhirst: [\[37431\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will list the full membership of each Mission Board.

Ellie Reeves:

The membership of the Mission Boards - as outlined on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) - is the lead Secretary of State as the chair of their respective Mission Board and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster as Deputy Chair; other Ministers will be invited according to the agenda.

■ National Energy System Operator

Charlie Dewhirst: [\[37433\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to his Department's guidance entitled The Approvals Process for the Creation of New Arm's-Length Bodies, updated on 15 March 2018, whether his Department's public bodies team assessed the National Energy Systems Operator against the guidance that the creation of a new ALB should only be considered as a last resort; whether the Department provided evidence of

whether alternative delivery models were considered; and which of the three tests outlined in chapter 2 of that guidance it met.

Georgia Gould:

The National Energy Systems Operator (NESO) is a public corporation and is therefore not administratively classified as an arm's-length body. The guidance entitled 'The Approvals Process for the Creation of New Arm's-Length Bodies' did not apply to NESO for this reason.

The NESO will support the UK's energy security, help to keep bills down in the long term, and accelerate the government's clean power mission.

■ **Parliamentary and Political Service Honours Committee: Public Appointments**

Charlie Dewhirst: [\[37424\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 27 November 2024 to Question 14712 on Honours: Public Appointments, who has been (a) appointed and (b) appointed by open and fair competition to the Parliamentary and Political Service honours Committee since 5 July 2024; and what recruitment is ongoing.

Georgia Gould:

All appointments are announced on the Honours Committee page of GOV.UK, which can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/honours-committees>.

All appointments to the honours committees are made following a fair and open competition. This includes utilising reserve lists where appropriate.

■ **Prime Minister: Communication**

Charlie Dewhirst: [\[37432\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 27 November 2024 to Question 7442 on Prime Minister: Communication, how many staff work on digital communications in Downing Street; and at what cost.

Georgia Gould:

As of 17 March 2025, there are 43 FTE Civil Servants in the overall communications team, covering a range of disciplines including digital, planning, press and private office. 15 FTE Civil Servants work on digital communications covering a number of responsibilities, as part of the wider communications team.

■ **UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland**

Mr Gregory Campbell: [\[37539\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the value was of (a) exports and (b) imports between the UK and Ireland in (i) 2019 and (ii) 2024.

Georgia Gould:

[Holding answer 17 March 2025]: The information requested falls under the remit of the UK Statistics Authority.

A response to the Hon gentleman or lady Parliamentary Question of 12th March is attached.

Attachments:

1. Letter from the National Statistician [PQ37539 (1).pdf]

■ **UK Relations with EU**

Chris Law:

[\[36413\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Prime Minister's speech entitled, Prime Minister's remarks from the plenary session at the first UK-Ireland Summit: 6 March 2025, what steps the Government is taking to work more closely with the EU to (a) boost trade, (b) create jobs and (c) increase economic growth.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

The Government is committed to improving the UK's trade and investment relationship with the EU, by tearing down unnecessary barriers to trade. The Prime Minister and President von der Leyen agreed to identify areas where we can strengthen cooperation for mutual benefit, such as the economy, energy, security and resilience. Commissioner Maroš Šefčovič and I are taking this forward ahead of the first UK-EU summit in London on 19 May. The first UK-Ireland Summit saw the announcement of £185.5 million in new Irish investments, and creating 2540 jobs across the country.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ **Arts: Artificial Intelligence**

Luke Myer:

[\[37419\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to protect the (a) creative, (b) video game and (c) animation industries from the potential impact of AI-generated content on jobs and educational programs.

Chris Bryant:

Our consultation on the impact of AI on the copyright regime, which was published on 17 December and closed on 25 February, received over 10,000 responses. We will now consider the full range of responses we have received and will continue to develop our policy approach in partnership with creative industries, media and AI stakeholders. Addressing this is an urgent priority for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, but no decisions will be taken until we are absolutely confident we have a practical plan that delivers for the creative industries.

The Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) also works closely with the Department for Education (DfE) on skills policy affecting the creative sector. This includes DfE's work on the reformed growth and skills levy, which will help more

people learn new high-quality skills at work, including digital skills, and create routes into good, skilled jobs in growing industries.

Many video games studios already use AI tools to streamline development processes and enhance game-play experience.

■ Department for Culture, Media and Sport: Hakluyt

Jon Trickett:

[\[37117\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, how many staff her Department has seconded from Hakluyt since July 2024.

Stephanie Peacock:

DCMS has zero such secondments. Secondments are one way of bringing talent and experience into the civil service for short periods of time, and have been used by successive governments.

■ Gambling: Regulation

Max Wilkinson:

[\[37357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the oral contribution by the Minister for Sport, Media, Civil Society during the debate on gambling harms of 5 February 2025, Official Report, columns 373-377WH, if she will outline the conditions under which her Department would intervene to replace the self-regulating system in the gambling industry.

Stephanie Peacock:

Gambling in Great Britain is independently regulated by the Gambling Commission.

The independent Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) is responsible for regulating advertising in the UK. There are robust rules in place to ensure that advertising, whenever it appears, is socially responsible. Gambling operators must comply with the advertising codes of practice, which are enforced by the ASA, as part of their licence conditions. The ASA has the power to take action where there is evidence of advertising in breach of the Codes, and can also refer operators' advertising to the Gambling Commission for possible regulatory action. However, we recognise that more can be done to improve protections. We have set the gambling industry a clear task to raise standards and this work will be monitored closely.

■ Sports

Mr Louie French:

[\[36802\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to help ensure that the United Kingdom continues to host international sporting events beyond 2035.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Government remains committed to delivering major international sporting events with pride - building upon the UK's global reputation for excellence in event delivery. - and seeking new opportunities to do so.

We recognise that major events deliver significant economic and social benefits as well as an opportunity to showcase the UK globally. We look forward to delivering a series of major events before the end of the decade, including the 2025 Women's Rugby World Cup, the European Athletics Championships, Invictus Games, Women's T20 Cricket World Cup and Glasgow Commonwealth Games in 2026, the UEFA European Championships in 2028, and the men's T20 Cricket World Cup in 2030.

The Government is working with UK Sport and other partners in order to identify and secure major sporting event targets into the future, in order to build a pipeline of events up until 2035 and beyond. This includes supporting a potential UK bid to host the 2035 FIFA Women's World Cup.

DEFENCE**■ Air Force: Training****James Cartlidge:**[\[38083\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Air - Specialist Instructional Officers were employed by his Department on 13 March 2025.

AI Carns:

As at 13 March 2025, there were 271 people in positions within Air's Top Level Budget with a job field as either "Specialist Instructional Officer" or "Instructor" at Executive Officer (EO) grade.

■ Armed Forces: Charities**Ben Obese-Jecty:**[\[38724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the Office for Veterans' Affairs provides oversight of military charities.

AI Carns:

Charities are independent from Government and are regulated by the Charity Commission for England and Wales, the Scottish Charities Regulator or the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland depending on location. Specific services provided by charities are subject to other regulators as appropriate, such as the Care Quality Commission or the Fundraising Regulator.

The Office for Veterans' Affairs works closely with many Armed Forces charities who play a vital part of the wider support system for veterans, and I am also actively exploring ways of simplifying and cohering access to Government support, working in partnership with the charity sector.

■ Defence Business Services**Dame Caroline Dinéage:** [\[38354\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he plans to establish an MPs' hotline for the Defence Business Services.

AI Carns:

There are no plans to establish a hotline for Members of Parliament to contact Defence Business Services officials.

Ministers are accountable for the policies, decisions and actions of their Departments. Parliamentarians have direct access to Ministers, and any information they require from the Department should be provided by Ministers.

This guidance is intended to ensure that only accurate and releasable information is provided to Parliament and that Ministers can assure themselves of that before it is released.

■ Defence: Procurement**James Cartlidge:** [\[38084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he is planning to publish a new defence social value model as part of the Defence Industrial Strategy.

James Cartlidge: [\[38085\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what method his Department plans to use for applying social value into defence procurement in the future.

James Cartlidge: [\[38086\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what model his Department uses for applying social value into defence procurement.

James Cartlidge: [\[38087\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he plans to consult industry on a new defence social value model.

James Cartlidge: [\[38088\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions he has held with industry on social value models since 5 July 2024.

Maria Eagle:

This Government is committed to bringing forward a Defence Industrial Strategy which ensures the imperatives of national security and a high-growth economy are aligned. As part of the Government's primary mission to grow the economy and spread the benefits to every region and nation in the UK, this will include supporting policy areas such as innovation, skills and international trade.

The Cabinet Office have released an updated Social Value Model that is aligned to the Government's missions. The Defence Industrial Strategy will include measures

that supplement this with action to reform procurement, reduce waste, leverage inward investment and boost sovereign defence industrial capacity to create good jobs and grow UK exports.

The Cabinet Office Social Value Model is mandated for all competitive-based Ministry of Defence (MOD) contracts that are in-scope of the Procurement Act 2023, excluding defence and security contracts and exempt procurements. MOD policy is that Social Value Model criteria can still be included in defence and security and exempt contracts where relevant and appropriate, at the discretion of delivery teams and considered on a case-by-case basis. This approach will be kept under review as the Defence Industrial Strategy is developed.

MOD delivery teams currently have the option to apply either the previous or updated (as of March 2025) Cabinet Office Social Value Model, as part of a transition period until October 2025 when the new model will be mandated for procurements to which it is applied.

The Defence Industrial Strategy is being developed through consultation with a wide range of stakeholders including industry, academia and international partners. Ministers have held a number of roundtables and bilateral engagements with industry. The MOD has released communications on the recent National Procurement Policy Statement and what this means for the application of the Cabinet Office Social Value Model in MOD procurements via a range of standard channels of communication and engagement routes.

■ Defence: Repairs and Maintenance

Callum Anderson:

[\[37444\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of expanding UK-based (a) maintenance and (b) upgrading facilities for defence assets.

Maria Eagle:

No recent assessments have been conducted on expanding UK based maintenance for Ministry of Defence (MOD) built assets.

The MOD is investing in upgraded facilities to improve living, working and training environments in UK sites.

■ Ministry of Defence: Pay

James Cartlidge:

[\[28549\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an estimate of the total financial remuneration for Non-Executive Directors in (a) his Department, (b) Defence Equipment & Support, (c) the Atomic Weapons Establishment and (d) all other connected agencies for financial year 2024-25.

AI Carns:

The estimated financial remuneration for financial year 2024-25 for the Department's public appointments (which includes a range of roles including non-executive board members, statutory officeholders and expert committee members, etc) is as follows:

- a) Departmental - £1,270,920 (95 roles)
- b) Defence Equipment & Support - £318,000 (7 roles)
- c) Atomic Weapons Establishment - £359,965 (8 roles)
- d) All other connected agencies - £1,305,257 (55 roles)

■ NATO: Public Appointments

James Cartlidge: [\[37246\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 6 March 2025 to Question 33949 on Ministry of Defence: Public Appointments, whether he plans to have discussions with his European counterparts on the appointment of the next Supreme Allied Commander Europe.

Luke Pollard:

Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) is one of NATO's two strategic commanders and is a post that is traditionally held by the US.

The Secretary of State does not have plans to have discussions with his European counterparts on the appointment of the next Supreme Allied Commander Europe.

■ Navy: Training

Amanda Martin: [\[37483\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, for what reason he approved Project Selbourne.

Amanda Martin: [\[37484\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the training provided by Capita to the Royal Navy.

Luke Pollard:

The Project Selborne contract began on 1 April 2021 and is implementing a transformation in the way that the Royal Navy delivers its training, unlocking more opportunities for them to fulfil their potential and get better trained people to the frontline, quicker.

We keep the program made by Project Selbourne under review.

■ Norway: Joint Expeditionary Force

James Cartlidge: [\[37250\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 6 March 2025 to Question 33951 on Joint Expeditionary Force, if he will publish a summary of his

discussions with his Norwegian counterpart on (a) 19-20 February 2025 and (b) 27 February 2025.

Luke Pollard:

Pursuant to my Answer of 6 March 2025 to Question 33951, the Secretary of State for Defence discussed future plans for the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) with his Norwegian Counterpart during his visit to Norway on 19 - 20 February; in particular, third-party engagement through the JEF + concept. As the Joint Statement on Enhanced Defence Co-operation between the UK and Norway (published during the course of the visit) states, the UK and Norway will step up our commitment to work together to strengthen Euro-Atlantic Security, including through the Joint Expeditionary Force. The meeting of JEF Defence Ministers on 27 February 2025 discussed the situation in Ukraine.

■ **Nuclear Disarmament**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[31929\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether it is his policy to support nuclear disarmament.

Luke Pollard:

The United Kingdom's nuclear deterrent exists to deter the most extreme threats to our national security and way of life. It will remain essential for as long as the global security threat picture demands it.

This Government's commitment to our nuclear deterrent maintained on behalf of the UK and our NATO allies is unshakeable.

The UK Government believes that the best way to achieve global nuclear disarmament is through a gradual multilateral disarmament negotiated using a step-by-step approach which takes account of the international security environment and is under the framework of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

■ **Nuclear Weapons**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[31928\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will take steps to review the UK's nuclear weapons policy.

Luke Pollard:

The United Kingdom's nuclear deterrent exists to deter the most extreme threats to our national security and way of life, which cannot be deterred by other means. It will remain essential for as long as the global security environment demands.

We continually review our nuclear deterrence posture in light of the international security environment and the actions of potential adversaries, to ensure we can meet the threats facing the UK and our NATO allies.

■ Reserve Forces: Labour Turnover

Alison Taylor:

[\[33164\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to improve (a) recruitment and (b) retention within the army reserve.

Luke Pollard:

This Government inherited a recruitment crisis, with targets being missed every year for the past 14 years, and is taking decisive action to get recruitment back on track. This has included the largest pay rise to personnel in decades and scrapping 100 outdated policies that slow recruitment down.

Improving recruitment and retention levels is one of the Army's top priorities, supported by defence.

Measures in place to increase recruitment into the Army Reserves include a sustained digital and physical marketing campaign; an increased focus on professional training and upskilling courses; and improved financial incentives.

A retention strategy has been launched to address barriers to retention through a holistic set of financial and policy initiatives spanning the entire employee lifecycle.

Further announcements will be made in due course, in line with the future Strategic Defence Review.

■ Strategic Defence Review

James Cartlidge:

[\[37251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the Strategic Defence Review will include capability annexes for each of the single services.

Luke Pollard:

The Strategic Defence Review (SDR) will determine the roles, capabilities and reforms required by UK Defence to meet the challenges, threats, and opportunities of the twenty-first century. The SDR has been considering all aspects of Defence, including the major features of the force structure needed to create the necessary integrated all-domain Defence capability of the future.

■ Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

Rachael Maskell:

[\[31927\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make it his policy to send representatives to attend the Third Meeting of States Parties of the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons as observers.

Luke Pollard:

No officials will attend the Third Meeting of States Parties of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

■ Warships: Iron and Steel

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[38099]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the (a) proportion and (b) value was of steel from the (i) US and (ii) EU used in UK military shipbuilding in each of the last five years.

Maria Eagle:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) contributes to the Department for Business and Trade's (DBT) steel public procurement return. The information is published annually and can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/steel-public-procurement>

The data available from the information published includes steel purchased for MOD shipbuilding projects. The response to this question assumes that UK military shipbuilding relates solely to the building of surface warships, and does not include submarine construction.

The tables below set out a summary of the details available, for each of the last five years. Data for Financial Year (FY) 2023-24 has not yet been published. The data gathered and subsequently published by DBT has matured and become more detailed since the start of publishing steel data for FY 2017-18 in January 2019. Therefore, the origin of the steel is only available for FY 2022-23.

Financial Year 2022-23

PROJECT	STEEL PRODUCT TYPE	EU / UK / US	COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN	VALUE OF STEEL £
Type 31	Flat rolled, Plate, Sections & shapes	EU	Finland, Spain	£41,850,500
	Sections & shapes, UK Tubes/Pipes/Hollow sections	UK	UK	£1,311,790
Type 26	Plate, Sections & shapes	EU	Sweden, Denmark, Belgium, Finland, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Spain	£3,162,171
	Plate, Sections & shapes	UK	UK	£1,537,996

Financial Year 2021-22

PROJECT	STEEL PRODUCT TYPE	COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN	VALUE OF STEEL £
Type 31	Plate, Bulb bar, Sections	Not detailed	£43,600,000
Type 26	Plate	Not detailed	£465,498

Financial Year 2020-21

PROJECT	STEEL PRODUCT TYPE	COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN	VALUE OF STEEL £
Type 31	Structural steel, Sections	Not detailed	£391,949
Type 26	Plate, Sections, Sheet, Non-ship	Not detailed	£3,758,269

Financial Year 2019-20

PROJECT	STEEL PRODUCT TYPE	COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN	VALUE OF STEEL £
Type 26	Various grades	Not detailed	£3,401,994

Financial Year 2018-19

No steel was recorded as having been purchased in FY 2018-19 for any UK shipbuilding projects.

EDUCATION

■ **Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund**

Martin Wrigley: [\[37398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund permanent.

Janet Daby:

An announcement on funding for the adoption and special guardianship support fund will be made as soon as possible. All future funding decisions will be considered as part of the next spending review.

James McMurdock: [\[37513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, which groups she has consulted during the decision-making process on the future of the adoption and special guardianship support fund.

James McMurdock:

[37514]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the Adoption and special guardianship support fund on families with adopted children.

James McMurdock:

[37515]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of waiting times for the Adoption and special guardianship support fund.

James McMurdock:

[37516]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department is taking steps to simplify the re-application process for the Adoption and special guardianship support fund.

Janet Daby:

The department regularly discusses policy issues with a range of sector bodies and interested parties.

Between 2018 and 2021, the Institute of Public Care (IPC), at Oxford Brookes University, carried out a three-year mixed-method evaluation, on behalf of the department. Their report can be accessed at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6391c41a8fa8f53ba783e8ad/Evaluation_of_the_Adoption_Support_Fund_2018_to_2022_-_summary_.pdf.

The report found that “a high proportion (83%) of parents and guardians participating in the longitudinal survey found the funded support helpful or very helpful overall”. The IPC report also found “a statistically significant (substantial, with large effect size) improvement in parent and guardian estimates of the extent to which the main aim of the funded support had been met by the end of the intervention” and reported that parents and guardians scored on average “7 out of 10 in relation to a question about the extent to which positive change(s) for their child and/or family had been sustained 6 months since the conclusion of adoption support fund-funded support”.

The impact of the therapies available within the adoption and special guardianship fund (ASGSF) is currently being assessed from multiple angles. The National Institute for Health Research is conducting a randomised control trial into Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP), one of the main therapies the ASGSF funds. This research is currently in its third and final phase and it will provide robust evidence regarding the effectiveness of DDP. The department started to collect data from outcomes measurement tools for ASGSF-funded therapies in December 2023. As therapy treatment comes to an end, this data will give an overall picture of the impact and adequacy of individual ASGSF-funded therapies.

The department has been making a range of changes to improve the timeliness of the ASGSF application process. For example, we have streamlined the online application process to reduce administration for local authorities and regional adoption agencies (RAAs) and have changed systems to ensure that application outcomes are delivered more swiftly. We have also introduced a direct

communication link with therapy providers to give early updates on any changes and advice on submitting applications.

These changes should help to reduce delays within local authorities and RAAs before applications are received. The additional support to providers, with better sharing of information about the ASGSF, should also help families to receive support more quickly.

The department has considered what changes to the ASGSF portal will facilitate making the re-application for therapies more efficient. The streamlining of the application process has already reduced the information required, and an option to simplify the process in the case of a re-application is under consideration.

■ Apprentices: Small Businesses

Wendy Morton:

[37179]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to encourage small and medium-sized enterprises to offer apprenticeships.

Janet Daby:

Apprenticeships can support small and medium sized employers (SMEs) to improve their skills base, boost productivity and develop a pipeline of future talent.

To support non-levy paying employers, usually SMEs, to offer apprenticeships, the government pays the full training costs for young apprentices aged 16 to 21 years-old, and for apprentices aged 22 to 24 years-old who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan or have been in local authority care. For all other apprentices, employers who do not pay the levy are required to co-invest 5% towards apprentice training costs.

Employers of all sizes can also benefit from £1,000 payments when they take on apprentices aged 16 to 18 years-old, or apprentices aged 19 to 24 years-old who have an EHC plan or have been in local authority care. This is in recognition of the additional support that younger apprentices may require when entering employment. Employers can choose how they spend these payments.

Employers also benefit from not being required to pay anything towards employees' National Insurance for all apprentices aged up to age 25 where they earn less than £967 a week (£50,270 a year).

Employers that need help with employing an apprentice, including accessing funding, can access the employer support GOV.UK page, which is available here: <https://help.employersupport.apprenticeships.gov.uk/hc/en-gb>.

The apprenticeship ambassador network is a group of employers and former and current apprentices. Around 35% of the employers are SMEs. Their remit is to inspire greater numbers of employers and individuals to connect with apprenticeships.

■ Cultural Heritage: Curriculum

Matt Bishop:

[\[37499\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the University of Manchester's blog entitled Addressing the UK's heritage skills crisis: why we must act now, published on 23 January 2025, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of including (a) heritage skills and (b) the Sloyd method in the national curriculum.

Catherine McKinnell:

The national curriculum focuses on the key knowledge that must be taught to children aged 5 to 16 years-old in maintained schools. The national curriculum provides a broad framework which ensures schools have flexibility to organise the content and delivery of the curriculum to meet the needs of their pupils.

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

The Review seeks to deliver a curriculum that ensures children and young people leave compulsory education ready for life and ready for work, building the knowledge, skills and attributes needed to thrive.

The Review Group has now published a well-evidenced, clear interim report, which sets out its interim findings and confirms the key areas for further work. This highlights the successes of the current system, making clear that the most trusted and valued aspects of our system will remain, whilst setting a positive vision for the future. The report can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/curriculum-and-assessment-review-interim-report>.

The government will consider any changes it wishes to make to curriculum, assessment and qualifications whilst the Review is conducted, and will respond to the final recommendations in autumn 2025.

■ Free School Meals

Imran Hussain:

[\[37186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans her Department has to extend universal free school meals to all children in (a) Bradford East constituency and (b) other areas of high child poverty.

Stephen Morgan:

The government has a central mission to break down barriers to opportunity for every child. The government has inherited a trend of rising child poverty, which has increased by 700,000 since 2010, with over four million children now growing up in a low income family. That is why the government is committed to delivering an ambitious strategy to reduce child poverty, tackling the root causes and giving every child the best start at life. To support this, a ministerial taskforce has been set up to begin work on the Child Poverty Strategy.

Under current programmes, disadvantaged pupils in state-funded schools, as well as 16 to 18 year-old students in further education, are entitled to receive free meals on the basis of low income. 2.1 million disadvantaged pupils are registered to receive free school meals (FSM) and a further 90,000 are registered to receive further education free meals. In addition, all children in reception, year 1 and year 2 in England's state-funded schools are entitled to universal infant free school meals, which benefits around 1.3 million pupils.

Additionally, the government is committed to introducing free breakfast clubs in every primary school, to set children up for the day and ensure they are ready to learn, while supporting parents and carers to work.

As with all government programmes, the department will keep the approach to FSM under review.

■ Overseas Students: Ukraine

Mr Will Forster:

[\[37496\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether Ukrainian students will be eligible for home fee status from the 2025-26 academic year.

Janet Daby:

In the 2022/23 academic year, the Student Support Regulations were amended so that persons granted leave under one of the Ukraine schemes (Homes for Ukraine, Ukraine family scheme and Ukraine extension scheme) would qualify for student support and home fee status in England without requiring them to meet the three-year ordinary residence requirement.

Following the recent launch of the Ukraine Permission Extension Scheme (UPES), the regulations have been further updated from the 2024/25 academic year, so that those who have been granted leave under UPES will also qualify for student finance and home fee status in line with those granted leave under one of the other Ukraine schemes.

This ensures that Ukrainians who have been affected by the war in Ukraine can access support on the same basis as those within other protection-based categories, such as refugees.

■ Personal Care Services: Apprentices

John Whitby:

[\[37517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department has made an assessment of the impact of informal and disguised employment in the beauty sector on the number of apprenticeship places available in hairdressing and beauty.

Janet Daby:

Apprenticeships are jobs with training, and it is for employers in the hair and beauty sector to decide how they use apprenticeships to meet their skills needs.

The sector has developed several apprenticeship standards, including the level 2 hairdressing professional standard. To support smaller employers to access apprenticeships, the government pays the full training costs for young apprentices aged 16 to 21, and for apprentices aged 22 to 24 who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan or have been in local authority care.

Employers can benefit from £1,000 payments when they take on apprentices aged 16 to 18, or apprentices aged 19 to 24 who have an EHC plan or have been in local authority care. Employers can choose how they spend these payments. Employers are also not required to pay anything towards employees' National Insurance for all apprentices aged up to age 25, where they earn less than £50,270 a year.

■ Schools: Staff

Neil O'Brien:

[\[38378\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much and what proportion of (a) primary and (b) secondary schools' expenditure was on staff in each of the last three years.

Catherine McKinnell:

Overall core revenue funding for schools totals almost £61.6 billion for the 2024/25 financial year. At the Autumn Budget 2024, the government announced an additional £2.3 billion for mainstream schools and young people with high needs for the 2025/26 financial year, compared to 2024/25. This means that overall core school funding will total almost £63.9 billion in 2025/26. Each school has autonomy to allocate their budgets, including for their staff, to best meet the needs of their pupils to ensure they have the best opportunities in life.

The latest three years of published data for schools' spending relates to the 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23 financial years. Our estimates in the table below for the proportions of expenditure for teachers and support staff have been compiled by combining published expenditure data sets from academies, which budget by academic year, and local authority maintained schools, which budget by financial year. We have not included cash expenditure data as combining financial and academic year data on school expenditure for different types of schools is less robust for estimating expenditure amounts than it is for estimating proportions. The pattern of expenditure in both 2020/21 and 2021/22 was affected by COVID-19.

FINANCIAL YEAR	PRIMARY SCHOOLS	SECONDARY SCHOOLS
Proportions of expenditure in 2020/21	Teachers: 50.6% Support staff: 33.0%	Teachers: 59.1% Support staff: 23.8%
Proportions of expenditure in 2021/22	Teachers: 49.0% Support staff: 32.8%	Teachers: 57.4% Support staff: 23.8%
Proportions of expenditure in 2022/23	Teachers: 48.1% Support staff: 33.1%	Teachers: 55.7% Support staff: 24.0%

Further data on schools' expenditure in the years following the 2022/23 financial year will be published in due course.

■ Sign Language: GCSE

Alberto Costa: [\[37205\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when she expects the first BSL GCSE course to begin.

Alberto Costa: [\[37206\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions her Department has had with Ofqual on the timing of the first teaching of the British Sign Language GCSE.

Catherine McKinnell:

The development of a British Sign Language (BSL) GCSE is an important step toward fostering greater recognition of BSL as a language, and the government is committed to developing a qualification that benefits both students and the wider deaf community.

The department published subject content in December 2023, and Ofqual, the independent qualifications regulator, is in the process of finalising the assessment arrangements. We have worked closely with Ofqual throughout this process, as we do during the development of any new GCSE. Our focus is on ensuring that the BSL GCSE is of the highest quality. It is important that the assessment is fair, rigorous, and reflective of BSL as a language, so that the qualification meets the required standards and serves the needs of both students and the deaf community.

■ Special Educational Needs: First-tier Tribunal

Jenny Riddell-Carpenter: [\[37422\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what funding her Department has provided to local authorities for Special Educational Needs and Disability First-tier Tribunal hearings in the past 12 months.

Jenny Riddell-Carpenter: [\[37423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the potential cost to the public purse was of funding from her Department to Suffolk County Council to help pay for Tribunal fees for each year between 2019-2023.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department does not fund local authorities to cover the costs associated with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) first-tier tribunal hearings. Local authorities fund their legal costs from their operational budgets.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO**■ Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: Hakluyt****Jon Trickett:**[\[37119\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how many staff their Department has seconded from Hakluyt since July 2024.

Michael Shanks:

The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero has not seconded any staff from Hakluyt since July 2024.

■ Electricity: Prices**Patrick Hurley:**[\[37351\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what recent discussions his Department has had with the utility companies on the ability of people living in (a) flats and (b) houses in multiple occupation to take advantage of reduced tariffs for off-peak electricity due to (i) the conditions of their tenancy agreement (ii) the potential impact on their neighbours.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The only way to accurately reflect the individual usage of each tenant in a house of multiple occupancy (HMO) would be if they each had a submeter. This would mean that their energy usage would be reflected in how much they pay the landlord for their energy. If an individual wishes to have this implemented, they should speak to their landlord to see if this is an option for them.

In order to protect consumers in HMOs, there is legislation which sets a maximum price that can be charged for electricity and gas which has already been bought from a licensed supplier. The maximum resale price guidance is available on Ofgem's website and if a tenant upon reviewing this guidance believes their landlord to be in contravention of it, they should raise it with them.

Ofgem is exploring options for easier routes to access support where non-compliance with the guidance has taken place. Ofgem continues to work to have vulnerable consumers added to the Priority Services Register in order that they can more easily access support where needed.

We will continue to engage with stakeholders and consider whether any further actions are required.

■ Energy: Artificial Intelligence**Kanishka Narayan:**[\[37342\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment his Department has made of the anticipated impact of the growth in artificial intelligence and sovereign compute infrastructure on national energy demand; and what steps the

Government is taking to ensure that the UK's energy security strategy addresses the power requirements of advanced computing and AI workloads.

Michael Shanks:

Embracing the opportunities that AI can provide to drive growth and productivity in the economy is a government objective. Supporting the development of AI data centres through policies such as AI Growth Zones is a key part of that. 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 proactively manage the energy requirements of AI. Building the low carbon economy of the future will lead to significant increases in electricity demand across many sectors. These projected increases were a key part of the analysis that underpinned the department's Clean Power Action Plan. This set out how, by unlocking new low carbon electricity generation, improving access to the electricity grid and efficient use and operation of the energy system - which can be supported by new technologies such as AI - we will achieve Clean Power by 2030 and maintain secure, resilient energy supplies.

■ **Energy: Ceramics**

Gareth Snell:

[\[37258\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to prioritise financial support for the energy costs of ceramic manufacturers.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

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

Companies in the ceramics sector are eligible to apply to the British Industry Supercharger scheme, which has provided energy bill support to hundreds of firms in energy intensive sectors. Financial relief to support energy intensive industries with electricity costs is worth £470 million per year through a mixture of spending and bill discounts.

I understand that Minister Jones is due to meet with representatives of the ceramics sector later this month to discuss challenges faced by manufacturers, including high energy costs. Government is committed to continuing to listen and engage with the sector.

■ Energy: Meters

Mr Angus MacDonald:

[\[37511\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to support the Data Communications Company expand smart meter network coverage in the context of the Radio Teleswitch switch off.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Department and Ofgem have been clear that they expect energy suppliers to promptly arrange suitable replacement metering solutions for their remaining RTS customers.

The Data Communications Company (DCC) is examining options for premises not currently able to get smart metering network coverage as part of its Future Connectivity strategy, which includes a range of technical solutions.

Where an RTS household does not currently receive coverage, energy suppliers can provide pre-configured smart meters, which operate like analogue meters, until a WAN connection can be established.

■ Energy: Shops

Kevin Hollinrake:

[\[37217\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of minimum energy efficiency standards on the commercial viability of shops in (a) high street and (b) town centre locations.

Sarah Jones:

The energy shock of recent years has highlighted the urgent importance of improving energy efficiency in non-domestic buildings. For shops in high street and town centres, improving energy efficiency can be one of the most cost-effective mechanisms for businesses to reduce their energy bills, while also reducing their carbon emissions. Minimum energy efficiency standards help unlock energy efficiency upgrades in rented buildings where landlords and tenants often do not have aligned incentives to improve the performance of the building.

■ Infrastructure

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[\[37370\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of raising the threshold to qualify as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project in line with technological progress.

Michael Shanks:

The Government has now introduced legislation to re-introduce onshore wind into the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) regime for projects over 100MW and raise the existing solar threshold from 50MW to 100MW.

This ensures onshore wind projects are treated in the same way and can access the same planning regimes as other types of critical energy infrastructure, such as offshore wind or nuclear power stations.

Setting 100MW thresholds for onshore wind and solar also reflects their technological advancements, ensuring that only the largest and most nationally significant projects enter the NSIP regime.

■ Infrastructure: Land

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[37375\]](#)

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 largest quantity of best and most versatile land used for a nationally significant energy development infrastructure project that has been consented.

Michael Shanks:

Further detail on individual projects can be found on PINS.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/planning-inspectorate>

■ Land: Compulsory Purchase

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[37369\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how many land transactions for nationally significant projects were via compulsory purchase order since 4 July 2024.

Michael Shanks:

The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero does not hold statistics on whether land has been acquired via compulsory acquisition.

■ North Sea Oil

Tom Morrison: [\[37379\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of trends in the sale of fossil fuels in international energy markets on his Department's support for North Sea oil operations.

Michael Shanks:

Oil and gas is traded on international markets, therefore domestically produced oil and gas does not mean cheaper prices and leaves British consumers exposed to unstable fossil fuel markets. On 5 March the Government launched a [consultation](#) that progresses the commitment to not issue new licences to explore new oil and gas fields while managing existing fields for their lifespan. It also sets out the next steps to make the North Sea a world leading example of an offshore clean energy industry, which is vital for delivering the best outcomes for workers and communities, energy security, and sustainable economic growth.

■ Photovoltaics: Import Controls

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[\[37365\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of banning the (a) import and (b) use of Chinese photovoltaic panels manufactured using forced Labour.

Michael Shanks:

The Government is determined to eradicate forced labour in global supply chains, including in the manufacture of solar panels.

Legislation and guidance are already in place to help businesses take action against modern slavery. However, we are working across government to see where we can go further, keeping all potential policy options under review.

We are monitoring closely the industry-led supply chain assurance scheme, the Solar Stewardship Initiative. Further information on the actions needed to develop supply chains that are resilient and free from forced labour will be set out in the Solar Roadmap, to be published in Spring 2025.

■ Renewable Energy: Developing Countries

Jon Trickett:

[\[37115\]](#)

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 the report by Oxfam entitled Fast, Fair, Funded and Feminist: A pathway to a just and transformative climate transition within and beyond the UK, published on 10 March; and whether he plans to implement the recommendations on supporting lower-income countries in publicly funded energy transitions.

Kerry McCarthy:

The government's approach to this transition is built on the principle of fairness – ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to contribute to the transition and reap the benefits – and is core to the UK's Clean Energy Superpower Mission. This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to deliver jobs, growth and prosperity.

■ Solar Power

Gideon Amos:

[\[37459\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what his Department's timetable is for publishing a consultation on the placement of solar canopies on outdoor carparks.

Michael Shanks:

The Government will this year be publishing a Call for Evidence on the potential to drive solar canopies on carparks over a certain size, as announced in the Clean Power Action Plan.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ Agriculture: Subsidies****Richard Foord:**[\[35785\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to resolve technical issues within the Rural Payments Agency that prevent common landowners applying for the Sustainable Farming Incentive due to incorrect mapping data and the lack of an offline application process.

Daniel Zeichner:

68% of common land is currently taking part in our agri-environment schemes. Defra will continue to work with our delivery partners to ensure future schemes will be accessible to managers of common land.

■ Animal Welfare**Adrian Ramsay:**[\[37925\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what his planned timetable is for publishing the welfare standards and guidance to accompany the Animal Welfare (Primate Licences) (England) Regulations 2024; and which stakeholders he plans to consult on the guidance before it is published.

Daniel Zeichner:

The accompanying guidance to the Animal Welfare (Primate Licences) (England) Regulations 2024 has been developed taking into account views from the consultation undertaken in 2023 and relevant experts. The guidance will be published shortly.

■ Aquariums and Zoos: Nature Conservation**Martin Wrigley:**[\[36239\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has plans to support endangered species breeding programmes in (a) zoos and (b) aquariums.

Mary Creagh:

Defra recognises the work modern zoos and aquariums do in promoting conservation and biodiversity, including participating in breeding programmes for endangered species. Under the Zoo Licensing Act 1981, all licensed zoos in Great Britain must undertake conservation measures. These measures could include the breeding of wild animals in captivity, or the repopulation of an area with, or the reintroduction into the wild of, wild animals. Defra works with other countries and the British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums (BIAZA) to enable movements of endangered species where there are breeding concerns.

■ Biodiversity: Northern Ireland

Jim Shannon:

[\[35260\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on the preservation of biodiversity in Northern Ireland.

Mary Creagh:

The UK's National Biodiversity Strategy & Action Plan (NBSAP) was discussed with Minister Muir, as well as other devolved government ministers, at the Inter-Ministerial Group for EFRA held on 16 September. The UK has published the full NBSAP during the resumed COP16 that commits us to achieving all 23 targets of the Global Biodiversity Framework at home. The four governments, and relevant Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies have worked collaboratively to develop the NBSAP and now we need to work together to deliver it.

■ Biodiversity: Reviews

Cat Eccles:

[\[37941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if his Department will conduct a review of the statutory framework for biodiversity net gain; and if he will take steps with environmental horticulture experts to include cultivated plant diversity in its metrics.

Mary Creagh:

The Government is working with stakeholders, including the horticulture sector, to monitor the implementation of biodiversity net gain to make sure it is working as intended.

■ Cats: Animal Breeding

Cat Eccles:

[\[37879\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what his planned timetable is for reviewing the recommendations of the Animal Welfare Committee Opinion on the welfare implications of current and emergent feline breeding practices, published in December 2024.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Government welcomes the Animal Welfare Committee's Opinion on the welfare implications of current and emergent feline breeding practices. We are carefully considering the Committee's recommendations.

■ Countryside: Access

Alice Macdonald:

[\[37413\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to (a) encourage people to access nature and (b) ensure visitors to

the countryside are informed about the statutory guidance entitled The Countryside Code: advice for countryside visitors, last updated 26 May 2023.

Mary Creagh:

The Government recognises the importance of providing access to the outdoors for people's health and wellbeing and is working to ensure this is safe and appropriate. This is why we have set out our ambitious manifesto commitments to create nine new national river walks and three new national forests in England, expanding access to the great outdoors. We will make further announcements on plans to develop policy on access to nature in due course.

The Government is also already delivering several policies to increase access to nature including:

- Working to complete the King Charles III England Coast Path which, at around 2,700 miles, will be the longest waymarked and maintained coast walking route in the world. Over 2,000 miles have now been approved as King Charles III England Coast Path, with over 1,000 miles already open. It will also create 250,000 hectares of new open access land within the coastal margin.
- Designating Wainwright's Coast to Coast route across the north of England as a National Trail.
- Delivering the £16m 'Access for All' programme, which consists of a package of targeted measures in our protected landscapes, national trails, forests and the wider countryside to make access to green and blue spaces more inclusive.

The Countryside Code was refreshed and relaunched in 2021 and a long-term campaign to promote the messages of the code began. In 2023, we also released a version of the Code for land managers. The Code sets out the rules that we all must follow to enjoy visits to the countryside safely and responsibly.

■ **Dangerous Dogs**

Ruth Jones:

[\[37270\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many dogs are registered on the Index of Exempted Dogs by (a) breed and (b) type.

Daniel Zeichner:

As of the 12 March 2025, the total number of dogs registered on the Dangerous Dogs Index, broken down by breed type, is as follows. This excludes dogs that have died, destroyed or have been exported.

TYPE OF DOG	NUMBER ON DANGEROUS DOGS INDEX
Dogo Argentino	24
Japanese Tosa	4
Pitbull Terrier	2,698

TYPE OF DOG	NUMBER ON DANGEROUS DOGS INDEX
XL Bully	56,469

■ **Dogs: Animal Welfare**

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[37715\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had on the adequacy of the (a) training, (b) registration and (c) regulation of dog (i) trainers and (ii) behaviourists.

Daniel Zeichner:

Defra is working hand in hand with the police, local authorities and animal welfare groups to encourage responsible dog ownership across all breeds of dog, including considering the role of education and training (for both dogs and their owners).

■ **Domestic Waste: Recycling and Waste Disposal**

Joe Robertson:

[\[32575\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 5 February 2025 to Question 24365, on Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: WRAP, what guidance (a) his Department and its agencies and (b) WRAP, funded by his Department has produced on the no side waste rubbish and recycling policies for household waste collection.

Mary Creagh:

Under section 46 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, waste collection authorities may require householders to place waste for collection in receptacles of a kind and number specified. If householders do not follow waste collections rules, there is guidance on circumstances in which a waste collection authority can issue a fixed penalty notice or penalty charge available here: [Household waste bins: when and how councils may issue fixed penalties - GOV.UK](#). Additionally, Defra recently published guidance on ensuring good waste collection services for households: [Ensuring good waste collection services for households - GOV.UK](#). Waste is a devolved policy, and the devolved administrations have their own arrangements for household and business recycling and waste collections.

■ **Electronic Cigarettes: Sales**

Tristan Osborne:

[\[37453\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the guidance entitled Single-use vapes ban, published on 20 January 2025, what steps he is taking to ensure that (a) relevant enforcement authorities and (b) Trading Standards are informed of changes to the MHRA notified products list.

Mary Creagh:

We are working closely with regulators and enforcing authorities, including trading standards, to ensure that they are prepared for the introduction of the single-use vapes ban on 1 June 2025 and to ensure that relevant information is shared.

Tristan Osborne:[\[37454\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to his Department's guidance on the single-use vapes ban, published on 20 January 2025, how the Department plans to enforce this guidance; and if he will consider placing it on a statutory footing through secondary legislation.

Mary Creagh:

Trading standards will be responsible for enforcing the single-use vapes ban. The published guidance provides businesses with the information they need to know to ensure that they are complying with the requirements laid out in The Environmental Protection (Single-use Vapes) (England) Regulations 2024 legislation. It is already a legal requirement that this legislation is complied with and the current business guidance covers these new legal responsibilities.

Environment Protection: Planning**Blake Stephenson:**[\[36880\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to page 3 of the ADAS and Stephenson Halliday's report entitled Review of the implementation of National Planning Policy Framework para 186c, published on 27 August 2024, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of the recommendations on mitigation strategies.

Blake Stephenson:[\[36881\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to page 3 of the ADAS and Stephenson Halliday's report entitled Review of the implementation of National Planning Policy Framework para 186c, published on 27 August 2024, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of the recommendations on compensation strategies.

Blake Stephenson:[\[36882\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to page 3 of the ADAS and Stephenson Halliday's report entitled Review of the implementation of National Planning Policy Framework para 186c, published on 27 August 2024, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of the paragraph on Identification of ancient and veteran status.

Blake Stephenson:[\[36883\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to page 6 of the ADAS and Stephenson Halliday's report entitled Review of the implementation of National Planning Policy Framework para 186c, published on 27

August 2024, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of planning officers' specialist arboricultural expertise.

Blake Stephenson:

[\[36884\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will hold discussions with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities & Local Government on the potential merits of requiring arboricultural (a) reports and (b) impact assessments for all major developments.

Mary Creagh:

We are using the evidence from this Review ([Review of the implementation of the NPPF para 186 \(c\) in applications and appeals in or within 15 metres of ancient woodlands or near ancient and veteran trees](#)), and subsequent engagement with stakeholders, to explore what options are available to improve the implementation of the NPPF regarding ancient woodland and ancient and veteran trees.

■ Environment Protection: Reviews

Andrew George:

[\[38341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to conclude the Environmental Improvement Plan rapid review.

Mary Creagh:

The Government concluded a rapid review of the existing Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP23), publishing a statement of its key findings on 30 January 2025. The revised EIP will be published later this year.

■ Fisheries

Sarah Champion:

[\[38358\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of operating a carding system to (a) warn and (b) sanction states which (i) export seafood to the UK and (ii) do not cooperate with efforts to tackle illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

Daniel Zeichner:

The UK, after leaving the European Union, retained the powers originally set out in the EU's Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing Regulation (1005/2008) to ban imports from countries that do not cooperate with efforts to tackle IUU fishing. Import bans are currently in place on seafood from Cambodia, Comoros and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. The UK's legislative framework also requires the banning of imports and landings of seafood from fishing vessels that are included on the UK's IUU vessel list as having been identified as engaging in IUU fishing. Other control measures are also in place to manage imports of seafood into the UK from other countries. Such measures include the operation of a catch documentation scheme to ensure seafood imported into the UK is caught in line with national and international regulations on fisheries conservation and sustainable management. Defra will continue to keep under active review steps to combat IUU fishing.

■ Fishing Gear**Ben Maguire:**[\[36326\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a minimum-distance rule for gill nets.

Daniel Zeichner:

Decisions on an assessment 0-6 nautical miles from the shore would be for individual Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities, with measures beyond six nautical miles falling to the Marine Management Organisation.

■ Foot and Mouth Disease: Veterinary Services**James Naish:**[\[36163\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the availability of (a) veterinarians, (b) veterinary technicians and (c) other veterinary experts to manage potential future outbreaks of foot and mouth disease.

Daniel Zeichner:

Defra and APHA appreciates the incredibly valuable work completed by veterinarians, technicians, and support staff, recognising their essential roles in achieving our ambitious goals of upholding high standards of animal welfare, supporting trade, and safeguarding public health and food security. The Government acknowledges the high demand for veterinary services and is working collaboratively across departments and with the profession to explore additional measures that will ensure sufficient staffing levels to support and sustain the sector effectively during times of disease outbreaks.

■ Forests and Rivers: Access**Blake Stephenson:**[\[35439\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to his Department's consultation entitled Land Use in England published on 31 January 2025, what the process is for (a) designating and (b) creating new (i) national river walks and (b) national forests.

Mary Creagh:

The Government is progressing plans to designate nine new National River Walks across England, one in each region, to enhance access to nature. This is a priority for us and we are currently considering several delivery options, as well as reviewing where existing river walks are in place. Further details will be provided in due course.

Defra is running a competitive two-stage process to select the first new national forest. This process is in the final stages and further details will be provided in due course. Alongside this competition we are considering plans for other national forests.

■ Forests: Bedfordshire

Blake Stephenson:

[\[38445\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of expanding the Forest of Marston Vale community forest to the south.

Mary Creagh:

Any assessment of the potential merits of expanding the Forest of Marston Vale would be made by the Forest of Marston Vale Trust and its local partners. This is one of a national network of fifteen Community Forests funded by Defra to plant thousands of hectares of new trees and woodland. Suitable sites for woodland creation are identified within agreed boundaries that encompass 61 square miles between Bedford and Milton Keynes.

■ Glass: Recycling

Luke Murphy:

[\[37823\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential implications for his policies of trends in glass volumes reported through the Extended Producer Responsibility data portal in the first six months of 2024.

Mary Creagh:

The glass volume data reported through the Extended Producer Responsibility data portal in the first six months of 2024 does not cover a long enough period for trends to be identifiable. An assessment of the trends in glass volumes will be made once sufficient data has been gathered and this assessment will be based both on the data from the portal and other reliable sources we may identify.

■ Government Departments: Catering

Alex Mayer:

[\[38242\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the written statement of 25 February 2025 entitled NFU conference: Boosting farm profitability, HCWS469, what his definition is of high welfare products in the context of Government catering contracts; and what farmed animal species will be covered by this policy.

Daniel Zeichner:

The National Procurement Policy Statement underscores the Government's commitment to increasing the procurement of food that meets higher environmental standards, supporting local suppliers and upholding ethical sourcing practises across public sector contracts. This includes sourcing products from all farmed animals which have been raised to high UK welfare standards as defined in current animal welfare legislation.

■ Horses: Import Controls

Grahame Morris: [\[37145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he has taken to improve the traceability of horses in Great Britain.

Daniel Zeichner:

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

The Government recognises the importance of the equine sector to the UK economy and of improving equine traceability. Defra is engaging with industry stakeholders to consider improvements to the current regime.

Defra also regularly engages with officials in the devolved governments to discuss matters of equine identification and traceability. Officials also share data on equines located in the UK with the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in Northern Ireland and with the Department for Agriculture, Food and the Marine in the Republic of Ireland. The majority of equine movements into and out of GB take place between the island of Ireland and GB.

■ Hospitality Industry: Waste Disposal

Sarah Edwards: [\[37339\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he plans to take to ensure hospitality businesses are not double charged for the handling of their waste, in the context of the introduction of extended producer responsibility for packaging.

Mary Creagh:

Under packaging extended producer responsibility, packaging producers are only liable for fees that cover the management of packaging waste collected from households. The regulations therefore make a distinction as to what is "household packaging" and what is not, so as to attribute those costs to producers.

■ Hunting: Foxes

Neil Duncan-Jordan: [\[35597\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will commission a review into the prevalence of fox hunting across England and Wales.

Mary Creagh:

Defra has no current plans to commission a review into the prevalence of foxhunting. The Hunting Act 2004 makes it an offence to hunt a wild mammal with dogs except where it is carried out in accordance with the exemptions in the Act. The full details of the Hunting Act 2004 exemptions are available online at:

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/37/schedule/1.

Those found guilty under the Act are subject to the full force of the law. Enforcement of the Hunting Act is an operational matter for the police.

■ **Lead: Contamination**

Terry Jermy:

[\[36006\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to assess lead levels in food produced near to abandoned lead mining sites.

Daniel Zeichner:

Lead is naturally present in the environment, making it impossible to eliminate completely from food. Maximum levels are set to be as low as reasonably achievable, and enforcement action can be taken if food safety concerns arise whether or not maximum levels are specified.

Risk-based checks on lead in food by food businesses and local authorities ensure food safety. Lead is also included under the Veterinary Medicines Directorate surveillance plan. The Animal and Plant Health Agency investigates farms where animals may have been exposed to lead, providing advice to farmers as well as a reminder of their responsibilities to protect the food chain and comply with maximum levels.

■ **Livestock: Electronic Tagging**

John Lamont:

[\[36112\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential implications for its policies of Scottish Government research on Ultra High Frequency electronic identification technology in livestock.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Government has yet to make a decision on which technology to adopt for electronic identification (EID) in cattle in England. To inform decision making, Defra is reviewing, testing and seeking feedback on the different EID technologies, including through examining Scottish Government research.

In collaboration with the Welsh Government, we commissioned Harper Adams University to study the relative strengths and potential weaknesses of the two technologies under consideration. The findings of this study have now been published and can be found on Defra Science Search pages.

As we develop our thinking, Defra has also been in close touch with industry through an independent group of 25 industry, government and academic specialists from across the livestock, equine and meat industry.

■ Marine Protected Areas: Reviews

Neil Duncan-Jordan:

[\[36335\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how his department plans to ensure the forthcoming review of the English Marine Protected Area (MPA) network will deliver stronger protections for vulnerable marine habitats; and how it relates to the ongoing process to manage the impacts of fishing activities such as bottom-trawling on English offshore MPAs.

Emma Hardy:

Our MPAs represent our most precious marine resources. However, the MPA network is under pressure from a range of sources. The review which we announced in January will consider ways to future proof the network, for example in terms of climate change adaptation and mitigation, while allowing us to still meet our international commitment to effectively protect 30% of our seas by 2030.

In the meantime, the Government remains committed to making continued progress on effective management. We are considering next steps to manage bottom trawling, along with other fishing methods, where this might damage marine protected area features or benthic habitats, in the context of our domestic and international nature conservation obligations. We are keen to continue to work closely with fisheries and marine stakeholders as we develop our plans for future fisheries and marine management.

■ Packaging: Recycling

Luke Murphy:

[\[37824\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what his Department's timetable is for publishing the final Extended Producer Responsibility fees.

Mary Creagh:

Pending satisfactory regulatory checks, the confirmed, final base fees that will be used to invoice businesses (producers) will be available in June 2025, once the full year of packaging tonnage data has been reported on the Report Packaging Data (RPD) system by April 2025 and verified by the regulators.

Nick Timothy:

[\[38162\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has taken steps to promote material substitution, in the context of (a) recent trends in the level of Extended Producer Responsibility Fees and (b) the introduction of a deposit return scheme for other drink materials from 2027.

Mary Creagh:

The Government is committed to transitioning to a circular economy. The packaging reforms increase producers' roles in supporting this transition. Packaging EPR will make producers, rather than taxpayers, responsible for the costs of managing their packaging, reducing the amount of packaging used by producers and incentivising recyclable and reusable alternatives.

In line with previous consultations, and the regulations, Packaging EPR base fees in year 1 are designed to reflect the cost of managing packaging waste. From year 2 fees will include modulation to incentivise more environmentally sustainable packaging, initially focussing on recyclability. I

DRS in England, Northern Ireland and Scotland will include single-use drinks containers from 150ml to 3 litres. Materials included are polyethylene terephthalate (PET) plastic, steel, and aluminium drink containers. A DRS will create a separate cleaner, closed-loop waste stream which will mean plastic and metal drinks containers can be turned back into new drinks containers, reducing the reliance on virgin materials. The scheme has not been designed to encourage material switching.

■ Recycling

Ian Sollom:

[\[37777\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department plans to encourage the (a) reuse and (b) repair of items to help create a circular economy.

James McMurdock:

[\[37857\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to encourage (a) repair, (b) reuse and (c) other waste reduction measures.

Mary Creagh:

This Government is committed to transitioning to a circular economy. We have convened a Circular Economy Taskforce, comprising experts from industry, academia, and civil society, to help develop a Circular Economy Strategy for England. The Strategy will map our transition to a circular economy, supported by a series of roadmaps that detail the interventions that the government and others will make on a sector-by-sector basis.

Defra recognises that reuse and repair are fundamental tenets of any circular economy, and a successful transition aims to eliminate waste and promote sustainability through reuse and resource efficiency. We will consider the evidence for appropriate action right across the economy as we develop the Strategy.

■ Rights of Way

Charlie Maynard:

[\[35566\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential implications for his policies of (a) the inequality of access to nature in England and (b) that a fifth of English constituencies have no Right to Roam at all.

Mary Creagh:

The Government recognises the importance of providing access to the outdoors for people's health and wellbeing and are working to ensure this is safe and appropriate. We also recognise that access to nature is currently inequitable across England, with

some groups such as those from lower socio-economic backgrounds particularly disadvantaged. This is why we committed in our Environmental Improvement Plan to work across government to help ensure that everyone lives within 15 minutes' walk of a green or blue space, and to reduce barriers to access. We are already taking forward initiatives to help us deliver this, including new initiatives such as the river walks and national forests manifesto commitments and existing initiatives such as completing the King Charles III England Coast Path and upgrading the Coast to Coast trail across the north of England.

The last Labour Government introduced the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, which provides the public a right of access to large parts of the English countryside. The 8% figure of publicly accessible land does not include the thousands of green spaces (e.g. parks) that are available to the public. Most of the Public Forest Estate (around 258,000 hectares) in England Nation's Forests managed by Forestry England, has been dedicated as open access land.

Manuela Perteghella: [\[36251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department plans to publish a consultation on access reform.

Mary Creagh:

We are currently developing policy to improve access to nature, working closely with other Government departments and key stakeholders, and further information will be available in due course.

■ Rural England Prosperity Fund

James MacCleary: [\[35965\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, for what reason the Rural England Prosperity Fund has been reduced for the year 2025-2026.

Daniel Zeichner:

Defra announced on 4 March that it would be providing an additional £33 million for the Rural England Prosperity Fund in financial year 2025-26. This announcement continues funding beyond the lifetime of the original scheme providing new money for new projects in rural areas.

The Autumn Statement on 30 October confirmed Defra's budgets for 2024-25 and 2025-26. Funding allocations for individual programmes have been determined through the departments business planning exercise. Future funding decisions remain subject to the Government spending review.

Helen Morgan: [\[36808\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of the reduction of the Rural England Prosperity Fund in the 2025-26 financial year on rural areas.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Department announced on 4th March that it would be providing an additional £33 million for the Rural England Prosperity Fund in financial year 2025-26. This announcement continues funding beyond the lifetime of the original scheme providing new money for new projects in rural areas.

The Autumn Statement on 30 October confirmed Defra's budgets for 2024-25 and 2025-26. Funding allocations for individual programmes have been determined through the departments business planning exercise. Future funding decisions remain subject to the government spending review.

Helen Morgan:[\[36809\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how the level of funding for the Rural England Prosperity Fund was decided for 2025-26.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Department announced on 4th March that it would be providing an additional £33 million for the Rural England Prosperity Fund in financial year 2025-26. This announcement continues funding beyond the lifetime of the original scheme providing new money for new projects in rural areas.

The Autumn Statement on 30 October confirmed Defra's budgets for 2024-25 and 2025-26. Funding allocations for individual programmes have been determined through the departments business planning exercise. Future funding decisions remain subject to the government spending review.

John Milne:[\[36970\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he made an assessment of the adequacy of the Rural England Prosperity Fund before reducing the level of funding to be provided through that scheme in the 2025-26 financial year.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Department announced on 4th March that it would be providing an additional £33 million for the Rural England Prosperity Fund in financial year 2025-26. This announcement continues funding beyond the lifetime of the original scheme providing new money for new projects in rural areas.

The Autumn Statement on 30 October confirmed Defra's budgets for 2024-25 and 2025-26. Funding allocations for individual programmes have been determined through the departments business planning exercise. Future funding decisions remain subject to the government spending review.

■ Stansted Airport: Import Controls**Grahame Morris:**[\[37143\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of the closure of the Border Inspection Post at Stansted Airport on the British horseracing industry; and whether he plans to take steps to ensure that horses are able to continue travelling to and from the UK by air.

Daniel Zeichner:

Defra is aware that Stansted has signalled an intention to relocate its Border Inspection Post to another site and that the timing of this remains uncertain. This is a commercial decision for the airport's owners. No application to de-designate the existing site or designate a new site has been received. The Department stands ready to help progress such applications when received.

■ Tree Planting: Animal Welfare**Dr Neil Hudson:****[R] [36459]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that Government-funded tree planting schemes are avoiding planting sycamore trees adjacent to, or near to, known equine grazing areas, in the context of the causative link between exposure to sycamore trees and seeds and (a) equine atypical myopathy and (b) hypoglycin A toxicity.

Mary Creagh:

Defra seeks to ensure all Government-funded tree planting schemes plant the right trees in the right place. Trees, forests, and woodlands can bring different benefits to different individuals, communities, and sectors. All woodland creation proposals considered by the Forestry Commission are assessed according to the UK Forestry Standard (UKFS), which sets out the government's approach to sustainable forestry. The UKFS is explicit on the importance of tree species selection ensuring a diverse composition which is site appropriate, with the potential to mitigate the risks posed by climate change, pests and diseases.

In November 2024 a [Tree Species Guide for UK Agroforestry Systems](#) was launched. Developed by Forest Research and the University of Reading, this is designed to inform farmers about the different tree species which could be used in agroforestry systems, and highlights potential risks associated with individual species.

Landowners are encouraged to engage with neighbours and stakeholders when designing their woodland creation proposals, to discuss the proposal, including species selection. All woodland creation and most felling proposals are listed on the [Forestry Commissions Consultation Public Register](#).

■ Zoos: Animal Breeding**Martin Wrigley:****[36240]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the upcoming negotiation with the European Union on Sanitary and Phyto-Sanitary arrangements will include zoo breeding programmes.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Government is committed to resetting our EU relationship, including by seeking to negotiate a SPS agreement. We have been clear that an SPS agreement could boost trade and deliver significant benefits on both sides. It's too early to discuss any

specific areas in detail and we will not be providing a running commentary on discussions with the EU.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ **Afghanistan: Women**

Saqib Bhatti:

[\[36456\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the proposed reduction of the proportion of gross national income spent on official development assistance on women and girls in Afghanistan.

Saqib Bhatti:

[\[36458\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to ringfence official development assistance for women and girls in Afghanistan.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

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

■ **British Indian Ocean Territory: Seas and Oceans**

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[\[37762\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what estimate his Department has made of the value of the (a) seabed and (b) other parts of the marine portfolio of the area within 200 nautical miles of the British Indian Ocean Territory.

Stephen Doughty:

The British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) has some of the most biodiverse waters on the planet with over 220 species of coral, 855 species of fish and 355 species of molluscs. Since its designation as a Marine Protected Area in 2010, the BIOT Administration has managed environmental policy across the archipelago, with marine conservation efforts supported by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's Blue Belt Programme. The agreement between the UK and Mauritius will be supported by an enhanced partnership on conservation under which the UK will support Mauritius to establish a Marine Protected Area that protects the globally significant ecosystems in the Archipelago.

■ British Indian Ocean Territory: Sovereignty

Priti Patel:

[\[36635\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 5 March 2025 to Question 32981 on British Indian Ocean Territory: Sovereignty, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of (a) the transfer of sovereignty and (b) the consequences of the protections being changed of the current marine protected area on (i) biodiversity, (ii) protection of reefs, (iii) fish species and numbers and (iv) other plant and animal life.

Stephen Doughty:

The UK will assist Mauritius in implementing a new Mauritian Marine Protected Area in the Archipelago, which will extend to technical, financial, capacity-building assistance, fostering long-term sustainable management. The parties will work with international conservation organisations to ensure the implementation of science-backed strategies for conservation.

■ British Overseas Territories: Economic Growth

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[36373\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help (a) support economic (i) development and (i) diversification and (b) reduce reliance on financial services in British Overseas Territories.

Stephen Doughty:

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) promotes economic development in Official Development Assistance-eligible territories primarily through budget support and essential capital programmes. These amounted to £100.53million in Financial Year 24/25 and, with advisory input, enables the development of diversified private sector economies.

While non-aided Overseas Territories (OTs) are responsible for their own public finance decisions and economic policy, the FCDO provides technical assistance and project funding to improve diversification. This has included, but is not limited to, funding a financial adviser, contributing to the airport redevelopment in Anguilla and providing infrastructure expertise available to all OTs. The FCDO continues to engage with the OTs on matters related to diversification.

■ Climate Change: Finance

Wendy Morton:

[\[36406\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department is taking steps to ensure that aid reclassified as international climate finance provides additional finance to developing countries.

Stephen Doughty:

All UK International Climate Finance (ICF) supports developing countries with capital investment, technical assistance, and capacity building to help drive the transition to

low-carbon, climate resilient and nature positive development paths. Since 2011 UK ICF programmes have directly supported over 110 million people adapt to the effects of climate change; reduced or avoided over 105 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions and provided over 82 million people with improved access to clean energy.

Wendy Morton:

[\[36410\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much and what proportion of expenditure on international climate finance will have been with (a) multilateral organisations and (b) development banks in each financial year between 2020-21 and 2025-26.

Stephen Doughty:

The UK Government spend on International Climate Finance (ICF) was £1,560 million in 2020-21, £1,623 million in 2021-22, £1,641 million in 2022-23, and £2,277 million in 2023-24. Financial years 2024-25 and 2025-26 are not complete and so figures are not available. The proportion of ICF spent through multilateral organisations was 41% in 2020-21, 23% in 2021-22, 39% in 2022-23, and 46% in 2023-24. The proportion of ICF spent on development banks, included under multilateral organisations, was 0% between 2020-21 and 2022-23, and 16% in 2023-24.

Wendy Morton:

[\[36411\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what estimate he has made of (a) overspends and (b) underspends in the International Climate Finance budget.

Stephen Doughty:

The UK has met all of its climate finance targets to date.

Wendy Morton:

[\[36412\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what amount of International Climate Finance funding is (a) allocated and (b) distributed via other Government departments.

Stephen Doughty:

Between 2021-22 and 2023-24 the amount spent on International Climate Finance was £4,111 million by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, £1,179 million by the Department for Energy Security and Net-Zero / Department for Science and Technology and £250 million by the Department for Environment and Rural Affairs. Figures for 2024-25 and subsequent years will be published in due course.

■ Detainees

Mrs Elsie Blundell:

[\[37752\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what progress he has made on appointing a special envoy for complex detention cases.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) is committed to strengthening support for British Nationals overseas, including through the appointment of an Envoy for complex detention cases. Further details will be announced in due course.

■ Export Controls: Russia**Martin Wrigley:**[\[34074\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will take steps with Cabinet colleagues to end all (a) non-humanitarian aid, (b) trade, (c) financial services and (d) exports to Russia.

Stephen Doughty:

In response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the UK has put in place an unprecedented package of sanctions.

The UK has locked most of the Russian banking sector out of the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT), frozen Russia's sovereign assets and adopted a wide range of trade and financial sanctions measures, covering most areas of the Russian economy with the exception of trade in humanitarian goods such as food and medicine.

We will continue to bear down on Russia, ratcheting up economic pressure until it ends its brutal invasion of Ukraine.

■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Children**Wendy Morton:**[\[36065\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of establishing a Special Envoy for Children within his Department.

Stephen Doughty:

As a ratifier of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UK Government is committed to the promotion, protection and realisation of children's rights at home and overseas. Whilst the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office does not have a dedicated Special Envoy on Children, Ministers and Senior Officials regularly raise and advocate for increased awareness and action on cross-cutting issues affecting children through diplomatic and international engagement.

This is a priority for the Foreign Secretary: in January, he launched a new campaign to advocate for family-based care for children around the world, recognising the specific vulnerabilities faced by children in need of care and protection. Further, in November Baroness Chapman, Minister for International Development and Latin America and the Caribbean, represented the UK at the first Global Ministerial Conference on Violence Against Children.

■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Flags

Kevin Hollinrake: [\[35702\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 11 February 2025 to Question 29073 on FCDO: Flags, what flags have been flown at ground level but visible from the public highway since 5 July 2024.

Catherine West:

The bisexual flag was flown in September 2024 and the Union flag was flown in November 2024 on the internal Quad flag poles.

■ International Assistance

Monica Harding: [\[37851\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to prioritise (a) maintaining and extending financial commitments to multilateral organisations and (b) bilateral aid to partner countries, in the context of the reduction in ODA.

Stephen Doughty:

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

■ John Bunyan Fund for Freedom of Religion and Belief

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[37266\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what criteria his Department uses to assess applications to the John Bunyan Fund.

Stephen Doughty:

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's John Bunyan Fund provides funding to overseas posts to support the promotion and protection of freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) for all around the world. UK posts are invited to submit applications that support the central objective of the fund: to curtail FoRB violations and abuses. Diplomatic missions have full control over the exact design and scope of project work to best develop an intervention that suits their specific in-country context and priorities and is complementary to any other financing they receive.

■ Manahel al-Otaibi

Ellie Chowns: [\[38335\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations he has made to his Saudi counterpart on the case of Manahel al-Otaibi.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office have monitored the case of Manahel Al-Otaibi and will continue to do so. We have raised the case with the Saudi authorities. The British Embassy in Riyadh has attempted to observe Ms Al-Otaibi's trials. We will continue to discuss human rights, including individual cases of concern, with the Saudi government.

■ Northern Cyprus: Travel Restrictions**Sir Iain Duncan Smith:**[\[37527\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of impact of (a) indirect flights via Turkey and (b) other travel restrictions on UK nationals travelling to the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.

Stephen Doughty:

We recognise that the status quo in Cyprus creates serious challenges for the Turkish Cypriot community, including in relation to international travel. The Government believes a just and lasting settlement is the best way of resolving these challenges and improving the lives of all Cypriots. On 18 March, I attended talks in Geneva brokered by the UN Secretary General where I encouraged all sides to engage constructively towards a Cyprus Settlement.

■ Peacekeeping Operations: Finance**Harpreet Uppal:**[\[36288\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions his Department has had with (a) locally-led mutual aid networks and (b) civil society on funding for peacebuilding programmes.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

Ministers meet regularly with mutual assistance networks during their visits to countries facing humanitarian needs. During his visit to the Chad-Sudan border in January 2025, the Foreign Secretary announced £20 million in additional funding to support people in Sudan and Chad, including support to mutual aid groups, such as the Emergency Response Rooms. The previous Minister for Development also met with these networks during recent visits to both Sudan and Ethiopia where they are involved in both relief and peacebuilding, and where we have allocated UK Official Development Assistance to peacebuilding programmes in Tigray. A major purpose of the Integrated Security Fund is to provide support to civil society actors in conflict environments. Similarly, the UK continues to invest in the Peacebuilding Fund, the UN's primary mechanism supporting conflict prevention and peacebuilding activity in over 40 countries including Sudan, South Sudan, West Africa, and the Sahel. The FCDO engages regularly with civil society working on conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peacebuilding, including on funding for programmes.

■ Syria: Christianity

Lee Anderson:

[\[38133\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help protect persecuted Christians in Syria.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

We are closely monitoring the treatment of all civilians in Syria, including those from the Christian community. In my Statement in Parliament on 10 March, and in the Foreign Secretary's public statement on 9 March, we made clear that the interim authorities must ensure the protection of all Syrians. I raised this with the Syrian Interim Foreign Minister, Asaad al-Shaibani, on 17 March, we consistently emphasise the need for a Syrian-led political transition that leads to an inclusive, non-sectarian and representative government.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Ambulance Services: South West

Cameron Thomas:

[\[38528\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce ambulance waiting times in (a) the South West of England and (b) Gloucestershire.

Karin Smyth:

Ambulance services in Gloucestershire and the South West are provided by the South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust, with responsibility for commissioning the services a matter for the local NHS Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board (ICB). Specific local actions needed to reduce ambulance waiting times should be undertaken and agreed locally by National Health Service organisations in the best interests of the local population and patients.

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

■ Aphasia: Health Services

Fabian Hamilton:

[\[37983\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to introduce nationally commissioned services for the treatment of primary progressive aphasia.

Stephen Kinnock:

There are no current plans to introduce such nationally commissioned services. We are committed to delivering high quality care and support for every person with dementia, and central to this is the provision of personalised care and support planning for post diagnostic support.

Provision of dementia health care services is the responsibility of local integrated care boards (ICBs). It is the expectation that ICBs commission services based on local population needs, taking account of the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines. It is the responsibility of ICBs to work within their geographical area to offer services that meet the needs of their population.

Local authorities are required to provide or arrange services that meet the social care needs of the local population under the Care Act 2014.

■ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: Diagnosis

Sarah Bool:

[37042]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is taking steps to (a) prevent Integrated Care Boards from deprioritising ADHD assessments due to funding limits and (b) ensure that patients' rights are upheld if funding limits are reached.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 18 March 2025]: Local integrated care boards (ICBs) are responsible for planning service provision in their local area, including for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) assessments. In doing so, ICBs should take account of waiting lists, considering how local funding can be deployed to best meet the needs of their local population.

Patients will continue to have the right to choose their provider as set out in legislation. The proposed NHS Payment Scheme does not and cannot change this.

The Government is committed to patients having the right to choose their provider when referred to consultant-led treatment, or to a mental health professional, for their first appointment as an outpatient. Further information on the choices available for patients can be found on the NHS Choice framework available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-nhs-choice-framework>

The consultation on the proposed NHS Payment Scheme closed on 28 February 2025. The outcome of the consultation will be published shortly once all responses received have been fully considered and any decisions made about the final Payment Scheme.

NHS England has established an ADHD taskforce which is working to bring together those with lived experience with experts from the National Health Service, education, charity, and justice sectors. The taskforce is working to get a better understanding of the challenges affecting those with ADHD, including timely and equitable access to services and support, with the final report expected in summer 2025.

Luke Taylor:

[37792]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of changes to the NHS Payment Scheme on the availability of ADHD assessment services.

Stephen Kinnock:

As required by law, NHS England has assessed the impact of the proposed NHS Payment Scheme. This is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/25-26-NHSPS-Consultation-notice-C-impact-assessment.pdf>

This impact assessment includes consideration of the impact on patient choice, as well as an assessment of the impact on patients, in line with NHS England's public sector equality duty.

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) patients will continue to benefit from the Right to Choose their provider at the point of referral. None of the proposed changes to the NHS Payment Scheme included in the consultation would change this.

Local integrated care boards (ICBs) are responsible for planning service provision in their local area, including for ADHD assessments. In doing so, ICBs should take account of waiting lists, considering how local funding can be deployed to best meet the needs of their local population.

■ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: Drugs**Yuan Yang:****[38293]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of shortages of ADHD medication.

Karin Smyth:

As a result of intensive work, some issues with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) medicines have resolved. All strengths of lisdexamfetamine, atomoxetine capsules, atomoxetine oral solution and guanfacine prolonged-release tablets are now available.

However, whilst supply of methylphenidate prolonged-release tablets has improved, issues persist. We are continuing to work to resolve these remaining issues by engaging with all suppliers of methylphenidate prolonged-release tablets to assess the challenges faced and their actions to address them. We are also directing suppliers to secure additional stocks, expedite deliveries where possible, and review plans to build further capacity to support continued growth in demand for the short and long-term. The Department is also working with new suppliers of methylphenidate prolonged-release tablets to improve supply and resiliency for the United Kingdom market.

We are supporting an ADHD taskforce established by NHS England to examine ADHD service provision. The taskforce will bring together expertise from across a broad range of sectors, including the National Health Service, education and justice, to help provide a joined-up approach in response to concerns around rising demand. In collaboration with NHS England's national ADHD data improvement plan, we plan

to combine modelling for future growth forecasts, which will be shared with industry to improve demand forecasting for ADHD medicines.

The Department has worked with NHS specialists to develop advice on prescribing alternative ADHD medications. We expect that ADHD service providers should follow this guidance and offer rapid responses for urgent advice, especially for high-risk patients. To aid decision-making at the point of prescribing and dispensing of ADHD medicines, we continue to update a list of available ADHD products on the Specialist Pharmacy Service website.

■ Autism: Children

Leigh Ingham:

[\[37480\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of providing guidelines to social workers for parents with autism.

Stephen Kinnock:

Social workers involved in an autistic person's care have a duty to promote their human rights, safety and wellbeing, assess their needs and help facilitate access to the right services.

The regulator for the social work profession, Social Work England, sets the professional standards. These are standards all social workers must meet. The professional standards include that social workers must be able to provide, or support people to access, advice and services tailored to meet their needs.

Social workers complete initial education and training, for which training providers must meet Social Work England's Education and Training Standards. These standards require training providers to ensure that the course is continually updated because of developments in research, legislation, Government policy and best practice.

Additionally, under the Health and Care Act 2022, Care Quality Commission-registered providers are required to ensure their staff receive specific training on learning disability and autism appropriate to their role. This will help to ensure that staff, including social workers, have the right knowledge and skills to provide safe and informed care.

To support this, we have been rolling out the Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training on Learning Disability and Autism. Over two million people have already completed the e-learning package which is the first part of this training.

■ Cancer: Disadvantaged

Jim Shannon:

[\[37151\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential correlation between areas with higher levels of deprivation and trends in the level of cancer diagnosis.

Ashley Dalton:

Making improvements across different cancer types is critical to reducing disparities in cancer survival. We recognize that there are challenges for several different populations, particularly for people living in the most deprived areas of the country.

We are directly targeting activity at areas that we know will make a difference. This includes awareness campaigns such as the NHS Help Us, Help You campaign, to increase awareness of cancer symptoms and encourage people to get checked.

We know that some cancers disproportionately impact those living in deprived areas, notably lung cancer. The Lung Cancer Screening Programme is a national screening programme, targeted at those aged between 55 and 74 years old with a history of smoking. It is designed to identify cancers at an earlier stage and has led to over 3,000 more lung cancers being diagnosed at such a stage. Furthermore, NHS England's Core20PLUS5 approach informs action to reduce healthcare inequalities, including for early cancer diagnosis.

The NHS England Cancer Programme commissions clinical cancer audits, which provide timely evidence for cancer service providers of where patterns of care in England may vary, increase the consistency of access to treatments, and help stimulate improvements in cancer treatment and outcomes for patients. Rather than a single audit, NHS England commissions ten audits, by tumour type.

We are investing an additional £889 million in general practice to reinforce the front door of the NHS, bringing total spend on the GP Contract to £13.2 billion in 2025/26. This is the biggest increase in over a decade.

Finally, the recently announced Cancer Plan, which will complement the 10-Year Health Plan and support delivery of the Government's Health Mission, will set out further actions to improve early diagnosis.

■ Cannabis: Medical Treatments**Jo Platt:**[\[37268\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing electronic prescriptions for medicinal cannabis.

Karin Smyth:

Cannabis-based products for medicinal use are Schedule 2 controlled drugs under the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 2001. Electronic prescribing of Schedule 2 and 3 Controlled Drugs in National Health Service primary care settings has been operational since 2019.

Electronic prescriptions for controlled drugs in Schedules 2 and 3 must be sent using an advanced electronic signature and sent via the NHS Electronic Prescribing Service as part of enhanced security measures. There are no current plans to make legislative changes to enable similar systems in private healthcare to prescribe Schedule 2 and 3 controlled drugs.

■ Care Homes: Allowances

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[38103\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the personal expenses allowance for residents of care homes.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[38104\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the criteria used to determine the amount allocated for the Personal Expenses Allowance for residents in care homes.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 19 March 2025]: The personal expenses allowance (PEA) sets the statutory minimum amount of income an individual residing in a care home must be left with after being charged for their care. These rates are reviewed annually, and local authorities also have the discretion to set higher rates where they choose.

The 2025 Local Authority Circular, published on 3 March 2025, sets out that the rates of the PEA will be updated in line with consumer price index (CPI) inflation for 2025/2026, to £30.65 per week.

This aligns with the Chancellor's Autumn Budget 2024 announcement that benefits will be updated in line with CPI inflation.

■ Carers

Wendy Chamberlain: [\[R\] \[34327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking with Cabinet colleagues on improving support for unpaid carers.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 6 March 2025]: Supporting unpaid carers is a cross-Government issue which requires cross-Government support. I recently met with the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment Rights, Competition and Markets in the Department for Business and Trade and the Minister of State for Social Security and Disability in the Department for Work and Pensions to look at how we can work together more closely to support unpaid carers.

The Government has already taken steps to support unpaid carers. From April 2025, we are increasing the Carer's Allowance weekly earnings limit from £151 a week to £196. This means carers can earn up to £10,000 a year whilst still retaining Carer's Allowance; this is approximately an additional £2,000 a year.

The Government recognises the challenges facing the adult social care system. That is why the Government is launching an independent commission into adult social care as part of our critical first steps towards delivering a National Care Service.

The commission will start a national conversation about what working age adults, older people, and their families expect from adult social care, including exploring the needs of unpaid carers who provide vital care and support.

The Government is also committed to reviewing the implementation of Carer's Leave and examining the benefits of introducing paid Carer's Leave.

■ Dementia: Health Services

Victoria Collins:

[\[37846\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure the move to a neighbourhood health service will (a) meet the complex needs of people living with dementia and their families and (b) include (i) Admiral Nurses and (ii) other dementia specialist nurses as a core role within these multidisciplinary teams.

Stephen Kinnock:

We are committed to moving towards a Neighbourhood Health Service, with more care delivered in local communities to spot problems earlier, supporting people to stay healthier and maintain their independence for longer. The Government also wants a society where every person with dementia receives high-quality, compassionate care from diagnosis through to the end of life.

Neighbourhood Health Guidelines have been published alongside the 2025/26 NHS Operational Planning Guidance and the 2025/26 Better Care Fund policy framework, to help integrated care boards (ICBs), local authorities and health and care providers to continue to progress neighbourhood health in 2025/26. The focus for 2025/26 is on individuals with complex needs who require support from multiple services and organisations, which could include those living with dementia.

Neighbourhood health reinforces integrated working for the National Health Service, local government, social care and wider partners including the voluntary sector as the norm, not the exception. Admiral Nurses are developed and supported by Dementia UK as an independent charitable organisation. Provision of dementia health services is the responsibility of local ICBs. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence recommends providing people living with dementia with a single named health or social care professional who is responsible for coordinating their care.

The full vision for the health system will be set out in the 10-Year Health Plan.

■ Dental Services

Jim Shannon:

[\[37158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve NHS dental services.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Government plans to tackle the challenges for patients trying to access National Health Service dental care with a rescue plan to provide 700,000 more urgent dental appointments and recruit new dentists to areas that need them most. To rebuild

dentistry in the long term and increase access to NHS dental care, we will reform the dental contract, with a shift to focus on prevention and the retention of NHS dentists.

The responsibility for commissioning primary care services, including NHS dentistry, to meet the needs of the local population has been delegated to integrated care boards across England. The provision of NHS dental care is a devolved matter.

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[37765\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 11 March 2025 to Question 35427 on Dental Services, what estimate he has made of when that data will be available.

Stephen Kinnock:

Data on the number of additional urgent dental appointments created since 4 July 2024 will be available in due course. We are working with NHS England and the NHS Business Service Authority on the data publication schedule.

James McMurdock: [\[37891\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to ensure that the targets for the additional 700,000 urgent dental appointments are met in areas with high vacancies in NHS dental services.

Stephen Kinnock:

We will deliver 700,000 extra urgent dental appointments per year, with integrated care boards (ICBs) asked to start making extra appointments available from April 2025.

Appointments will be available across the country. Patients will be able to access these additional appointments either through NHS 111, or via helplines set up by their ICB where these arrangements are in place.

The methodology used to determine how to allocate the 700,000 appointments across ICBs has considered factors including unmet need, population size and projected contract delivery at an ICB level in 2024/25. Details can be found in the letter sent to ICBs on 21 February 2025 and Annex A, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/arrangements-for-nhs-urgent-primary-dental-care-during-2025-26-and-confirmation-of-the-closure-of-the-new-patient-premium-scheme/#annex-a-distribution-of-700k-additional-appointments>

ICBs will be responsible for ensuring these appointments are commissioned in line with local population need, to support improved access to urgent dental care for those most in need. We will monitor delivery monthly to identify where ICBs need further support to deliver against their allocated share of the 700,000 additional appointments.

Areas which are struggling to recruit and retain National Health Service dentists can make use of the Golden Hello scheme which is aimed to encourage dentists to work in areas where they are needed most.

James McMurdock:

[37893]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to ensure equitable access to NHS dental services for patients living in areas with chronic shortages of NHS dentists.

James McMurdock:

[37894]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to tackle low levels of dental attendance in Thurrock.

Stephen Kinnock:

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

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

■ Dental Services: Disability

Helen Maguire:

[37083]

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

Stephen Kinnock:

We are committed to ensuring National Health Service dental services are available to all who need them. The January 2025 Getting It Right First Time (GIRFT) report on community dental services (CDS) highlighted several known challenges in the operation and monitoring of CDS. NHS England and the Department have taken the recommendations on board and are working to improve the data reporting process to increase oversight of CDS activity, including current waiting lists and performance reporting.

Integrated care boards (ICBs) are responsible for undertaking special care oral health needs assessments, to identify areas of oral health need, to inform local commissioning intentions, and determine the local priorities for investment.

On 5 October 2024, NHS England announced a new dental check-up service for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. The dental check-ups will be offered to all special residential schools and colleges across England from next year and will reach around 18,000 children and young people. More information is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/2024/10/nhs-rolls-out-free-eyesight-hearing-and-dental-checks-for-children-at-residential-special-schools/>

■ Dental Services: Labour Turnover and Recruitment**James McMurdock:** [\[37892\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Golden Hello scheme in improving (a) NHS dentist recruitment and (b) retention levels of staff.

Stephen Kinnock:

We are determined to rebuild National Health Service dentistry, but it will take time and there are no quick fixes. Strengthening the workforce is key to our ambitions.

Integrated care boards have started to recruit posts through the Golden Hello scheme. This recruitment incentive will see up to 240 dentists receiving payments of £20,000 to work in those areas that need them most for three years.

■ Dental Services: Pension Credit**James MacCleary:** [\[37466\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to make (a) dental mouth guards and (b) other dental orthotics services available for free on the NHS for people who are on Pension Credit.

Stephen Kinnock:

Dental mouth guards are available for free to any patient who is in receipt of Pension Credit, Guarantee Credit, or anyone else who is exempt from dental patient charges, where they have a specific dental need for one. There are currently no plans to change the dental patient charge exemption criteria.

National Health Service orthodontic treatment is free for people under 18 years old with a clear health need for treatment. Orthodontic treatment is not usually available on the NHS for adults. More information is available at the following link:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/orthodontics/>

■ Dental Services: Rural Areas**Ian Roome:** [\[37875\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure improved access to NHS dentistry for people in rural areas.

Stephen Kinnock:

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

The responsibility for commissioning primary care services, including NHS dentistry, to meet the needs of the local population has been delegated to the integrated care boards (ICBs) across England.

The additional 700,000 appointments will be available across the country, with specific targets for each region. These targets are more heavily weighted towards those areas where they are needed the most. Further information is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/arrangements-for-nhs-urgent-primary-dental-care-during-2025-26-and-confirmation-of-the-closure-of-the-new-patient-premium-scheme/#annex-a-distribution-of-700k-additional-appointments>

ICBs have started to advertise posts through the Golden Hello scheme. This recruitment incentive will see up to 240 dentists receiving payments of £20,000 to work in those areas that need them most for three years.

■ Dentistry: Lincolnshire

Sir John Hayes:

[\[34586\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many dentists have been recruited through the dental recruitment incentive scheme in Lincolnshire.

Stephen Kinnock:

The application process for the dental recruitment incentive scheme is in progress and remains open until the end of March 2025. The Lincolnshire Integrated Care Board continues to work with dental practices whose applications for funding have been successful and has provided funding locally for seven posts in addition to the four places available through the incentive scheme. This recruitment incentive will see up to 240 dentists across England receiving payments of £20,000 to work in those areas that need them most for three years.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Communication

John Cooper:

[\[36334\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, 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.

Karin Smyth:

The following table shows the Department's spend through CCS agreements RM6125 (lots 1 and 2) and RM6123 since 5 July 2024:

AGREEMENT	CONTRACTOR	SPEND
RM6125 (Lot 1: end to end campaign solutions)	Mullen Lowe	£3,929,499.92
RM6123 (Media services)	Manning Gottlieb OMD	£15,232,110.00
RM6125 (Lot 2: Media strategy and planning)	Wavemaker	£212,763.00

Source: Department of Health and Social Care

Information on spend by arm's length bodies is not held centrally. The spend outlined above includes advertising, creative development and production, and media planning. Investment is set as part of the campaign planning process based on the audiences and objectives. This spend includes campaigns such as adult social care recruitment, childhood immunisations, smoking and mental health.

■ Dienogest

Sir Alec Shelbrooke:

[\[38027\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve access to Dienogest for people with endometriosis.

Karin Smyth:

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is the independent body that develops authoritative, evidence-based guidance for the National Health Service in England on best practice. In its guideline on the diagnosis and management of endometriosis, last updated in November 2024, NICE recommends that hormonal treatment such as Dienogest should be offered to women with suspected, confirmed or recurrent endometriosis.

It is the clinician's responsibility to make decisions appropriate to the circumstances of the individual, in consultation with them and their families and carers or guardian. Prescribers must always satisfy themselves that the medicines they consider appropriate for their patients can be safely prescribed and ensure that they take account of NICE guidelines, as well as the local commissioning decisions of their respective integrated care boards.

■ Disabled Facilities Grants

Max Wilkinson:

[\[36822\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of (a) increasing the maximum mandatory disabled facilities grant and (b) reviewing means test arrangements for that grant.

Stephen Kinnock:

In England, we continue to fund the locally administered Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) which helps eligible older and disabled people on low incomes to adapt their homes. We are providing an immediate in-year uplift of £86 million in 2024/25. This is on top of the £625 million paid to local authorities in May 2024. The Government also announced an £86 million additional investment in the DFG for 2025/26 at the Autumn Budget 2024, bringing total funding for 2025/26 to £711 million.

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

■ Doctors: Surrey Heath**Dr Al Pinkerton:**[\[37945\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help ensure that healthcare services can (a) recruit and (b) retain doctors in Surrey Heath constituency.

Karin Smyth:

Decisions about recruitment are matters for individual National Health Service employers. NHS trusts manage their recruitment at a local level ensuring they have the right number of staff in place, with the right skill mix, to deliver safe and effective care.

NHS England's Enhancing Resident Doctors Working Lives programme continues to implement several measures aimed at supporting resident doctors, supporting them to stay in training and the NHS, and reducing overall attrition. In addition, the NHS National Retention Programme is actively improving working conditions for doctors by enhancing workplace culture, promoting flexible training, and reducing burnout and attrition.

■ Drugs: Testing**Mr Richard Holden:**[\[37317\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to ensure that the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency uses (a) placenta-on-a-chip and (b) other modern test methods in drug testing.

Karin Smyth:

In the development of new medicines, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) does not, itself, carry out experimental studies. Its role is to review reports of studies supplied by drug developers characterising safety and potential efficacy of the drug; these can include placenta-on-a chip, or other methods using human cells.

To be able to make such judgements, MHRA staff need to maintain and develop their knowledge about modern testing methods and to this end, MHRA staff have contributed to organising and have attended meetings where these methods are

discussed. For instance, Agency staff contributed to a multi-stakeholder meeting in London in November 2024 organised in conjunction with the National Council for the 3Rs and with the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry for which a publication is now under preparation. MHRA staff will attend the Microphysiological Systems World Summit in Brussels in June 2025, where drug testing methods will be a major topic of discussion.

The MHRA's own laboratory activities include the independent testing of certain biological products, for example, vaccines and anti-toxins, to ensure they meet acceptable standards prior to each batch being released for use. In the small number of products where this work currently relies on use of animals, development of acceptable, validated, alternatives is a major priority; the numbers of animals used in our regulatory science has more than halved in the last 10 years.

■ **Electronic Cigarettes: Surrey Heath**

Dr Al Pinkerton:

[\[37479\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to tackle the sale of illegal vapes in Surrey Heath constituency.

Ashley Dalton:

The Tobacco and Vapes Bill will strengthen the enforcement of vape sales regulations by giving Ministers in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland the ability to introduce a licensing scheme for the retail sale of tobacco, vapes and nicotine products. The licensing scheme will support Trading Standards to crack down on rogue vape retailers. The Bill also enables the introduction of a new registration scheme for tobacco, vape and nicotine products sold on the United Kingdom market. This will help ensure products are compliant with product safety and standards requirements and will enable Trading Standards to remove non-compliant products from the market quickly and efficiently.

In 2025/26, we will invest £10 million of new funding in Trading Standards to enhance their work to tackle the illicit and underage sale of tobacco and vapes, and support the implementation of the Tobacco and Vapes Bill.

The introduction of a new Vaping Products Duty in October 2026 will provide civil and criminal powers for HM Revenue and Customs to assess for duty and seize products and equipment used to produce or transport illicit vape products.

■ **Epilepsy: Drugs**

Zöe Franklin:

[\[38333\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to (a) help tackle shortages of epilepsy medication and (b) ensure patients have consistent access to their prescribed treatment.

Karin Smyth:

The Department is working hard with industry to help resolve intermittent supply issues with some epilepsy medications. As a result of ongoing activity and intensive

work, including directing suppliers to expedite deliveries, most issues, including with carbamazepine, lamotrigine and oxcarbazepine presentations, have been resolved.

We are currently aware of an ongoing supply issue with all strengths of topiramate tablets from one manufacturer. This supply issue is expected to resolve by the end of May 2025. We are also aware of a shortage of phenobarbital 15 milligram tablets from one manufacturer with the resupply date to be confirmed. In both cases, alternative suppliers are in stock with sufficient supply to support patients. These issues have been communicated to the National Health Service.

■ **Epilepsy: Women**

Cat Smith:

[\[903269\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking with Cabinet colleagues to support women with epilepsy.

Ashley Dalton:

The Government is committed to prioritising women's health, placing women's equality at the heart of our agenda and ensuring women's health is never again neglected.

At a national level, there are several initiatives supporting service improvement and better care for patients with epilepsy, including women, such as the RightCare Epilepsy Toolkit, and the Getting It Right First Time Programme (GIRFT) for Neurology and the Neurology Transformation Programme (NTP).

The GIRFT National Specialty Report made recommendations designed to improve services nationally and to support the National Health Service to deliver care more equitably across the country. The National Specialty Report highlighted differences in how services are delivered and offered an unprecedented opportunity to share successful initiatives between trusts to improve patient services nationally.

Building on the GIRFT National Specialty Report, the NTP has developed a model of integrated care for neurology services to support integrated care boards (ICBs) to deliver the right service, at the right time for all neurology patients, including providing care closer to home. A toolkit is being developed to support ICBs to understand and implement this new model.

The RightCare Epilepsy Toolkit includes specific recommendations regarding supporting women with epilepsy. For example, it states that support should be provided to women with epilepsy who are pregnant and those who are of childbearing age which makes clear the risks of certain anti-epileptic drugs that are known to cause birth defects, such as sodium valproate.

The Toolkit also makes clear that it is equally important to provide clear information and guidance on the risks of stopping an anti-epileptic drug treatment, which include Sudden Unexpected Death in Epilepsy, that is not related to causing birth defects, and the risks that poses to the mother and unborn baby to support balanced informed decisions on care.

■ Fluoride: Drinking Water**Andrew Cooper:****[34466]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing a national water fluoridation strategy.

Stephen Kinnock:

Water fluoridation is an effective population measure that reduces tooth decay. It should be used to complement other effective methods of increasing fluoride use, as set out in the statement by the UK Chief Medical Officers, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/water-fluoridation-statement-from-the-uk-chief-medical-officers/statement-on-water-fluoridation-from-the-uk-chief-medical-officers>.

On 7 March 2025, we confirmed plans, following public consultation, to expand provision of water fluoridation in the north east of England. The outcome report is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/community-water-fluoridation-expansion-in-the-north-east-of-england>

There are no current plans for a national water fluoridation strategy. Any decisions on the future expansion of water fluoridation will be based on oral health needs, funding, and will be subject to public consultation.

Alex Sobel:**[37692]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance his Department provides on safe levels of fluoride in drinking water.

Stephen Kinnock:

Fluoride is a naturally occurring mineral found in water and some foods. The amount of naturally occurring fluoride in water varies across the United Kingdom due to geological differences. Drinking water regulations contain a standard for fluoride which is a maximum of 1.5 milligrams per litre. This is the same level as the World Health Organisation health-based guideline value for fluoride in drinking water. If the standard of 1.5 milligram per litre is breached, the Drinking Water Inspectorate has the power to take enforcement action to require the water company to rectify the breach.

In some areas of England, the level of fluoride is adjusted through a water fluoridation scheme to improve dental health. In these areas, the target level for fluoride is one milligram per litre, well within the regulatory limit. There is a legal duty to monitor the effects of water fluoridation schemes on health and report on it every four years. Previous reports are available at the following link, with the next due to be published in 2026:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/water-fluoridation-health-monitoring-report-for-england-2018>

The Drinking Water Inspectorate has published an advice leaflet on fluoridation of drinking water which can be found here:

<https://www.dwi.gov.uk/consumers/learn-more-about-your-water/fluoridation-of-drinking-water/>

■ **Gastrointestinal System: Diseases**

Mr Andrew Snowden:

[38416]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, which areas of gastroenterology he plans to prioritise in the Elective Care Reform Programme.

Mr Andrew Snowden:

[38417]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his planned timeline is for implementing gastroenterology reforms through the Elective Care Reform Programme; and how he plans to monitor progress.

Mr Andrew Snowden:

[38418]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans NHS England has to consult with patient organisations on gastroenterology reform in the Elective Care Reform Programme; and how he plans to include patients in decision-making.

Karin Smyth:

We have prioritised cutting waiting lists and getting back to the standard that at least 92% of people should wait no longer than 18 weeks from referral to treatment. We have delivered an extra 2.5 million operations, scans, and appointments between July and December 2024 compared to the same period in 2023; this means that last month we hit our commitment seven months early.

We recently published the Elective Reform Plan which sets out the reform and productivity efforts needed to return to the 18-week standard. One of the major commitments in the plan is to enhance clinically led pathways to shift care from hospital to community, including gastroenterology pathways.

Specifically, the plan commits to pathway reform starting in five areas, with gastroenterology being one. The commitment is to develop an integrated pathway across primary, community and secondary care for common gastroenterology conditions. We will also drive the rapid adoption of remote monitoring in appropriate gastroenterology pathways, which reduces consultant-led outpatient appointments by over 50%. Work is underway, including with the Royal Colleges, and further information will be forthcoming as plans are developed.

The plan also reinforces the Government's commitment to work with patients, carers and their representatives to publish the standards patients should expect to experience while they wait for care, including for those waiting for gastroenterology services. We will continue to work with patients and carers to build on this work and establish a gold standard for experience.

■ General Practitioners

Jas Athwal:

[\[37955\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of GP provision in (a) England, (b) London and (c) Ilford South constituency; and what steps he is taking to improve patient access.

Stephen Kinnock:

Ilford South sits within the North East London Integrated Care Board (ICB). Since June 2018, there has been an increase of 45 full-time equivalent (FTE) general practitioners (GPs) in the ICB; in the London region, there has been an increase of 411 FTE GPs; and across England there has been an increase of 4,636 FTE GPs.

In January 2025, an estimated 1.1 million appointments were delivered in the North East London ICB, an increase of 3.75% from January 2024. In the London region, there was a 2.64% increase over the same period, and across England there was a 1.76% increase.

We are uplifting the 2025/26 GP contract by £889 million, with a rising share of total National Health Service resources going to general practice. This will help to increase capacity in the system so patients can access the care they need. Alongside this increase in funding, the contract contains measures to improve access to services, continuity of care and GP recruitment.

■ General Practitioners: Contracts

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[\[36477\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 7 March 2025 to Question 35000 on General Practitioners: Contracts, how many GP contracts have been handed back since 4 July 2024.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Department does not hold the data requested.

■ General Practitioners: Death Certificates

Melanie Onn:

[\[37567\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of GPs undertaking medical examinations on GP workloads.

Stephen Kinnock:

We are determined to 'bulldoze bureaucracy' and cut red tape, ensuring general practitioners (GPs) spend less time filling in forms and more time caring for patients. We recognise it is vital for roles to be satisfying, rewarding and sustainable so that our experienced GPs continue to contribute throughout their career.

■ General Practitioners: Employers' Contributions

Martin Wrigley: [\[38222\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of changes to employer National Insurance contributions on the new GP contract.

Martin Wrigley: [\[38223\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of levels of funding available to GPs following (a) the new GP contract for 2025-26 and (b) changes to employer National Insurance contributions.

Stephen Kinnock:

We have made necessary decisions to fix the foundations of the public finances in the Autumn Budget. Resource spending for the Department will be £22.6 billion more in 2025/26 than in 2023/24, as part of the Spending Review settlement. The employers' National Insurance rise will be implemented in April 2025.

Primary care providers, including general practices, are valued independent contractors who provide almost £20 billion worth of services in the National Health Service. Each year, we consult with each sector both about what services they provide, and the money providers are entitled to in return under their contract.

We are investing an additional £889 million in general practice (GP) to reinforce the front door of the NHS, bringing total spend on the GP Contract to £13.2 billion in 2025/26. We are pleased that the England general practitioners committee of the British Medical Association is supportive of the contract changes.

■ General Practitioners: Finance

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[37766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 11 March 2025 to Question 35425 on General Practitioners: Finance, what data was used to calculate the standardised (a) Limited Long-Standing Illness and (b) Mortality Ratio for people under 65 years old.

Stephen Kinnock:

The weighting in the Carr-Hill formula for Standardised Limited Long-Standing Illness was estimated using the Health Survey for England data for 1998 to 2000. The weighting for the Mortality Ratio for people under 65 years old was estimated from Office for National Statistics (ONS) data for 1996 to 2000.

■ GP Surgeries: Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole

Sir Christopher Chope: [\[38342\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the application by the South Coast Medical Group for the establishment of a surgery in Burton as a Branch of The Grove Surgery was made; and when a decision will be given.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Department does not hold information on applications for the establishment of new surgeries as it is for integrated care boards, as part of their commissioning responsibility for primary care, to consider applications for any new general practice surgeries.

The hon. Member may wish to raise this issue with the local integrated care board directly, so it can investigate this further. Their contact details are available at the following link:

<https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/find-your-local-integrated-care-board/>

Health Professions: Crimes of Violence**Jim Shannon:****[37159]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to stop violence against pregnant NHS healthcare professionals.

Karin Smyth:

The Government takes a zero-tolerance approach to any kind of violent behaviour. All National Health Service staff, including pregnant healthcare workers, should be able to care for patients without fear of violence.

Individual employers are responsible for the health and safety of their staff, including assessing the risks to pregnant employees and their baby. Where there are risks, employers should take reasonable steps to remove them.

NHS England are leading work on violence prevention and reduction to provide better training and support for employers and their staff. In December 2024, NHS England published a refreshed Violence Prevention and Reduction Standard. The standard sets out guidance for trusts to help them identify risks, training requirements and crucially, what support must be made available to those staff affected.

Health Services**Steve Darling:****[38403]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 13 March 2025 to Question 36169 on Health Services, what tests (a) his Department and (b) NHS England require before a substantial planned service change.

Karin Smyth:

The tests the Department requires are set out in NHS England's guidance to the National Health Service on planning, assuring and delivering service change, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/planning-assuring-and-delivering-service-change-for-patients/>

The Government's four tests of service change are:

- strong public and patient engagement;

- consistency with current and prospective need for patient choice;
- clear, clinical evidence base; and
- support for proposals from clinical commissioners.

In any proposal includes plans to significantly reduce hospital bed numbers, NHS England will expect commissioners to be able to evidence that they can meet one of the following three conditions: demonstrate that sufficient alternative provision, such as increased general practice or community services, is being put in place alongside or ahead of bed closures, and that the new workforce will be there to deliver it; and/or show that specific new treatments or therapies, such as new anti-coagulation drugs used to treat strokes, will reduce specific categories of admissions; or where a hospital has been using beds less efficiently than the national average, that it has a credible plan to improve performance without affecting patient care, for example in line with the Getting it Right First Time programme.

■ Health Services: Information

Catherine Atkinson:

[\[37417\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of NHS England's revision of the Accessible Information Standard on compliance among NHS organisations.

Stephen Kinnock:

National Health Service organisations and publicly funded social care providers are expected to meet the Accessible Information Standard (AIS), which details the approach to supporting the information and communication support needs of patients and carers with a disability, impairment or sensory loss.

NHS England has been undertaking a review of the AIS to help ensure that the communication needs of people with a disability, impairment or sensory loss are met in health and care provision. One of the aims of the review was to strengthen assurance of implementation of the AIS, and a self-assessment framework has been developed to support providers of NHS and social care services to measure their performance against the AIS and develop improvement action plans to address gaps in implementation. The AIS self-assessment framework is designed to enable enhancements around assurance and allows organisations, commissioners, and the Care Quality Commission to judge performance and compliance.

A revised AIS will be published in due course, and in the meantime, NHS England continues to work to support implementation with awareness raising, communication and engagement and a review of the current e-learning modules on the AIS. The intention is to ensure that staff and organisations in the NHS are aware of the AIS and the importance of meeting the information and communication needs of disabled people using services.

Health Services: Waiting Lists**Dr Luke Evans:** [\[33086\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS appointments were lost due to strike action between July to November (a) 2023 and (b) 2024.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 28 February 2025]: NHS England publishes data on the number of rescheduled appointments due to industrial action, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/preparedness-for-potential-industrial-action-in-the-nhs/>

We are pleased that a deal was agreed in summer 2024 between the Government and the British Medical Association Resident Doctors Committee bringing an end to its prolonged strike action. The Government can now work with resident doctors to get on with its mission of fixing the health service for patients, including tackling waiting lists.

As set out in the Plan for Change, we have committed to return to the NHS constitutional standard that 92% of patients wait no longer than 18 weeks from referral to treatment by March 2029. We have already supported this with additional investment in the Autumn Budget 2024, which has enabled us to deliver an additional two million appointments, seven months ahead of schedule.

Hospitals: Construction**Ben Obese-Jecty:** [\[37769\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate he has made of when all wave one hospitals in the New Hospital Programme will be completed.

Karin Smyth:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 11 February 2025 to Question [29225](#).

Hospitals: Geothermal Power**Max Wilkinson:** [\[37738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the use of deep geothermal energy on energy bills for hospitals.

Karin Smyth:

The Department recognises that deep geothermal has the potential to be valuable part of the National Health Service's energy mix. The clean, consistent energy offered by successful geothermal projects could make a significant contribution to the NHS's 2040 Net Zero target, whilst supporting the NHS's overall energy security and resilience.

However, there are barriers that must first be addressed, including the United Kingdom sector's lack of relative maturity, the geological risks posed by deep bore projects, the extensive payback periods, project failure rates, and the high upfront capital demand of such projects. These issues are outside of the competence of the Department of Health and Social Care and would be for the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero to explore further as the lead energy department.

■ Hospitals: Radio

Steve Darling:

[\[37741\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help support hospital radio stations.

Karin Smyth:

Hospital radio can provide National Health Service patients and visitors with a positive experience at a time when they are feeling vulnerable. NHS trusts work locally with volunteers and organisations to provide this service. Decisions about supporting the service are made most appropriately at a local level.

■ Learning Disability: Diagnosis and Medical Treatments

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[38002\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he has taken to improve (a) diagnosis and (b) treatment of learning difficulties in adults.

Stephen Kinnock:

A learning difficulty is a reduced ability for a specific form of learning and includes conditions such as dyslexia and dyspraxia. These are life-long conditions.

It is the responsibility of integrated care boards (ICBs) to make available appropriate provision to meet the health and care needs of their local population. Information on dyslexia assessments as well as those for dyspraxia in adults are available at the following links:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/dyslexia/diagnosis/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/developmental-coordination-disorder-dyspraxia-in-adults/>

The Department for Education has invested £1.34 billion in the 2024/25 academic year in education and skills training for adults through the Adult Skills Fund (ASF). This is funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency and includes funds for learning support, which helps adult education providers to meet the additional needs of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including the costs of reasonable adjustments, as set out in the Equality Act 2010.

Learning support can cover a range of needs, including an assessment for dyslexia, funding to pay for specialist equipment or helpers, and/or arranging signers or note takers. The Mayoral Strategic Authorities and the Greater London Authority have a

devolved ASF and decide how to make best use of the ASF, beyond the ASF's statutory entitlements, to meet their local needs.

■ Medical Examiners

Chris Coghlan:

[37449]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to (a) increase the capacity of and (b) reduce delays in medical examiner services.

Ashley Dalton:

The Government is monitoring the impact of the death certification reforms which came into legal effect on 9 September 2024. Medical examiner offices are staffed at a trust level and arrangements at each office should reflect local health priorities and the needs of communities. NHS England has published guidance which outlines principles for medical examiner offices and advice on how to provide flexible and sustainable cover during busy periods

Early data since the introduction of the reforms indicated the median time taken to register a death appeared to have risen by one day, from seven days to eight days prior to Christmas. This figure is for all deaths, as it includes those certified by a doctor and those investigated by a coroner. The average time taken to register increased further over the Christmas weeks, but this was expected given increases are observed during this period every year; the average has subsequently decreased.

The median time taken to register a death varies depending on the type of certification. Deaths certified by a doctor, that comprise approximately 80% of deaths registered each week, have typically had a median time to registration of seven days, though there can be variation at a local level. It is important to note that the medical examiner system was active on a non-statutory basis before the introduction of the statutory system on 9 September 2024, and this makes direct 'before' and 'after' comparisons challenging to draw conclusions from.

Ensuring the system is appropriately resourced and works for all those who interact with it is crucial, and something the Department will continue to monitor with NHS England.

■ Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency and National Institute for Health and Care Research

Johanna Baxter:

[R] [38167]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has plans to take steps to streamline approvals processes for the (a) Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency and (ii) National Institute for Health and Care Research.

Karin Smyth:

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) continues to optimise its performance in delivering efficient and predictable services which meet stakeholders' expectations, for the benefit of patients and public health and the Life

Sciences. The Agency has been working in close collaboration with health system partners and industry to ensure that robust, appropriate and prompt decisions are made. In March 2024, the MHRA published new guidance in how medicines will be assessed to improve the robustness and rapid decisions, which it can be seen, has a significantly positive effect.

The Agency has an ongoing system for review of licencing pathways and has recently launch the consultation for Personalised Immunotherapies for Cancer which can be used to drive discussion forward as to how to enable fast patient benefit of new and novel technologies.

The National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) continues to work collaboratively across Government and with key stakeholders to ensure it has optimal systems and processes to support the delivery of impactful and timely research for patient and public benefit. For example, the NIHR has recently launched a new single awards management system for the NIHR underpinned by optimised processes which will streamline operations, enable data sharing and reduce duplicate information requests.

■ **Mental Health Services: Rural Areas**

Stuart Anderson:

[\[37279\]](#)

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

Stephen Kinnock:

People with mental health issues are not getting the support or care they need, which is why we will fix the broken system to ensure we give mental health the same attention and focus as physical health and that people can be confident of accessing high quality mental health support when they need it.

Nationally, we plan to recruit an additional 8,500 mental health workers across children and adult mental health services in England to reduce delays and provide faster treatment. We will also introduce access to a specialist mental health professional in every school and roll out “Young Futures hubs” in every community.

In addition, people of all ages who are in crisis or who are concerned about a family or loved one can now call 111, select the mental health option, and speak to a trained mental health professional. National Health Service staff can guide callers with next steps such as organising face-to-face community support or facilitating access to alternative services, like crisis cafés or safe havens, which provide a place for people to stay as an alternative to accident and emergency or a hospital admission. It is the responsibility of integrated care boards (ICB) to commission care to meet the needs of their local population.

■ Mental Health Services: Waiting Lists**Ben Maguire:** [\[37863\]](#)

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

Stephen Kinnock:

Too many people are not receiving the mental health care they need and we know that waits for mental health services are lengthy. As part of our mission to build a National Health Service that is fit for the future, we will recruit an extra 8,500 mental health workers across children and adult mental health services to cut waiting times and ensure people can access treatment and support earlier.

We will provide access to specialist mental health professionals in every school in England so every young person has access to early support to address problems before they escalate. We are also rolling out Young Futures Hubs to provide open access mental health support for children and young people.

■ Neurodiversity and Tourette's Syndrome: Devon**Martin Wrigley:** [\[35866\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of assessment times for (a) ADHD, (b) autism and (c) Tourette's syndrome in Devon.

Stephen Kinnock:

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

Devon ICB advises it is working with local partners as part of One Devon to implement an integrated neurodiversity assessment pathway to reduce the complexity for families and schools seeking assessment. One Devon is also conducting work focused on autism waiting times recovery.

Nationally, NHS England has 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.

NHS England has established an ADHD taskforce which will make recommendations about how to address the challenges faced by those affected by ADHD.

■ NHS: ICT**Catherine Atkinson:** [\[37416\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on the number and proportion of NHS organisations that do not have

adequate IT systems in place to support the delivery of the Accessible Information Standard.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Department does not hold information on the adequacy of IT systems to support specifically the delivery of the Accessible Information Standard. NHS England publishes criteria for how organisations can assess their compliance with the Accessible Information Standard, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/about/equality/equality-hub/patient-equalities-programme/equality-frameworks-and-information-standards/accessibleinfo/resources/assess-conformance/>

The Frontline Digitisation programme is supporting integrated care systems and trusts in England do a baseline level of digital capability, as defined in the Minimum Digital Foundation.

■ **NHS: Negligence**

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[\[38437\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 11 March 2025 to Question 35836 on NHS: Negligence, how many separate instances of clinical negligence in England where NHS Resolution paid damages were there in each financial year since 2019-20, broken down by speciality.

Ashley Dalton:

NHS Resolution (NHSR) manages clinical negligence and other claims against the National Health Service in England.

NHS Resolution has provided the requested information broken down by financial year since 2019/20 as well as speciality and scheme. Low figures have been suppressed to protect claimant identity. NHSR may make more than one payment on a claim and therefore the volume of payments may exceed the volume of those claims where payments have been made. A copy of the information is attached.

Attachments:

1. PQ38437 Additional Document. [PQ38437 - additional data.pdf]

■ **NHS: Standards**

Peter Prinsley:

[\[37972\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has plans to review NHS targets to incentivise improvements in patient experience and outcomes.

Karin Smyth:

The Government is committed to putting patients first. This means making sure patients are seen on time and ensuring people have the best possible experience of care. Our efforts to improve patient experience will be patient-led and co-developed

to support and empower the people who use services within the National Health Service.

In the Elective Reform Plan, published on 6 January 2025, the Government committed to work with patients, carers and their representatives to publish the standards patients should expect to experience while they wait for care. Once published, these standards will set an expectation to all Trusts about the service they are expected to deliver. We will continue to work with patients and carers to build on this work and establish a gold standard for experience.

We will support NHS trusts to prioritise experience of care by ensuring they make customer care training available to non-clinical staff with patient facing roles, as well as ensuring the take up of training already available on the e-Referral Services to support more effective referral, booking and waiting list management processes. NHS trusts will also be required to name an existing director who will be responsible for improving experience of care.

The Department will also make improvements to patient experience on a national level; for example, by expanding the NHS App and Manage Your Referral website to improve information and appointment management for patients, as well as parents and carers through proxy access.

Additionally, in January 2025, NHS England published NHS Planning Guidance for 2025-26, setting out the first steps for reform, and the immediate actions for systems to take to deliver on the Government's objectives. Acting on findings from the Darzi review, instructions to the NHS have been stripped down to what matters most to patients, including, for instance, improving patient experience of access to general practice as measured by the Office for National Statistics' Health Insights Survey and shifting focus from inputs to outcomes for patients.

■ Occupational Therapy

Max Wilkinson:

[\[37356\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of mandating principal occupational therapist roles within (a) local authorities and (b) NHS trusts.

Stephen Kinnock:

Whilst the Department is not responsible for decisions about the principal occupational therapist roles in adult social care or National Health Service trusts, the role of mandating would sit with employers and the regulator of principal occupational therapists, which is the Health and Care Professions Council.

Max Wilkinson:

[\[37359\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to better integrate occupational therapists in primary care; and whether occupational therapists will be included in any plans for a neighbourhood health service.

Stephen Kinnock:

We are committed to moving towards a Neighbourhood Health Service, with more care delivered in local communities to spot problems earlier, supporting people to stay healthier and maintain their independence for longer

Achieving our vision for a Neighbourhood Health Service will involve health and care services, including social care, wider local government services, and statutory services such as housing and employment, and the voluntary sector. There will be a strong focus on how they collaborate with system partners to prevent people spending unnecessary time in hospitals or care homes. The full vision for the health system will be set out in the 10-Year Health Plan.

Occupational Therapy: Recruitment**Max Wilkinson:**[\[37355\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase the number of qualified occupational therapists in (a) health, (b) social care and (c) community settings.

Stephen Kinnock:

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

The Department supports occupational health students in training with the NHS Learning Support Fund (LSF), providing eligible students with a non-repayable grant of £5,000 a year. Further financial support is also available for childcare, dual accommodation costs and travel.

Pancreatic Cancer: Medical Treatments**James McMurdock:**[\[37507\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to invest in developments in the treatment of pancreatic cancer.

James McMurdock:[\[37509\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to raise awareness of pancreatic cancer.

Ashley Dalton:

NHS England is delivering a range of interventions to improve awareness of pancreatic cancer symptoms. NHS England runs 'Help Us Help You' campaigns to increase knowledge of symptoms of a wide range of cancers, including pancreatic cancer, and encourage people to come forward as soon as possible to see their general practitioner.

NHS England is also working with Pancreatic Cancer UK to develop a Family History Checker, which enables people affected by pancreatic cancer and their families to self-assess if they have inherited risk. People identified of being at risk are referred directly to the European Registry of Hereditary Pancreatic Diseases research trail, which aims to understand inherited conditions of the pancreas. Referrals to the trail can be made by any healthcare professional across all health sectors, or by individuals via self-referral.

NHS England and other National Health Service organisations, nationally and locally, also publish information on the signs and symptoms of many different types of cancer, including pancreatic cancer. The Department is working with NHS England to deliver interventions to improve treatment for those with pancreatic cancer across England.

NHS England has funded an audit into pancreatic cancer to improve consistency in access to treatments and enhance patient outcomes. On 12 September 2024, the National Cancer Audit Collaborating Centre published its State of the Nation Report on Pancreatic Cancer and the initial recommendations are informing improvements in treatment and care.

The National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) also supports delivery in the health and care system of research into pancreatic cancer, funded by industry and by partners in the charity and public sectors. The NIHR supported 73 clinical research studies into pancreatic cancer research between 2018/19 and 2022/2023 through the Clinical Research Network.

■ Pancreatic Enzyme Replacement Therapy

Ann Davies:

[\[37918\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase the supply of Creon.

Karin Smyth:

The Department is in regular discussion with the supplier of Creon on the latest stock availability and the actions that are being taken to mitigate the supply issue that is affecting the whole of the United Kingdom. Through these discussions we have managed to secure additional volumes of Creon for 2025 for the UK. We continue to work with all suppliers of pancreatic enzyme replacement therapy (PERT) to understand what more can be done to add further resilience to the market. The Department has also worked with 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 of PERT 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

Imran Hussain:

[\[37184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential cost savings to the NHS arising from the implementation of the Hub and Spoke model in community pharmacy.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 19 March 2025]: The Impact Assessment was published alongside the consultation of the proposed hub and spoke reform, which was published on 13 May 2024. The assessment is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/hub-and-spoke-dispensing/outcome/government-response-to-the-consultation-on-hub-and-spoke-dispensing#impact-assessment-and-equality-considerations>

No costs savings were attributed to the National Health Service in that assessment. The monetised benefits relate to the reduction in operating costs at the spoke pharmacies due to the savings in dispensing time. The Impact Assessment will be updated when the Government lays the proposed legislation in Parliament.

James Naish:

[\[37731\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of providing additional support for pharmacies to dispense medication in multi-compartment compliance aids to vulnerable patients.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Equality Act 2010 requires pharmacies to make reasonable adjustments for patients with protected characteristics. Multi-compartment compliance aids are one of many reasonable adjustments available, however, they are not always the most appropriate option. Patients should be assessed on a case-by-case basis to find the right intervention for them.

Pharmacies are expected to fund reasonable adjustments required under the Equality Act 2010 from the fees they receive for essential services as part of the Community Pharmacy Contractual Framework. 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.

■ Pharmacy: Opening Hours

Helen Morgan:

[\[36810\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on the number of hours pharmacies were open in (a) 2015 and (b) 2024.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 14 March 2025]: The Department does not hold opening hours data for pharmacies in 2015. Data for opening hours from 2022 is available at the following link:

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

■ Prescription Drugs: Finance**Gideon Amos:****[37903]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of increasing the funding for early access programmes.

Karin Smyth:

There are no current plans to increase funding for medicines supplied through early access programmes. The early access to medicines scheme (EAMS) was formed in 2014 and aims to give patients with life threatening or seriously debilitating conditions access to medicines that do not yet have a marketing authorisation when there is a clear unmet medical need. In 2022, EAMS was introduced into the Human Medicines Regulations 2012. EAMS products are classed as unlicensed medicines within the regulations. Additionally, within the regulations, there is no comment on the ability to charge for supply, however, it is stated in the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency's (MHRA) guidance that there should be no charge for supply of these medicines under the EAMS programme.

Outside of EAMS, companies may put in place early access programmes (EAPs) to allow early access to new medicines that do not yet have a marketing authorisation. These are not approved by the MHRA and participation in such programmes is decided at an individual National Health Service trust level. Under these programmes, the cost of the drug is free to both patients taking part in it, and to the NHS, but NHS trusts must still cover administration costs.

NHS England has published guidance for integrated care systems (ICS) on free of charge medicines schemes such as EAPs, including providing advice on potential financial, administrative, and clinical risks. The guidance aims to support the NHS to drive value from medicines and ensure consistent and equitable access to medicines across England. ICSs should follow the recommendations to determine whether to implement any free of charge scheme, including assessing suitability and any risks in the short, medium, and long term. The guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/free-of-charge-foc-medicines-schemes-national-policy-recommendations-for-local-systems/>

■ Primary Care: Finance

Daisy Cooper:

[\[37306\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made a recent assessment of the adequacy of (a) NHS Capital and (b) District Valuer Services rules in meeting demand for new primary care facilities.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Government is committed to fixing the front door of the National Health Service, and this includes working with providers to deliver the primary care infrastructure required to enable a Neighbourhood Health Service.

Capital spending is set to increase by £1.8 billion to £13.6 billion in 2025/26, representing a real terms increase of 12.8%. Excluding COVID-19 years, this settlement represents the highest Departmental capital budget in real terms since 2010. The Department is currently reviewing capital requirements in line with the Government's missions and as part of our preparations for future budget allocations.

Properties occupied by general practitioners are required to be professionally valued by the District Valuer. This is to ensure that agreed rent levels are in line with market conditions. It is important that these rent levels represent value for money because they will be reimbursed by the local integrated care board under the Premises Costs Directions 2024.

■ Rare Diseases: Diagnosis and Medical Treatments

Sadik Al-Hassan:

[\[37489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the NHS 10 Year Plan will include steps to ensure healthcare professionals are adequately trained and supported in diagnosing and treating rare diseases like Myasthenia Gravis.

Ashley Dalton:

We have committed to develop a 10-Year Health Plan to deliver a National Health Service fit for the future. The plan, and the refreshed Long Term Workforce Plan that follows it, will ensure that we have the right number of staff, with the right skill mix so that patients, including those with rare diseases like myasthenia gravis, can be promptly diagnosed and treated.

■ Relugolix/estradiol/norethisterone: Northern Ireland

Sorcha Eastwood:

[\[38239\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's recommendation of relugolix-estradiol-norethisterone for routine NHS use to treat endometriosis will extend to Northern Ireland.

Karin Smyth:

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) makes recommendations on whether new medicines should be routinely funded by the National Health Service in England. NICE published final draft guidance on 13 March

2025 that recommends relugolix-estadiol-norethisterone as an option for treating symptoms of endometriosis in adults of reproductive age who have had medical or surgical treatment for endometriosis. NICE currently expects to publish final guidance in April 2025. Health is a devolved matter and decisions on the availability of medicines in Northern Ireland are a matter for the Northern Ireland Executive. Further information is available at the following link:

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/topics/national-institute-health-and-care-excellence-nice>

■ Royal College of Physicians

Abtisam Mohamed: [\[37414\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions his Department has had with the Royal College of Physicians on the administrative error in the 2023 Membership of the Royal Colleges of Physicians of the UK part two examinations.

Karin Smyth:

We recognise that this will be a concerning time for those doctors affected. We have asked the UK Statutory Education Bodies, which is NHS England in the case of England, to work with the Royal College of Physicians and the General Medical Council to ensure this issue is rectified as a matter of urgency.

■ Social Workers

Sally Jameson: [\[37842\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of ensuring social workers have more time for relationship-based work.

Stephen Kinnock:

It is the responsibility of employers to ensure that social workers in their organisation have time for relationship-based work. The Department recognises and values the importance of relationship-based work for social workers in adult social care, and for the people they are providing care and support to. The Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) is a 12-month, employer led and employment-based programme of support and assessment for newly qualified social workers. The ASYE Knowledge and Skills Statement for Social Workers in Adult Services standards state that social workers need to apply a wide range of knowledge and skills to understand and build relationships, and work directly with individuals, their families and carers to enable and empower them to achieve best outcomes. The Knowledge and Skills Statement sets out what a social worker working with adults should know and be able to do by the end of the ASYE, and this includes relationship-based work.

HOME OFFICE**■ Anti-social Behaviour****Lewis Cocking:**[\[37350\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for what reasons will the renaming of civil injunctions as housing injunctions help housing associations tackle anti-social behaviour.

Dame Diana Johnson:

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

We will crack down on those making neighbourhoods feel unsafe and unwelcoming by bringing forward new Respect Orders, which will carry tough sanctions and penalties for persistent adult offenders. These were introduced as part of the Crime and Policing Bill on 25 February.

The Respect Order partially replaces the existing Civil Injunction power for the most persistent and serious adult ASB offenders, carrying with it a power of arrest and sentencing in the criminal courts for breach. It is a broad power for use in situations where behaviour had caused or is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress.

Practitioners who use the Civil Injunction for housing-related ASB have told us the power works well for those purposes. The element of the Civil Injunction that pertains to housing related ASB will therefore be retained, and re-named the 'housing injunction' for clarity, to distinguish it from the Respect Order and the Youth Injunction. The legal test for this is behaviour causing, or capable of causing, housing-related nuisance or annoyance. If agencies consider that ASB committed in the context of neighbour disputes meets the legal test for a Respect Order (behaviour causing harassment, alarm or distress), they may determine a Respect Order is the most appropriate option instead.

■ Asylum: Albania**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[34801\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department have made an assessment of the efficacy of the Government's illegal migration returns agreement with Albania.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The UK and Albania have established a close and productive relationship on irregular migration and returns over recent years. 2024 saw 616 Albanian nationals arrive in the UK from Albania by small boat, a reduction from 12,658 in 2022. In the same year, 5,294 Albanian nationals were returned, an increase from 2,035 in 2022.

■ Asylum: Employment**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** [\[38379\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of waiting 12 months before being allowed to apply for a right to work on asylum seekers.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[38382\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has made an assessment of the potential impact of restrictions on right to work on the health and safety of people seeking asylum.

Dame Angela Eagle:

Impacts on vulnerable individuals and equalities considerations are at the front and centre of our work. As required through the Public Sector Equality Duty, we have continuously considered equality implications throughout the policy development process.

Asylum seekers who have had their claim outstanding for 12 months or more, through no fault of their own, can apply for permission to work. Those permitted to work are restricted to jobs on the Immigration Salary List.

Whilst we keep all policies under review, there are no immediate plans to change the existing policy. It is important that we distinguish between individuals who need protection and those seeking to work here who can apply for a work visa under the Immigration Rules. Asylum seekers do not need to make perilous journeys in order to seek employment in the UK.

The Government is determined to restore order to the asylum system after it has been put under unprecedented pressure. We will ensure that the system operates fairly and with quicker processing of claims. This will ensure that genuine refugees can access the labour market faster rather than waiting for extended periods on the outcome of their claim.

■ Charging Points: Theft**Mark Garnier:** [\[38029\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to introduce a nationwide policing strategy to prevent the theft of materials from charging stations.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Theft, including the theft of cables is a serious issue. This Government recognises the distress and disruption that theft and vandalism can cause, not only to businesses, but also to local communities and critical infrastructure.

The Home Office provided initial funding to establish the National Infrastructure Crime Reduction Partnership. The Partnership ensures national co-ordination of policing and law enforcement partners to tackle metal theft. It also provides training to police

officers to help with tackling metal theft, and facilitates data and intelligence sharing to partners to target offenders and implement crime prevention measures.

The Home Office will also continue to support the extensive work undertaken by the British Transport Police in partnership with organisations such as Network Rail to further improve the enforcement response to metal theft. This includes supporting the Metal Crime Steering Group led by the National Police Chiefs Council lead for metal theft, Assistant Chief Constable Charlie Doyle, whose aim is to disrupt those involved in this area of crime.

The Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013 was introduced to reduce metal theft by strengthening regulation of the scrap metal industry. Enforcement of the Act is key to reducing metal theft. Following the introduction of the Act, there was an overall downward trend in metal-related theft offences. The latest figures for the year ending March 2024 are 64% lower than in the previous year.

■ Crossbows

Matt Turmaine:

[R] [\[37526\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has made a recent assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward further regulation of the sale of (a) crossbows and (b) crossbow arrow heads.

Dame Diana Johnson:

We are actively considering the introduction of further controls around crossbows and broadhead arrows. This follows a call for evidence on strengthening controls on crossbows on public safety grounds which ran from 14 February to 9 April 2024.

It tested ideas for whether there should be some form of licensing regime that would provide further controls on the use, ownership and supply of crossbows as well as whether there should be a prohibition on broadhead arrows. The responses have been reviewed and we will publish the Government's response to the call for evidence, which will include what action we intend to take alongside a summary of the responses received, shortly.

■ Drugs: Crime

Leigh Ingham:

[\[37481\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to tackle drug related crime in Stafford constituency.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Government recognises the considerable impact of drug use and dealing on individuals, families and communities. Tackling this is a vital part of our missions to deliver safer streets, improve health outcomes and contribute to opportunities. That is why we are taking a collaborative, cross-government approach to drugs at a national level.

This Government is dedicated to reducing drug-related harms through prevention and treatment, while acting quickly and decisively to stop the criminals peddling these harmful substances. We also expect the police to intervene to tackle illicit drug use, recognising the significant harms it causes.

Delivery focused local drugs partnerships across England provide a whole-system, multi-agency response from police, probation, public health, the NHS and other local partners. The partnership in Staffordshire, led by the Police and Crime Commissioner, has recognised and responded to the impact locally of the illicit supply and misuse of synthetic cathinones, sometimes referred to as 'monkey dust'.

It is also crucial that the Government tackles the gangs that lure children and young people into crime and run county lines through violence and exploitation. County Lines are the most violent model of drug supply and a harmful form of child criminal exploitation. Through the County Lines Programme, we will continue to target exploitative drug dealing gangs and break the organised crime groups behind the trade. Since July 2024, policing activity delivered through the County Lines Programme has resulted in over 400 deal lines being closed, the arrest and charge of over 200 deal line holders, 500 arrests and 800 safeguarding referrals of children and vulnerable people.

Also, by disrupting drug supply chains, increasing treatment access, and targeting organised crime, we can reduce anti-social behaviour, knife crime, and the exploitation of young people through county lines.

The Government will set out its approach to drugs in more detail later this year.

■ Drugs: Young People

Jim Shannon:

[\[37154\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of recent trends in the level of underage drug use across the UK.

Dame Diana Johnson:

There are several surveys estimating the number of young drug users in the UK: According to the Crime Survey for England and Wales, in the year ending March 2024, 16.5% of people aged 16-24 in England and Wales reported using a drug in the last 12 months (approximately 971,000 people). This is a reduction from 17.6% of people aged 16-24 in the year ending March 2023 (approximately 1,035,000 people).

According to the Scottish Health Survey 2023, 26% of people aged 16-24 in Scotland reported using a drug in the last 12 months. This is an increase from 22% in 2021.

According to the Smoking, Drinking and Drug Use among Young People in England survey, in 2023, 9% of children aged 11-15 in England reported taking a drug in the last year. This is a reduction from 12% of children aged 11-15 in 2021.

This Government is committed to tackling these numbers head on. I know the most sustainable approach to reducing drug use across society in the long term is through preventing use among children and young people, and work continues across

Government to proactively support this cohort by building their long-term resilience and intervening early to stop them from being drawn into crime and a range of wider risky behaviours.

This Government is also committed to tackling county lines and drugs supply. County Lines are the most violent model of drug supply and a harmful form of child criminal exploitation. Through the County Lines Programme, we will continue to target exploitative drug dealing gangs and break the organised crime groups behind the trade.

Since July 2024, policing activity delivered through the County Lines Programme has resulted in over 400 deal lines being closed, the arrest and charge of over 200 deal line holders, 500 arrests and 800 safeguarding referrals of children and vulnerable people. Over 260 children and young people have also received dedicated specialist support through our county lines support service since July.

Developing the evidence base on what works to facilitate behaviour change and prevent escalation to more harmful use and or dependency is an important part of that. I look forward to receiving the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs' report which will provide insights into effective whole-system approaches to prevention of drug use in children and young people.

■ **Dual Nationality**

Sir John Hayes: [\[37110\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many British citizens held dual citizenship in each of the last five years.

Seema Malhotra:

The Home Office does not hold the requested data.

Sir John Hayes: [\[37111\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what information her Department holds on the number of British citizens who hold more than two passports.

Seema Malhotra:

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

■ **Fire and Rescue Services: Police**

Kevin Hollinrake: [\[37214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 21 February 2025 to Question 29614 on Fire and Rescue Services: Police, what steps she is taking with Cabinet colleagues to support (a) joint working between emergency services, (b) tri-service working between the three emergency services and (c) joint working between the police and fire service.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Government is committed to seeing more and better collaboration between emergency services to increase efficiency and public safety outcomes. The Policing and Crime Act 2017 sets out a statutory duty for ambulance trusts, fire and rescue bodies and police bodies in England to keep collaboration opportunities under review and, where it is in the interests of their efficiency or effectiveness, to put those collaboration opportunities into practice. It is for local fire and rescue services, working with emergency services counterparts, to decide what collaborative activities will be best to take forward.

The HMICFRS framework considers collaboration as part of its inspections, and we continue to work with the sector to learn more about good examples that can be shared.

■ Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority: Staff**Chris Law:**[\[37193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority inspectors were operational in (a) Scotland, (b) England, (c) Wales, and (d) Northern Ireland in each of the last five years.

Chris Law:[\[37194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority inspections on farms employing workers on the Seasonal Worker visa were carried out in each of the last five years in (a) Scotland, (b) England, (c) Wales, and (d) Northern Ireland.

Jess Phillips:

The Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA) can deploy their officers to any part of the country when there is capacity and a need to do so. The GLAA have employed the following number of compliance officers and enforcement officers over the last five years:

2020 - 13 Compliance Officers, 38 Enforcement Officers

2021 - 13 Compliance Officers, 43 Enforcement Officers

2022 - 14 Compliance Officers, 40 Enforcement Officers

2023 - 13 Compliance Officers, 39 Enforcement Officers

2024 - 13 Compliance Officers, 35 Enforcement Officers

2025 - 13 Compliance Officers, 34 Enforcement Officers

The GLAA does not hold the specific data requested on the number of farms they have inspected that employ workers on a Seasonal Worker visa.

■ Home Office: Catering**Rupert Lowe:** [\[36914\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many sandwiches have been delivered through her Department's contract entitled Catering - KIU, procurement reference CF-0357300D58000000L5A4EAK.

Rupert Lowe: [\[36915\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many sandwiches have been delivered through her Department's contract entitled Catering - CIU, procurement reference CF-0360600D58000000L5A4EAK.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The contracts maintained are designed to provide basic nutrition to arriving individuals in need, including children. The amounts of food provided across the two sites will vary according to need.

■ Home Office: Hakluyt**Jon Trickett:** [\[37128\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many staff their Department has seconded from Hakluyt since July 2024.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Home Office does not have any seconded staff from this organisation.

■ Hong Kong: British National (Overseas)**James Naish:** [\[37348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to assist the continued freedom of movement of BN(O) visa holders whose passports have been cancelled by Hong Kong authorities.

Seema Malhotra:

Following introduction of the National Security Law, the Hong Kong authorities have cancelled the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) passports of some British Nationals (Overseas) (BN(O)), including some currently residing in the UK. Where such individuals have a BN(O) passport, they can generally use that for travel. However, those whose sole passport is a Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) passport, which has been cancelled, may face travel restrictions.

In those circumstances, individuals may be eligible to apply for a Home Office travel document. This is available, in some cases, for individuals who do not hold British nationality, but are residing in the UK, have permission to stay and who cannot use or get a passport from their country's national authorities.

A Home Office travel document enables a person to travel, subject to any conditions that may be required. The onus is on the individual applying for a Home Office travel document to demonstrate they are eligible, in line with the published guidance.

Further information on Home Office travel documents can be found at: [Apply for a Home Office travel document: Overview - GOV.UK](#).

■ Migrants: Chronic Illnesses and Disability

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[38380\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential impact of the no recourse to public funds policy on people with long-term (a) conditions and (b) disabilities.

Seema Malhotra:

The Home Office keeps all aspects of the immigration system under regular review, in consultation with a wide range of experts and stakeholders, including groups representing people with long-term conditions and disabilities.

■ Migration and Economic Development Partnership

Alison Bennett: [\[35118\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether money spent on the UK and Rwanda Migration and Economic Development Partnership has been distributed to M23 militias in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.

Dame Angela Eagle:

Under the previous government's Migration and Economic Development Partnership (MEDP) with Rwanda, an Economic Transformation and Integration Fund was agreed to support the Government of Rwanda to achieve its Vision 2050 and National Strategy for Transformation 1 development strategies, which are intended to support sustainable and inclusive economic growth within Rwanda and improve the conditions of the existing refugee population and host communities, including in areas such as education, healthcare, agriculture, infrastructure, and job creation.

Further costs relating to the MEDP have been published here: [Breakdown of Home Office costs associated with the MEDP with Rwanda and the Illegal Migration Act 2023 - GOV.UK](#).

■ Police: Databases

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[37296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what measures her Department has put in place to prevent the misuse of police databases by (a) officers and (b) staff; and if she will make an assessment of the effectiveness of those measures in the last five years.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[37297\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many instances of unauthorised access to police databases by (a) officers and (b) staff have been recorded in each the last five years; and what disciplinary actions were taken in each case.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[37298\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what training is provided to police (a) officers and (b) staff on the ethical use of police databases; and how frequently that training is updated.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[37299\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of cybercrime convictions involved (a) police (i) officers and (ii) staff and (b) other people in each of the last five years.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[37300\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to help tackle cybercrime perpetrated by police (a) officers and (b) staff.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[37301\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of whether there is a correlation between the (a) (i) roles and (ii) ranks of police personnel and (b) likelihood of committing cybercrimes; and what steps her Department is taking to help mitigate identified risks.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[37302\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what independent oversight mechanisms are in place to monitor and investigate the misuse of police databases by officers and staff.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[37303\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how often audits are conducted on police database access logs to detect and deter unauthorised access by officers and staff.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The auditing of police systems is a matter for local forces, who use bespoke IT systems to conduct lawful business monitoring. Forces' use of such systems is assessed as part of His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services' (HMICFRS) integrity inspection programme. The provision of training is also a matter for local forces, dependent on the specific systems in use

Police officers must adhere to the statutory Standards of Professional Behaviour, which are clear that they must only access or disclose information in the proper course of their policing duties. This is further supported by guidance within the College of Policing's Code of Ethics, published in 2024, on the accessing of data without authorisation. Allegations of system misuse are investigated by force Professional Standards Departments (PSDs), however the most serious and sensitive allegations of police misconduct are referred to the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC)

The number of finalised conduct matter, recordable conduct matter and public complaint allegations against police officers and staff is published on an annual basis within the 'Police misconduct, England and Wales' statistical bulletin, which can be accessed here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/police-misconduct-statistics>. The latest statistics, covering the year ending 31 March 2024 includes the number of allegations broken down by the allegation type, including 'use of force systems', where the threshold for recording a conduct matter, recordable conduct matter or complaint has been met. This can be found in the accompanying 'misconduct allegations by type' data table:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-misconduct-open-data-tables>. This includes information on whether the allegation was referred to disciplinary proceedings, however does not however identify the specific subsequent disciplinary outcome of these proceedings or the characteristics of the officer or staff member in each individual allegation.

The Home Office does not hold information on cybercrimes committed by police officers or staff and published Ministry of Justice data on criminal convictions is not broken down by the individual's occupation. However, the College of Policing's Barred List statistics do identify the reasons for dismissal. The total number of reasons is higher than the number of actual dismissals because individuals may be dismissed for multiple reasons. In 2023/24, there were 66 instances of unlawful access or disclosure of information which featured as part of a police officer's dismissal, 5 in respect of special constables and 37 in respect of police staff. Data for previous years is available here: <https://www.college.police.uk/article/barred-list>

The Government has committed to raising standards in policing and, last year, the Home Secretary announced a series of reforms to strengthen the police misconduct system, including a presumption of dismissal for proven gross misconduct and specific offences automatically amounting to gross misconduct

The Government is also committed to disrupting and pursuing those responsible for Computer Misuse Act offences. We will continue to ensure we keep the public safe and use all of the levers available to us to achieve this. This includes using our capabilities to pursue those responsible for crime, as well as protecting people and businesses at risk of being victims of crime

■ Retail Trade: Crimes of Violence

James McMurdock: [\[37501\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions has she had with police forces on preventing reoffenders from committing retail crimes.

James McMurdock: [\[37502\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make a comparative assessment of recent trends in the level of retail worker assaults reported in (a) the East of England and (b) other regions of England in the last 12 months.

James McMurdock: [\[37503\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of recent trends in the level of retail crime in Essex.

James McMurdock: [\[37504\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to support retail workers in reporting incidents of abuse, threats and violence to the police.

James McMurdock: [\[37505\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to with retailers in Essex to increase (a) the provision of security personnel and (b) local police presence in stores to help deter (i) violence and (ii) abuse against staff.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Shop theft continues to increase at an unacceptable level, with more and more offenders using violence and abuse against shopworkers. We will not stand for this.

This Government is committed to effectively tackling retail crime. In the Crime and Policing Bill, introduced to Parliament on 25 February, we brought a new offence of assaulting a retail worker to protect the hardworking and dedicated staff that work in stores. We are also repealing legislation which makes shop theft of and below £200 a summary-only offence, sending a clear message that any level of shop theft is illegal and will be taken seriously.

There were 44,048 shoplifting offences recorded by the police in the East of England region in the year ending September 2024, a 19% increase on the previous year (37,166 offences). This was a 41% increase when compared with the year ending March 2010 (31,154 offences).

There were 13,266 shoplifting offences recorded by Essex police in the year ending September 2024, a 20% increase on the previous year (11,101 offences). This was a 44% increase when compared with the year ending March 2010 (9,190 offences).

We will provide £100,000 additional funding next financial year for the National Police Chiefs' Council to give further training to police and retailers on prevention tactics, as well as investing £2 million over the next three years in the National Business Crime Centre (NBCC), which provides a resource for both police and businesses to learn, share and support each other.

I chair the Retail Crime Forum to ensure we understand the needs of all retailers and to promote collaboration between the retail sector, security providers and law enforcement.

■ Visas: Married People

Dr Rupa Huq: [\[37587\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending the period of duration for spousal visas.

Seema Malhotra:

A partner or spouse coming to or staying in the UK with their British or settled relative is granted permission for 33 or 30 months respectively. The temporary grant of permission allows the Home Office to confirm the relationship is ongoing and subsisting before an extension of permission to stay or settlement as a partner/spouse.

The Government will set out its approach to future policy on a range of immigration policy areas in the upcoming Immigration White Paper which will be published later this year.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**Admiralty House**

Kevin Hollinrake: [\[37220\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 21 February 2025 to Question 30632 on Admiralty House, whether any civil servants assisted her move into Admiralty House.

Alex Norris:

Professional removal and cleaning services were hired and paid for personally by the Deputy Prime Minister and at no cost to the Department. Some logistical support was provided by civil servants for the move into an official residence.

Agriculture: Compulsory Purchase

Katie Lam: [\[37476\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how much agricultural land her Department plans to compulsorily purchase in (a) Kent and (b) Weald of Kent constituency.

Matthew Pennycook:

My Department has no plans to compulsorily purchase land in Kent or in the Weald of Kent constituency.

Buildings: Carbon Emissions

Sir John Hayes: [\[37531\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of taking embodied carbon into account when considering proposals to restore or replace older buildings.

Matthew Pennycook:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer to Question UIN [28035](#) on 18 February 2025.

■ Combined Authorities

Stuart Anderson:

[\[37274\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how much funding her Department has provided to help support the operation of mayoral combined authorities in each of the last five years.

Jim McMahon:

Details of funding provided to Mayoral Combined Authorities is published each year in annual devolution reports and can be accessed on gov.uk.

■ Education: British National (Overseas)

James Naish:

[\[37349\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she has had discussions with the Secretary of State for Education on the implementation of the recommendations of the report by British Future entitled Working it Out: Hong Kongers, Employment and the Cost of Living, published on 29 October 2024, that fall within the remit of the Department for Education.

Alex Norris:

The government has noted the report. We continue to support Hong Kong British National (Overseas) on these issues through our Welcome Programme, including through specific English language provision, the network of Welcome Hubs and online resources that provide advice on employment, childcare and accessing public services.

■ Freedom of Expression

Kevin Hollinrake:

[\[36684\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 26 February 2025 to Question 24223 on Freedom of Expression, what assessment has been made of the potential impact of introducing a definition of Islamophobia on legal rights to freedom of expression relating to blasphemy.

Alex Norris:

The Government has established a new working group to provide government with a definition of Anti-Muslim Hatred/Islamophobia, advising government and other bodies on how to best understand, quantify and define prejudice, discrimination, and hate crime targeted against Muslims. The group's proposed definition must be compatible with the unchanging right of British citizens to exercise freedom of speech and expression. The Government has been clear that there is no blasphemy law in England, and we will not introduce one.

■ High Sheriffs

Kevin Hollinrake: [\[38048\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment has been made of the indirect impact of local government restructuring on the appointment and boundaries of the High Sheriffs.

Jim McMahon:

There is no intention that the priorities set out in the English Devolution White Paper will impact on the ceremonial counties or the important roles the High Sheriffs and Lord Lieutenants play as the Monarch's representatives in those counties, and ceremonial counties will be retained. The Government recognises and values the work they do in relation to civic, business, social and community life in the ceremonial counties, and will ensure that the ceremonial rights and privileges of an area will be maintained after any reorganisation of local government.

■ Homelessness: Thames Valley

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[38110\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of the availability of homeless shelter services in (a) Slough and (b) Thames Valley.

Rushanara Ali:

The government is clear levels of homelessness and rough sleeping are too high. As announced at the Budget, funding for homelessness services is increasing next year by £233 million compared to this year (2024/25). This increase brings total homelessness grant funding to nearly £1 billion in 2025/26.

The eight local authorities in the Thames Valley area have been allocated a total of £23,007,657, including an allocation of £3,943,746 in Slough, through the Rough Sleeping Prevention and Recovery Grant in 2025/26. This funding is to enable local authorities to provide the services needed to tackle rough sleeping locally.

■ Housing: Geothermal Power

Max Wilkinson: [\[37739\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether the potential for deep geothermal energy for new housing developments is being considered in her planning reforms.

Matthew Pennycook:

The revised National Planning Policy Framework published on 12 December 2024 makes clear that when determining planning applications, local planning authorities should give significant weight to the benefits associated with renewable and low carbon energy and the contribution of the proposal in question to a net zero future.

The Framework also states that plans should identify opportunities for development to draw its energy supply from decentralised, renewable or low carbon energy supply

systems and for co-locating potential heat customers and suppliers, to help increase the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy and heat.

■ **Housing: Mould**

Jim Shannon:

[37561]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate she has made of the number of homes that are uninhabitable due to excessive mould and damp.

Matthew Pennycook:

The English Housing Survey (EHS) provides findings on housing quality and condition in England, including damp and mould.

The EHS found that, in 2022-23, 4% of dwellings had a problem with damp.

The EHS does not report on whether damp has made a property uninhabitable or not, but relevant government guidance clearly sets out the health risks associated with damp and mould in the home and how to reduce these risks. The guidance in question can be found on gov.uk [here](#).

■ **Land: Council Tax**

Mr Will Forster:

[38319]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of charging Council Tax on properties which have received planning permission but where no construction has commenced after a year.

Jim McMahon:

Council tax is a tax on domestic properties based on their capital value in 1991. The Valuation Office Agency is responsible for allocating council tax bands in England, and upon completion will assign a band to newly constructed properties. The government has no plans to change this.

■ **Leasehold: Reform**

Jas Athwal:

[37952]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she plans to take to reform the leasehold system.

Matthew Pennycook:

I refer the hon. Member to the Written Ministerial Statement made on 21 November 2024 ([HCWS244](#)).

■ **Local Government: Disclosure of Information**

Kevin Hollinrake:

[37213]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the answer of 24 February 2025, to Question 30652, on Local Government: Disclosure

of Information, if she will undertake an audit of the local government transparency data published by local authorities to ascertain whether data is (a) accessible, (b) published in open reuse formats and (c) published in a timely manner.

Jim McMahon:

The purpose of the Transparency Code is to make it easier for the public to directly hold their councils to account. Councils are independent of central government and expected to meet the Code's requirements, and to take account of recommendations in the document, including to publish data in a format that allows open reuse. It is for councils to ensure that they are complying with legal duties and government does not monitor or micromanage how such requirements or recommended best practice are being met, including compliance with the Code.

If members of the public have concerns about a local authority's compliance with the Code, then they should raise this with the authority in question.

■ **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Equality**

Kevin Hollinrake:

[\[37225\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 18 February 2025 to Question 29152 on Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Equality, which (a) contractors and (b) organisations that funding went to.

Alex Norris:

a) Funding in the aforementioned response procured learning services from the following suppliers:

- Ernst & Young LLP through the Government Learning Frameworks
- Inclusive Employers Ltd.

b) This funding was not provided to any other organisations.

■ **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Hakluyt**

Jon Trickett:

[\[37133\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many staff their Department has seconded from Hakluyt since July 2024.

Alex Norris:

Secondments is one way of bringing talent and experience into the civil service for short periods of time and has been used by successive governments. Secondments are arranged at a business unit level and data is held at Business Unit Level.

There have been no secondments from Hakluyt into the Department since 5th July 2024.

■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Ministers' Private Offices

Kevin Hollinrake: [\[37221\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 14 February 2025 to Question 23920 on MHCLG: Minister's Private Offices, if she will publish the invoices for these works.

Alex Norris:

It is not in our policy to publish individual invoices for works. However, we have previously provided costings for fittings in Ministers' Private Offices in the answers to Question UIN [9072](#) on 3 December 2024 and Question UIN [23920](#) on 14 February 2025.

■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Public Consultation

Kevin Hollinrake: [\[37219\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 21 February 2025 to Question 23917 on MHCLG: Public Consultation, what the reference number is of each response that was published in response to a (a) Freedom of Information and (b) Environmental Information Regulations in the last three years.

Alex Norris:

The Department has not published Freedom of Information or Environmental Information Regulations responses for the last three years. We are currently exploring options for routinely publishing this information in future.

■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Written Questions

Kevin Hollinrake: [\[37577\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when she plans to answer Question 26478 on Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Employers' Contributions, tabled on 27 January 2025.

Jim McMahon:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer to Question UIN [26478](#) on 17 March 2025.

■ Neighbourhood Boards

Wendy Morton: [\[37169\]](#)

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, who will the new Neighbourhood Boards be accountable to; and what steps her Department plans to take to measure the effectiveness of the Boards.

Alex Norris:

The relevant local authority in each place will act as the accountable body for the funds with responsibility for ensuring that public funds are distributed fairly and effectively, and that funds have been managed in line with the [Nolan Principles](#) and [Managing Public Money](#) principles. They will also be responsible for compliance with legal responsibilities in relation to subsidy control, state aid and procurement.

Wendy Morton: [\[37171\]](#)

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 criteria will be used to determine the (a) geographical boundaries and (b) jurisdiction of the Neighbourhood boards.

Alex Norris:

The default geographic boundary for each place is determined as follows:

- for England and Wales: the [built-up areas](#) as defined by the Office for National Statistics (2022 boundaries GB BGG)
- for Scotland: based on [Localities 2020](#) geography
- for Northern Ireland: [Settlements 2015](#) data

Neighbourhood Boards may make representations to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to alter their default boundary.

Wendy Morton: [\[37172\]](#)

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 steps her Department plans to take to ensure Neighbourhood boards are representative of the community.

Alex Norris:

The local authority or an alternative organisation, such as a community group if agreed by the chair and local authority, should act as secretariat to the board. Recognising the partnership between the board and local authority, council officers may provide secretariat support and can sit as an observer to discussions, if agreed with the chair. We strongly encourage the board to consider whether an alternative organisation, e.g. a local community group, could act or support in this role to build capacity and capability. In line with the principles of public life and to ensure the local community can hold the board to account, its operations must be transparent, with membership and governance arrangements (including minutes of meetings and decision logs) published on the lead council's website.

■ Neighbourhood Plans

David Chadwick: [\[37473\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he plans to (a) continue and (b) expand to more towns the Plan for Neighbourhoods programme.

Alex Norris:

The new £1.5 billion Plan for Neighbourhoods will deliver up to £20 million of funding and support over the next decade into 75 communities across the UK, a long-term commitment to building the foundations to kickstart local growth and drive-up living standards. There are no plans to expand the programme at this time, this would be a decision for the upcoming Spending Review.

■ New Homes Ombudsman Service

Lisa Smart: [\[37745\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she will make it her policy to require all housing developers to register with the New Homes Ombudsman Service.

Matthew Pennycook:

The government believes that existing redress mechanisms for those buying a new home are inadequate. We are therefore working with the devolved administrations to implement the statutory UK-wide New Homes Ombudsman (NHO) to investigate and resolve complaints, and will bring forward the necessary secondary legislation in due course. Once enacted all developers will be required to be a member of the statutory NHO.

■ Night Shelter Transformation Fund

Daniel Francis: [\[38763\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what her Department's timetable is for notifying applicants to the Night Shelter Transformation Fund of the outcome of their application.

Daniel Francis: [\[38764\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to provide additional funding for the Night Shelter Transformation Fund in the 2025-26 financial year.

Rushanara Ali:

This government has increased homelessness and rough sleeping funding by £233 million in 2025/26, taking total investment to nearly £1 billion. This includes a further £3.5 million for the Night Shelter Transformation Fund extension in 2025-26. NSTF projects that were in receipt of revenue funding in 2024/25 were eligible to apply for additional funding in 2025/26. Successful applicants will be informed about the

outcome of their applications, and all allocations be published on gov.uk website in the new financial year.

■ Parking: Fees and Charges

Martin Wrigley: [37400]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 7 March 2025 to Question 34688 on Parking: Private Sector, if she will list the dates of each meeting her officials have had with parking (a) trade associations and (b) consumer groups since 4 July 2024; and when the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Local Growth and Building Safety is due to meet with these organisations.

Martin Wrigley: [37410]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 17 February 2025 to Question 29983 on Parking: Fees and Charges, whether her Department has received representations on the potential impact of implementing a parking code of practice on businesses.

Martin Wrigley: [37411]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 17 February 2025 to Question 29983 on Parking: Fees and Charges, whether her Department has received representations from businesses on the potential impact of implementing a parking code of practice on their operations.

Martin Wrigley: [38460]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 17 February 2025 to Question 29983 on Parking: Fees and Charges, whether she has had discussions with parking companies on the potential impact of a parking code of practice on (a) those companies' profit models (b) the number of parking charge notices issued and (c) contracts based on the financial model of profits from the number of FPN notices issued.

Alex Norris:

My officials have regular meetings with both parking Trade Associations and representatives for motorists. Meetings with the Trade Associations are scheduled monthly, and meetings with the motorist group are quarterly. In addition to regular meetings, my officials also have ad hoc meetings with both groups dependent on the business needs.

Dates for my meetings have not been confirmed.

On representations on the potential impacts of implementing a Private Parking Code of Practice on businesses and operations, in 2023 the Department published a draft Private Parking Code of Practice Impact Assessment, alongside a Call for Evidence to improve the evidence base within the draft Impact Assessment. Both are available online from <https://www.gov.uk/government/calls-for-evidence/private-parking-code-of-practice-call-for-evidence>

My officials have used the responses to the Call for Evidence to review previous proposals and develop new ones on which, as per my previous answer, we intend to consult shortly. A Final Impact Assessment will be published following the consultation.

■ **Parking: Regulation**

Kevin Hollinrake: [\[37222\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 21 February 2025 to Question 30336 on Parking: Regulation, for what reason a further consultation is required.

Alex Norris:

The Parking (Code of Practice) Act 2019 places a duty on the government to prepare a code of practice containing guidance about the operation and management of private parking facilities. The Act explains in Section 2 that the Secretary of State must consult relevant stakeholders prior to the Code's publication. The consultation in 2021 related to a Code laid by the previous government which was later withdrawn.

■ **Planning Authorities: Staff**

Gideon Amos: [\[33748\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of planning authorities' access to ecological expertise.

Gideon Amos: [\[33750\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will take steps to increase data available on the number of planning officers per (a) authority and (b) region.

Gideon Amos: [\[33751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department has plans to increase the number of additional planning officers.

Matthew Pennycook:

MHCLG does not hold detailed data on the number of planning officers recruited by individual local authorities.

In 2023, the Department commissioned a nationwide survey to improve understanding of the capacity and capability issues reported in local planning authorities. The findings of the local authority planning capacity and skills survey have been used to guide support and monitor investment impacts. We are currently analysing the results of the 2025 pulse survey, which will update key metrics and compare them to the 2023 baseline.

Our manifesto committed us to appointing 300 new planning officers into local planning authorities. We are on track to meet that commitment through two routes,

namely graduate recruitment through the Pathways to Planning scheme run by the Local Government Association and mid-career recruitment through Public Practice.

On 27 February, the government announced funding to support salaries and complement graduate bursaries. Further information can be found in the Written Ministerial Statement I made on 27 February 2025 ([HCWS480](#)).

The government has also increased planning fees for householder and other applications from 1 April 2025, which will provide much-needed additional resources for hard-pressed local planning authorities. The government is also taking forward measures in the Planning and Infrastructure Bill that will enable local planning authorities to set their own planning fees to cover their costs.

Through our funding of the Planning Advisory Service, support is also being provided to local planning authorities and their staff (including ecologists) in relation to the implementation of Biodiversity Net Gain.

■ Private Rented Housing: Disability

Lisa Smart:

[38408]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department is taking to support disabled people living in private rented accommodation to secure adaptations to make their homes (a) safe and (b) suitable for their needs.

Rushanara Ali:

Government recognises how important home adaptations are in enabling disabled people to live as independently as possible in a safe and suitable environment. People of all ages and tenures, including in the private rented sector, can apply to their local authority for a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG). The DFG is a capital grant administered by local authorities in England that can contribute towards meeting the cost of adapting an eligible person's home. Government has awarded an £86 million in-year uplift to the DFG for 2024-25, bringing the total funding for 2024-25 to £711 million. Government has also confirmed £711 million for 2025/26.

The Renters' Rights Bill, currently before Parliament, will empower disabled tenants to request the home adaptations that they need and to complain if their requests are unreasonably refused. By abolishing section 21, the Bill will remove the threat of retaliatory eviction. It will also establish a new PRS Landlord Ombudsman, which will have strong powers to put things right for tenants where their landlord has failed to resolve a legitimate complaint.

■ Recreation Spaces

Cat Eccles:

[37939]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that green spaces are adequately designed to (a) tackle climate challenges, (b) support water availability and (c) increase flood resilience.

Matthew Pennycook:

The revised National Planning Policy Framework published on 12 December 2024 makes clear that the planning system should take full account of all climate impacts, including water scarcity and flood risk.

Planning should help to shape places in a way that minimises vulnerability and improves resilience to the effects of climate change through suitable adaptation measures, including through incorporating green infrastructure and sustainable drainage systems.

The government provides design guidance through the National Design Guide (NDG) and National Model Design Code (NDMC) which support the National Planning Policy Framework. The department intends to update this guidance in Spring 2025.

Natural England have also published The Green Infrastructure Framework and accompanying Design Guide in February 2023. This can be used to support local planning authorities and developers to design and create more nature-rich urban greenspaces.

Refugees: Social Rented Housing and Temporary Accommodation**Kevin Hollinrake:**[\[38036\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what access rights asylum seekers with refugee status have to social housing; and whether homeless asylum seekers with refugee status are entitled to emergency housing.

Rushanara Ali:

I refer the hon. Member to the answers given to Question UIN [34617](#) on 10 March 2025 and Question UIN [11929](#) on 8 November 2024.

Rented Housing: Mould**Daisy Cooper:**[\[36776\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of modern dehumidifying technologies can play on tackling damp and mould in the social and private rented housing sectors.

Matthew Pennycook:

The government has published consolidated guidance for social and private landlords relating to the health impacts of damp and mould and what actions they should consider when responding to reports of it.

Whether or not dehumidifiers form part of the way damp and mould is addressed is a decision for landlords to make. However, the guidance is clear that it is the responsibility of landlords to identify the underlying causes of damp and mould, including structural issues or inadequate ventilation, and to find long-term solutions.

A range of experts in damp and mould and related areas were engaged with and contributed to the guidance in question which can be found on gov.uk [here](#).

■ Rents: Increases

Cat Eccles: [\[37944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to help tackle unaffordable rent increases.

Matthew Pennycook:

The government recognises that paying rent is likely to be a tenant's biggest monthly expense. The Renters' Rights Bill empowers private rented sector tenants to challenge unreasonable rent increases, with all rent increases taking place via an existing statutory process.

Tenants who receive a rent increase that they feel is not representative of the market value will be able to challenge the increase at the First-tier Tribunal. This will prevent unscrupulous landlords using rent increases as a backdoor means of eviction, while ensuring rents can be increased to reflect market rates.

The Bill also prohibits rental bidding practices and landlords demanding large amounts of rent in advance.

■ Sleeping Rough

Joe Morris: [\[38423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department has had recent discussions with relevant stakeholders on the extension of the Rough Sleeping Initiative.

Joe Morris: [\[38424\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department has had recent discussions with relevant stakeholders on the extension of the Rough Sleeping Initiative in the North East.

Rushanara Ali:

For 2025-26, we are consolidating our main rough sleeping and single homelessness focused grants (Rough Sleeping Initiative, which includes Housing First funding, and Accommodation for Ex Offenders) into a single Rough Sleeping Prevention and Recovery Grant. The Rough Sleeping Prevention and Recovery Grant will provide up to £280.75 million in funding across England in 2025/26.

Allocations for the Rough Sleeping Prevention and Recovery Grant 2025/26 can be found here: [Rough Sleeping Prevention and Recovery Grant allocations 2025 to 2026 - GOV.UK](#)

■ Social Rented Housing

Rachel Blake: [\[37463\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment her Department has made of the potential reasons for housing associations selling homes previously let out for social rent.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) publishes annual statistics relating to the social housing stock owned and managed by Private Registered Providers in England, including information on stock lost from the sector. Sales for non-social use in 2023/24 were recorded as 4,341 homes. Further information can be found on gov.uk [here](#).

RSH's analysis suggests that providers are undertaking fixed asset sales for a variety of reasons. These include stock rationalisation and disposal of uneconomic properties, as well as generating receipts to support reinvestment in new and existing stock.

■ Social Rented Housing: Finance**Cat Eccles:****[37943]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will take steps with Cabinet colleagues to increase funding for social housing in the next Spending Review in the context of levels of homelessness.

Matthew Pennycook:

The government is committed to delivering the biggest increase in social and affordable housebuilding in a generation.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to Question [UIN 30393](#) on 24 February 2025 for more detail on the steps we have already taken to increase social and affordable housebuilding.

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

■ Social Rented Housing: Fire Prevention**Rachel Blake:****[37461]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what support she is providing to housing associations, in the context of costs associated with the Building Safety Act 2022.

Alex Norris:

Social landlords, including Housing Associations, can apply to the Building Safety Fund and the Cladding Safety Scheme where the cost of remediating a building would threaten the financial viability of the landlord or to cover costs which - without the protections of the Building Safety Act - could have been passed on to leaseholders and shared owners. As of November 2024, social landlords had been allocated £568 million by government remediation schemes. From April 2025, we will increase funding for social landlords applying for government remediation funding so that remedial works can start sooner. We are working with the sector to develop a long-term social housing remediation strategy.

Rachel Blake: [\[37462\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she has made an estimate of costs for housing associations related to the remediation of aluminium composite material cladding.

Alex Norris:

In 2018, government estimated that the cost of removing and replacing unsafe ACM cladding on 18m+ social residential buildings would be approximately £400 million. As of March 2025, 144 high rise buildings had entered the Social Sector ACM Fund. To date, government schemes approved allocation of c.£297 million towards remediating those buildings, including c.£101 million for buildings owned by Housing Associations.

■ Social Rented Housing: Homelessness

Imran Hussain: [\[37188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will take steps through the next Spending Review to increase the level of funding for the provision of social housing for homeless people.

Matthew Pennycook:

The government is committed to delivering the biggest increase in social and affordable housebuilding in a generation.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to Question UIN 30393 on 24 February 2025 for more detail on the steps we have already taken to increase social and affordable housebuilding.

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

■ Social Rented Housing: Leeds North West

Katie White: [\[37465\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department is taking to help reduce waiting times for social housing in Leeds North West constituency.

Matthew Pennycook:

The government is committed to delivering the biggest increase in social and affordable housebuilding in a generation.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to [Question UIN 30393](#) on 24 February 2025 for more detail on the steps we have already taken to increase social and affordable housebuilding.

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

JUSTICE

■ Cannabis: Crime

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[\[37294\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate her Department has made of the proportion of magistrates' court cases that involved cannabis possession in the last 12 months; and if she will make an estimate of the potential impact of legalising cannabis possession on the cost of these court cases.

Sarah Sackman:

The latest published data shows that 1.0% of magistrates' courts proceedings in the year to June 2024 (12,429 defendants) in England and Wales were for cannabis possession offences. (Source: [Criminal Justice System statistics quarterly: June 2024 - GOV.UK](#)). Equivalent published data for the calendar year 2024 will be available on 15 May 2025. The number of proceedings is presented on a principal offence basis, this means that more serious offences accompanied by an additional cannabis possession offence will not be included in this number.

The estimated sitting day cost to HMCTS for those cases is c. £1 million.

■ Domestic Abuse: Suicide

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[\[38197\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what discussions she has had with relevant stakeholders on reviewing sentencing for instances of coercive control that leads to the suicide of the victim.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Tackling this issue is a core part of this Government's mission to halve violence against women and girls (VAWG) in a decade, and our VAWG strategy, which will be published in the summer, will look at how we can better understand, learn from and prevent future deaths linked to domestic abuse.

The Lord Chancellor has recently asked the Law Commission to undertake a review of homicide law and sentencing, and the use of, and obstacles to, manslaughter charges where a person may be driven to suicide by abuse, and sentencing in these cases, is in scope of this review. The Government has engaged with the families and stakeholders campaigning on this issue.

The Law Commission review will be open, inclusive and evidence-based and will include consultation with judges, legal and criminal justice practitioners, victims'

groups and representatives, parliamentarians, academics, and third-sector organisations.

The Government is also working to develop the evidence base on suicides that follow domestic abuse, including through funding research by the National Police Chiefs' Council's Domestic Homicides and Suspected Victim Suicides Project, which captures information on suicides with a known history of domestic abuse from all 43 police forces.

■ **Juries: Compensation**

Luke Myer:

[\[37901\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps her Department is taking to ensure jurors are adequately compensated for loss of earnings; and whether she has made an assessment of the potential impact of jury service on jurors that receive compensation less than their usual income.

Sarah Sackman:

This Government has not made any specific assessment of the impact of jury service on jurors who receive compensation less than their usual income. However pursuant to my answer to PQ 36911, the Government will keep under review all support provided to jurors throughout their service. People who are not paid by their employer whilst they are on jury service can claim a loss of earnings allowance from the court. Self-employed people who lose earnings whilst doing jury service are also able to claim loss of earnings.

■ **Ministry of Justice: Hakluyt**

Jon Trickett:

[\[37134\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many staff their Department has seconded from Hakluyt since July 2024.

Alex Davies-Jones:

Information about secondments in the Ministry of Justice is not held in a central location, and therefore we are not able to report on the number of employees seconded from Hakluyt since July 2024.

All Civil Servants are subject to a Loans and Secondments policy and the provisions of the Official Secrets Act. HR policies outline the Department's stance on political activity, with declaration requirements varying by grade. All Civil Servants are expected to abide by rules governing political activities and to avoid situations that lead to conflicts of interest, such as the non-disclosure of sensitive information.

■ **Offenders: Women**

Paul Davies:

[\[38329\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the oral answer of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice on 11 March 2025 to Question

903119 on Female Offenders, whether specialised training includes suicide prevention training.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The Foundation training programme for all new prison officers includes learning in relation to suicide and self-harm. For officers working in the female estate, there is an additional week of Foundation training which gives officers an understanding of the potential for increased risk factors for women in custody in relation to self-harm and suicide.

■ **Prisoners**

David Chadwick:

[\[38326\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of prisoners (a) have served their original sentence and (b) maintain their innocence.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Data regarding how many and what proportions of prisoners have served their original sentence and maintain their innocence is not collated by the Ministry of Justice.

Innocence is a matter for the courts, so HM Prison and Probation Service and the Parole Board must treat the individual as being guilty of the crimes they have been convicted of but maintaining innocence does not prevent prisoners being released from custody. Most prisoners are released automatically and so their attitude to the index offence has no bearing on their release date. Where release is subject to review by the independent Parole Board, the Board take a range of factors into account, and they must direct an offender's release where they are satisfied that the statutory release test has been met regardless of whether the prisoner maintains their innocence.

■ **Prisoners' Release**

David Taylor:

[\[38526\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will hold discussions with the Parole Board on the potential impact of the release of James Hurley on PC Frank Mason's family.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

James Hurley is rightly serving a life sentence for the murder of PC Frank Mason. The Court set his minimum term for the purposes of retribution and deterrence at 20 years. The minimum term expired on 8 January 2022, and from that date he became eligible for a review of his imprisonment by the independent Parole Board.

To assist the Parole Board in making its determination, it received detailed risk assessments from experienced probation and prison officers. The Lord Chancellor also submitted an overarching view of Hurley's remaining risk of serious harm. In the overarching view, the Lord Chancellor concluded that Hurley should not be released,

because she had concluded that his risk remained too high for him to be safely managed in the community.

Having considered all the reports, on 31 October 2024 the Parole Board directed Hurley's release on life licence. The Lord Chancellor currently has only limited power to challenge a release decision by the Parole Board. Under the Parole Board Rules, she may apply to the Board to reconsider its decision where she has an arguable case that the decision is irrational or based on an error of law or reached in a procedurally flawed way. Unfortunately, there was no basis to apply for reconsideration, meaning that the release became final. Whilst the Lord Chancellor was disappointed by the outcome, she has to respect the independence of the Parole Board. By law, HMPPS then had to release him from prison.

Hurley will be on licence for the rest of his life. He is currently subject to stringent licence conditions, including exclusion zones, and faces being recalled to prison if he breaches them. Mrs Neaves will be informed by her Victim Liaison Officer of any developments whilst Hurley is on licence. He is managed under the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements. The statutory MAPPA framework requires the Probation and Police Service to work together to assess and manage the risks presented by known dangerous offenders.

My thoughts are with Mrs Neaves at this difficult time.

■ Prisoners: Dyslexia

Adam Dance:

[38291]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate she has made of the number of inmates with dyslexia in prisons in (a) Somerset, (b) the South West and (C) the UK.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

His Majesty's Prisons and Probation Service (HMPPS) offers screening to prisoners upon entry to prison to help identify any additional needs they may have, including those associated with dyslexia. We would not attribute any additional needs that are identified during the screening process to a specific clinical condition but do encourage individuals to self-declare any conditions or needs they consider themselves to have.

HMPPS held data does not distinguish the specific types of learning needs of prisoners, so cannot identify those with dyslexia from other learning needs. However, the data from initial screening offered upon entry to prison, which indicates the number of learners in prison with a learning difficulty or disability can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/prison-education-and-accredited-programme-statistics>.

■ Prisons and Probation: Training

Paul Davies:

[38328]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate she has made of the cost of providing suicide prevention training to (a) prison and (b) probation staff.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Suicide prevention training for prison staff has been developed by the HMPPS learning design team in conjunction with policy leads and subject matter experts. It is delivered locally, using a training for trainers approach where possible, to minimise the cost and resource impact on prisons, and delivered centrally only where this is not deemed appropriate.

Suicide prevention training for probation staff was developed externally by the Zero Suicide Alliance (a suicide awareness and prevention initiative, funded via Mersey Cares NHS Charity) in conjunction with HMPPS subject matter experts, at no additional cost to HMPPS. It is delivered online, and as part of broader training for new entrants. It is not possible to disaggregate the costs of this training as they appear in a number of budgets including those for Learning and Development and for individual probation delivery units.

We are unable to disaggregate suicide prevention costs from other learning activity. As the delivery model in prisons is local, the costs for trainers and staff attending are in prison budgets. In probation the training is completed online, the costs of staff time to complete the training are in PDU budgets.

LEADER OF THE HOUSE**■ Government Departments: Written Questions****Kevin Hollinrake:****[37209]**

To ask the Leader of the House, pursuant to the Answer of 22 October 2024 to Question 8807 on Government Departments: Written Questions, whether her policy on Freedom of Information requests also applies to Environmental Information Regulation requests

Lucy Powell:

The Government's policy on answers to Written Parliamentary Questions and Questions for Written Answer is set out in the Guide to Parliamentary Work (available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guide-to-parliamentary-work>). The guidance contains no reference to Environmental Information Regulation requests. The Information Commissioner's Office provides guidance and resources for public authorities and the public about the Freedom of Information Act and the Environment Information Regulations, available online at ico.org.uk.

NORTHERN IRELAND**■ Northern Ireland Office: Hakluyt****Jon Trickett:****[37129]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, how many staff their Department has seconded from Hakluyt since July 2024.

Hilary Benn:

The Northern Ireland Office has had no staff in the department seconded from Hakluyt since July 2024.

■ Trade Barriers: Northern Ireland**Jim Shannon:**[\[37152\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what steps he is taking with Cabinet colleagues to reduce trade barriers between Northern Ireland and Great Britain.

Hilary Benn:

The Government is continuing to implement the commitments made in the Safeguarding the Union command paper, and the first meeting of Intertrade UK was held on 28 February 2025.

A key focus for Intertrade UK will be to promote the full extent of the UK's market to businesses and traders and to help to counter any misconceptions or confusion businesses and traders in Great Britain may have about providing goods and services in Northern Ireland.

We are also committed to seeking a veterinary agreement with the EU for the whole of the UK, which could deliver tangible benefits for businesses across the UK and smooth flows of trade.

■ Veterans: Northern Ireland**Alicia Kearns:**[\[38147\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, how many meetings he has had with veterans who have served in Northern Ireland since taking his post.

Hilary Benn:

Since I was appointed Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, I have engaged with veterans and their representatives on two occasions. I have also met with both the previous and current Northern Ireland Veterans Commissioner, and with a group representing former police officers. This is in addition to the engagement that has been carried out by the Minister for Veterans and People, and by officials in the Northern Ireland Office.

The Government will continue to discuss legacy issues with veterans and their representatives, alongside our wider process of engagement with all interested parties, as we seek to establish a way forward that is lawful and can command confidence across communities.

■ Voting Rights: Northern Ireland**Claire Hanna:**[\[37324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, if he will ensure that Northern Ireland is included in legislative proposals to lower the voting age for UK elections.

Hilary Benn:

This Government will legislate to lower the voting age to 16 during this Parliament for all non-devolved elections across the UK, including elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly and Northern Ireland local government elections.

Claire Hanna:[\[37325\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, if he will take steps with Cabinet colleagues to include a legislative consent motion with legislative proposals to lower the voting age to allow 16 and 17 year olds in Northern Ireland to vote in (a) Assembly and (b) local government elections.

Hilary Benn:

The Government has given a clear commitment to lower the voting age to 16 at all non-devolved elections, which includes Assembly and local elections in Northern Ireland. As elections are an excepted matter under Schedule 2 to the Northern Ireland Act 1998, it will not be necessary to seek a legislative consent motion in relation to that commitment. The Government will of course work closely with stakeholders across Northern Ireland on the implementation of this major change to the franchise and ensure we empower our young people to participate in democracy.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY**■ Artificial Intelligence: Data Centres****Jim Shannon:**[\[37150\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what progress his Department has made on establishing AI growth zones in the devolved nations.

Feryal Clark:

The UK Government will partner with local and regional authorities and Devolved Governments to establish AI Growth Zones (AIGZs), ensuring substantial regional and national benefits, such as upskilling and employment opportunities, are felt across the country.

In February, Devolved Governments, along with local authorities and industry, were invited to come forward with potential sites suitable for hosting AI infrastructure as an early expression of interest. DSIT regularly engages with the Devolved Governments on a range of issues and there was significant interest in AIGZs from across the UK.

■ AstraZeneca: Merseyside**Blake Stephenson:**[\[37787\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, pursuant to the Answer of 19 February 2025 to Question 30737 on AstraZeneca: Merseyside, if he will publish the feedback his Department has received from AstraZeneca on their Merseyside investment withdrawal.

Feryal Clark:

Company feedback on Government grant process continually informs improvements in grant delivery. However, to maintain confidentiality between companies and Government, we do not publish company specific feedback.

SPEAKER'S COMMITTEE FOR THE INDEPENDENT PARLIAMENTARY STANDARDS AUTHORITY**■ Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority: Equality****Mr Peter Bedford:**[\[38862\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Warrington North, representing the Speaker's Committee for the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority, whether she has made an estimate of the potential savings to the public purse of abolishing diversity, equality and inclusion roles.

Charlotte Nichols:

The Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (IPSA) does not employ any people who work solely in diversity, equality, and inclusion roles.

SPEAKER'S COMMITTEE ON THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION**■ Elections: Expenditure****Kevin Hollinrake:**[\[37583\]](#)

To ask the Right hon. Member for Kenilworth and Southam, representing the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission, pursuant to the Answer of 3 March 2025 to Question 31952 on Elections: Expenditure, what guidance the Commission has provided on (a) whether a battlebus must be declared as a local candidate expense if the candidate participates in campaigning with the battlebus and (b) the definitions of (i) directing, (ii) encouraging and (iii) authorising the spending.

Sir Jeremy Wright:

The Commission has published guidance for [parties](#) and [candidates](#) on how to distinguish between party and candidate spending, and how to report such spending. The classification of spend on a battlebus visit will depend on whether the spending promotes the party or the candidate.

Activity promoting the candidate must be reported on the candidate return if it is authorised by the candidate or qualifies as notional spending. There is a £700 limit on unauthorised spending to promote the candidate, which would be reported on the party return. The Commission's guidance includes [a number of examples](#) of campaign events and how these would be reported.

The Commission has also published [guidance on the tests for notional spending](#), including how to identify when an item has been [made use of by the candidate or someone on their behalf](#). Someone can only make use of an item on behalf of the

candidate if that use has been directed, authorised, or encouraged by the candidate or their agent.

The Commission has not published a specific definition of “directed, authorised, or encouraged”; these terms are interpreted according to their commonplace use.

Kevin Hollinrake:

[37584]

To ask the Right hon. Member for Kenilworth and Southam, representing the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission, pursuant to the Answer of 3 March 2025 to Question 31952 on Elections: Expenditure, what guidance the Commission has provided on (a) what (i) petrol, (ii) staffing, (iii) coach hire and (iv) other costs of a battlebus should be assigned to local candidate spend and (b) whether this includes travel outside a constituency to the constituency.

Sir Jeremy Wright:

The Commission has published guidance for [parties](#) and [candidates](#) on how to distinguish between party and candidate spending, and how to report such spending. The classification of spend on a battlebus visit will depend on whether the spending promotes the party or the candidate.

The Commission's guidance includes [a number of examples](#) of campaign events and how these would be reported.

The Commission has published [guidance for candidates on transport costs](#). Reportable transport costs include the costs of transporting volunteers, party members or other campaigners around the electoral area, or to and from the electoral area, where they are undertaking campaigning on behalf of the candidate. This includes the costs of transport hire and fuel.

The Commission has also published [guidance for candidates on staff costs](#). Costs for staff directly employed by the party do not count towards party spending limits. However, if staff are provided to a candidate for their campaign, staff costs would need to be reported by the candidate as notional spending.

TRANSPORT

■ A39: Bypasses

Ben Maguire:

[37820]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will communicate directly with (a) residents and (b) businesses in (i) Camelford and (ii) surrounding areas on plans for the proposed A39 bypass.

Lilian Greenwood:

The government currently is undertaking a multi-year spending review. Until the outcome of this is known, I am unable to provide any assurances on Departmental funding for the A39 Camelford bypass scheme which is being promoted by Cornwall

Council as part of the Department's Major Road Networks/ Large Local Majors programme.

■ **Bus Services: Concessions**

Sojan Joseph:

[\[38507\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment she has made of the potential merits of extending the hours at which English National Concessionary Travel Scheme bus passes can be used in (a) Kent and (b) England.

Simon Lightwood:

The English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) provides free off-peak bus travel to those with eligible disabilities and those of state pension age. The ENCTS costs around £700 million annually and any changes to the statutory obligations, such as extending the travel time criteria, would therefore need to be carefully considered for its impact on the scheme's financial sustainability. The Government recently conducted a review of the ENCTS, which included considering travel times for disabled passholders, and is currently considering next steps.

Currently, local authorities in England have the power to go beyond their statutory obligations under the ENCTS and offer additional discretionary concessions, such as extending the travel time criteria for the ENCTS.

The government has confirmed £955 million for the 2025 to 2026 financial year to support and improve bus services in England outside London. This includes £243 million for bus operators and £712 million allocated to local authorities across the country. Kent County Council has been allocated £23 million of this funding. Funding allocated to local authorities to improve services for passengers can be used in whichever way they wish. This could include extending the discretionary concessions available in the local area.

■ **Driving Licences: Disqualification**

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[38140\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many driving licenses have been revoked in each month since January 2024.

Lilian Greenwood:

The table below provides the number of drivers who have been revoked in each month since January 2024.

VOLUMES			
Month	Drivers revoked under the New Drivers Act 1995	Group 1 (car & motorcycle) drivers revoked on medical grounds	Group 2 (bus and lorry) drivers revoked on medical grounds
Jan-24	1,173	3,226	341
Feb-24	1,121	3,214	322
Mar-24	1,160	3,164	342
Apr-24	1,148	3,094	248
May-24	1,201	3,099	260
Jun-24	1,125	2,616	294
Jul-24	1,223	3,603	424
Aug-24	1,091	3,298	359
Sep-24	1,106	3,345	342
Oct-24	1,112	3,410	390
Nov-24	1,111	3,109	331
Dec-24	1,048	2,503	301
Jan-25	1,083	3,056	415
Feb-25	N/A	3,032	353
Total	14,702	43,769	4,722

Group 1 and 2 revocations should not be added together as there will be an element of double accounting. The medical standards for Group 2 driving are higher than Group 1 and Group 2 drivers may lose just their Group 2 entitlement or may lose both Group 1 and 2 entitlement.

■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points

Edward Morello:

[\[38822\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many fast charging points for electric vehicles are operational in West Dorset constituency.

Lilian Greenwood:

Data on the number of public electric vehicle charging devices in the West Dorset constituency, provided by the electric vehicle charging platform Zapmap as of 1 January 2025, are given in the table below, categorised by standard speed groupings. Higher power devices can deliver charging at quicker speeds.

	3kW UP TO 8kW	8kW TO 49kW	50kW TO 149kW	150kW AND ABOVE
West Dorset constituency	30	47	28	2

Data on charging devices not available to the public installed under government grants are not available at parliamentary constituency level and so are excluded from this table.

■ **Electric Vehicles: Fylde**

Mr Andrew Snowden:

[\[38419\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking with Cabinet colleagues to help support people to use electric vehicles in Fylde constituency.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Government is committed to accelerating the roll-out of affordable and accessible charging infrastructure so that everyone, no matter where they live or work, can make the transition to an electric vehicle. As of March 2025, the Government and industry have supported the installation of 75,305 publicly available charging devices, up 32% on this time last year.

Lancashire County Council, which includes Fylde constituency, have been allocated over £10.8m capital and resource funding through the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) Fund to increase the number of local public chargepoints across the area. In total, the £381m LEVI Fund will support the installation of at least 100,000 local chargepoints across England.

■ **Large Goods Vehicles: Concrete**

Mr Will Forster:

[\[37497\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will take steps to review her Department's decision to reduce the maximum weight limits for volumetric concrete mobile plants; and if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of this policy on (a) the number of skilled jobs in the construction industry, (b) the size of the construction sector and (c) the environment.

Lilian Greenwood:

The outcome of my Department's review into volumetric concrete mixers was published on 18 March. This can be accessed at the following link:

gov.uk/government/calls-for-evidence/volumetric-concrete-mixers-review.

■ M60 and M67: Litter

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[38013\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the (a) monitoring and (b) removal of litter and detritus from the junctions, embankments, central reservations, verges and hard shoulders along (i) the M60 and (ii) the M67 in Greater Manchester.

Lilian Greenwood:

National Highways undertakes weekly safety inspections on the M60 and M67, litter is identified and reported on in accordance with the Defra Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse.

National Highways programme of cyclic maintenance involves litter collections on the M60 and the M67 annually. In addition to those routine litter picks, National Highways will arrange for reactive litter picking where any section of the Strategic Road Network has been identified as reaching Grade C or D according to the Code. In these cases, litter picking is carried out within 28 and 7 days respectively, depending on the grading recorded and any road space or traffic management constraints.

■ Railways: Fylde

Mr Andrew Snowden:

[\[38420\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to help reduce the cost of rail services in Fylde constituency.

Simon Lightwood:

Most regulated rail fares increased by 4.6 per cent on 2 March 2025. This was the lowest absolute increase in three years and delivers a fair balance between taxpayers and passengers. This increase will support the Government's long-term plans to achieve financial sustainability of the railway. Whilst it is our ambition through railway reform to deliver a more affordable railway, any long-term changes or concessions made to rail fares policy require balancing against the potential impacts on passengers, taxpayers and the railway.

■ Transport Focus

Laurence Turner:

[\[38503\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when Transport Focus last published minutes of meetings of its Board.

Simon Lightwood:

Transport Focus is currently in the process of updating numerous sections of its website. This includes records such as the board minutes, and the board committee terms of reference. Transport Focus is committed to upholding the principles of transparency and accountability and will prioritise the publication of historic minutes as soon as possible.

The most current iteration of board meeting minutes available on the Transport Focus website are those from the November 2021 board meeting. Recordings of public board meetings are available on the website, with the most recent being from May 2024: <https://www.transportfocus.org.uk/about/transparency-and-accountability/board-meetings/>

In the interim, if there are any minutes/events of particular interest, Transport Focus will be more than happy to make these available upon request: <https://www.transportfocus.org.uk/contact-form>.

TREASURY

■ Agriculture: Seasonal Workers

Chris Law: [\[37199\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many HMRC inspections of farms employing workers on the Seasonal Worker visa were conducted in each of the last five years.

James Murray:

The Government is determined that everyone who is entitled to the National Minimum Wage (NMW) receives it. All businesses, irrespective of size or business sector, are responsible for paying the correct minimum wage to their staff.

HMRC continue to crack down on employers who ignore the law, ensuring workers receive the wages to which they are entitled.

HMRC continue to undertake compliance activity within the agriculture sector across the UK. However, we do not hold specific data on how many of our interventions in this sector employ seasonal workers.

Chris Law: [\[37200\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps HMRC have taken to ensure farms employing workers on the Seasonal Worker visa are being paid the National Living Wage in (a) 2023 and (b) 2024.

James Murray:

The Government is determined that everyone who is entitled to the National Minimum Wage (NMW) receives it. All businesses, irrespective of size or business sector, are responsible for paying the correct minimum wage to their staff.

HMRC continue to crack down on employers who ignore the law, ensuring workers receive the wages to which they are entitled.

HMRC continue to undertake compliance activity within the agriculture sector across the UK. However, we do not hold specific data on how many of our interventions in this sector employ seasonal workers.

■ Airports: Business Rates

Kevin Hollinrake:

[\[37229\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 26 February 2025 to Question 32153 on Airports: Business Rates, how airports will be valued in the 2026 business rates revaluation.

James Murray:

Civil Airports for the 2026 Revaluation are being valued using the 'receipts and expenditure' valuation method. This takes into account the business' income and expenses in determining the rateable value.

As with other revaluations, the VOA are in discussions with representatives from the airport sector. The VOA have not changed the methodology they use to assess airports since the last revaluation.

The revaluation is not yet complete and the VOA expect to publish draft valuations by the end of 2025.

Kevin Hollinrake:

[\[37572\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant of the Answer of 20 December 2024 to Question 19700 on Airports: Business Rates, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of (a) the rates revaluation in April 2026 and (b) the surcharge for hereditaments above £500,000 Rateable Value from April 2026 on (i) economic growth, (ii) international competitiveness and (iii) airfares.

James Murray:

The Government recognises that in the post-COVID world, expected valuations for airports at the 2026 revaluation amount to significant increases. The aviation sector is in conversation with the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) about their 2026 draft rateable values.

The Government is legally required to introduce transitional relief for ratepayers to support those seeing the biggest increases at revaluations. Once we understand the complete 2026 revaluation picture will the Government be in a position to make final decisions, at Autumn Budget 2025, on the transitional relief scheme.

On the new multiplier rates, the Government will confirm these 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.

■ Business Rates

Kevin Hollinrake: [\[37568\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 18 February 2025 to Question 30645 on Business Rates, if she will make an estimate of the number of hereditaments subject to the £500,000 multiplier if the threshold is not updated in 2026.

James Murray:

The Government intends to introduce permanently lower tax rates for high street retail, hospitality, and leisure properties, with rateable values below £500,000, from 2026-27.

This tax cut must be sustainably funded, and so the Government intends to apply a higher rate from 2026-27 on the most valuable properties - those with a rateable value (RV) of £500,000 and above. These represent less than one per cent of all properties, but cover the majority of large distribution warehouses, including those used by online giants.

On 21 February, the Valuation Office Agency published an ad hoc release detailing total property counts and RV for properties in England with a RV over £500,000. This is broken down by sector, sub-sector, special category and region. This is available online: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/non-domestic-rating-property-counts-and-rateable-value-rv-for-properties-in-england-with-rv-over-500000>.

■ Cash Dispensing

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[38108\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of the availability of banking facilities in (a) Slough and (b) Berkshire.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[38109\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment she has made of the potential impact of bank closures on people requiring in person banking services in Slough.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[38111\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of access to cash.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[38114\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she plans to bring forward legislative proposals to help ensure public access to cash.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[38115\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps she plans to take to help support small businesses with cash banking, in the context of trends in the number of closures of physical banks.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:[\[38117\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions she has had with NatWest on the adequacy of the provision of its banking facilities in Slough.

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 Government understands the importance of face-to-face banking to communities and businesses, including in areas such as Slough and Berkshire, 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.

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.

While the ongoing trend in payments in the UK has been away from cash and towards card and digital payment methods, the Government recognises that cash continues to be used by millions of people across the UK, including those who may be in vulnerable groups. Furthermore, businesses need access to cash deposit services in order to keep accepting cash and, therefore, support people's ability to continue to transact using cash.

The Financial Services and Markets Act 2023 granted the FCA the responsibility and powers to seek to ensure the reasonable provision of cash withdrawal and deposit facilities. In September 2024, The FCA introduced regulatory rules for access to cash. Its rules require the reasonable provision of free cash withdrawal and deposit facilities for personal current accounts. Data from LINK (the operator of the UK's largest ATM network) identifies 106 ATMs in Slough, including 70 free-to-use ATMs.

Where a branch closure is announced or a community has submitted a cash access assessment request, LINK 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.

■ Darlington Economic Campus

Kevin Hollinrake:

[\[37226\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many days each Minister in her Department has spent working at the Darlington Campus since 5 July 2024.

James Murray:

Since 5th July 2024 the following working visits have taken place by HMT ministers at the DEC. Chancellor Rachel Reeves has spent 3 days at the DEC, on 11th July 2024, 12th December 2024 and 13th March 2025. Exchequer Secretary James Murray MP has spent 4 days at the DEC, on 31st July 2024, 17th August 2024, 5th December 2024 and 13th February 2025. Financial Secretary Lord Spencer Livermore has spent 1 day at the DEC, on 22nd August 2024. Chief Secretary Darren Jones MP has spent 1 day at the DEC on 13th March 2025.

The Darlington Economic Campus is central to the plans of HM Treasury and we are delighted to be nearing our target of 335 HMT roles based in Darlington, including a number of the most senior Treasury staff. The Chancellor and the broader Treasury ministerial team support DEC not only by regularly visiting, but also by ensuring that colleagues based in Darlington are welcomed to hybrid meetings and able to contribute fully to the work of the department, making their voices heard and shaping economic policy making for the country as a whole from the North East of England.

■ Electric Vehicles: Taxation

Luke Murphy:

[\[37817\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of benefit-in-kind rates for electric vehicles on the annual uptake of electric vehicles.

James Murray:

HMRC publishes annual statistics which provide information about the company cars provided as benefits in kind to employees by employers, including the proportion of the company car stock which is electric. The most recent statistics were published in June 2024 for the tax year 2022-23, which showed that 220,000 company cars were fully electric, or 29% of the total company car stock, an increase from 50,000 in 2020-21.

The Government is committed to supporting the transition to electric vehicles, and generous company car tax rates for electric cars have been a key incentive for increasing their number on the road. Electric company cars also play a significant role in supporting the used EV markets. At the end of their lease company cars are sold into the used markets, which is where the majority of car sales take place in the UK. There were 314,000 zero emission cars registered for the first time in 2023, an increase of 18 per cent from 2022.

Luke Murphy:

[\[38251\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the introduction of low benefit-in-kind rates for electric vehicles on GDP since 2020-21.

Luke Murphy:

[\[38252\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the impact of the introduction of low benefit-in-kind rates for electric vehicles on supply chain security since 2020-21.

James Murray:

Company cars in the UK are subject to an emissions-based regime, which taxes vehicles based on their list price as well as their CO2 emission level. The Government recognises that this regime plays an important role in the electric vehicle transition.

In July 2019, the Government announced new company car tax rates for the tax years 2020 to 2025, which included generous incentives for electric vehicles. These were legislated for as part of the Finance Act 2020. The Government subsequently announced rates for 2025 to 2028 at Autumn Statement 2022, and rates for 2028 to 2030 at Autumn Budget 2024.

Alongside each fiscal event where the changes were announced, an accompanying Tax Information and Impact Note was published setting out expected economic, equalities and other impacts of the new rates. In each of these notes, the rates were not expected to have any significant macroeconomic impacts, such as impacts on GDP and job creation.

At Budget 2024, the Chancellor announced £2 billion of funding to 2030 to support the zero emissions vehicle manufacturing base and supply chain, recognising the value that the industry delivers for the UK and its ongoing transition.

■ Employers' Contributions: Tax Allowances

Wendy Morton:

[\[37165\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she has considered providing targeted relief or exemptions from employers' National Insurance contributions increases to (a) charities, (b) social enterprises and (c) other not-for-profit entities.

James Murray:

The Government recognises the important role charities play in our society and has made it a priority to reset the relationship with civil society by developing a Civil Society Covenant.

To repair the public finances and help raise the revenue required to increase funding for public services, the Government has taken the difficult decision to increase employer National Insurance.

The Government recognises the need to protect the smallest businesses and charities, which is why we have more than doubled the Employment Allowance to £10,500, meaning more than half of employers with NICs liabilities either gain or see no change next year. Charities will still be able to claim employer NICs reliefs including those for under 21s and under 25 apprentices, where eligible.

More broadly, within the tax system, we provide support to charities through a range of reliefs and exemptions, including reliefs for charitable giving with more than £6 billion in charitable reliefs provided to charities, CASCs and their donors in 2023 to 2024.

■ Energy: VAT

Gareth Snell:

[\[38094\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of removing VAT from the energy bills of ceramic manufacturers.

James Murray:

VAT input tax on energy bills wholly and exclusively related to business activity can be reclaimed by VAT registered businesses.

The Government provides a range of support for business energy bills. The British Industry Supercharger includes a series of targeted measures to bring energy costs for key industries in line with other major economies. The Energy Intensive Industries Compensation Scheme provides businesses with relief for the costs of the UK Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) and Carbon Price Support mechanism in their electricity bills. Finally, the Industrial Energy Transformation Fund supports businesses with high energy use to cut their bills and reduce carbon emissions and is available over the period to 2027.

■ Enterprise Investment Scheme: Lincolnshire

Sir John Hayes:

[\[38344\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what proportion of Enterprise Investment Scheme funding was provided to companies in Lincolnshire in each of the last ten years.

James Murray:

% OF EIS INVESTMENT

2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
0.1%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%	0.2%

It is not possible to provide this information for the last 10 years as administrative data is not available.

■ Financial Conduct Authority and Payment Systems Regulator: Mergers

Mark Garnier:

[\[38030\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of merging the Financial Conduct Authority and the Payment Systems Regulator on costs to the Exchequer.

Mark Garnier:

[\[38031\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate her Department has made of the cost of merging the Financial Conduct Authority and the Payment Systems Regulator.

Emma Reynolds:

The Payment Systems Regulator (PSR) has carried out important work to support the UK's world leading payments sector. However, moving forward, the Government wishes to see a more streamlined regulatory environment with minimal overlap between regulators' responsibilities. That is why the Government has announced its intentions to consolidate the PSR and its functions primarily within the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA). The Government will consult on the detail of this proposal in the summer and legislate as soon as possible.

The Payment Systems Regulator is funded by fees levied on industry.

■ Financial Services Compensation Scheme

Mark Garnier:

[\[38033\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions she has had with the Bank of England on the Financial Services Compensation Scheme's compensation limit for (a) consumer and (b) business accounts.

Emma Reynolds:

Eligible deposits held by UK banks, building societies and credit unions that are authorised by the Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA) are protected by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme up to £85,000, with joint accounts protected up to £170,000. This limit is set by the PRA and applies to both retail and business accounts.

The PRA is required to independently review the limit every five years and will be publishing a consultation on the outcome of its most recent review shortly. Any changes to the limit must be approved by the Treasury and the Government would carefully consider any changes proposed by the PRA.

■ Fraud

Mark Garnier:

[\[38032\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether her Department plans to require (a) technology and (b) telecommunication firms to contribute to the cost of (i) fraud prevention and (ii) the reimbursement of victims of fraud on their platforms.

Emma Reynolds:

Fraud is a costly crime for citizens, consumers, and businesses.

I welcome existing pledges to prevent fraud made by tech and telecoms firms.

At Mansion House, the Chancellor announced this government would work with tech and telecoms companies to stop their platforms and networks being exploited by criminals.

We are monitoring progress, including work on the second Telecommunications Fraud Sector Charter and implementation of the Online Safety Act.

To balance the requirement on Financial Services to reimburse victims of fraud, Section 72 of the Financial Services and Markets Act enables the sector to manage risk through due diligence checks before releasing payments.

The department will continue to work with the Home Office and Department for Science, Innovation and Technology to unlock further prevention efforts across all sectors in the forthcoming update to the fraud strategy.

Housing**Kevin Hollinrake:**[\[37570\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many dwellings there were in England in April (a) 2010 and (b) 2024; how many of those dwellings had (a) one, (b) two, (c) three, (d) four and (e) five or more bedrooms; and how many of those dwellings had a garden.

James Murray:

Please see the response to [UIN 32144](#). The Valuation Office Agency does not usually record whether a domestic property has a garden.

Intellectual Property**Chris Coghlan:**[\[37900\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of expensing intellectual property transactions.

James Murray:

The UK's Intangible Fixed Asset (IFA) regime offers generous and internationally competitive relief for acquired intangible assets like trademarks and licences. In addition, UK businesses can benefit from the biggest tax treaty network in the OECD – which make the UK an attractive jurisdiction for holding IFAs.

The government committed to maintain the regime's current competitive approach in the Corporation Tax Roadmap.

Payment Systems Regulator**Sir John Hayes:**[\[37530\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate she has made of the potential savings to the public purse for abolishing the Payment Systems Regulator.

Emma Reynolds:

The Payment Systems Regulator (PSR) has carried out important work to support the UK's world leading payments sector. However, moving forward, the Government wishes to see a more streamlined regulatory environment with minimal overlap between regulators' responsibilities. That is why the Government has announced its intentions to consolidate the PSR and its functions primarily within the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA). The Government will consult on the detail of this proposal in the summer and legislate as soon as possible.

The Payment Systems Regulator is funded by fees levied on industry.

Private Education: Business Rates**Kevin Hollinrake:**[\[37228\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 27 February 2025 to Question 31955 on Private Education: Business Rates, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of liability for business rates on the commercial viability of nurseries located within the premises of an independent school.

James Murray:

As the Government confirmed at Autumn Budget 2024, schools that satisfy the definition of a private school will lose any entitlement to charitable rate relief entirely. This may include private schools with some nursery classes, which, despite the presence of some nursery provision will still be, by their nature, private schools.

Standalone nursery schools, where they have their own business rates assessments, are excluded from the legislation and, where applicable, retain their charitable rate relief. This approach best ensures consistency with the underlying policy intent.

Public Expenditure: Health Services**Ben Lake:**[\[38377\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment has she made of the potential impact of the Government's plans to abolish NHS England on the future amounts of health related consequential funding that the Welsh Government will receive under the Barnett formula.

Darren Jones:

The Barnett formula is applied when departmental budgets change – not when departments announce changes in policy.

The Department for Health and Social Care are working through the implications of abolishing NHS England and will provide further details in due course. For any funding implications, the Barnett formula will apply in the usual way as set out in the Statement of Funding Policy.

A full breakdown of devolved government funding is set out in the Block Grant Transparency, the next iteration of which will be published in due course.

■ Public Houses: Business Rates and Employers' Contributions**Kevin Hollinrake:**[\[37569\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 27 February 2025 to Question 32146 on Public Houses: Business Rates and Employers' Contributions, for what reason the median rateable value is used.

James Murray:

The Transforming Business Rates consultation used the median RV of a pub (£16,800) to illustrate the amount the average pub is estimated to save in business rates liabilities (over £3,300) from RHL relief being extended at 40% for 2025-26 rather than being removed entirely. The median RV was used as it is less affected by the presence of a few large pubs than the mean RV. Therefore, the median is likely to be closer to the actual RV of a greater number of pubs than the mean would be.

■ Stamp Duty Land Tax**Gregory Stafford:**[\[38297\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of allowing people who have instructed solicitors and are in the process of completing property transactions to apply previous stamp duty rates.

James Murray:

In September 2022, the previous government announced a change to the level at which purchasers of residential property start paying Stamp Duty Land Tax (SDLT), from £125,000 to £250,000. This change was made temporary in November 2022, and the rate will revert to £125,000 on 1 April 2025. For first-time buyers, the nil-rate band is currently £425,000 and the purchase price limit for accessing the relief is currently £625,000. On 1 April 2025, after the rates revert, first time buyers will still benefit from paying no SDLT up to £300,000 and will be able to claim relief on purchases up to £500,000.

Purchasers have had notice of these tax changes, as legislated for in the Stamp Duty Land Tax (Temporary Relief) Act 2023. In order to benefit from the temporary rates, purchasers will need to have completed on their purchase by 31 March 2025. The Government keeps all taxes under review as part of the usual tax policy making process.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES**■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Edward Morello:**[\[903266\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, whether she has had discussions with the Secretary of State for Transport on improving the accessibility of air travel for people with disabilities.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Aviation needs to be accessible so everyone can travel with dignity and ease. The Department for Transport's Aviation Accessibility Task and Finish Group was launched in November. I look forward to seeing its recommendations for improving aviation accessibility.

Carers: Equality**Manuela Perteghella:**[\[903275\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of classifying care experience as a protected characteristic.

Dame Nia Griffith:

The Government is delivering for care leavers by taking practical action. As announced by the Prime Minister on 24 September 2024, care leavers under age 25 will be exempt from rules which require a connection to a local area before accessing social housing. We have also established a care leaver Ministerial Board, which brings together Ministers from key Departments, to improve support for care leavers across Government.

The Equality Act 2010 already protects many care leavers under the indirect discrimination provisions, because a disproportionately high number are likely to be from particular protected characteristics.

Employment: Women**Liz Jarvis:**[\[903274\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps she is taking with Cabinet colleagues to help women re-enter the workforce.

Bridget Phillipson:

The Government is committed to tackling the challenges women face in the labour market, whether they want to find a job, return to work, or progress in-work. We are driving this forward through the support measures in the Employment Rights Bill, Make Work Pay and the Get Britain Working White Paper. We are making flexible learning a Day One right, opening up access to childcare with £8 billion investment to roll out further free hours, and tackling the gender pay gap to ensure women are paid fairly.

Equality**Sarah Smith:**[\[903271\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps she is taking with Cabinet colleagues to promote equality as part of the Government mission entitled Break Down Barriers to Opportunity.

Elaine Stewart:

[\[903272\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps she is taking with Cabinet colleagues to promote equality as part of the Government mission entitled Break Down Barriers to Opportunity.

Bridget Phillipson:

Through the Opportunity Mission, we're creating a fairer Britain, giving every child the best start in life and building the skills to drive economic growth and open up opportunities for all. We're already making progress to ensure where you're from doesn't determine where you end up in life. For example, we have named the first 750 schools introducing free breakfast clubs, helping 180,000 children start the day ready to learn, including 67,000 children in deprived areas.

■ **LGBT+ people: Discrimination**

Adam Thompson:

[\[903270\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps she is taking to help end discrimination against LGBT+ people.

Dame Nia Griffith:

The Government is committed to ensuring LGBT+ people feel safe, included and are protected from discrimination.

Work is underway to fulfil the commitments set out in the Government's manifesto, including the trans-inclusive ban on conversion practices and equalising all existing strands of hate crime.

DHSC also delivered legislation to end discrimination in fertility services for LGBT+ families, by removing additional screening costs for female same-sex couples undertaking reciprocal motherhood, and lifting the ban on people with HIV donating gametes.

Moving forward, we will continue to develop policies and initiatives that enhance the lives of LGBT+ people.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ **Access to Work Programme**

Tom Morrison:

[\[37383\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the average waiting time is for support to be granted to a claimant applying to the Access to Work scheme.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The average waiting time for a decision to be made on support for a claimant applying for Access to Work was 56.9 days from April 2024 to February 2025. We are consulting on this in the Green Paper and aim to reduce times.

Please note that the data supplied is derived from unpublished management information, which was collected for internal Departmental use only, and have not been quality assured to National Statistics or Official Statistics publication standard. They should therefore be treated with caution.

■ **Access to Work Programme: Multiple Sclerosis and Neurology**

Tom Morrison:

[\[37382\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people with (a) neurological conditions and (b) multiple sclerosis are using the Access to Work scheme.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The Department does collect information on the primary medical condition of Access to Work recipients, however we do not hold information to the level required to identify people with neurological conditions. Therefore, we are not able to make an estimate of the number of people living with neurological conditions that are receiving support through the Access to Work scheme.

Information on the number of Access to Work recipients with multiple sclerosis is not readily available. Details of an individual's specific disability/medical condition is stored as descriptive, free-text information and would require manual examination of individual applications to analyse and therefore falls outside of the costs limit.

Information on Access to Work volumes and expenditure by primary medical condition are published annually in the Access to Work official statistics: [Access to Work statistics: April 2007 to March 2024 - GOV.UK](#)

■ **Employment and Support Allowance: Multiple Sclerosis**

Tom Morrison:

[\[37385\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an estimate of the number of people with Multiple Sclerosis who are on income-related Employment and Support Allowance.

Sir Stephen Timms:

In August 2024 there were around 6,500 people on income-related ESA with multiple sclerosis as their main condition.

■ **Employment: Older Women**

Kanishka Narayan:

[\[37343\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment her Department has made of the financial security of older women in (a) Vale of Glamorgan constituency and (b) the UK; and what steps she is taking to end discrimination due to (i) age and (ii) gender.

Alison McGovern:

As announced in the recent Get Britain Working White Paper, we are reforming Jobcentre Plus and creating a new Jobs and Careers service that will enable

everyone, regardless of age or gender, to access support to find good, meaningful work, and support to help them progress in work or increase their earnings.

For those above state pension age, the new State Pension addresses historically poorer outcomes for women, low earners and self-employed people. This means, on average, women on the new State pension are receiving around 98% of the amount received by men.

The government have made a commitment to the Triple Lock for the entirety of this Parliament which will mean spending on State Pensions is forecast to rise by over £31 billion and will see pensioners' yearly incomes being up to £1,900 higher.

Pension Credit provides a safety net for low-income pensioners and those with additional needs, such as those with a severe disability, caring responsibility, responsibility for a child or certain housing costs. Around 1.4 million pensioners are in receipt of the invaluable help that Pension Credit provides.

For those below State Pension age, support is also available through the working age welfare system. In addition, further help is available to eligible over 50s on Universal Credit, through Midlife-life MOTs delivered in Jobcentres and online, which provide an opportunity to review health, finances and skills and signpost to suitable support. There are also over 70 dedicated 50PLUS champions, working across all 37 Jobcentre Districts.

In Vale of Glamorgan, Employer and Partnership Teams in Jobcentres work with a range of employers and partners to enhance the skills and employment support available locally for customers, including women of all ages. The Department for Work and Pensions is also working across government, and through regular engagement with employers, to encourage positive attitudes towards older workers and to advocate for a more diverse, inclusive, and multigenerational workforce.

■ Incapacity Benefit

Tom Morrison:

[\[36492\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of work intensification on the ability of incapacity benefit claimants to (a) find and (b) maintain paid employment.

Sir Stephen Timms:

No assessment has been made. This government is committed to supporting disabled people in finding and maintaining employment. We plan to establish a Disability Advisory Panel to ensure that the voices of disabled people are at the heart of the reforms set out in the Get Britain Working White Paper. The government aims to support more disabled people to find and thrive in employment, thereby reducing the disability employment gap. Additionally, we will set out reforms to health and disability benefits to ensure the system supports people who can work to remain in or start employment in a way that is fair and fiscally sustainable.

■ Job Centres: Stafford

Leigh Ingham:

[\[37482\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of job centres on economic growth in Stafford.

Alison McGovern:

Supporting everyone to find good, meaningful work and helping them to progress is vital for economic growth. Stafford Jobcentre works in partnership with local employers, the NHS, colleges and the voluntary sector on initiatives that support people to get into and on at work.

Through our plans to create a new jobs and careers service we will transform our ability to support people into work, help those on low pay to increase their earnings, and create a more flexible workforce for a fast changing, higher skilled jobs market. This transformation is expected to contribute significantly to economic growth by addressing local skills gaps and providing tailored support to meet the needs of local labour markets.

We are currently considering our evaluation strategy to assess the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the new jobs and careers service. This includes funding in 2025/26 to take forward the first steps of building the new service through a pathfinder, as set out in the Get Britain Working White Paper.

■ Low Incomes: Food

Imran Hussain:

[\[37187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing financial support to enable people on low incomes to buy healthy food.

Alison McGovern:

We are committed to supporting vulnerable households access healthy food. We support over 365,000 pregnant women and young children to buy healthy foods like milk or fruit through Healthy Start, provide Free School Meals to over 3 million children, are tripling investment in breakfast clubs to over £30 million, and last year invested over £200 million into the Holiday Activities and Food Programmes. We also continue to provide substantial funding to Local Authorities to support those most in need, and are extending the Household Support Fund (HSF) by a further year until March 2026, providing funding of £742 million in England. This will ensure low-income households can continue to access support towards the cost of essentials, such as food.

■ Personal Independence Payment: Telephone Services

Nadia Whittome:

[\[37329\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to improve waiting times for the Personal Independence Payment helpline.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Telephony is our customers' primary channel to contact us. We continually assess the number of calls we are receiving and the associated waiting times, deploying resources accordingly to support service levels wherever this is possible. However, due to recent media articles regarding PIP, we have been receiving high volumes of calls. As a result, we have been deploying, where practical (whilst also balancing the need to complete necessary processing work) 100% dedicated telephony specific resource to the Personal Independent Payment telephony lines which will give extra support with the increase in both volume of traffic and waiting times.

■ **Poverty: Children****Margaret Mullane:**[\[37468\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking with Cabinet colleagues to reduce levels of poverty among migrant children.

Alison McGovern:

Delivering our manifesto commitment to tackle child poverty is an urgent priority for this Government and the Ministerial Taskforce is considering all children across the United Kingdom in developing a Child Poverty Strategy. The causes of child poverty are deep-rooted and complex and the Taskforce is exploring all available levers to drive forward short and long-term actions across government to reduce child poverty.

The Taskforce recognises the distinct challenges of poverty faced by migrant children and the Child Poverty Unit is working closely with the Home Office on this important aspect of the work. Alongside this, officials planned specific discussions with experts from outside Government, as part of the wider evidence gathering the Taskforce is undertaking.

■ **Seasonal workers: Agriculture****Chris Law:**[\[37203\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps the Health and Safety Executive have taken to prevent health and safety hazards on farms employing workers on the Seasonal Worker visa in each of the last five years in (a) Scotland, (b) England and (c) Wales.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety, this includes workplace health and safety risks created in agriculture.

Over the last 5 years, HSE has taken the following steps to address on-farm health and safety hazards and improve the health and safety performance of the industry for the benefit of all farm workers in Scotland, England and Wales, including seasonal workers, by:

- Working closely with the industry through Britain's Farm Safety Partnerships (FSPs). Together, HSE and the FSPs use a range of interventions to encourage

the industry to take a greater ownership of the health and safety risks that it creates, and work to create sustained improvement from within the industry.

- Between 2018 and 2024, in partnership with the industry, HSE ran a campaign to offer farmers free health and safety training which was then followed up by an inspection to a selection of the farms invited to take the training.
- Although HSE has no pre-planned inspections in agriculture in 2024/25, HSE continues to inspect where they receive intelligence to suggest risk is not being managed and investigate incidents in line with its selection criteria.
- Over the last 5 years HSE has also engaged with the industry through a variety of other methods including industry talks, webinars, presentations, campaigns, media engagement, and producing industry notifications which include safety messaging.
- HSE's recent agricultural media campaign "Your Farm Your Future" was a successful example of using HSE and industry voices to reinforce safety messages and reach a wide range of farmers and farm workers. Campaign materials can be found at: <https://workright.campaign.gov.uk/campaigns/agriculture/>.
- In addition, HSE also publishes guidance for farmers on how to prevent workplace ill health and injury to their workforce, including seasonal workers. The guidance is freely available on the HSE website at <https://www.hse.gov.uk/agriculture/index.htm>.

HSE remains committed to working with the farming industry to help improve health and safety performance for the benefit of all its workers.

■ Unemployment: Young People

Dr Al Pinkerton:

[37478]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to help reduce youth unemployment rates in Surrey Heath constituency.

Alison McGovern:

As part of our plan to Get Britain Working, we will also be launching a new Youth Guarantee for all young people aged 18-21 in England to ensure that they can access quality training opportunities, an apprenticeship or help to find work.

DWP currently provides young people aged 16-24 with labour market support through an extensive range of interventions at a national and local level. This includes flexible provision driven by local need, nationwide employment programmes and support delivered by work coaches based in our Jobcentres and in local communities working alongside partners.

One such provision is our DWP Youth Hubs. The Surrey Heath Youth Hub provides employability support, mental health support and confidence building sessions, and also works alongside partners such as Surrey Young People's Fund and Surrey Choices. Surrey Young People's Fund provides funding for disadvantaged young people aged 16-25, who are resident in Surrey, to assist them in moving towards an identified goal in education, training, apprenticeship, or employment. Surrey Choices

offer specialised programmes for young people aged 16-24 with a range of support needs – the aim of these programmes is to prepare disabled, neurodivergent and autistic people for work.

■ Universal Credit: Incapacity Benefit

Steve Darling:

[\[38169\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of raising the standard rate of Universal Credit on the number of people claiming incapacity benefits.

Sir Stephen Timms:

[Holding answer 18 March 2025]: Universal Credit awards include a standard allowance, which is the core component of any award and is paid according to age and household unit. The purpose of the standard allowance is to provide towards basic living costs. Additional amounts are added to provide for individual needs such as housing, children, disability, and childcare costs.

On 18 March 2025 we announced the first permanent above-inflation rise in the Standard Allowance, benefitting millions of people. That is an increase of up to £775 annually in cash terms by 2029/30 for single households on UC aged over 25. This avoids people having to choose between employment or adequate financial support, and addresses the current issue where people on the health element receive over double the rate of the standard allowance, creating an incentive for people to prove they are unfit to work to claim the health element and access greater financial support.

The government will publish the OBR-certified costings of individual measures on the day of the Spring Statement on 26 March and we will be publishing estimated impacts on claimants, including for changes to the Standard Rate of Universal Credit, on the same day.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

HOME OFFICE

■ Animal Experiments: Animal Welfare

Mr Richard Holden:

[37318]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many animals were housed in UK (a) laboratories, (b) breeding centres and (c) universities but not used in scientific procedures in 2023; and how many animals were not used in scientific procedures and euthanised in 2023.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 18 March 2025. The correct answer should have been:

Dan Jarvis:

Cryptoassets exchanges, like all businesses who launder funds, can be prosecuted under the money laundering offences in Part 7 of the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 and fined accordingly. In April 2024, new powers came into force to enable law enforcement to more effectively investigate, seize, and recover the proceeds of crime within the cryptoasset ecosystem. Since 2020, businesses providing cryptoasset services that fall under the scope of the [Money Laundering, Terrorist Financing and Transfer of Funds \(Information on the Payer\) Regulations 2017](#) (MLRs) in the United Kingdom have also been required to register with the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), and comply with the requirements of the regulations. They must also comply with the UK sanctions regime and are obliged to report any breach of these regimes to the Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation (OFSI). They should further consider their obligation to submit a suspicious activity report (SAR) to the UK Financial Intelligence Unit.

More widely, the government has bolstered law enforcement's capacity and capability to tackle money laundering through cryptoassets. This includes new specialist capability in the NCA and partner agencies, funding public-private crypto collaboration teams in police forces and Regional Organised Crime Units, and the development of a multi-agency operational crypto cell to ensure that knowledge and abilities in investigating cryptoassets are pooled together and all available tools and powers are exploited efficiently.

The available data in this area was most recently set out in Annual Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Living Animals, Great Britain 2023, published on 11 September 2024. The statistics provide full details on the number of licensed procedures carried out, the species of animals and the purposes for which the procedures have been undertaken. The 2023 Annual Statistics show that 2.68 million scientific procedures involving living animals were carried out in Great Britain in 2023; this is a decrease of 3% on last year and the lowest number since 2001.

Attachments:

1. **annual-statistics-scientific-procedures-living-animals-2018-tables (3).xlsx**

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

HOME OFFICE

■ Support for victims and survivors of terrorism

The Minister of State for Security (Dan Jarvis):

[\[HCWS533\]](#)

The impact of terrorism on individuals and their families is long lasting and evolving. In a single moment, their worlds are turned upside down and lives are changed forever. We hold in our thoughts everyone tragically lost, bereaved, and injured, physically and mentally, by terrorist attacks, both at home and abroad.

It is essential that each and every one of these individuals receive timely and compassionate support to help them recover from the impacts of an attack.

The Home Office has carried out a comprehensive review of the support needs of victims and survivors of terrorism, to identify ways to better address the needs of victims and survivors. The Government pays tribute and gives thanks to each and every victim and survivor who contributed to the review and to those who continue to raise awareness of the lived experiences of victims and survivors, and to campaign for better support.

Today we have published the review's findings, which fundamentally signal that more needs to be done to better support victims and survivors of terrorism.

The review identified that victims and survivors need consistent and co-ordinated support, with streamlined communications to enable clarity on what support they are eligible for, how to apply, and where to receive help in applying. The review also found that acknowledgement of victims' and survivors' lived experiences is crucial to their individual recoveries.

Today the Government has affirmed this commitment by announcing plans to implement a dedicated support hub to deliver timely and compassionate support to victims and survivors nationally. The Government has also launched a consultation on a 'National Day for Victims and Survivors of Terrorism' to better recognise those impacted by terrorist attacks.

Next Steps

Today we have announced that we will deliver a dedicated support hub for victims and survivors of terrorism. The support hub will better support victims by streamlining communications through a single point of contact and will provide specialist support addressing their diverse needs in the immediate and long-term aftermath of an attack. We are aiming for the support hub to be available to victims and survivors from next year.

There is currently no single focal point to allow the nation to come together in reflection and remembrance of those sadly lost and impacted by terrorism. It is only right that we consider the ways the Government could appropriately acknowledge their experiences.

In recognition of this, today the Government has also launched a public consultation on a National Day for Victims and Survivors of Terrorism. The consultation seeks specific

feedback on the proposal for a National Day, together with exploring other forms of recognition for victims and survivors. It also seeks respondents' input on key aspects of a National Day, including their views on a potential name, date, the ways it could be commemorated, and any consequences that may arise. We welcome responses from those impacted by terrorism including, victims, survivors, their loved ones and those that support them.

The consultation has launched today for a period of 12 weeks. It is available on GOV.UK and is open to members of the public.

We understand the outcomes of the review have been long-awaited. It is important to this Government that we are transparent about the unique challenges victims and survivors experience. Today we have also published a summary of the review and its key recommendations. The review summary is available on the GOV.UK website and accessible to all members of the public.

These reforms are an important first step towards better support and recognition for victims and survivors of terrorism. I personally pay tribute to their courage and resilience, and I pledge my commitment to ensuring they receive the support they deserve.

A copy of the consultation (and related Privacy Information Notice) and the review summary will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.