



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 20 March 2025 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:40 P.M., 20 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

#### ■ Crimes of Violence: Beckenham and Penge

**Liam Conlon:**

[\[37876\]](#)

To ask the Solicitor General, what steps she is taking to help ensure effective prosecution rates for (a) serious and (b) violent crime cases in Beckenham and Penge constituency.

**Lucy Rigby:**

We are taking strong action as part of our Plan for Change to tackle serious and violent crime.

Our new Crime and Policing Bill will back our police by giving them enhanced and tougher powers to keep our streets safe, to tackle anti-social behaviour, and to crack down on knife crime.

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) prosecutes serious and violent crime robustly, providing early investigative advice on complex and serious offending to build strong cases and deliver justice for victims.

The CPS is working with cross-government partners to support the delivery of the Safer Streets Mission and all CPS guidance and training is kept under constant review to ensure front-line prosecutors are equipped to prosecute these serious offences.

### BUSINESS AND TRADE

#### ■ Bark.com

**Leigh Ingham:**

[\[37836\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will have discussions with Bark.com on their effectiveness in vetting tradespeople employing their services.

**Justin Madders:**

All traders, including online platforms, must exercise professional diligence in their commercial practices in order to comply with the requirements in the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations (2008), restated and updated in the DMCC Act 2024. Part 3 of the DMCC Act will strengthen the CMA's powers to enforce the law and enable the CMA and courts to impose monetary penalties for breaches.

#### ■ Companies: Insolvency

**Ian Roome:**

[\[37869\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to help reduce the number of corporate insolvencies.

**Gareth Thomas:**

The Government aims to boost all businesses, across key policy areas to build business capabilities, and a strong business environment. The Government works closely with the British Business Bank to enhance small business's access to finance through targeted interventions. Under the umbrella of the Export Academy, UK Export Finance and the newly announced Business Growth Service, businesses can access support, information, training, events, and expert support from business and International Trade advisors to overcome trading and export barriers.

**Conditions of Employment****Charlie Dewhirst:** [\[37801\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the planned Right to Switch Off, what plans he has for the application of this policy (a) on fallow days for employees, (b) during office hours on Mondays to Fridays for people who work (i) standard working patterns, (ii) part-time and (iii) compressed hours and (c) for people who work four-day weeks on full-pay.

**Justin Madders:**

In "Next Steps to Make Work Pay" the Government said it would deliver the right to switch off through a Statutory Code of Practice, rather than through the Employment Rights Bill.

A Code of Practice sets out guidelines for employers to follow. A failure to comply with a code of practice can be taken into account by an Employment Tribunal. We are developing the content of a draft Code with key stakeholders including both business representative groups and trade unions. In due course, that draft Code will be subject to a full formal consultation process.

**Defence: Industry****Ben Obese-Jecty:** [\[38196\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on fulfilment of the UK's commitment to the NATO Industrial Capacity Expansion Pledge.

**Gareth Thomas:**

The Department for Business and Trade continues to work with colleagues across government to deliver new a Defence Industrial Strategy which will help us meet our NATO commitments, such as the NATO Industrial Capacity Expansion Pledge.

**Industry****Dr Scott Arthur:** [\[R\] \[37885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of staff cuts at Dundee University on the 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. Education policy is devolved in Scotland, and it is for the Scottish Government to consider the broader impact of developments in the education sector, including of any potential staff cuts in Scottish universities.

**■ New Businesses: Women****Lauren Edwards:**[\[37486\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what proportion of British Business Bank funding is dedicated to supporting female entrepreneurs by sector.

**Gareth Thomas:**

The British Business Bank delivers most programmes via third parties, limiting data on gender and sectoral breakdowns, however it aims to increase gender data in 2025.

The Start Up Loans programme is an example of where gender data is held, and since 2012, it has delivered over 118,000 loans totalling more than £1.1 billion, with 40% going to female founders.

As a founding signatory of the Investing in Women Code, the Bank supports women entrepreneurs by improving access to the tools, resources and finance they need. The Bank also collects data on equity finance for female entrepreneurs and is committed to enhancing data collection of its own equity finance activities.

The Bank has also invested £50 million through existing programmes, supporting the Invest in Women Taskforce.

**■ Postal Services: Prices****Bell Ribeiro-Addy:**[\[37709\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of Universal Service Obligation reform on the affordability of postal services for consumers.

**Justin Madders:**

It is the responsibility of Ofcom, as the independent regulator of postal services, to ensure that the universal postal service is affordable for customers as well as being efficient and financially sustainable.

In its consultation document proposing a package of reforms to better reflect people's usage of postal services and support financial sustainability, Ofcom set out that it plans to consider options to ensure the continued affordability of USO services, including more targeted interventions than the current Second-Class safeguard cap.

## ■ Postal Services: Universal Service Obligation

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** [\[37710\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will take steps to ensure that Universal Service Obligation reform adequately meets the requirements of vulnerable consumers reliant on postal services.

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** [\[37711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will take steps to ensure that Universal Service Obligation reform retains a universal postal service for (a) people experiencing homelessness, (b) victims of domestic abuse and (c) other people without a secure address.

**Justin Madders:**

The government recognises the importance of access to post for all users, especially the most vulnerable and is committed to the universal service obligation.

As the independent regulator for postal services, it is Ofcom's responsibility to secure the provision of a universal postal service and must ensure the provision of sufficient access points to meet the reasonable needs of users of the service. In its proposals, Ofcom committed to continue to engage with other stakeholders on the issue of ensuring that specific vulnerable groups have access to post.

## ■ Products: Safety

**Peter Prinsley:** [\[38269\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps he is taking to ensure that online marketplaces are accountable for the sale of unsafe products on their platforms.

**Peter Prinsley:** [\[38270\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how the Department plans to ensure online marketplaces have a duty to notify consumers who have been sold (a) unsafe and (b) illegal products.

**Justin Madders:**

UK product safety law is clear: all products must be safe. Despite this, unsafe products are too readily available to consumers online. The Government has introduced the Product Regulation and Metrology Bill to allow us to update our regulatory framework, including clarifying and modernising responsibilities of online marketplaces, building on best practice, to create an effective and proportionate framework.

Alongside this, the Office for Product Safety and Standards takes action to reduce risks from non-compliant products online, including risk-based intelligence-led test purchasing, enforcement of online marketplaces and others, consumer and business advice campaigns, and coordinated interventions at ports and borders.

**■ Shellfish: Faroe Islands****Adrian Ramsay:** [\[37927\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he has plans to meet with the Faroese Minister of Foreign Affairs, Industry and Trade to discuss cetacean hunts.

**Mr Douglas Alexander:**

The Government is strongly opposed to the hunting of whales and dolphins. The Secretary of State currently has no plans to meet with the Faroese Minister of Foreign Affairs, Industry and Trade. However, the Department for Business and Trade regularly engages the Faroese government on this important matter. Officials meet annually under the Joint Committee of the UK-Faroe Islands Free Trade Agreement, and UK officials highlight our strong opposition to the practice at every opportunity.

**■ Stellantis: Luton****Blake Stephenson:** [\[35851\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 25 February 2025 to Question 31113 on Stellantis: Luton, what his Department's definition of appropriate support is.

**Sarah Jones:**

We are supporting affected workers at Stellantis' Luton plant by making sure they are fully aware of the options available to them and have access to services they need to assist them in taking forward these options e.g. the Job Centre Plus Rapid Response Service.

We have been engaging with the company, trade unions, Luton council and across government throughout the process to ensure that a package of measures is being put in place to support all workers at Luton facing redundancy. This includes tools and services to find new employment.

**■ Toys and Games: Safety****Andrew Rosindell:** [\[38007\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps he is taking to ensure redress for consumers harmed by dangerous toys sold on online marketplaces.

**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[38008\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether the Product Regulation and Metrology Bill will regulate online marketplaces selling dangerous toys.

**Justin Madders:**

The Consumer Protection Act 1987 allows consumers harmed by defective products to make civil claims from the manufacturer for compensation. The Government is currently reviewing this legislation to ensure it remains up-to-date and fit for the future. Other legislation gives consumers the right to redress if they are misled by a

trader's actions; including the right to unwind contracts, claim discounts, and damages.

While the law is clear that toys must be safe before being placed on the market, the Product Regulation and Metrology Bill will enable regulations to be updated to better reflect modern online supply chains.

## ■ Trade Agreements: Australia and New Zealand

**David Chadwick:** [\[37895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether his Department has plans to make an assessment of the potential impact of the UK's free trade agreements with (a) Australia and (b) New Zealand on Welsh agriculture.

**Mr Douglas Alexander:**

The UK Government assessed the environmental impacts of the UK-Australia FTA and the UK-New Zealand FTA within the independently scrutinised impact assessments which were published in December 2021 and February 2022 respectively when the FTAs were signed. These covered both the economic and environmental impacts.

In addition, the independent Trade Agriculture Commission gave both the UK-Australia FTA and the UK-New Zealand FTA a clean bill of health, concluding both FTAs are consistent with the maintenance of UK statutory protections in relation to animal or plant life or health, animal welfare and environmental protection.

**David Chadwick:** [\[37896\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether his Department has plans to review the UK's free trade agreements with (a) Australia and (b) New Zealand.

**Mr Douglas Alexander:**

The UK Government continually assesses the implementation of free trade agreements to maximise their benefit and to support economic growth. The Department is working to ensure the UK-Australia and UK-New Zealand Free Trade Agreements continue to work well for business.

## ■ Trade Agreements: Impact Assessments

**David Chadwick:** [\[37897\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether future trade deals will include impact assessments for (a) Scotland, (b) Wales, (c) Northern Ireland and (d) the regions of England.

**Mr Douglas Alexander:**

For new free trade agreements (FTAs), the Government publishes impact assessments to support the parliamentary scrutiny process of FTAs. The analysis will include an assessment on the UK's regions and nations as well as UK growth and trade.

**■ Trade Agreements: USA****Clive Jones:** [\[38272\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether his Department plans to publish a Strategic Approach document for prospective US trade negotiations.

**Mr Douglas Alexander:**

As the Prime Minister said on 27 February, we've decided to work with the United States on a new economic deal with advanced technology at its core. We will set out more details as discussions evolve.

**■ Trade Promotion: Israel and Occupied Territories****Andy Slaughter:** [\[38558\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 13 February 2025 to Question 30065 Trade Promotion: Israel and Occupied Territories, if he will list his department's current priorities identified for (a) export and (b) investment services in (i) Israel and (ii) the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

**Mr Douglas Alexander:**

Current priorities identified for export and investment services in Israel include infrastructure (construction and energy), healthcare (medicinal and pharmaceutical products), food and drink, financial and professional services.

Priorities for the Occupied Palestinian Territories include cars, tech, food and drink, and financial, professional business, and digital services.

**Andy Slaughter:** [\[38559\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 13 February 2025 to Question 30065 on Trade Promotion: Israel and Occupied Territories, how much of his Department's budget has been allocated to each of the Trade Envoys for (a) Israel and (b) the Occupied Palestinian Territory in the (i) 2024-25 and (ii) 2025-26 financial years.

**Gareth Thomas:**

The Department has so far not spent any of its budget this Financial Year to support the Trade Envoys to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

The funding for next Financial Year 2025-26 for the Trade Envoys to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories will be allocated on a case-by-case basis to meet costs of travel and subsistence needed to undertake their role.

Any costs incurred are subject to Departmental guidelines which apply to the programme's use of public funds.

**Andy Slaughter:** [\[38560\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 13 February 2025 to Question 30065 on Trade Promotion: Israel and Occupied Territories,

what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the role of the Trade Envoys to (a) Israel and (b) the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

**Gareth Thomas:**

Following the announcement by the Secretary of State on 28<sup>th</sup> January of the appointment of a new team of Trade Envoys, we are in the process of developing specific objectives to measure the performance and impact of the Trade Envoys supporting Departmental priorities including Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

## CABINET OFFICE

### ■ Civil Servants: Pay

**Charlie Dewhirst:** **[37804]**

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 26 November 2024 to Question 14107 on Civil Servants: Pay, if he will publish an anonymised list of the salary of each civil servant by public body.

**Georgia Gould:**

As was the case under the previous administration (a) summary data that includes £5k salary band headcounts and median and mean salary measures by department and grade are published here <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/civil-service-statistics> and

(b) Salary data reported within 5k salary bands for individual SCS at paybands 2 and 3 are published regularly by departments on data.gov.uk as part of departmental transparency organograms. These data also include the salary pay scales for junior staff. The Cabinet Office organograms can be found here <https://www.data.gov.uk/dataset/ff76be1f-4f37-4bef-beb7-32b259413be1/organogram-cabinet-office>

There are no current plans to publish further data.

### ■ Commissioner for Public Appointments

**Charlie Dewhirst:** **[37811]**

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 27 November 2024 to Question 14111 on Public Appointments, if he will place in the Library a copy of all correspondence to and from the Public Appointments Commissioner since 4 July 2024.

**Georgia Gould:**

Ahead of launching a significant appointment (which are agreed between the Commissioner for Public Appointments and HM Government Ministers and Welsh Government Ministers) departments must correspond with the Office for the Commissioner for Public Appointments to agree the Senior Independent Panel Member.

Personal data relating to potential Senior Independent Panel Members is shared with the Commissioner for Public Appointments for the purpose of assessing their suitability and experience for the role, as per the requirement in the Governance Code for Public Appointments.

I am unable to publish this correspondence as it would involve disclosing personal information protected under data protection laws in line with practice under previous administration.

## ■ Overseas Trade: Faroe Islands

**Adrian Ramsay:** [\[37926\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will make an estimate of the value of trade (a) imports and (b) exports between the UK and the Faroe Islands for financial year (i) 2023-24 and (ii) 2022-23.

**Adrian Ramsay:** [\[37928\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will make an estimate of the total value of trade (a) imports and (b) exports of fish and crustaceans between the UK and the Faroe Islands for financial year (i) 2023-24 and (ii) 2022-23.

**Georgia Gould:**

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 [PQ37926\_ 37928 (1).pdf]

## ■ Permanent Secretaries: Dismissal and Recruitment

**Charlie Dewhirst:** [\[37806\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 26 November 2024 to Question 14099 on Permanent Secretaries: Dismissal and Recruitment, what his planned timetable is for the implementation of the recommendations in 2025.

**Georgia Gould:**

I have nothing to add to my answer to question 14099 on 26 November 2024.

## ■ Prime Minister: Recruitment

**Charlie Dewhirst:** [\[37808\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 27 November 2024 to Question 6057 on Prime Minister's Office: Vacancies, how many jobs in the Prime Minister's Office were filled by exception without (a) internal and (b) external advertisement since 4 July 2024.

**Georgia Gould:**

As was the case under the previous Government, where over 9,000 such exceptions were used in the year ending March 2023, exceptions are a long-established part of bringing talent and expertise into the Civil Service. Since 4 July 2024, there have been 3 appointments made via exception.

**Public Bodies: Reviews****Charlie Dewhirst:**[\[37814\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 5 February 2025 to Question 25853 on Public Bodies: Reviews, which four public body reviews are completed; what were the conclusions of each of these; which public body reviews are in progress; and which public body reviews have been paused.

**Georgia Gould:**

Of reviews planned for 2024/25, the following reviews have completed:

Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency, Care Quality Commission, Regulator of Social Housing, Defence Equipment and Support, Submarine Delivery Agency, Nuclear Research Advisory Council, Legal Aid Agency.

It is each department's responsibility to publish its reviews once finalised.

The following reviews are in progress:

Valuation Tribunal Service, Science Advisory Committee on the Medical Implications of Less-Lethal Weapons, Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service, Youth Justice Board for England and Wales, Intellectual Property Office.

In some cases, departments have paused their reviews to give capacity to deliver more ambitious work on improving delivery and value for money, in line with government's wider commitment to reform arm's length bodies. This wider reform includes the closure of NHS England as announced by the Prime Minister on 13 March.

**Public Sector Reform and Innovation Fund****Charlie Dewhirst:**[\[37802\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many people he plans to recruit for the test-and-learn teams funded through the Innovation Fund.

**Georgia Gould:**

The £100 million Public Service Reform and Innovation Fund will be deploying Test, Learn and Grow 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 – 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.



As part of this co-design, we will formalise our resourcing requirements to provide support on the ground with multi-disciplinary teams helping local places respond to the public service challenges in their areas.

## ■ Public Sector: Fraud

**Jas Athwal:** [\[37964\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to reduce fraud in the public sector.

**Georgia Gould:**

This government is taking tough action to reduce public sector fraud.

In January, we introduced the Public Authorities (Fraud, Error and Recovery) Bill, giving us more tools to combat fraud, allowing government to investigate fraud, recover public money and sending fraudsters a clear message: you won't get away with stealing public money.

The Bill was introduced on 22nd January, and is currently being examined at the Committee Stage.

Utilising emerging technology to counter fraud is vital. That's why the Public Sector Fraud Authority uses advanced analytics and is developing artificial intelligence tools to help counter fraud experts better understand, prevent and detect fraud.

## ■ Special Advisers: Codes of Practice

**Charlie Dewhirst:** [\[37809\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 26 November 2024 to Question 14093 on Special Advisers: Code of Practice, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of amending the Code of Conduct for special advisers to reflect changes to the Ministerial Code.

**Georgia Gould:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to PQ14093. The Government published the Code of Conduct for Special Advisers 6 November 2024.

## ■ UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland

**Jim Allister:** [\[37523\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Answer of 22 February 2023 to Question 146816 on Northern Ireland Protocol and Trader Support Service: Costs, what the cost to the public purse was of (a) Trader Support Services operations, (b) Movement Assistance Scheme operations and (c) the Digital Assistance Scheme between August 2020 and February 2025.

**Nick Thomas-Symonds:**

The Government is committed to supporting industry in moving goods smoothly between Great Britain and Northern Ireland, including through the use of schemes such as the Movement Assistance Scheme (MAS) and the Trader Support Service

(TSS). The costs of the MAS, TSS, and Digital Assistance Scheme (DAS) are set out below:

	FY 2020/21	FY2021/22	FY2022/23	FY2023/24	FY2024/25
MAS	£3.53 million	£9.78 million	£8.75 million	£9.64 million	£8.30 million (up to 30/01/2025)
TSS	£100.62 million	£148.80 million	£114.68 million	£105.19 million	£73.18 million (up to 30/01/2025)
DAS	£3.45 million	£13.73 million	£16.6 million	£18.4 million	£15.2 million (up to 28/02/2025)

### ■ UK Relations with EU: Consultants

**Charlie Dewhirst:**

[\[37812\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 27 January 2025 to Question 25918 on UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement: Consultants, what consultants are commissioned by his Department to (a) assist the EU Relations Secretariat and (b) work on the renegotiations with the European Union.

**Nick Thomas-Symonds:**

The Cabinet Office has not commissioned consultants to assist the EU Relations Secretariat or work on resetting the relationship with the European Union.

## CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

### ■ Arts: Heywood and Middleton North

**Mrs Elsie Blundell:**

[\[37751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to support the creative industries in Heywood and Middleton North constituency.

**Chris Bryant:**

The creative industries are one of the government's eight priority Industrial Strategy (IS) sectors. In 2023, the sector employed 2.4m people, and contributed £124bn in UK GVA – more than 5% of total UK GVA.

The Industrial Strategy is being designed and implemented in lockstep with local and regional leaders. We have selected Greater Manchester as a priority region for the Creative Industries: as a result, Greater Manchester will receive additional funding, to be agreed as part of the Spending Review, to encourage sustainable investment in the creative industries.

Greater Manchester has also received funding from the Create Growth Programme, which supports high-growth creative businesses in 12 English regions outside of

London. Government has awarded a further £16.3 million for the programme for the next financial year – part of the £60 million package of support for the sector announced at January's Creative Industries Growth Summit.

We also set out new commitments from the British Business Bank, the UK's economic development bank, and UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) in January to strengthen their support for the creative industries, in addition to making shorter apprenticeships available from August 2025, building towards a more flexible growth and skills levy. These are the first steps we have taken in delivering on our ambitions for the creative industries, with more to be set out with the publication of the Creative Industries Sector Plan, alongside the Industrial Strategy, in late Spring.

### ■ **Football: Regulation**

**Sir John Hayes:** [\[37528\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what estimate she has made of the potential cost to the public purse for setting up an independent football regulator.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

All relevant costs relating to the creation of the Independent Football Regulator will be recovered from clubs via a levy, ensuring that there is nil cost to the public purse.

### ■ **Gambling Commission**

**Ellie Chowns:** [\[37932\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what recent assessment she has made of the progress of the Gambling Commission's investigation on allegations under section 42 of the Gambling Act 2005 relating to bets placed on the date of the 2024 General Election; and what steps her Department is taking to help ensure the timely conclusion of this investigation.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

The Gambling Commission is continuing its investigation into potential criminal offences of cheating under section 42 of the Gambling Act 2005 in relation to bets placed on the timing of the 2024 General Election. It would be inappropriate to comment whilst this investigation is ongoing.

### ■ **Gambling: Charities**

**Mr Louie French:** [\[36799\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to ensure that gambling harms charities are funded from the end of the voluntary levy period until the introduction of the statutory levy.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

It is a priority that in this crucial transition period, the valuable experience and services in the current system are protected. We are clear that operators must continue to provide financial contributions at their current levels until the levy is in

force, and have received reassurances from the industry that this will be delivered. The levy will come into force in April this year with funding flowing for research, prevention and treatment as soon as possible. We are clear that levy funding will be directed to ensure the third sector continues to play a key role across the future system.

## ■ Historic Buildings: Repairs and Maintenance

**Sir John Hayes:**

[\[37532\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to help support (a) heritage restoration and (b) sustainable retrofitting for the stock of historic buildings.

**Chris Bryant:**

DCMS and its arms-length bodies offer a range of grants and support to restore heritage assets. The Secretary of State announced in February £15 million of additional funding for Heritage at Risk, building on Historic England's existing Repair Grants for Heritage at Risk programme - providing grants for repairs and conservation to heritage buildings at risk, focusing on those sites with most need, and a new £4.85 million Heritage Revival Fund to enable local people to take ownership of heritage they love and bring historic buildings back into use. The National Lottery Heritage Fund also delivers project-based heritage funding. Since 1994, The National Lottery Heritage Fund has distributed £8.6bn of National Lottery funds to more than 47,000 projects.

Historic England has published advice online to help owners of historic buildings to streamline the installation of energy efficiency measures, and works with partners including Government to support the wider retrofit of historic buildings.

## ■ National Physical Activity Taskforce

**Mr Louie French:**

[\[36804\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, when the National Physical Activity Taskforce (a) last met and (b) next plans to meet; and whether she plans to update the terms of reference of that taskforce.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

This Government has set out a bold and ambitious agenda for change and sport has an important role to play in delivering this. Sport and physical activity are central to delivering the Government's health mission as being physically active is good for both our physical and mental health.

The National Physical Activity Taskforce (NPAT) was established under the previous government. The NPAT last met on Wednesday 25 March 2024 and we have no plans to reconvene that group.

Instead, as a mission led Government we intend to work through the Health Mission Board to bring together a range of Departments to tackle fundamental issues

including high levels of inactivity; and with the sector to secure their support. We will be setting out our holistic approach as part of the Spending Review process.

## ■ **Sports: Facilities**

**Jas Athwal:**

[\[37960\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to help protect grassroots sports venues in London.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

This Government recognises that grassroots sports facilities are important to communities up and down the country. Everyone, no matter who they are or where they live, should have access to high quality facilities and opportunities to participate in sport and physical activity. Sport England's site Buddle provides free learning and support resources to inspire and strengthen clubs and community organisations offering sport and physical activity.

The Government has committed to continued funding for grassroots facilities. £123 million is being invested UK-wide via the Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programme throughout 2024/25, including support for 20 projects in London.

## ■ **Sports: Special Educational Needs**

**Dr Al Pinkerton:**

[\[37930\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to improve the (a) availability and (b) accessibility of SEND sports camps in Surrey Heath constituency.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

The Government is dedicated to making sport in this country accessible and inclusive for everyone. The holiday activities and food programme provides healthy meals, enriching activities, and free childcare places to children from low-income families, benefiting their health, wellbeing and learning. The holiday activities and food programme funding is primarily for school aged children from reception to year 11 (inclusive) who receive benefits-related free school meals. Local authorities have discretion to use up to 15% of their funding to provide free or subsidised holiday club places for children, who are not in receipt of benefits-related free school meals, but who the local authority believe could benefit from holiday activities and food programme provision.

The Department for Education encourages local authorities to engage with local and national organisations, including special schools with expertise in working with children with SEND or additional needs. Local authorities are obligated to include the numbers of children with SEND or additional needs who have participated in their programme in their post provision reporting to the department.

**■ Tennis: Facilities**

**Max Wilkinson:** [\[37734\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of the Park Tennis Court project on encouraging more people to take up tennis.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

The Government is committed to ensuring that everyone, regardless of background, should have access to and benefit from quality sport and physical activity opportunities. We recognise that everyone should have access to high quality facilities and opportunities to participate in sport and physical activity.

The previous Government commissioned an independent impact evaluation assessment of the Park Tennis Court Programme in August 2023, with a key focus being the impact of the programme on participation. We expect the full evaluation impact report to be published during April 2026.

**Max Wilkinson:** [\[37735\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what plans her Department has to renew funding for the Park Tennis Courts programme.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

The Government is committed to ensuring that everyone, regardless of background, should have access to and benefit from quality sport and physical activity opportunities.

All future funding of sports facilities will be considered as part of the forthcoming Spending Review.

**Max Wilkinson:** [\[37736\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing funding for the provision of padel courts.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

The Government is committed to ensuring that everyone, regardless of background, should have access to and benefit from quality sport and physical activity opportunities.

Sport England provides long term investment to the Lawn Tennis Association, the National Governing Body for padel tennis in Britain, which receives up to £10.2 million for five years to invest in community tennis and padel initiatives that will benefit everyone.

All future funding of sports facilities will be considered as part of the forthcoming Spending Review.

**DEFENCE****■ Air Force and Army: Recruitment**

**Nadia Whittome:** [\[38690\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to help reduce the time it takes for (a) Army and (b) RAF applicants to complete the recruitment process.

**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.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to Question 34507 to the hon. Member for Mid Derbyshire (Jonathan Davies).

**Attachments:**

1. Armed Forces: Recruitment [34507 - Armed Forces Recruitment.docx]

**■ Ammunition: Lost Property and Theft**

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37596\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many 5.56mm rounds have been (a) lost or (b) stolen from his Department's facilities since 5 July 2024.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37597\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many 7.62mm rounds have been (a) lost or (b) stolen from his Department's facilities since 5 July 2024.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37598\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many 9mm rounds have been (a) lost or (b) stolen from his Department's facilities since 5 July 2024.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37599\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many 4.6mm rounds have been (a) lost or (b) stolen from his Department's facilities since 5 July 2024.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37600\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many 12.7mm rounds have been (a) lost or (b) stolen from his Department's facilities since 5 July 2024.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37601\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many .22mm rounds have been (a) lost or (b) stolen from his Department's facilities since 5 July 2024.

**Luke Pollard:**

The security of ammunition is taken very seriously within the Ministry of Defence (MOD), and we have robust procedures in place to deter, detect and prevent loss and theft. All losses and thefts are fully and rigorously investigated.

No ammunition has been reported stolen during that period.

The below table details 5.56mm, 7.62mm, 9mm, 4.6mm, 12.7mm and .22 inch ammunition lost from MOD Facilities from 5 July 2024 until 28 February 2025. This includes military establishments, ranges, training areas and on operations.

Of the 203 7.62mm ammunition rounds detailed in the table, 200 were lost overboard in the Solent from a Navy vessel

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37602\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many 30mm canon rounds have been (a) lost or (b) stolen from his Department's facilities since 5 July 2024.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37603\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many 155mm artillery shells have been (a) lost or (b) stolen from his Department's facilities since 5 July 2024.

**Luke Pollard:**

The security of Ordnance, Munitions and Explosives (OME) is taken very seriously within the Ministry of Defence, and we have robust procedures in place to deter, detect and prevent loss and theft. All losses and thefts of OME are fully and rigorously investigated.

A search has been undertaken against the Defence Incident Management Database (DIMDb) which is the single repository for all security incident data for Defence. No incidents have been raised for the loss or theft of either 30mm canon rounds or 155mm artillery shells within the timeframe requested.

**■ Armed Forces Covenant****James Cartlidge:** [\[38653\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he plans to have discussions with local government on the implementation of the Armed Forces Covenant.

**Al Carns:**

The Ministry of Defence's Covenant Team has utilised its established local Government engagement structures to inform proposals for the Armed Forces Covenant Duty extension. Officials have undertaken an extensive research and engagement programme, including hosting roundtable discussions and other workshops with more than 150 stakeholders, including local Government organisations.



## ■ Armed Forces: Career Development

**Grahame Morris:** [\[38568\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what information his Department holds on career progression for non-UK personnel by nationality.

**Al Carns:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 13 March 2025 to Question 35903 to the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mr Jogee).

**Attachments:**

1. Armed Forces: Career Development [UIN 35903.docx]

## ■ Armed Forces: Conditions of Employment

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37605\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 1 on the creation of a new people-value-proposition.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37606\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 2 on the people-value-proposition hand-in-hand with personnel.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37607\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 3 on further investment in service accommodation.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37608\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the answer of 30 January to Question 20673 on Haythornwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 4 on the improvement of food service provision.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37609\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the answer of 30 January to Question 20673 on Haythornwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 5 on the test of changes outlined in recommendation 4 at a specific site.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37610\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the answer of 30 January to Question 20673 on Haythornwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his

Department plans to implement recommendation 5 on the identification of a site to conduct the test of Delivering Defence Dining Quality.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37611\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 6 on the reintroduction of a focus on empowerment and adding value into commercial service delivery.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37612\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 6 on the uplift of the new contractual trust with consequences limit to £100,000 within all Top Level Budgets.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37613\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 6 on removal of all bureaucratic barriers to the use of the contractual trust with consequences limit.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37614\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 7 on the improved approach to service delivery.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37615\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 8 on the empowerment of Single Services.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37616\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January to Question 20673 on Haythornwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department implement recommendation 9 on the Future Accommodation Model approach.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37617\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 10 on the recognition of long-term partners.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37618\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 11 on the update of the charging mechanism for accommodation.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37619\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 11 on the improved communication of the value of the accommodation element of the wider offer.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37620\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the answer of 30 January to Question 20673 on Haythornwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 12 on the hybrid working accommodation trial.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37621\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the answer of 30 January to Question 20673 on Haythornwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 13 on the zero-based review of the overseas package.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37622\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 14 on reviewing the number, scope and scale of allowances.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37623\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 15 on creating a spectrum of service framework.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 16 on creating a spectrum of service categories that avoid any suggestion of less commitment or reduced capability.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37625\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his

Department plans to implement recommendation 16 on creating a spectrum of service categories that do not come with specific constraints on reward package of membership.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37626\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 17 on bringing forward legislative proposals for a simpler spectrum of service approach by bringing together regular and reserve terms of service.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37627\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 17 on initiating a trial of the spectrum of service in an organisation, formation or unit to inform the new legislative approach.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37628\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 23 on creating a pension value statement to increase the value and efficacy of the Armed Forces pension.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 23 on replacing the Early Departure Payment with an alternative in-service payment scheme.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37630\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 18 on creating a reward framework that considers whether each of the elements of financial and non-financial reward is optimally aligned to achieve Defence objectives.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37631\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 23 on examining options for (a) a pay in lieu of pension scheme, (b) pension-recycling and (c) reforming SCAPE.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37632\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 24 on commencing a trial of the total reward approach with an engineering cohort.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 19 on introducing a flexible pay model which includes individual skills-based pay element for all Service personnel.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37634\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 25 on delivering a commercial-grade digital experience.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37635\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement Recommendation 26 on delivering a single front end, single sign-on portal available on (a) personnel's own devices, (b) his Department's intranet, and (c) approach and use terminals when deployed.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37636\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement Recommendation 19 on implementing a Pan-Defence Skills Framework.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37637\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement Recommendation 27 to deliver digital capability to encompass all service delivery functions to (a) veterans and (b) other personnel.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 20 to implement a reward framework that (a) rewards mobility and (b) rewards those engaged in (i) risky and (ii) rigorous activity outside operational theatres.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37639\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 21 to conduct longitudinal research to understand the value service personnel place on all elements of the reward package.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37640\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 28 for a Head Office led delivery of an agreed set of core capabilities that are (a) consistent and (b) unified across the organisation.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37641\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 22 to establish a sustainable costing methodology for the reward framework to understand the (a) cost and (b) value of the reward strategy.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37642\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 29 on delivering a path toward policy simplification before the digital solution is fixed.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37643\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 30 on Head Office ensuring interoperability as Single Services continue to deliver other capabilities.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37644\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 31 on delivering digital capability to create a people data strategy.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37645\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 32 on commissioning new data sources.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37646\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 38 on building connections and understanding in broader society through a newly reinvigorated outreach and engagement capability.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37647\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 33 on planning for (a) long-term capability and (b) introducing a personal digital profile.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37648\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 38 to apply a five-step approach that combines innovative, risk-taking engagement online with real-life opportunities.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37649\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 34 on the trial of a revolutionised approach to recruit digital aptitude into the uniformed force.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37650\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 35 on ensuring that appropriate effort is dedicated to internal skills development.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37651\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 39 on targeting (a) newly engaged, (b) more diverse and (c) skilled populations to bring more recruits into the Services.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37652\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 36 on setting out a clear day-to-day connectivity goal based on broader Government ambition.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37653\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 36 on applying the Government's UK Digital Strategy for gigabit connectivity across all (a) domestic, (b) technical, (c) training and (d) headquarters estates.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his

Department plans to implement recommendation 40 on ensuring all recruits are tested for aptitude (a) on joining and (b) are updated throughout their career.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37655\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 37 on setting a clear connectivity goal on operations.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37656\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 40 on (a) conducting systematic benchmarked aptitude tests on all joiners and (b) recording them as part of the Personal Digital Profile.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37657\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 37 on ensuring sufficient welfare megabit allowance to enable at least one video call per week.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37658\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 37 on creating separate allowances for (a) chain of command, (b) management and (c) training responsibilities.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37659\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 41 on (a) refreshing the Armed Forces Covenant as a two-way relationship and (b) beginning a conversation with today's members about how this can be done.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37660\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 46 on creating a new and integrated governance structure for the Defence People Function.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37661\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 42 on developing a coordinated



approach to (a) retain a relationship with and (b) increase understanding of veterans within the broader labour market.

**James Cartlidge:**

[\[37662\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, if his Department plans to implement recommendation 47 on recording skills-based information on (a) regular and (b) reserve personnel to enable career managers to match skills to roles.

**James Cartlidge:**

[\[37663\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 43 on issuing a definitive leadership statement, endorsed by (a) Ministers, (b) Service Chiefs, (c) the Chief of Defence People and (d) others, that sets out how a systems approach to the (i) non-operational leadership and (ii) management of people will be achieved.

**James Cartlidge:**

[\[37664\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 48 on combining the career management of (a) regulars and (b) reservists.

**James Cartlidge:**

[\[37665\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 44 on creating a greater (a) agile and (b) strategically focused Defence People Team that is able to deliver on the Chief of Defence People's mandate.

**James Cartlidge:**

[\[37666\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 49 on ensuring there are no hidden (a) cultural or (b) procedural barriers to the wider use of the reservists.

**James Cartlidge:**

[\[37667\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 57 to produce a gap analysis to better understand the (a) strengths and (b) weaknesses of the current performance management approach.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37668\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 58 to empower single Services and Top Level Budget holders to (a) own, (b) plan and (c) manage their optimum employment mix within an overall workforce cost envelope by implementing the five key process changes.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 58 to free up the Army's headcount constraint, moving to a workforce cost envelope approach that will increase focus on capability outputs.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37670\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 58 to integrate (a) regular and (b) reserve strategic workforce planning.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37671\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 58 to adapt and endorse processes which promote changing workforce types as needed by (a) single service and (b) top level budget holders.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37672\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 59 to create a strategic workforce planning coherence committee for (a) single service and (b) top level budget holder coordination, including financial planners in Head Office and elsewhere.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37673\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 58 to include robust workforce planning assessments in the evidence needed for options analysis in outline business cases.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement Recommendation 59 to simplify the existing policy and process and create a simple playbook to replace the Defence Workforce Planning Instruction and related policies.

**James Cartlidge:**

[\[37675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 60 on enabling Head Office to focus on (a) ensuring the necessary consistency in process and (b) strategic, long-term and pan-government workforce interventions.

**James Cartlidge:**

[\[37676\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement Recommendation 60 to enable Head Office to focus on ensuring the necessary consistency in process, alongside strategic, long-term and pan-government workforce interventions.

**James Cartlidge:**

[\[37677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 60 on defining (a) core objectives, (b) design principles and (c) the overall operating model.

**James Cartlidge:**

[\[37678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 61 on introducing a new whole-force workforce planning technology and data solution.

**James Cartlidge:**

[\[37679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement Recommendation 61 to engage a third party to conduct an agnostic vendor selection market assessment to determine which products, functionalities and services are available and aligned to user requirements.

**James Cartlidge:**

[\[37680\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement Recommendation 59 to ensure the whole strategic workforce planning ecosystem remains balanced and coherent by light-touch governance with shared ownership that ensures coherence.

**James Cartlidge:**

[\[37681\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement Recommendation 61 to define the design principles for the technology and data solution.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37976\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement Recommendation 58 to trust commanders to identify, where reasonable, additional funds can be best employed.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37977\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement Recommendation 61 to establish a design authority to define technical and functional requirements, manage, track and evaluate all design elements of the solution.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[38058\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 45 on developing a head office investment approvals process for human capability.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[38059\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 50 on allowing heads of professions to immediately identify where skills-based career pathways should be established in their areas of responsibility.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[38060\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 51 on designing career pathways that holistically incentivise (a) skills acquisition, (b) reskilling and (c) upskilling by using all elements of total reward approach.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[38061\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 52 on reorganising career management around skills groups rather than rank groups for professions.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[38062\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 56 on empowering career managers to (a) discuss and (b) offer individuals opportunities to (i) move between employment type,

(ii) upskill and reskill, (iii) access talent management initiatives, (iv) move professions, and (v) consider a temporary or permanent move outside the service.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[38063\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 53 on creating a mechanism to ensure discussions known as personalised conversations that matter happen at events-driven intervals for all personnel during their career.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[38064\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 54 on (a) researching and (b) setting an approach that identifies what are known as moments that matter for conversations referenced in recommendation 53 of that review.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[38065\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 55 on making data on (a) the individual, (b) their aptitudes and (c) wider context immediately available to career managers.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[38066\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement the element of the element of recommendation 56 on delivering access to (a) broader and (b) up-to-date information about (i) professional career paths and (ii) skills development opportunities to career managers.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[38067\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 61 to conduct pilots on a representative sample set of (a) Head Office, (b) single Service and (c) Top Level Budget areas to (i) test and (ii) iterate the technology solution.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[38068\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 62 to integrate strategic workforce planning fully with other parts of the (a) incentivisation and (b) people systems.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[38069\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his

Department plans to implement recommendation 62 to integrate (a) process and (b) policy first.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[38070\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 65 to make supporting the creation of an inclusive culture an explicit objective of the (a) people system, (b) data it collects and (c) tools it applies.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[38071\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 66 to ensure senior leaders (a) have committed to and (b) clearly communicated how they intend to go about delivering on the review's recommendations.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[38072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 67 to put in place a system to (a) understand, (b) monitor and (c) improve the key conversations that matter around (i) recruitment, (ii) starting a family and (iii) careers.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[38073\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 62 on (a) improving and (b) exploiting data (i) capture and (ii) baseline across all workforce types.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[38074\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 62 on to communicating the intent to embark on a substantial cultural change across workforce planning.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[38075\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 62 on (a) pivoting and (b) refocusing workforce planners on activities that add value to the organisation.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[38076\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his

Department plans to implement recommendation 62 on exploiting data available to (a) enhance and (b) feedback to (i) organisation design and (ii) structured establishments.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[38077\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 63 on moving inclusion from being a stand-alone diversity and inclusion activity.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[38078\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 63 on making the requirement to build an inclusive culture a core part of expected leadership behaviours against which leaders are judged.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[38079\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 63 on experimenting with new training methods to find the best practice that works in the military context.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[38080\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 64 on creating a human resource advice service that can provide independent support to (a) the chain of command and (b) personnel of all ranks.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[38081\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 20673 on Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether his Department plans to implement recommendation 6 on the uplift of the new contractual trust with consequences limit to £100,000 within all top level budgets.

**AI Carns:**

The Government acknowledges the important work done in the Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation (HRAFI) report completed under the previous Government.

The Government is delivering a comprehensive portfolio of work to fix the people system, and this captures many of the recommendations of the HRAFI report, but goes much further. The portfolio is organised around five Missions aligned to the key themes of the report. These Missions will form the basis of all future work delivered across the People Function.

Defence has been taking forward work that directly addresses the majority of the reports 67 recommendations. To deliver a workforce that is highly skilled and

productive, meeting the demands Defence is likely to experience, and helping ensure benefits are felt by our people as soon as possible.

Progress is constantly monitored and reported on through the governance structure to ensure real time oversight.

The progress made within each Mission is summarised below:

1. **Workforce Agility.** Delivering the right people with the right skills in the right place at the right time will result in a reduced number of gaps across the workforce, increase the percentage of deployable Suitably Qualified and Experienced People and enable more effective and intelligent management of the workforce to support operational effectiveness. This will, in turn be a more rewarding use of Service personnel's skills, supporting their development and becoming a key lever to satisfaction and retention.

Work is underway to improve engagement with veterans, understand how to make better use of the Reserve forces and make improvements to the workforce planning. The Armed Forces Recruitment Programme will deliver a tri-service recruitment solution by 2027.

2. **Skills.** This Government will build Defence as a world-class engine for a skills-based approach to recruitment, workforce planning and increased operational effectiveness. This includes the Pan-Defence Skills Framework (PDSF) which will start to be implemented later this year, will represent the first important milestone towards becoming a truly Skills-Based Organisation. A PDSF skills-based pay supplement is being developed to be tested with a cohort of engineers from spring 2025.

3. **Reward.** In direct response to recommendation 24 of the report, work has begun to trial aspects of a Total Reward Approach with a cohort of engineers to help understand what our people really value in their reward and benefits package, and to inform prioritisation of initiatives. Release 1 initiatives are starting to be rolled out and will see improvements for the cohort of engineers and more widely, including targeted Financial Retention Incentive payments to some of this cohort as well as to junior ranks across the Army. The evaluation of initiatives within Release 1 will inform and shape future reward packages across Defence; an approach advocated by HRAFI.

Within this Mission, we have also recently announced an improved offer for overseas families, with the expansion of the wraparound childcare scheme. We are also continuing our work to strengthen the Armed Forces Covenant in law. This Government also awarded personnel the highest pay rise in 20 years.

Taking a future-focused approach, understanding what drives the retention and recruitment of target generations and using financial and non-financial levers to stabilise and motivate the workforce we aim to attract new talent, incentivise reward and develop a bespoke reward landscape for a better experience for our people and their families.



4. Digital. This focuses on providing a consumer-grade, user experience, which was a big emphasis within the report (chapter three was devoted to this). Delivery of the objectives under the well-established Corporate Services Modernisation and Defence Human Resources Services programmes will go some way to achieving the intent of the report. In line with this, progress is being made with the simplification of policy across military and Civilian systems, supported by the roll out of consistent HR taxonomy. This will deliver an improved lived experience enabled through intuitive, accessible and responsive HR and digital services that meet employee needs in a timely and user-friendly manner; ultimately driving enhanced employee satisfaction.

5. One Defence. This Mission recognises the extent of the cultural challenge that we face in many areas and much of this is captured under our Raising our Standards programme. More specifically, work is underway to review the Service Justice System and Service Complaints process. Defence Reform will make recommendations for a more effective People Department. Underlining the government's commitment to addressing welfare concerns within the Armed Forces, the Armed Forces Commissioner Bill continues its passage through Parliament. The ultimate goal is to deliver a workforce that harnesses all talents.

#### ■ **Armed Forces: Defence Equipment**

**Ian Roome:**

[\[37867\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that equipment used by the armed forces is interoperable with that of NATO allies.

**Maria Eagle:**

The Ministry of Defence takes a number of steps to ensure our equipment is interoperable with NATO allies. These include leading on the development, ratification, and implementation of NATO standards; participation in joint exercises and training such as Formidable Shield; and promoting and encouraging allies to jointly procure and integrate capabilities, including through the UK-led NATO Multinational Procurement Initiatives and DIAMOND. We are also working with allies and industry to ensure the implementation of NATO's Defence Production Action Plan, which places strong emphasis on the need to ensure the interoperability of existing and future military capabilities.

#### ■ **Armed Forces: Educational Institutions**

**Mr Peter Bedford:**

[\[38852\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions his Department has had with the Department for Education on promoting careers in the armed forces in (a) schools and (b) other educational settings.

**Al Carns:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 25 November 2024, to Question 14894.

**Attachments:**

1. Armed Forces: Young People [14894 - Armed Forces Young People.docx]

**■ Armed Forces: Employers' Contributions****Blake Stephenson:**[\[37788\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of changes to employers' National Insurance contributions on the armed forces.

**Maria Eagle:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 5 February 2025 to Question 27805 to the hon. Member for Great Yarmouth (Rupert Lowe).

**Attachments:**

1. Ministry of Defence: Employers' Contributions [UIN 27805.docx]

**■ Armed Forces: Engineering****James Cartlidge:**[\[38637\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to increase the retention of engineers in the (a) Royal Navy, (b) British Army and (c) Royal Air Force.

**Luke Pollard:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Minister for Veterans and People (Alistair Carns) on 13 January 2025 to Question 21528 to the right hon. Member for Gosport (Dame Caroline Dinenage).

**Attachments:**

1. Armed Forces: Labour Turnover [21582 - Armed Forces Labour Turnover.docx]

**■ Armed Forces: Protective Clothing****Mr Calvin Bailey:**[\[36821\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what progress his Department has made on replacing enhanced combat body armour for frontline troops.

**Maria Eagle:**

The safety of personnel remains the Ministry of Defence's top priority and we are taking all necessary steps to ensure the safety of our forces and maintain operational readiness. Where it is appropriate, alternative body armour plates have been issued to those on high-threat deployments.

Work continues, at pace, to test and ensure the safety of sufficient Enhanced Combat Body Armour (ECBA) plates. To date 30% of the required number of ECBA plates have been scanned and are in the process of being distributed back to units. This is being prioritised based on operational requirements. It is anticipated that the most impacted users will receive tested ECBA plates by the end of this month.

The Tactical Ballistic Plate programme, which will replace both Osprey body armour and ECBA plates, is expected to deliver from 2027.

**Fred Thomas:**

[\[36920\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what progress his Department has made on replacing enhanced combat body armour for all deployed armed forces personnel.

**Maria Eagle:**

The safety of personnel remains the Ministry of Defence's top priority and we are taking all necessary steps to ensure the safety of our forces and maintain operational readiness. Where it is appropriate, alternative body armour plates have been issued to those on high-threat deployments.

Work continues, at pace, to test and ensure the safety of sufficient Enhanced Combat Body Armour (ECBA) plates. To date 30% of the required number of ECBA plates have been scanned and are in the process of being distributed back to units. This is being prioritised based on operational requirements. It is anticipated that the most impacted users will receive tested ECBA plates by the end of this month.

The Tactical Ballistic Plate programme, which will replace both Osprey body armour and ECBA plates, is expected to deliver from 2027.

**Ben Obese-Jecty:**

[\[37772\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 11 March 2025 to Question 36209, what the difference in attenuation across the frequency bands is between the (a) Peltor ComTac XP/XPI and (b) General Service Peltor Ear Muff.

**Maria Eagle:**

The performance of the ComTac XP/XPI and the General Service Peltor Ear Muff is as follows: ComTac XP/XPI

FREQUENCY (Hz)	125	250	500	1000	2000	4000	8000
Mean attenuation (dB)	11.5	17.9	27.8	30.0	32.1	36.2	40.3
Std deviation (dB)	2.5	2.7	1.8	2.3	3.0	2.0	3.1
Assumed Protection Value (dB)	9.0	15.3	25.9	27.7	29.1	34.2	37.2

SNR=28 db H=31 db M=25 db L=16 db

General Service Peltor Ear Muff

FREQUENCY (Hz)	125	250	500	1000	2000	4000	8000
Mean attenuation (dB)	16.2	17.0	26.4	33.5	37.1	39.1	34.3
Std deviation (dB)	4.1	2.7	2.9	4.6	2.8	3.6	4.7
Assumed Protection Value (dB)	12.1	14.3	23.5	28.9	34.3	35.5	29.6

SNR=28 db H=33 db M=25 db L=18 db

SNR=Single Number Rating, H=High Frequency Attenuation Value, M=Medium Frequency Attenuation Value and L=Low Frequency Attenuation Value.

**Ben Obese-Jecty:**

[\[38440\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 13 March 2025 to Question 35848 on Armed Forces: Protective Clothing, if he will list (a) all types of current in-service ear defence and (b) their NATO Stock Number issued to service personnel in (i) Royal Navy, excluding Royal Marines, (ii) British Army, (iii) Royal Air Force and (iv) Royal Marines.

**Maria Eagle:**

According to the information officials have been able to gather, the types of ear defence currently in service are as follows:

SYSTEM	NSN	ISSUED TO
Peltor Ear Muff	4240-99-301-1294 (H540B) 4240-99-957-6913 (H540A) 4240-99-773-1232 (H515FB) 4240-12-382-5630 (H540P3)	"All":Royal Navy, excl. Royal MarinesBritish ArmyRoyal Air ForceRoyal MarinesRoyal Marines
GS Ear Plug (3M EAR Classic)	6515-99-126-3570	All
3M EAR Ultrfit 20	6515-99-282-2905	All
S72KCEMOD Sana 30	4240-99-340-8839	All
S71KCEMOD Sana 25	4240-99-340-8840	All
JSP Sonis C SNR 31 Helmet Mounted	4240-99-938-2453	All

SYSTEM	NSN	ISSUED TO
ERMP9-15BN Etymoyic Research Music Pro 9-15	6515-99-375-9841	All
ERMP9-15P Etymoyic Research Music Pro 9-15	6515-99-375-9842	All
Surefire EP4	6515-99-862-1696 (Small) 6515-99-861-8175 (Medium) 6515-99-706-0764 (Large)	All
ComTac XPI	5965-25-161-5983 (headset) 5895-99-984-8647 (headset with boom microphone) 5965- 12-418-3075 (92EU connector)	All
ComTac XP	4240-99-282-2906	All
Invisio S10/X5	5965-99-669-6055	British ArmyRoyal Air ForceRoyal Marines
Helmet, Aircrew Mk4A4	22C/8415-99-7703105 (S) 22C/8415-99-7703106 (M) 22C/8415-99-7703107 (M/B) 22C/8415-99-7703108 (M/L) 22C/8415-99-7703109 (L)	British ArmyRoyal NavyRoyal Air Force
Helmet, Aircrew Mk4B/4L	22C/8415-99 0005550 (S) 22C/8415-99 0005551 (M) 22C/8415-99 0005552 (M/B) 22C/8415-99 0005553 (M/L) 22C/8415-99 0005554 (L)	British ArmyRoyal NavyRoyal Air Force
Helmet, Aircrew Mk10C	22C/8415-99-1991270 (S) 22C/8415-99-1433127 (M) 22C/8415-99-7627299 (M/L) 22C/8415-99-2459207 (M/B) 22C/8415-99-5352834 (L)	Royal Air Force
Helmet, Aircrew Mk10R	22C/8415-99-9375695 (M) 22C/8415-99-9935237 (M/L) 22C/8415-99-1528368 (M/B) 22C/8415-99-0006146 (L)	Royal Air Force
Helmet, Aircrew Mk10R(RAFAT)	22C/8475-99-4197926 (M) 22C/8475-99-8419081 (M/L)	Royal Air Force

SYSTEM	NSN	ISSUED TO
	22C/8475-99-4944883 (M/B) 22C/8475-99-9690333 (L)	
Helmet, Aircrew Mk10RW	22C/8415-99-8753314 (M) 22C/8415-99-8753315 (M/L) 22C/8415-99-8753316 (M/B) 22C/8415-99-8753317 (L) 22C/8475-99-3480594 (XL)	British ArmyRoyal NavyRoyal Air Force
Helmet, Aircrew Mk10SAR	8475-99-551-4929 (M) 8475-99-551-4930 (M/L) 8475-99-551-4931 (M/B) 8475-99-551-4932 (L)	Royal NavyRoyal Air Force
Helicopter users' helmet Mk 15	8475-99- 973-6861	British ArmyRoyal NavyRoyal Air Force
Passenger helmet – Mk 15	8475-99- 509-7355	British ArmyRoyal NavyRoyal Air Force
HGU25-P Helmet, helicopter passenger	22C/8415-99-9773990 (size 6 ¾) 22C/8415-99-9773991 (size 7) 22C/8415-99-9773992 (size 7 ¼) 22C/8415-99-9773993 (size 7 ½)	British ArmyRoyal NavyRoyal Air Force
Vented Aviation Moulded Protection System	5895-99-4767555 (Apache) 5895-99-8439096 (Standard)	British ArmyRoyal NavyRoyal Air Force
In Ear Communication Device (mini-CEP)	5965-01-6313875	British ArmyRoyal NavyRoyal Air Force
ANR Headset Assy HM091	5965-99-2164091 5965-99-5513468	Royal Air Force
ANR Headset Hawk 128, 9.5 Ohms HM115	5965-99-4979219	Royal Air Force
ANR Headset Assy HM115	5965-99-8761576	Royal Air Force
ANR V4.1 Headset 9.5Ω HM152	5965-99-1558313	Royal Air Force
ANR Headset Assy HM114	5965-99-7422387 5965-99-2441205 (Switched)	Royal Air Force

SYSTEM	NSN	ISSUED TO
V4.2 ANR Headset Non-Switched 150Ω HM157	5965-99-1870613	Royal Air Force
ANR Headset Switched 150Ω HM157	5965-99-8722541	Royal Air Force
HEADSET, ANR CREWBRIEF	5965-99-225-5010	British Army
ANR COMBAT HEADSET, MK2	5965-99-994-7128	British Army
ANR CREWGARD HEADSET	5965-99-551-5288	British Army
GENTEX HEADSET KIT, COMPLETE TO BES	5965-99-564-4677	All
Gentex Headset (GHCS)	5965-99-876-2259 5965-99-671-4687	All
CEP FOAM Ear Tips (Standard)	5965-01-588-6709	All
CEP FOAM Ear Tips (Slim)	5965-01-588-6710	All
CEP FOAM Ear Tips (Short)	5965-01-588-6715	All
Gentex NFMI Ear Plug Kit	6515-01-694-5367	All
Racal RA101 (JetGard)	5965-99-739-9311 5965-99-893-1188	All
Atlantic	5965-99-383-2112 5965-99-251-6054	All
Atlantic Mk2	5965-99-483-7471 5965-99-608-9281 5965-99-793-2757	All
Ampligard	5965-99-953-5231	All
INVISO HEADSET KIT, COMPLETE TO BES	5965-99-493-1233	British Army
RA7500-2001	5965-99-665-1507	British Army
RA7500-2000	5995-99-665-1508	British Army
RA7500-1000	5995-99-512-3019	British Army

**■ Army Foundation College****Helen Maguire:**[\[33341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many and what proportion of army recruits participating in the long course at the Army Foundation College left the army before completing the course in 2024.

**AI Carns:**

Of the 707 Junior Entry trainees that were due to complete training in 2024 as a result of starting the long course at the Army Foundation College in 2023, 198 left and discharged from training prior to completing the course. This equated to 28% of the total discharging from the course prior to completion.

The main reason for early discharge was individuals exercising their "Discharge As Of Right", i.e. voluntary discharge. An average of 167 personnel discharged voluntarily between 2013 and 2023.

**■ Army: Food****James Cartlidge:**[\[37589\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department plans to extend the Army EATS programme to other services.

**AI Carns:**

Responding to unequivocal feedback about the standard of dining in Defence, and the direct implications for morale, operational effectiveness, recruitment and retention, the Ministry of Defence has taken action to improve Defence catering services. The Defence Catering Strategy (DCS) was approved in 2023 and implementation began in May 2024. The DCS was built from the conclusions drawn from the Delivering Defence Dining Quality Review, (led by the Institute of Naval Medicine, on behalf of all three Services and delivered in 2022), and the Army's Exploring the Appetite of Today's Soldiers pilot (2023) and considers the recommendations made in the Haythornthwaite Review of UK Armed Forces Incentivisation (2023).

Implementing the DCS will involve further trialling of changes and regularly reviewing and adjusting provision. This will take place in single Service and joint establishments including, for example, a series of Improved Catering Experience trials at Royal Air Force units considering enhanced opening hours, technology supported access to the dining offer and the dining environment.

**■ AUKUS: Quantum Technology****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[37997\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he is taking steps with his (a) Australian and (b) US counterparts on the integration of quantum computing technologies under the AUKUS framework.



**Maria Eagle:**

Quantum technologies remain one of the six areas of advanced capability collaboration being progressed as part of AUKUS Pillar Two. The Secretary of State for Defence alongside his AUKUS counterparts continues to support the development and integration of quantum technologies for positioning, navigation, and timing in military capabilities.

**■ Caribbean: Defence****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[37995\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to help strengthen maritime security in the Caribbean region in (a) collaboration with British Overseas Territories and (b) other ways.

**Luke Pollard:**

A Royal Naval ship maintains a persistent presence in the Caribbean where it contributes to regional security through the conduct of counter-illicit trafficking operations, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief as necessary during the Caribbean hurricane season, and wider defence engagement. Defence also provides direct assistance to the Overseas Territory Defence Regiments through the provision of equipment and training, including maritime capacity building.

Defence maintains close relationships with independent states throughout the region and works in partnership with Canada, France, the Netherlands and the United States to align and conduct joint activity.

The Ministry of Defence works closely with the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office as part of a cross-HMG approach to the UK's Overseas Territories.

**■ Defence Equipment: Manufacturing Industries****Edward Morello:**[\[37936\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has conducted a feasibility study on increasing domestic production of critical weapon systems.

**Maria Eagle:**

The Strategic Defence Review will determine the roles and capabilities required by UK Defence to meet the challenges and threats of the twenty-first century. The Prime Minister's February announcement that spending on defence will increase to 2.5% of GDP from April 2027 reflects ongoing global instability.

This increased spending will sustain the UK's globally competitive defence industry, supporting highly skilled jobs and apprenticeships across the whole of the UK. The Defence Industrial Strategy will also review consideration of the sovereign capability and capacity required in the UK.

An example of early action against our security and economic priorities is the £1.6 billion deal to supply thousands of advanced air defence missiles to Ukraine. The

deal will support 700 existing jobs at Thales in Belfast, will see production of lightweight-multirole missiles at Thales's factory treble and will also benefit companies in the Thales Supply Chain across the UK.

### ■ Defence: Employers' Contributions

**Dr Neil Hudson:**

[\[38688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the increase to employer National Insurance contributions on the defence industry.

**Maria Eagle:**

As individual suppliers and contractors will manage the changes to Employer National Insurance Contributions differently, it would be extremely difficult for the Department to estimate the impact this will have on the defence industry.

### ■ Defence: Finance

**James Cartlidge:**

[\[38640\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 14 March to Question 37252 on Defence: Finance, what the real terms equivalent of that cash figure is.

**Luke Pollard:**

The Government's commitment to increase defence investment to 2.5% of GDP by 2027 will result in a £13.4 billion increase to defence spending in cash terms in 2027/28 compared to 2024/25. The final real terms equivalent will depend on inflation rates between this year and 2027.

### ■ Defence: Procurement

**Ben Obese-Jecty:**

[\[38194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to move away from over-exquisite design in the context of the procurement of new capability.

**Maria Eagle:**

The Ministry of Defence is reforming its acquisition system to deliver defence capabilities at greater pace and secure the best possible value for money.

Central to this is the creation of a National Armaments Director to ensure our Armed Forces are properly equipped to defend Britain, to build up the British defence industry, and to reduce waste. A key element of this role is to harmonise procurement, working closely with wider Government, industry, academia, and international partners to deploy best practice and optimise investment.

We are engaging industry earlier in the procurement process to ensure requirements for new capabilities are informed by what the market can offer and with consideration of the potential for exports.

Through Spiral acquisition we will deliver a minimum deployable capability to the front line more rapidly - based on what is readily available from the supply chains or quickly adaptable from existing capabilities - then iterate to adapt quickly to a changing environment to meet the needs of our Armed Forces and other customers.

## ■ Defence: Satellites

**Damien Egan:**

[\[38155\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has made an assessment of potential domestic alternatives for future launches of UK Space Command satellites, in the context of the launch of the Tyche satellite.

**Luke Pollard:**

The Government is developing the UK's emerging space launch industry, aiming to become a European leader in commercial small satellite launches. This effort involves approximately £111 million being invested in the UK's launch capabilities, including a recent £20 million investment to enable UK rocket manufacturer Orbex to complete construction of their launch vehicle Prime. Defence supports the UK's launch ambitions, working with the UK Space Agency to help develop a thriving UK spaceflight sector and with our international partners to assist their launch requirements. This includes involvement in the early development of NATO's STARLIFT programme to enhance space launch capabilities within the alliance, ensuring readiness for future launch needs.

## ■ Defence: Space Technology

**James Cartlidge:**

[\[38636\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to increase UK sovereign capability in the defence space sector.

**Maria Eagle:**

The Ministry of Defence is supporting the Government's ambition to strengthen the UK's space sector. Through major investments from Defence, including £1.5 billion over 10 years in Defence space technologies and £5 billion over a similar period in satellite communications through the SKYNET programme, we have supported the development of technology and economic growth opportunities for the sector. Initiatives like ISTAR, a satellite constellation for Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance, will boost operational independence using unique technology developed in the UK. Collaboration with industry, academia, and Government is ongoing to ensure the necessary infrastructure, skilled personnel, satellites, ground stations and operators are in place for sovereign capability.

## ■ F-35 Aircraft: Procurement

**Ben Obese-Jecty:**

[\[37763\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he plans to purchase the second tranche of F-35B jets.

**Maria Eagle:**

To provide the UK with the most relevant and capable Combat Aircraft force, the Ministry of Defence continually reviews the expected threat and the ability of our forces to counter it. Any further purchases would be set out in the usual way.

■ **Marines: Finance**

**Ben Obese-Jecty:** [\[37764\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much and what proportion of the defence budget is allocated to the Royal Marines, excluding Commando-trained Army sub-units.

**Luke Pollard:**

I hope the hon. Member will understand that it is not possible to split out costs that relate solely to the Royal Marines due to the interoperability of units, equipment and mixed use of training facilities.

■ **MOD Ashchurch: Vehicles**

**Ben Obese-Jecty:** [\[38727\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what vehicles are held at MOD Ashchurch; and what their readiness state is.

**Maria Eagle:**

MOD Ashchurch holds elements of the Army's stored operational fleet and stored equipment (sustainment) fleet. These are comprised of many vehicle types and are held at varying readiness levels.

■ **Multi-role Support Ships: Procurement**

**James Cartlidge:** [\[38652\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 17 March 2025 to Question 37236 on Fleet Solid Support Ships: Procurement, whether that answer should refer to Multi Role Support Ships.

**Maria Eagle:**

The answer given to the hon. Member is correct. The Multi Role Support Ship has been renamed the Multi Role Strike Ship (MRSS). MRSS will be a Royal Navy crewed warship with a combat system, self-defence and offensive capabilities. The amended name better reflects the platform's function and does not indicate any change of requirement.

■ **NATO: Expenditure**

**Rebecca Paul:** [\[38304\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions his Department has had with NATO allies on the potential redistribution of military capabilities in Europe in the event of a significant reduction in US troop presence.

**Rebecca Paul:**

[\[38305\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of European NATO's ability to fill capability gaps that would be created by a potential US troop withdrawal from Europe in (a) air defence, (b) intelligence-sharing and (c) rapid deployment forces.

**Luke Pollard:**

European security is this Government's foreign and defence priority and NATO is the cornerstone of our defence. The Prime Minister has been clear that European Allies must take greater responsibility for our own security, spending more and producing more. The Ministry of Defence continues its work to ensure the UK and European Allies step up their contribution to NATO as part of our 'NATO first' defence strategy.

## ■ NATO: Industry

**Ben Obese-Jecty:**

[\[38195\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has had recent discussions with Cabinet colleagues on taking steps to meet the NATO Industrial Capacity Expansion Pledge.

**Luke Pollard:**

It is essential that NATO Allies ramp up their defence industrial capacity and production across the Alliance – to support Ukraine and for our own defence and deterrence. That is why we strongly support the NATO Industrial Capacity Expansion Pledge, which commits Allies to building on transatlantic defence industrial cooperation, delivering on our industrial commitment, and accelerating the growth of our defence industry.

The Ministry of Defence continues to work with colleagues across government to deliver new a Defence Industrial Strategy which will help us meet our NATO commitments, such as the NATO industrial Capacity Expansion Pledge.

## ■ Seas and Oceans: Infrastructure

**Rebecca Paul:**

[\[38306\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent discussions his Department has had with international partners on increasing the protection of undersea cables and pipelines, in the context of Russian maritime activity.

**Luke Pollard:**

Subsea cables are critical to UK telecommunications digital infrastructure, and we are committed to maintaining and enhancing the security and resilience of that infrastructure. We continue to co-ordinate with HMG partners, particularly the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology who own subsea cables policy, as well as security partners, the subsea cables industry and international bodies, including NATO, to assess and respond to risks to subsea cables.

## ■ Strategic Defence Review

**James Cartlidge:** [\[37247\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 6 March 2025 to Question 33524 on Strategic Defence Review, what the cost envelope will be for the Strategic Defence Review.

**Luke Pollard:**

The Prime Minister has confirmed plans to increase spending on defence to 2.5% of GDP by 2027 and set an ambition to spend 3% of GDP on defence in the next parliament.

The Strategic Defence Review is looking at the threats we face and the capabilities we need, within the funding available.

## ■ Ukraine: Peace Keeping Operations

**Rebecca Paul:** [\[38309\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate his Department has made of the number of UK troops that could be safely deployed in a peacekeeping capacity to Ukraine without abridging other defence and security commitments.

**Luke Pollard:**

Discussions regarding how our military can support security guarantees for Ukraine's future are ongoing.

I hope the hon. Member will understand that I can't comment on operational details at this stage as revealing our force structure only helps Putin.

**Rebecca Paul:** [\[38321\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions his Department has had with NATO allies on the (a) size, (b) composition and (c) remit of a potential peacekeeping force in Ukraine.

**Luke Pollard:**

The Defence Secretary and the Chief of the Defence Staff met with counterparts in Paris last week to discuss the next steps for a coalition of the willing to defend Ukraine's security – with 37 nations attending the military meeting, alongside NATO and EU representatives. This was followed by the Prime Minister hosting a call on 15 March with European counterparts, the NATO Secretary General and other world leaders to discuss support for Ukraine.

Our military planners convened again on 20 March to progress practical plans for how our militaries can support security guarantees for Ukraine's future.

## ■ Uncrewed Systems

**James Cartlidge:**

[\[38082\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 06 March 2025 to Question 34642 on Army: Uncrewed Systems, whether uncrewed ground vehicles are being considered by the (a) British Army and (b) his Department.

**Maria Eagle:**

The Army has conducted considerable concept and assessment work into Human Machine Teaming over the last five-years, including trials with several uncrewed ground vehicles to consider their ability to share the soldier's burden, evacuate casualties, conduct resupply and more complex tasks such as surveillance and fire support. More recently, the Army has trialed autonomous minefield clearance to remove soldiers from more hazardous environments. Ultimately, uncrewed ground vehicles will allow the Army to reduce the risk to our soldiers' lives and achieve greater efficacy.

The Ministry of Defence has c£4.5 billion of current and planned investment in uncrewed systems across all three services. In addition, our drone strategy harnesses innovative capabilities from across Defence, enabling rapid integration, testing and evaluation of uncrewed systems whilst working in lockstep with industry. It will equip personnel of all 3 services with critical intelligence, reconnaissance, surveillance, strike and logistical capabilities.

## ■ USA: Defence

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[37996\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has had recent discussions with his US counterpart on the (a) future of AUKUS Pillar 2 cooperation and (b) potential UK participation in US-led advanced defence technology projects.

**Maria Eagle:**

The Secretary of State for Defence has used his recent opportunities for dialogue with his US counterpart to emphasise the importance, now more than ever, of our deep ties and collaboration on security and defence.

The UK continues to cooperate closely with the US within AUKUS Pillar 2, as well as bilaterally to develop advanced capabilities and increase interoperability between our forces.

## ■ USA: Iron and Steel

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[38100\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of US steel tariffs on UK military shipbuilding.

**Maria Eagle:**

The potential impact of US steel tariffs on UK military shipbuilding is still being explored. The UK benefits from a strong and balanced trade relationship with the US and we continue to share a longstanding, close relationship on all defence issues.

■ **Veterans**

**Lee Anderson:** [\[38134\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to support veterans in (a) the UK and (b) Ashfield constituency.

**Al Carns:**

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

In England Op RESTORE provides specialist care to veterans who have physical health problems, and Op COURAGE, a mental health specialist service helps veterans and their families. Over 1000 veterans have used Op RESTORE to date.

Housing support is available across the United Kingdom via Op FORTITUDE, a single referral pathway to connect veterans with help and support. This system provides housing guidance and assistance to veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Veterans can also access a range of tailored employment support, including the Career Transition Partnership, which is the initial point of provision for those leaving military Service in search of new job opportunities, and via Op ASCEND, the employment pathway for veterans.

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

**Clive Lewis:** [\[34290\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to replace support for (a) adopted and (b) special guardianship children receiving therapy for early trauma when the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund closes.

**Clive Lewis:** [\[34291\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of closing the Adoption and special guardianship support fund on children receiving support from that fund.

**Janet Daby:**

The department will shortly be finalising business planning decisions on how its budget will be allocated for the next financial year. All decisions regarding the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund are being made as part of these discussions. An announcement will be made as soon as possible.



The department will always consider the impact of decisions on vulnerable children.

**Lisa Smart:** [\[34664\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund funding not being extended beyond March 2025 on children receiving therapy through that fund.

**Lisa Smart:** [\[34665\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to ensure that children currently undergoing therapy funded by the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund do not experience disruption to their care due to uncertainty around the fund's future.

**Lisa Smart:** [\[34666\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has considered introducing a transitional funding arrangement for the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund beyond March 2025 to prevent a gap in therapeutic support for eligible children.

**Janet Daby:**

The department will shortly be finalising business planning decisions on how we will allocate our budget for the next financial year. All decisions regarding the future of the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund (ASGSF) are being considered as part of these discussions. An announcement will be made as soon as possible. The department will, of course, always consider the impact of decisions on vulnerable children.

ASGSF applications are generally permitted to extend up to 12 months, allowing children and families to receive continuing therapy across financial years. Where applications are agreed, therapy which starts before March 2025 may therefore continue into the next financial year, under previously agreed transitional funding arrangements.

**Calum Miller:** [\[36322\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of the time taken to confirm the Adoption Support Fund budget on children receiving therapy through that fund.

**Calum Miller:** [\[36323\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that the time taken to confirm Adoption Support Fund funding does not lead to gaps in therapy provision for adopted children with additional needs.

**Calum Miller:** [\[36324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of linking the Adoption Support Fund annual funding cap to inflation.

**Janet Daby:**

The department will shortly be finalising business planning decisions on the allocation of the department's budget for the next financial year. All decisions regarding the future of the adoption and special guardianship support fund (ASGSF), including issues linked to inflation, are being considered as part of these discussions. An announcement will be made as soon as possible. We will always consider the impact of decisions on vulnerable children.

To ensure there are no gaps in therapy, including for children with additional needs, ASGSF applications are generally permitted to extend up to 12 months, allowing children and families to receive continuing therapy across financial years. Where applications are approved, therapy which starts during March 2025 may therefore continue into the next financial year under previously agreed transitional funding arrangements.

**Luke Taylor:**[\[37791\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what her Department's policy is on the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund.

**Janet Daby:**

The adoption and special guardianship fund (ASGSF) offers valuable support to adoptive and kinship families, helping families to thrive and enabling children and young people to make the best start in life.

Announcements on funding for the ASGSF will be made shortly.

**■ Children in Care****Neil O'Brien:**[\[32081\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much the Government spent on children looked after in 2023-24; and what proportion of this was on unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

**Neil O'Brien:**[\[32082\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the predicted cost of children looked after is in 2024-25; and what proportion of this is allocated to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

**Janet Daby:**

In 2023/24, local authority gross expenditure on children's and young people's services was £14.8 billion. Over half of that expenditure was on services for children looked after, which is a total of £8.1 billion (54.9%).

Expenditure under the last administration on asylum seeker services for children, within local authority children's services, increased by 29.7% to £341.7 million in 2023/24. This accounted for 4.2% of the total spend on looked after children.

The asylum seeker services for children spending line is unlikely to capture all expenditure on unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC). This spending line

will only capture expenditure related to UASC that has not been recorded in other spending lines. For example, if a UASC is fostered then the associated expenditure will be captured in the 'fostering services' spend line by local authorities. These other lines are not disaggregated in the data collection so the department is unable to determine what proportion of fostering spend is spent on UASC.

The relevant data can be accessed here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/la-and-school-expenditure> and data guidance and a breakdown of spending categories is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/section-251-2023-to-2024/section-251-financial-data-collection-2023-to-2024-guidance-for-local-authorities-compiling-their-outturn-statement>.

In 2024/25, local authorities have planned expenditure on children looked after in gross terms to be £7.8 billion, of which £268.4 million is planned to be spent on asylum seeker services for children. The relevant data can be found here:

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/planned-la-and-school-expenditure>.

Local authorities typically underbudget, so budgets are generally a poor indicator of actual spend, but they are currently the only published data available for 2024/25. For example, local authorities spent £1.5 billion, 23%, more than budgeted for in 2023/24 on looked after children. Gross planned spend on looked after children for 2023/24 was £6.6 billion and the actual spend on looked after children in 2023/24 was £8.1 billion. The relevant data can be found here:

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/planned-la-and-school-expenditure/2023-24#dataBlock-b3207b9e-46a0-4a1e-8e8a-7bfa46e2241b-tables> and here:

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/la-and-school-expenditure#explore-data-and-files>.

## ■ Children: Social Services

**Helen Hayes:**

**[38633]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of (a) family finding, (b) befriending and (c) mentoring programmes.

**Helen Hayes:**

**[38634]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if her Department will extend funding for (a) family finding, (b) befriending and (c) mentoring programmes to 2025-26.

**Helen Hayes:**

**[38635]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of Lifelong Links on (a) children and young people in care and (b) care leavers.

**Janet Daby:**

Stable support networks and loving relationships are crucial to supporting children in care and helping care leavers to thrive.

The department launched the family finding, befriending and mentoring programme in 2023. It is testing a range of programmes that seek to enable children and young people to connect with the important people in their lives, improve their sense of identity and community, and help them create and sustain consistent, stable and loving relationships. We are currently funding 50 programmes across 45 local authorities, and this includes 23 Lifelong Links programmes.

The family finding, befriending and mentoring programme is subject to a formal evaluation, with an initial report due later this year. The evaluation will help us understand the impacts for children in care and care leavers and assess the practicability of extending family finding and befriending and mentoring programmes in the future.

My right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced the overall settlement for the department for the 2025/26 financial year, providing additional funding for core schools, early years and children's social care, amongst other areas. We are actively working to finalise the details of the 2025/26 budgets, including funding for the family finding, befriending and mentoring programme.

**■ Domestic Violence: Children****Neil Duncan-Jordan:**[\[35194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the guidance entitled Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 in preventing children from being returned to abusive parents.

**Janet Daby:**

Local authorities have a duty to protect all children, including those returning home from care.

The statutory 'Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations volume 2: care planning, placement and case review' is clear that where the plan is for a child to return to the care of their family when they cease to be looked-after, there should be a robust planning and decision-making process to ensure that this decision is in the best interests of the child and will safeguard and promote their welfare.

The multi-agency statutory guidance 'Working together to safeguard children 2023' reinforces the legal obligations for individuals and organisations to ensure the safety of children, including those returning home.

Local statutory safeguarding partners, such as local authorities, integrated care boards and police chiefs have responsibility for the delivery and monitoring of multi-agency priorities and procedures to protect and safeguard children in the local area, and are required to publish an annual report on the effectiveness of their arrangements.

Internal analysis of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements' annual reports and on the impact of how the 'Working together to safeguard children 2023' statutory guidance was strengthened in 2023 is encouraging, especially regarding how safeguarding partners are implementing its requirements.

Ofsted also has a vital role to play in ensuring that the settings and services that support children are safe and effective, and that children leaving care are given the right support to achieve and thrive, with 100 local authorities now rated Good or Outstanding for children's services.

Protecting children at risk of abuse and stopping vulnerable children falling through cracks in services are at the heart of the government's landmark Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill, introduced on 17 December 2024.

The department's investment in reforms includes over £500 million for Family Help and child protection services. We expect Family Help to provide support where children in care may be able to return safely to their families.

#### ■ **Members: Correspondence**

**Steve Darling:**

[\[37744\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when she plans to respond to the letter of 3 February 2025 on (a) mental health support for school staff and (b) automated external defibrillators governance and compliance from the Hon. Member for Torbay.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

I can confirm that a response to the correspondence dated 3 February 2025 from the hon. Member for Torbay was sent on 26 February 2025.

#### ■ **Music: Education**

**Neil Duncan-Jordan:**

[\[37838\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will consider a three year funding settlement for the Music Hub programme.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

Multi-year programme budgets will be considered as part of the spending review and subsequent business planning process.

#### ■ **Physical Education and Sports: Children and Young People**

**Olly Glover:**

[\[35170\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to develop programmes promoting active lifestyles for children and young people as recommended in the article by Sarah MacQuarrie and Alexandra Hennessey entitled Transforming children and young people's futures through PE, school sport, and physical activity, published on 12 February 2025.

**Olly Glover:**

**[35171]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential implications for her policies of the recommendations within the article entitled Transforming children and young people's futures through PE, school sport, and physical activity, published by the University of Manchester on 12 February 2025.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

This government values physical education (PE) and sport as a way to improve not only the health, but the wellbeing and lives of all children and young people. Existing government-funded programmes look to address this with the primary PE and sport premium and the School Games Organisers.

To address specific barriers, we have recently launched an open procurement for a new grant programme for up to 3 financial years (from April 2025 to March 2028 at up to £300,000 per year) to develop and deliver a programme that improves and increases PE, school sport and physical activity opportunities for pupils with SEND. The inclusive education hub, funded by the department through the inclusion 2024 programme is an online platform of bespoke resources to help schools make PE and sport more inclusive.

## ■ Racial Discrimination: Palestinians

**Nadia Whittome:**

**[38689]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to help tackle anti-Palestinian racism in (a) schools and (b) universities.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

There is no place for racism in our education system or anywhere else in society. Students, regardless of their background, should be able to study in a safe and supportive environment that allows them to thrive.

The Equality Act 2010 enshrines in law that all public sector bodies, including schools and higher education institutions, must not discriminate against a student because of their protected characteristics. All educational institutions have a responsibility to take a zero-tolerance approach to any racism towards students and staff. They have clear responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 to adopt robust policies and procedures that enable them to investigate and address reports of racism swiftly. The department has published guidance for schools on how to comply with their duties. This guidance is accessible at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/equality-act-2010-advice-for-schools>.

Schools should actively promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance for those of different faiths and beliefs. Actively promoting these values means challenging opinions or behaviours in school that are contrary to fundamental British values. Schools should further tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions by enabling students to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures. Promotion of these values plays an important role in preparing our children and

young people for life in a modern and diverse Britain. Ofsted inspects how schools and colleges develop their pupils' understanding of these values. The Educate Against Hate website features more than 150 free resources to help pupils, teachers and parents tackle sensitive topics with students, including in relation to discrimination and hatred.

In universities, the Office for Students (OfS) is introducing a new condition of registration for preventing, addressing and investigating incidents of harassment with effect from 1 August 2025. The government is working with the OfS and sector bodies to help providers prepare to implement the new measures. The condition will enable the OfS to do more to ensure that universities are taking appropriate and timely action to prevent and tackle harassment of all kinds, including anti-Palestinian racism.

## ■ Schools

**Bradley Thomas:**

[\[35907\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 17 February 2025 to Question 29762 on Cross sector partnerships, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of cooperation between state and private schools on state schools.

**Stephen Morgan:**

Around 70% of private schools affiliated with the Independent Schools Council hold charitable status. As charities, they are required to demonstrate public benefit and one way in which they do that is through partnerships with state schools. This activity should continue.

## ■ Special Educational Needs: Teachers

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[37559\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what information her Department holds on the number of fully-qualified SEND teachers in England on 12 March 2025.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

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

High quality teaching is the in-school factor that makes the biggest difference to a child's education, which is why sufficient high quality teachers is key to delivering the government's mission to break down the barriers to opportunity.

All teachers are teachers of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and the Teachers' Standards sets clear expectations that teachers must understand the needs of all pupils, including those with SEND.

As of November 2023, which is the latest date for which data is available, there were 468,693 full-time equivalent teachers in state-funded schools in England. Of these, around 6% (28,200) were in special schools and state-funded alternative provision schools, including pupil referral units.

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

## ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

### ■ Climate Change

**Robin Swann:** [38843]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if his Department will take steps to prepare for temperature rises that could reach 4C by the end of the century.

**Kerry McCarthy:**

The latest UN Environment Programme Emissions Gap Report estimates that current policies will limit peak global warming to 3.1°C by 2100, with further reductions possible through full implementation of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) (<https://www.unep.org/resources/emissions-gap-report-2024>). More work is needed to limit warming to 1.5°C which is why the Government is committed to driving climate action domestically and internationally. At COP29 the UK announced an ambitious goal to reduce emissions by at least 81% by 2035 and will continue to urge other nations to be ambitious. The Government is investing in mitigation actions while future-proofing the Net Zero system against climate hazards.

### ■ Energy Supply: Planning

**Ms Polly Billington:** [38232]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has had discussions with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on the potential implications of the development of the Strategic Spatial Energy Plan for the Planning and Infrastructure Bill.

**Ms Polly Billington:** [38233]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has had discussions with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on the potential implications of the development of the National Planning Policy Framework for the Strategic Spatial Energy Plan.

**Michael Shanks:**

My Rt hon Friend the Secretary of State has regular discussions with Ministerial Colleagues on a number of issues, including planning. We are working with MHCLG on potential planning development and reform measures, and their interactions with the SSEP.



## ■ Energy: Billing

**Lisa Smart:** [\[37748\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to ensure energy suppliers issue accurate bills based on customer-submitted meter readings rather than estimated usage.

**Miatta Fahnbulleh:**

The Government takes the issue of accurate billing very seriously. All suppliers must take the required steps to reflect accurate meter readings in bills or statements sent to customers. This is laid out in Ofgem licence conditions.

All energy suppliers must follow Ofgem's enforceable overarching principles of the Standard Licence Conditions 0 and 0A. These are a set of broad and enforceable 'standards of conduct' principles that set fundamental expectations on how suppliers must ensure fair treatment of each customer. These principles guide supplier behaviour, information provision, and customer service processes. For domestic consumers, the Standards also dictate how suppliers identify and respond to consumers in vulnerable situations.

**Lisa Smart:** [\[37749\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether their Department has made an assessment of the impact of energy suppliers incorrectly reporting missed payments to credit reference agencies based on erroneous estimated bills on consumers.

**Miatta Fahnbulleh:**

While this is a commercial matter between suppliers and credit reference agencies, the Government takes the issue of accurate billing very seriously.

All suppliers must take the required steps to reflect accurate meter readings in bills or statements sent to customers where these have been provided by a customer or obtained by the supplier. This is also laid out in the Ofgem's licence conditions.

All energy suppliers must follow Ofgem's enforceable overarching principles of the Standard Licence Conditions 0 and 0A. These are a set of broad and enforceable 'standards of conduct' principles that set fundamental expectations on how suppliers must ensure fair treatment of each customer. These principles guide supplier behaviour, information provision, and customer service processes.

## ■ Environment Protection: Job Creation

**Ian Sollom:** [\[37776\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the Office for Clean Energy Jobs makes use of the research and evidence collected by the Green Jobs Delivery Group.

**Sarah Jones:**

The Office for Clean Energy Jobs is committed to ensuring that research and evidence gathered by the former Green Jobs Delivery Group directly inform its initiatives. In December 2024 we published the Clean Power 2030 Action Plan, accompanied by an Annex titled Assessment of the Clean Energy Skills Challenge. This Annex provides a comprehensive analysis of the skills landscape within the clean energy sector, highlighting workforce challenges and opportunities. We continue to engage with industry, unions, and educational bodies to ensure our policies align with latest labour market intelligence and effectively address workforce challenges in the clean energy sector.

**Ian Sollom:**[\[37778\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether his Department has (a) evaluated the effectiveness and (b) undertaken a lessons learned review of the Green Jobs Delivery Group.

**Sarah Jones:**

We have been building on the progress that the Green Jobs Delivery Group previously made by setting up the Office for Clean Energy Jobs (OCEJ). The OCEJ has been created to ensure that clean energy jobs are abundant, high quality, paid fairly, and have favourable terms and good working conditions.

The Department has undertaken lessons learned exercises of the work undertaken by, and to support the Green Jobs Delivery Group. This included an informal assessment of its effectiveness. The outputs have informed the establishment of the OCEJ and its work.

**■ Geothermal Power****Max Wilkinson:**[\[37737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what his Department's policy is on promoting deep geothermal energy.

**Kerry McCarthy:**

The Government supports the development of geothermal projects, provided they deliver affordable energy for consumers and are environmentally appropriate. The following schemes are open to applications from deep-geothermal projects: Contracts for Difference (for geothermal power); the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme and Green Heat Network Fund (for geothermal heat).

Recognising that cost is a barrier, the Government commissioned research to understand how we can support the geothermal sector to achieve its potential.

**■ Great British Energy: Annual Reports****Dave Doogan:**[\[38665\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, on what date GB Energy's annual report and accounts will be published.

**Michael Shanks:**

Clause 7 of the Great British Energy Bill requires Great British Energy to report its accounts to the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero. It also requires the Secretary of State to lay a copy of these before Parliament.

As The Bill has not yet received Royal Assent, we are unable to confirm a specific date on which the first annual reports and accounts will be laid before Parliament.

**■ Solar Power****Ben Obese-Jecty:**[\[37760\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what the (a) average and (b) maximum megawatt capacity of a solar energy infrastructure project was in (i) 2008 and (ii) 2024.

**Michael Shanks:**

No new operational solar photovoltaic installations above 50kW were recorded in 2008. In 2024, new solar installations (excluding those below 50kW) had an average capacity of 15.4MW. The largest was 67MW.

**■ Solar Power: Electricity Generation****Ben Obese-Jecty:**[\[37759\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, pursuant to the Answer of 11 March 2025 to Question 35004 on Solar Power: Electricity Generation, when his Department announced its plan to bring forward legislative proposals to increase the threshold for solar projects determined under the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project planning regime from 50MW to 100MW.

**Michael Shanks:**

The Government's intention to increase the threshold above which solar projects must be determined under the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project regime was announced in its response to an 8-week consultation on changes to the National Planning Policy Framework. This was published on 12 December 2024.

**■ Solar Power: Infrastructure****Ben Obese-Jecty:**[\[38728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how many solar farms have been approved as nationally significant infrastructure projects by (a) size in acres and (b) capacity in megawatts in each year since 2008.

**Michael Shanks:**

Nine nationally significant solar farms have been consented since 2008:

<i>PROJECT</i>	<i>(A) APPROXIMATE SIZE IN ACRES</i>	<i>(B) APPROXIMATE MEGAWATT CAPACITY</i>	<i>YEAR CONSENTED</i>
Cleve Hill Solar Park	1213.29	300 – 400	2020
Little Crow Solar Park	558.46	150	2022
Longfield Solar Farm	1119.39	500	2023
Gate Burton Energy Park	1690.20	500	2024
Mallard Pass Solar Project	2105.34	350	2024
Sunnica	2424.10	500	2024
Cottam Solar Project	2841.71	600	2024
Heckington Fen Solar Park	1448.04	500	2025
West Burton Solar Project	2190.34	480	2025

## ■ Warm Homes Plan

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

[\[37579\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether the Warm Homes Plan will (a) rationalise the number of home energy efficiency funding schemes and (b) streamline application processes for those schemes.

**Miatta Fahnbulleh:**

The Warm Homes Plan will help people find ways to save money on energy bills and transform our ageing building stock into comfortable, low-carbon homes that are fit for the future. As a first step the Government launched the Warm Homes: Local Grant (WH:LG) and Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund. The WH:LG is a successor scheme replacing the HUG and LAD schemes simplifying the current landscape.

We will continue to evaluate the application processes as schemes are developed.

Further details will be set out in the Warm Homes Plan in due course.

**■ Wind Power****Ben Obese-Jecty:**[\[37761\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what the (a) average and (b) maximum megawatt capacity was of a wind energy infrastructure project in (i) 2008 and (ii) 2024.

**Michael Shanks:**

For the 22 onshore wind projects completed in 2008, the largest capacity was 68 MW and the average capacity was 20 MW. Both of the offshore wind projects completed in 2008 had a capacity of 97 MW.

For the 17 onshore wind projects completed in 2024, the largest capacity was 443 MW and the average capacity was 48 MW. For the 2 offshore wind projects completed in 2024, the largest capacity was 882 MW and the average capacity was 665 MW.

Large wind projects may be installed in phases over several years.

**ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS****■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Mr Paul Kohler:**[\[903300\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to help protect the River Wandle from pollution.

**Emma Hardy:**

The Wandle pollution incident on 18 February was unacceptable. I understand the Environment Agency is investigating.

The Government is going further to clean up our waterways, delivering the Water (Special Measures) Act, giving Ofwat powers to ban bonus payments for water bosses. It also increases the Environment Agency's ability to bring criminal charges against water executives. We launched the largest review of the sector since privatisation. It aims to build consensus for a resilient and innovative water sector and robust wider regulatory framework.

**Mr Gagan Mohindra:**[\[903302\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made with Cabinet colleagues of the potential impact of infrastructure developments on agricultural land.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

The Government has launched a national conversation on land use in England. This includes the commitment to protect land with the greatest long-term potential for food production, whilst delivering on the potential of our landscapes to produce more energy and build 1.5 million homes. This will inform a Land Use Framework that is a win-win for development and nature.

**■ Agriculture: Grants****Martin Wrigley:** [\[38217\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to open capital grants in summer 2025.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

The Environmental Land Management standalone Capital Grant will re-open in the summer. Other grant schemes, including Higher Tier Capital Grants and Protection and infrastructure grants are open now.

**■ Agriculture: Sustainable Development****James Cartlidge:** [\[37593\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to support farmers to plan the long-term sustainability of their farms in South Suffolk constituency.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

This Government is proud to have secured the largest budget for sustainable food production in our country's history, with £5 billion being spent to support farmers over a 2-year period.

Defra has closed the Sustainable Farming Incentive for the submission of new applications, existing agreements will continue. Every penny in all existing SFI agreements will be paid to farmers, and outstanding eligible applications that have been submitted will be processed.

We will provide further details about the reformed SFI offer once the Spending Review has been completed.

SFI is an important offer, but it is part of a wider package. We recognise farmers need clarity and certainty and we remain committed to investing in agri-environment schemes, and to supporting the farming sector, including those in the South Suffolk constituency.

We plan to launch the new Higher Tier scheme later this year; Capital Grants will re-open in summer 2025; we continue to move forward with Landscape Recovery; and we are increasing payment rates for Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) agreement holders to recognise their ongoing commitment to delivering environmental outcome.

The budget for future years will be set in phase 2 of the SR.

**■ Animal and Plant Health Agency: ICT****James Naish:** [\[36162\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when the last time was that Animal and Plant Health Agency IT systems were upgraded.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) has a wide range of applications and IT systems all of which require maintenance, update, and refresh

As these activities are regular and carried out independently per system, each year work is continually undertaken to assess and then either remediate, modernise or replace IT systems

The level of development undertaken depends on several factors including government investment during a Spending Review period, evidence from formal IT Health Checks and an assessment of the level of risk held within the IT estate

Defra has different programmes underway which invest in the APHA's IT estate, including the Legacy Application Programme and the APHA's Delivering Sustainable Futures programme. The Delivering Sustainable Futures programme seeks to enhance the APHA's IT estate by developing modern, stable, lower cost and more interoperable IT architecture.

**■ Climate Change****Pippa Heylings:**[\[38189\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to encourage the use of nature-based solutions to help tackle the effects of climate change.

**Mary Creagh:**

When designed well, Nature-based solutions (NbS) can deliver multiple benefits for climate and biodiversity whilst helping communities adapt to climate change risks – for example through natural flood management and urban cooling.

NbS, such as restoring peat and planting trees, are key to tackling climate change and averting its impacts, as well as providing habitats which support our native species and functioning ecosystems.

Defra has pledged up to £400 million for tree planting and peatland restoration in England over the current and next financial year and we are working towards our statutory target to reach 16.5% tree canopy cover in England by 2050. We also have ambitions to restore hundreds of thousands of hectares of peat across England.

We are also actively pursuing the role of NbS to enhance habitats such as seagrass and saltmarsh to deliver blue carbon and biodiversity benefits.

We are supporting organisations to develop investment-ready nature projects that use private sector investment to benefit the environment and tackle climate change through the Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund. We have backed 127 pioneering projects to develop new business models that generate revenue from nature recovery, through carbon storage, cleaner water or enhanced biodiversity.

## ■ Coastal Areas: Devon

**Martin Wrigley:** [\[38210\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will report on the (a) financial, (b) environmental and (c) social impact of coastal natural capital resources in Devon.

**Emma Hardy:**

Defra has not undertaken specific regional surveys on coastal natural capital resources and, therefore, does not hold information on the financial, environmental and social impacts specific to Devon. Defra's £38 million marine Natural Capital and Ecosystem Assessment programme has explored the state of England's marine and coastal natural capital resources and the environmental, societal, and economic value they hold. It has delivered evidence, tools and guidance to inform place-based and system-wide decision making. The programme completes at the end of March 2025, with data and reports available later this year.

## ■ Environment Protection

**Jas Athwal:** [\[38782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to help meet (a) climate and (b) nature targets.

**Mary Creagh:**

The Government is committed to delivering for nature and climate. We are taking action to meet our Environment Act targets, to restore and protect our natural world, and one of the government's five missions is to make Britain a clean energy superpower, delivering clean power by 2030 and accelerating to net zero across the economy.

The Government has concluded a rapid review of the existing Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP23), including progress on Environment Act targets. The Government published a statement of the rapid review's key findings on 30 January 2025, to be followed by publication of a revised EIP later this year. This will include delivery information about how we will meet our ambitious targets.

The Government will also publish an updated plan that will outline the policies and proposals across Defra sectors needed to deliver Carbon Budgets 4-6 and the 2030 Nationally Determined Contribution on a pathway to net zero, in due course.

To support our climate and nature targets we have pledged up to £400 million for tree planting and peatland restoration over the current [2024/25] and next [2025/26] financial year.

## ■ Farming Recovery Fund

**Helen Morgan:** [\[24518\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Farming Recovery Fund, if he will publish (a) the number of individual payments



made by and (b) total costs of those payment to each local authority area for each year since the fund was established.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

Farming Recovery Fund payments are made directly to farmers. The Farming Recovery Fund is activated by the Government of the day and has been activated in 2015, 2019, 2020 and again in 2024 depending on the scale and impacts of the flooding, these are detailed below:

- In 2015 when Storm Desmond produced 341mm of rainfall at Honister Pass in Cumbria in 24 hours.

- In 2019/2020, a flash flood in North Yorkshire affecting a single parish and the collapse of a flood embankment in Wainfleet, Lincolnshire, and widescale flooding across central and eastern England.

- In 2024 an expanded fund following Storms Babet, Henk and the exceptional wet weather during the six-month period October 2023 to March 2024

Each iteration of the Farming Recovery Fund is different depending on when, where and what the weather conditions were which caused the flooding. Farmers were able to apply for these funds the details of which are set out below.

REGION	FRF 2015		FRF 2019		FRF 2020	
	NUMBER	AMOUNT	NUMBER	AMOUNT	NUMBER	AMOUNT
Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire	1	£9,120.00				
Cheshire					1	£3,948.94
Cumbria	530	£4,647,445.22				
Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire			18	£78,834.38	4	£28,006.84
East Anglia	1	£1,530.00				
East Yorkshire and Northern Lincolnshire	8	£34,027.49	2	£5,515.78	1	£1,361.30
Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and Bath/Bristol area	1	£2,924.20	1	£21,387.50	35	£241,976.01
Greater Manchester	7	£33,124.52				
Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Warwickshire			6	£52,665.32	70	£362,580.74
Inner London - West	1	£3,603.00			1	£1,730.00
Lancashire	129	£978,167.39				
Leicestershire, Rutland and Northamptonshire			1	£5,829.50		
Lincolnshire	1	£19,846.00	30	£165,887.13		

North Yorkshire	212	£1,507,147.20	36	£266,871.18		
Northumberland, and Tyne and Wear	60	£425,640.21				
Shropshire and Staffordshire	1	£20,000.00			29	£120,655.82
South Yorkshire	1	£514.90	12	£39,280.42		
Tees Valley and Durham	15	£106,270.76				
West Yorkshire	27	£181,071.49				
<b>Total payments to English registered businesses</b>	<b>995</b>	<b>£7,970,432.38</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>£636,271.21</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>£760,259.65</b>
Paid for land in England but business registered in other UK country	4	£31,867.98			3	£7,368.36
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>999</b>	<b>£8,002,300.36</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>£636,271.21</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>£767,628.01</b>

We will publish data for the 2024 Farming Recovery Fund once payments have been finalised. The 2024 Farming Recovery Fund has paid around 12,700 farming businesses £57.5 million, to date.

Recovery payments were always intended as an exceptional intervention. Defra is working with the Flood Resilience Taskforce to develop a longer-term solution to the impacts of our changing climate on the agricultural sector. We are also investing in environmental land management schemes which include actions to improve flood resilience and water management on farms.

## ■ Flood Control

**Stuart Anderson:**

[\[37278\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to support (a) prevention and (b) recovery efforts by local flood action groups.

**Emma Hardy:**

The Government's new Flood Resilience Taskforce brings together representatives from national, regional and local government, the emergency services, and the third sector to improve co-ordination between organisations working on floods resilience so they can put in the support that the public needs and bolsters the nation's floods resilience. The National Flood Forum, who support many local flood action groups, are a key member of our Flood Resilience Taskforce.

I recently met with the Chair and CEO of the National Flood Forum. We explored how their work to establish and support local flood action groups can be further promoted via the Taskforce.

**■ Food: Waste****Gareth Snell:** [\[33530\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has commissioned research into the potential impact of mandatory food waste reporting on (a) access to healthy foods, (b) sustainability targets, (c) expenditure by businesses and (d) access to healthier food distribution organisations.

**Mary Creagh:**

The consultation stage Impact Assessment considered the potential impacts of mandatory food waste reporting on large food businesses. Furthermore, when businesses reduce their food waste, we expect to see progress towards sustainability targets and increases in surplus food redistribution, but these has not been quantified, and these benefits are indirect because they are not realised from measurement and reporting alone, they require action to be taken. No assessment has been made of the potential of reporting to increase access to healthy foods.

**■ Forests: Bedfordshire****Blake Stephenson:** [\[38206\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps to help grow the forestry sector in Bedfordshire.

**Mary Creagh:**

Defra is funding a significant package of grants and activity across England to increase tree coverage and support the forestry sector. This includes funding a national network of fifteen Community Forests. These Forests are planting thousands of hectares of new trees and woodland in and around our towns and cities providing social, economic and environmental transformation. The Forest of Marston Vale is one of this network with tree planting sites in Bedfordshire. On 27 February 2025 the Government also relaunched the Timber in Construction Roadmap. The Roadmap will boost the forestry sector across England by encouraging the use of sustainable, low carbon building materials, fulfilling Government's commitment to 1.5million homes, creating a circular economy and accelerating economic growth. These actions will go alongside recommitting to existing plans such as promoting timber as a construction material, boosting skills and capacity across the supply chain and increasing the supply of sustainable timber products.

**■ Hornets: Non-native Species****Peter Prinsley:** [\[38314\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department plans to establish a fully (a) funded, (b) staffed and (c) equipped national Asian Hornet Task Force to tackle the threat posed by the Asian Hornet Wasp.

**Mary Creagh:**

The response to Yellow-legged hornet (YLH) also known as Asian hornet, is carried out by the Animal and Plant Health Agency's (APHA) National Bee Unit (NBU). The

NBU has been taking action against YLH since 2016 and has developed a fine-tuned response. In 2024, 24 nests were located and destroyed, compared to 72 nests in 2023. They frequently find a nest within a day of an initial sighting being reported.

The NBU are able to draw on further resources from wider APHA to manage the impact on other areas of NBU work including taking action on notifiable bee diseases, while continuing to provide an effective response to YLH.

Genetic analysis of hornet samples, conducted by Fera Science Ltd., also aids the response. Results from the analyses of nests destroyed in 2024, have been used to identify areas where there is a higher risk of hornets overwintering. In 2025, spring trapping will be carried out by the NBU in these areas. Although evidence was found that hornets had overwintered in 2023 this is not considered to be strong evidence of an established YLH population.

### ■ Import Controls: Northern Ireland

**Jim Allister:** [\[37520\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Answer of 11 March 2024 to Question HL2323 on Import Controls: Northern Ireland, how much and what proportion of the funding allocated to the construction of those posts has been disbursed as of 11 March 2025.

**Jim Allister:** [\[37521\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Answer of 11 March 2024 to Question HL2323 on Import Controls: Northern Ireland, what recent progress he has made on the construction of those border control posts; and what recent estimate he has made of when the construction of those posts will be completed.

**Jim Allister:** [\[37522\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, where in Northern Ireland border control posts have (a) been and (b) are being constructed for the purpose of complying with the Windsor Framework.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

In line with the commitments we have made under the Windsor Framework, SPS inspection facilities are under construction in Northern Ireland at the ports of Belfast, Larne, Foyle and Warrenpoint. Preparations are well underway, and they will be operationally ready by July 2025.

The Government has committed to a maximum funding envelope of £192.3 million. Of this envelope, Defra has spent £70.7 million up to the 28 February 2025, the latest data currently available.

## ■ Meat: Ritual Slaughter

**Rupert Lowe:** [\[36521\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate his Department has made of how many animals were slaughtered without being stunned for the production of Halal meat in 2024.

**Rupert Lowe:** [\[36522\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many and what proportion of animals were slaughtered without being stunned for the production of Halal meat in the UK in 2024.

**Rupert Lowe:** [\[36523\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate his Department has made of the proportion of all meat (a) produced and (b) consumed in the UK that is Halal meat.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

Of the 1.035 billion animals processed in English and Welsh slaughterhouses in 2024, an estimated 214.6 million animals (20.7%) were slaughtered to produce halal meat of which an estimated 27.0 million animals (2.6% of all animals processed) were slaughtered for halal meat without being stunned. These figures are calculated using data from a survey carried out at all slaughterhouses operating in England and Wales during the period 12 February to 18 February 2024, under the last Government.

We do not hold data that would allow us to accurately estimate the quantity of halal meat that was consumed in 2024.

## ■ Meat: Smuggling

**Carla Lockhart:** [\[36144\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of the illegal importation of meat from regions affected by (a) African swine fever and (b) foot and mouth disease on risks to the UK agricultural sector.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

Whilst we have never had an outbreak of African Swine Fever (ASF) in the UK, it remains a key priority in terms of exotic notifiable disease preparedness. The overall risk of an incursion is currently assessed to be medium, and we continue to prepare for a possible outbreak. To safeguard the UK's pork and pig industries, Defra, Devolved Governments, together with the pig industry and veterinary bodies have been working together to raise awareness of the risks of the introduction of ASF to the UK. Defra announced further controls in September 2024, restricting the movement of pork and pork products into Great Britain.

The risk of incursion of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) to Great Britain was increased to medium following the confirmation of disease in Germany on the 10 January 202 and then Hungary on 6 March 2025. The Government has taken decisive and rapid action to protect the UK by suspending the commercial import of susceptible animals from Germany and restricting personal imports of animal products from across the EU. The UK has robust contingency plans in place to manage the risk of this disease as set out in the [Foot and Mouth Disease Control Strategy for Great Britain](#) supported by the [Contingency plan for exotic notifiable diseases of animals in England](#).

## ■ Planning Permission

**Gideon Amos:** [\[33744\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what weighting the Land Use Framework will have in planning decision making.

**Mary Creagh:**

The Government is currently consulting on land use in England, the outcome of which will inform the publication of a Land Use Framework, planned for later this year. The Government is committed to building 1.5 million homes and the new infrastructure needed to deliver resilient and sustainable growth and clean energy; the Land Use Framework will play in a key role in delivering these commitments.

The Land Use Framework will provide the principles, advanced data and tools required to support national and local government, landowners, businesses, farmers, and nature groups in making the right decisions to meet the demands on their land.

By law, planning applications are determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. What constitutes a material consideration is broadly defined and is for the decision-maker to determine based on the circumstances of the case, as is the weight to give to each material consideration.

## ■ Recycling: Small Businesses

**Caroline Voaden:** [\[38288\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure small businesses are supported during the implementation of the extended producer responsibility scheme.

**Caroline Voaden:** [\[38289\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has of the cost of the Extended producer responsibility scheme for small businesses.

**Mary Creagh:**

The aim of packaging extended producer responsibility is to ensure businesses - rather than taxpayers - are responsible for the cost of dealing with packaging when it becomes waste. These plans will encourage manufacturers to reduce the amount of packaging they use and increase recyclable and reusable alternatives.

Packaging extended producer responsibility cost obligations will only apply to large producers with a turnover over £2 million and who place more than 50 tonnes of packaging on the market. This threshold exempts around 70% of producers from paying these fees. Any large producers who supply the exempt producers with empty packaging will pay the fees associated with that packaging.

We have made a full assessment of the impacts that implementing packaging extended producer responsibility will have. This includes assessment of the impacts on small businesses, which can be found in Section 8 of the impact assessment: [The Producer Responsibility Obligations \(Packaging and Packaging Waste\) Regulations 2024](#).

### ■ Recycling: Surrey Heath

**Dr Al Pinkerton:**

[\[35973\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he has taken to (a) support recycling efforts and (b) develop recycling infrastructure in Surrey Heath constituency.

**Mary Creagh:**

We are improving recycling services across England through our upcoming Simpler Recycling reforms, which will ensure that across England, people will be able to recycle the same materials, whether at home, work or school.

Every household and workplace (businesses and relevant non-domestic premises like schools and hospitals) across England will be able to recycle the same materials in the following core waste streams: metal, glass, plastic, paper and card, food waste, and garden waste (for households only).

Regarding recycling infrastructure, the Collection and Packaging Reforms – Simpler Recycling, Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging (pEPR) and a Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) – should guarantee a consistent supply of recyclable materials and increased income streams from pEPR. This should provide certainty, increasing investor confidence and unlocking investment in waste infrastructure.

Defra is currently strengthening the evidence base regarding waste and recycling infrastructure needs and we will continue to work closely with key stakeholders including local authorities and waste management companies on this.

### ■ Rivers: Walking

**Ben Maguire:**

[\[37858\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will publish the selection criteria his Department is using to (a) review and (b) allocate funding for locations for the nine new national river walks.

**Ben Maguire:**

[\[37859\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will publish a timeline for the (a) planning and (b) development of the nine new national river walks.

**Mary Creagh:**

Officials are continuing to scope out the delivery of the nine new national river walks manifesto commitment. Further details will be published in due course.

■ **Salmon: Conservation****Edward Morello:**[\[36991\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has had discussions with the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization on measures to protect Atlantic salmon from industrial by-catch in the North Norwegian Sea.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

Defra is working with the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation (NASCO) to better understand the risk of salmon bycatch in commercial pelagic fisheries, including the North Norwegian Sea.

■ **Sustainable Farming Incentive****Martin Wrigley:**[\[38212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to his Department's new policy on the Sustainable Farming Incentive, whether he has made an assessment of the availability of private funding to deliver public goods for nature.

**Mary Creagh:**

The Government is committed to significantly increasing private investment in nature's recovery. This will not only help meet our environmental targets but will also create opportunities for farmers and land managers to diversify their business revenues through the sale of nature services.

Nature markets in the UK are small but growing. We will be consulting on what additional action is needed to strengthen these markets in the coming weeks. Alongside this, in the recent Land Use Framework publication, we announced a Call For Evidence which will seek views on how we can better incentivise private investment in nature from sectors who impact and depend upon our shared natural capital. This will be published later this year.

■ **Sustainable Farming Incentive: South Suffolk****James Cartlidge:**[\[37590\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of pausing the Sustainable Farming Incentive for new applications for farms in South Suffolk constituency.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

We don't produce constituency level assessments. We publish regular statistics on Farm Business Income broken down in various ways. Farming evidence packs have been recently updated including key statistics and farm performance. These set out



an extensive range of data to provide an overview of agriculture in the UK. We will continue to carry out appropriate and timely assessments of our interventions to inform policy development.

On the 11th of March 2025 we published forecasts which suggest that average Farm Business Income has risen in 2024/25 across all farm types with the exception of cereal farms. This follows a fall in income for most farm types in 2023/24, after some exceptional highs in the two preceding years. For all farm types, except for Cereals, expected reductions in Direct Payments have been completely offset by projected increases in other Farm Business Income components in 2024/25.

Across England, 50,000 farm businesses are already in agri-environmental schemes. We will open up initial applications for CS Higher tier and a revised ELM capital grants offer later in the Summer.

**James Cartlidge:**

[\[37591\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to assist farmers to mitigate the impact of the loss of Sustainable Farming Incentive payments in South Suffolk constituency.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

This Government is proud to have secured the largest budget for sustainable food production in our country's history, with £5 billion being spent to support farmers over a 2-year period.

Defra has closed the Sustainable Farming Incentive for the submission of new applications, existing agreements will continue. Every penny in all existing SFI agreements will be paid to farmers, and outstanding eligible applications that have been submitted will be processed.

We will provide further details about the reformed SFI offer once the Spending Review has been completed.

SFI is an important offer, but it is part of a wider package. We recognise farmers need clarity and certainty and we remain committed to investing in agri-environment schemes, and to supporting the farming sector, including those in the South Suffolk constituency.

We plan to launch the new Higher Tier scheme later this year; Capital Grants will re-open in summer 2025; we continue to move forward with Landscape Recovery; and we are increasing payment rates for Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) agreement holders to recognise their ongoing commitment to delivering environmental outcome.

The budget for future years will be set in phase 2 of the SR.

**James Cartlidge:**

[\[37594\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to support farmers following the end of the Sustainable Farming Incentive in South Suffolk constituency.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

This Government is proud to have secured the largest budget for sustainable food production in our country's history, with £5 billion being spent to support farmers over a 2-year period.

Defra has closed the Sustainable Farming Incentive for the submission of new applications, existing agreements will continue. Every penny in all existing SFI agreements will be paid to farmers, and outstanding eligible applications that have been submitted will be processed.

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The budget for future years will be set in phase 2 of the SR.

**■ Tree Planting: Bedfordshire****Blake Stephenson:****[38205]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many trees he plans to plant in Bedfordshire as part of plans to increase woodland cover.

**Mary Creagh:**

Tree planting grant schemes are demand led so it is not generally possible to state where the trees will be newly planted, although a range of sensitivities will prevent permission to plant being granted in some locations. Additional planting will be dependent on future applications.

The Forestry Commission publishes statistics on new planting of woodland, and trees outside woodland, in England. These can be found in [Forestry Commission Key Performance Indicators](#). These statistics are reported for each financial year in thousands of hectares. This government has not set specific targets for individual constituencies and the reporting statistic the hon. Member has requested is not currently available. The statistics are produced annually and show recorded new planting from administrative records and grant schemes with estimates for planting without grant aid.

## ■ UK Trade with EU: Flowers

**Linsey Farnsworth:**

[\[36888\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has had discussions with his EU counterparts on streamlining the import process for flowers.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

Plant health import requirements are kept under continuous review, through the UK Plant Health Risk Group. Following such a review, most imports of cut flowers into GB from the EU no longer require an accompanying phytosanitary certificate and notification by importers.

Where phytosanitary certificates are still required, we are transitioning to digital certification via the IPPC ePhyto solution, which is a faster, safer and more cost-effective option. Defra has prioritised securing ePhyto agreements with EU countries, with arrangements now agreed for a range of plant products, including cut flowers, **from:** Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Sweden. Several other EU countries are due to have the capacity to export using ePhyto rolled out during 2025 .

The Trade Specialised Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures, set up under the UK/EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement, provides a platform for information sharing and discussion on each of the Parties' import requirements and processes. It is at this forum that the UK has discussed with the European Union the development of the UK's IPPC ePhyto solution.

Defra is also seeking to negotiate a SPS agreement to help boost trade and deliver benefits to businesses and consumers in the UK and the EU.

The UK and EU are like-minded partners with similarly high standards. We have been clear that a SPS agreement could boost trade and deliver significant benefits on both sides. A SPS agreement could reduce trade friction and deliver significant benefits to the EU and the UK, but delivering new agreements will take time.

## ■ Whisky: Northern Ireland

**Graham Leadbitter:**

[\[37890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate his Department has made of the value of single malt Irish whisky produced in Northern Ireland to the economy.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

The Irish Whiskey Association, representing 95% of Irish Whiskey producers across the island of Ireland, report that Irish Whiskey exports exceeded €1 billion in 2024 and reached 114 markets around the world.

Irish Whiskey produced in Northern Ireland is an important part of that economic impact. The oldest Irish Whiskey distillery in NI, Bushmills, reported a 9.7% rise in volume sales in 2022, reaching 1 million nine-litre cases for the first time. In 2024 the

newest Irish Whiskey distillery in NI, McConnell's, opened its £12m distillery in Belfast which is expected to produce half a million litres of alcohol and attract 100,000 visitors annually.

## FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

### ■ Afghanistan: Women

**Saqib Bhatti:**

[\[36457\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much and what proportion of official development assistance to Afghanistan is being spent on programmes supporting Afghan women and girls.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The UK is committed to prioritising gender equality and rights in Afghanistan. The needs and priorities of women and girls are at the core of the government's humanitarian response. In the Financial Year of 2023-24 (the most recent period for which we have verified data), we can confirm that of those reached by our £113.5 million aid budget to Afghanistan, at least 50% were women and girls, supporting at least 1.3 million Afghan women with humanitarian assistance. We have met this target since Financial Year 2021-22 and expect to continue to meet this target in 2024-25. Our aid is subject to strict monitoring and we have robust third-party monitoring for all our Official Development Assistance funded programmes.

### ■ Blue Belt Programme: Finance

**Sarah Champion:**

[\[37160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had recent discussions with the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on the potential merits of continuing funding for the Blue Belt international marine conservation programme beyond 2025.

**Stephen Doughty:**

UK Government Ministers meet regularly through the Overseas Territories Ministerial Group to discuss key priorities, the last was held on 5 March. Territory Governments, Ministers from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs discussed Overseas Territories environmental priorities during the annual Joint Ministerial Council (November 2024) where a commitment to the continuation of the Blue Belt Programme was provided in the Joint Communiqué. The UK Government remains committed to supporting the Blue Belt Programme, which underpins global ocean protection ambition. Future funding for the Programme remains subject to ongoing spending review considerations.

## ■ British Council

**Wendy Morton:** [\[36068\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 10 February to Question 28082 on the British Council, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of any decision to reduce the number of British Council offices on his Department's objectives.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The British Council is operationally independent from the UK Government. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) works with the British Council to ensure strategic alignment between FCDO objectives and British Council activity. Decisions relating to its overseas network are operational matters for the British Council. In an increasingly digital age, the British Council's contribution and impact should be judged by its operational - rather than physical - presence and its results.

## ■ British Indian Ocean Territory: Fisheries

**Ben Obese-Jecty:** [\[37768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help ensure long term access to the Fisheries Conservation and Management Zone of the British Indian Ocean Territory.

**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 International Investment: Borrowing

**Noah Law:** [\[38518\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what consideration he has given to allow British International Investment to borrow from the financial markets to support the expansion of its international development goals.

**Catherine West:**

In the first two years of British International Investment's (BII) current strategy (2022-2023), BII has invested approximately \$3 billion into developing economies and mobilised an additional \$2 billion in private capital on top of this. BII is evolving its approach to mobilising private capital, including through its new Mobilisation Facility announced by the Prime Minister at UNGA. As part of preparations for BII's next strategy, we will consider options to enable BII to continue mobilising private capital at scale.

**■ Chelsea Football Club: Sales**

**Calum Miller:** [\[38922\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, which Minister has responsibility for ensuring that the proceeds from the sale of Chelsea Football Club are spent in support of humanitarian causes in Ukraine.

**Calum Miller:** [\[38923\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has had legal advice on its powers to enforce the agreement with Roman Abramovich on the sale of Chelsea Football Club on the spending of proceeds in support of the victims of the war in Ukraine.

**Calum Miller:** [\[38924\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the proceeds from the sale of Chelsea Football Club remain in the UK.

**Calum Miller:** [\[38925\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent estimate he has made of when the proceeds from the sale of Chelsea Football Club will be disbursed to support victims of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

**Stephen Doughty:**

This issue primarily involves responsibilities of Ministers in the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, HM Treasury and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. The proceeds from the sale of Chelsea FC are frozen in a UK bank account. We are determined to see the proceeds reach humanitarian causes in Ukraine as soon as possible. It is a complex issue with Ministers receiving advice from a range of officials and lawyers. The UK is working with international partners, has engaged with Abramovich's team, and is exploring all options to ensure the proceeds reach vulnerable people in Ukraine who are most in need.

**■ Climate Change: Finance**

**Wendy Morton:** [\[36407\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking ensure the (a) effectiveness and (b) adequacy of the delivery of international climate finance spending planned for the (i) final two years of the 2021-2026 funding period and (ii) other years.

**Stephen Doughty:**

To ensure the effectiveness and adequacy of the delivery of international climate finance (ICF) spending the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) has robust delivery rules in place - these can be found here: FCDO Programme Operating Framework - GOV.UK. In addition, ICF programmes report progress against a set of Key Performance Indicators annually. These results are published to demonstrate the impact and effectiveness of ICF spending - the latest report can be

found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-international-climate-finance-results-2024>

**Wendy Morton:**

[\[36409\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent progress his Department has made on increasing private finance through (a) British International Investment and (b) British Investment Partnerships to help meet the UK's international climate finance targets; and how private finance is being targeted towards (i) low-income countries and (ii) climate-vulnerable regions.

**Catherine West:**

In 2023, the British Investment Partnerships (BIP) portfolio invested £1.5 billion in developing countries which mobilised over £3.5 billion of private sector investment. Over 54 per cent of BIP programme spend was classified as International Climate Finance (ICF) and over 70 per cent of BIP programmes operate in least developed countries and lower-middle income countries.

Since 2022, BII has invested over \$1 billion in climate finance and mobilised over \$2 billion of private capital. Over 90 per cent of BII's portfolio is invested in Africa and South Asia, in some of the poorest and most climate vulnerable countries in the world.

**Richard Burgon:**

[\[38056\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of proposed reductions in official development assistance on the UK contribution to international climate finance.

**Stephen Doughty:**

The impact on international climate finance is being worked through following the decision to reduce UK Official Development Assistance (ODA) from 0.5 per cent of GNI today to 0.3 per cent in 2027. We will be taking a rigorous approach to ensure all ODA delivers value for money and will set out our spending plans following the completion of the Spending Review and departmental resource allocation process.

## ■ Colombia: Trade Agreements

**Laurence Turner:**

[\[38794\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his counterpart in Colombia on the potential renewal of the UK-Colombia Bilateral Investment Treaty.

**Catherine West:**

The Government has not been formally approached by the Colombian government about proposals to amend the UK-Colombia Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT). The Government regards the UK-Colombia BIT as playing an important role in the investment relationship between our two countries. The stock of total investment between the UK and Colombia was £6.8 billion in 2023. Following the UK-Colombia

BIT's initial ten-year term, in accordance with the treaty's provisions, it shall remain in force indefinitely unless it is terminated by either Party.

#### ■ Commonwealth: Education

**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[37990\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to the Commonwealth Secretariat on the promotion of (a) open learning and (b) distance education through the Commonwealth of Learning.

**Stephen Doughty:**

The UK supports the role of the Commonwealth in promoting open learning and distance education through the Commonwealth of Learning. The Commonwealth of Learning promotes greater access to quality education and training and allows Commonwealth citizens to benefit from improved livelihoods, greater gender equity and overall economic, social, and cultural development leading to sustainable development. The UK continues to support and encourage collaboration across the Commonwealth and its institutions to ensure this important work can continue.

#### ■ Development Aid: Refugees

**Monica Harding:** [\[37855\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what proportion of official development assistance will be allocated to in-donor refugee costs in each fiscal year up to and including 2026/27.

**Stephen Doughty:**

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

Whilst there will always be volatility in asylum forecasts, we expect these decisions to drive down overall in-donor refugee costs over the next Spending Review and the Home Office are well incentivised to deliver this.

Detailed decisions on how the Official Development Assistance budget will be used will be worked through as part of the ongoing Spending Review based on various factors including impact assessments.

#### ■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Religious Freedom

**Sammy Wilson:** [\[37545\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much his Department spent on promotion of freedom of religion or belief in the financial year 2024/25.



**Stephen Doughty:**

The UK remains strongly committed to freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) for all abroad. It is our firm opinion that no one should live in fear because of what they do or do not believe in. We are championing the right to FoRB and promoting tolerance and mutual respect through our engagement in multilateral fora, our bilateral work, and our programme funding, including the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) John Bunyan Fund (JBF), a designated programme for FoRB-focused overseas projects. The JBF has a budget allocation of £460,720 in FY24/25. The FCDO works to ensure that Official Development Assistance (ODA) is allocated to those who are most vulnerable and most in need of this assistance irrespective of race, religion, or ethnicity. This includes minority religious or belief communities, who are assessed by our partners when determining those most in need of protection and assistance.

**■ Guatemala and Honduras: Gold****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[36379\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department is taking steps with regional partners to help prevent illegal gold mining operations in (a) Honduras and (b) Guatemala.

**Catherine West:**

The UK recognises the importance of combatting illicit and uncontrolled gold mining to prevent the negative impact it has on biodiversity and people, including in both Honduras and Guatemala. We regularly raise this issue with host governments in the region, working in conjunction with other international partners to help mitigate the impact of illegal gold mining.

**■ Guyana: Foreign Relations****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[36370\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has met with the High Commissioner of Guyana since taking office.

**Catherine West:**

The Foreign Secretary hosted President Ali of Guyana and his delegation, which included Guyana's High Commissioner to the UK, Dr Rajendra Singh, for lunch at 1 Carlton Gardens on 27 September 2024. They discussed a number of issues: climate, biodiversity, the situation in Haiti and the Essequibo border controversy.

**■ Guyana: Politics and Government****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[36369\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department is collaborating with international partners to support Guyana's territorial integrity.

**Catherine West:**

Our support for Guyana's territorial integrity is unwavering and we are clear that the border was settled in 1899 through international arbitration. The Foreign Secretary underlined our support for Guyana's territorial integrity in a call with President Ali in July 2024 and has reiterated this in subsequent engagements. The UK will continue to work with our international partners, including through the Commonwealth Ministerial Group on Guyana, to de-escalate tensions and ensure respect for Guyana's territorial integrity. We are pleased that the Leaders' Statement following the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting 2024 underlined the Commonwealth's unswerving support for Guyana's territorial integrity.

**■ Israeli Settlements: Sanctions****Graham Leadbitter:**[\[38513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of the Occupied Territories Bill proceeding through the Irish Parliament; and whether he plans to bring forward similar legislation to ban trade with illegal settlements.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The UK government considers Israeli settlements illegal under international law and goods produced in these settlements are not entitled to benefit from tariff and trade preferences under the UK's current trade agreements with the Palestinian Authority and Israel. We support accurate labelling of settlement goods, so as not to mislead the consumer. We routinely update our guidance to British businesses on the Overseas Business Risk website and do not encourage or offer support to economic and financial activity in the settlements.

**■ Jamaica: Foreign Relations****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[36367\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has met his counterparts in Jamaica since taking office.

**Catherine West:**

The Foreign Secretary spoke to Jamaica's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, Kamina Johnson Smith, on 2 August 2024. They discussed the importance of the UK-Jamaica bilateral relationship and climate issues including Hurricane Beryl. They later had a bilateral meeting in the margins of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Apia in October 2024. The Minister for Latin America and the Caribbean visited Jamaica 14-16 October 2024, with a focus on collaboration around growth, climate resilience and development. The Minister for Latin America and the Caribbean also met the Jamaican Minister of Industry, Investment and Commerce, Aubyn Hill, on 4 November 2024 to discuss opportunities for closer collaboration between the UK and Jamaica on trade and business.

**■ Jamaica: Heads of State****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[36368\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential implications for its policies of Jamaica's legislative steps to remove His Majesty King Charles III as head of state.

**Catherine West:**

It is for all Realms to consider their own constitutional arrangements. We are confident in our relationship with our Jamaican partners, and we will respect any decisions they make. The UK also looks forward to continuing a modern partnership with all Commonwealth partners regardless of their status as a Realm or republic.

**■ Nigeria: Food Supply and Malnutrition****Wendy Morton:**[\[35670\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Government's Africa Strategy includes specific commitments to addressing food security and malnutrition in Nigeria.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The Foreign Secretary launched a five-month consultation to inform the UK's new approach to the African continent during his visit to Nigeria and South Africa in November 2024. This follows the manifesto commitment to develop a fundamentally transformed partnership that engages with African countries as equals, promotes our economic growth ambitions and supports migration priorities. While consultations are ongoing, a broad range of policy options are being considered.

**■ Overseas Trade: Russia****Martin Wrigley:**[\[38467\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 10 March 2025 to Question 34422 on Overseas Trade: Russia; if his Department will ban UK-Russian imports and exports that are not directly linked to (a) humanitarian organisations and (b) UK and Russian embassies.

**Stephen Doughty:**

Together with our international partners, we have unleashed the largest and most severe package of trade sanctions ever imposed on a major economy. As a result, Russian imports into the UK have fallen by more than 99 per cent, and UK exports to Russia are down by more than 75 per cent. Examples of unsanctioned goods include food and pharmaceutical items. UK sanctions provide for a range of exceptions and licensing grounds, including relating to humanitarian and diplomatic activity.

**■ Papua New Guinea: Tree Felling****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[37992\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking with his counterpart in Papua New Guinea to help tackle illegal logging.

**Catherine West:**

The UK Forest Governance, Markets and Climate phase 2 (FGMC2) programme aims to improve forest stewardship by supporting countries to improve their forest governance and how they make decisions about forest land use. This includes reducing the illegal and unsustainable use of forest resources. In Papua New Guinea (PNG), FGMC2 is partnering with the PNG Forest Authority to (i) develop a Forest Sector Economic Model, which will allow stakeholders to examine the impacts of land use decisions, including timber extraction, on forest land; (ii) build on earlier timber legality standards to expose PNG to the experience of other countries that have developed timber verification systems and are able to demonstrate the legality of their timber to international markets.

**■ Peru: Development Aid****Sarah Champion:**[\[38588\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of Peru's new law expanding the powers of the Peruvian Agency for International Cooperation on (a) civil society and (b) indigenous peoples in that country.

**Catherine West:**

We are aware that Peru's Congress has approved a reform expanding the powers of the Peruvian Agency for International Cooperation (APCI) and strengthening state oversight of non-governmental organisations.

Given our strong partnership with Peru, we have been monitoring developments closely. We are evaluating the impact of the new regulations, including the issues put forward by some civil society and indigenous people's groups. Alongside international partners, we have previously raised concerns about the potential risks of new controls for civic society and offered to share best practice in this important area.

**■ Tigray: Armed Conflict****Ben Lake:**[\[38096\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps his Department is taking to prevent conflict in Tigray.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The UK is working with partners to prevent a return to conflict and preserve stability in the region by supporting the implementation of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement. In the context of a rise in tensions in Tigray, we are actively engaging all

parties to encourage de-escalation and dialogue. On 13 March we issued a joint statement alongside the US, EU, and 22 other countries to this effect.

## ■ Tigray: Politics and Government

**Ben Lake:** [\[38097\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has considered taking steps to help ensure that (a) Eritrean and (b) other non-Ethiopian federal forces honour the terms of the Ethiopia-Tigray Cessation of Hostilities Agreement, signed on 2 November 2022.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The full implementation of the 'Agreement for Lasting Peace through a Permanent Cessation of Hostilities' in Pretoria in November 2022 is key to peace and stability in Northern Ethiopia. The UK continues to be at the forefront of diplomatic and development efforts to sustain the agreement and encourage political dialogue. We regularly engage the parties to the agreement and the African Union guarantors to reiterate the importance of full implementation. We most recently issued a statement to this effect on 13 March alongside the US, EU, and 22 other countries.

Furthermore, we are supporting the African Union Monitoring Verification and Compliance Mechanism.

## ■ Uganda: Politics and Government

**James McMurdock:** [\[37861\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of the political situation in Uganda.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The UK works with the Government of Uganda on a range of shared interests including trade, development, and regional security. The Minister for Africa has spoken regularly to Ugandan Ministers, including on areas of cooperation and on issues related to human rights. The UK will continue to pursue shared interests with the Government of Uganda while maintaining diplomatic channels on a range of issues, including governance.

## ■ UK Soft Power Council

**Damien Egan:** [\[36814\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of UK soft power in advancing Britain's diplomatic interests.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

Soft power is crucial to our standing in the world: it fosters friendships, builds relationships, supports efforts to strengthen the rule of law internationally, and drives our own growth and prosperity. But we need to use it more effectively. This is why the

Foreign Secretary and Culture Secretary have launched the UK Soft Power Council. The Council will help shape and drive a new Soft Power Strategy that will deliver on our foreign policy priorities, bring momentum to campaigns, and broaden the reach of the major soft power and foreign policy moments in the global calendar. Detailed metrics to measure the impact of soft power on UK priorities will be developed as part of the new UK Soft Power Strategy.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

### ■ Dementia: Diagnosis and Medical Treatments

**Josh Babarinde:**

[\[37364\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to (a) improve early diagnosis rates and (b) support the (i) development and (ii) availability of treatments for dementia.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

The Government is committed to transforming diagnostic services and will support the National Health Service to increase diagnostic capacity to meet the demand for diagnostic services through investment in new capacity, including magnetic resonance imaging and computed tomography scanners.

The Department of Health and Social Care funds research into dementia via the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). Alongside Alzheimer's Research UK, Alzheimer's Society and the People's Postcode Lottery, the NIHR is funding the Blood Biomarker Challenge which seeks to produce the clinical and economic data that could make the case for the use of a blood test in the NHS to support diagnosis of dementia. The NIHR has also invested nearly £50 million over five years into the Dementia Trials Network, which seeks to significantly expand the United Kingdom's early phase clinical trial capabilities in dementia which will support the development of treatments.

To prepare for the new generation of dementia treatments in development, we are working to ensure the diagnostic and treatment capacity, clinical pathway redesign and investment are in place to support the adoption of any new licensed and National Institute for Health and Care Excellence-recommended treatments as soon as possible.

### ■ Dental Services: Worsley and Eccles

**Michael Wheeler:**

[\[36273\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase access to NHS dentistry in Worsley and Eccles constituency.

**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 the integrated care boards (ICBs) across England. For Worsley and Eccles constituency, this is the NHS Greater Manchester ICB.

ICBs 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.

## ■ Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards

**Abtisam Mohamed:**

[\[33689\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure Deprivation of Liberty Safeguard applications are processed within 21 days.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

Processing Deprivation of Liberty Safeguard (DoLS) applications is the responsibility of local authorities. There is considerable variation in how local authorities process and complete their DoLS applications with some areas successfully processing applications within 21 days. It is the responsibility of local authorities to make sure their systems for managing DoLS are informed by best practice.

## ■ Down's Syndrome

**Graham Stuart:**

[\[38557\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, who the designated board-level executive leads are for Down Syndrome in each ICB in England.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

It is the responsibility of integrated care boards (ICBs) to make information public about executive leads for Down syndrome in England. In accordance with statutory guidance published by NHS England on 9 May 2023, ICBs should be open and transparent about who holds these roles and should make this information publicly available. We are giving systems greater control and flexibility, and it is for individual ICBs to decide how to publicise these details.

The statutory guidance sets out NHS England's expectations about fulfilling executive lead functions and outlines the responsibilities of these roles in more detail, and is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/executive-lead-roles-within-integrated-care-boards/>

**■ General Practitioners: Finance****Manuela Perteghella:**[\[37902\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the new 2025-26 GP contract will lead to an increase in the proportion of the NHS budget allocated to general practice once the increase in employer National Insurance contributions has been taken into account.

**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 concluded the consultation on the 2025/26 GP contract in February 2025 and we are pleased that the England general practitioners committee of the British Medical Association is supportive of the contract changes. We are investing an additional £889 million in general practice to reinforce the front door of the National Health Service, bringing total spend on the GP Contract to £13.2 billion in 2025/26.

**■ General Practitioners: Unemployment****Bell Ribeiro-Addy:**[\[37708\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 11 March 2025 to Question 33570 on General Practitioners: Unemployment, which bodies hold data on the number of unemployed GPs; and for what reason that data is not held centrally.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

While the General Medical Council register contains data on the number of qualified general practitioners (GPs), the National Health Service is not the sole employer of GPs. They may choose to undertake private work, to work in other settings outside of general practice, for example, prisons or army bases, or to work abroad. Since the NHS only collects data on GPs employed through the NHS, unemployment figures are not available.

**■ GP Practice Lists****Ben Obese-Jecty:**[\[37767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer to Question 35425 on General Practitioners: Finance, how regularly GP practice lists of registered patients are updated.



**Stephen Kinnock:**

General practices are responsible for maintaining their registered patient lists in a current and accurate state, so that it does not contain any duplicated patients, namely patients who have either died or who have moved and/or are registered elsewhere, that may cause list inflation.

The global sum is a capitated payment, calculated based on the size of a practice's registered list of patients, weighted using the Carr-Hill formula. These payments are calculated quarterly to reflect changes in registered patients lists and other factors such as patient list turnover, sex, and age of registered patients.

**Health Services: Visual Impairment****Christine Jardine:**[\[37687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure blind and partially sighted people have access to health information in an accessible format.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

Under the Equality Act 2010, health and social care organisations must make reasonable adjustments to ensure that disabled people are not disadvantaged. Since 2016, all National Health Service organisations and publicly funded social care providers are expected to meet the Accessible Information Standard which details the approach to supporting the information and communication support needs of patients and carers with a disability, impairment or sensory loss, including blind and partially sighted people. NHS England has been undertaking a review of the Accessible Information Standard (AIS) to help ensure that the communication needs of people with a disability, impairment, or sensory loss are met in health and care provision. A revised AIS will be published in due course. In the meantime, the current AIS remains in force and therefore there should not be a gap in provision for people using services.

**Mental Health Services: Heywood and Middleton North****Mrs Elsie Blundell:**[\[37753\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve mental health services for (a) young men, (b) young women and (c) vulnerable people in Heywood and Middleton North constituency.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

We know that waits for children and young people's mental health services are lengthy and that some vulnerable groups are less likely to access support. That is why the National Health Service's planning guidance for 2025/26 makes it clear that one of the priorities for children's mental health services is to reduce local inequalities in access to children and young people's mental health services between disadvantaged groups, including in Heywood and Middleton North constituency, and the wider population.

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

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

### ■ **Mental Health Services: Terminal Illnesses**

**Jas Athwal:** [\[37949\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of access to (a) counselling and (b) psychological support for patients who receive a diagnosis of terminal illness.

**Jas Athwal:** [\[37950\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to tackle inequalities in access to end of life care services.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

NHS England has published statutory guidance which outlines areas for consideration when commissioning palliative and end of life care services and, within this, there is reference to improving equity of access and reducing inequity in outcomes and experience. Additionally, NHS England has developed a palliative and end of life care dashboard, which brings together all relevant local data in one place. The dashboard helps commissioners understand the palliative and end of life care needs of their local population, enabling integrated care boards to put plans in place to address and track the improvement of health inequalities, and ensure that funding is distributed fairly, based on prevalence.

NHS England's statutory guidance for palliative and end of life care states that integrated care board (ICB) commissioners should work to ensure that there is sufficient provision of care service providers available to deliver high-quality end of life care, paying particular attention to access to mental health and wellbeing support and spiritual care.

National Health Service counselling and psychological support is principally provided through local NHS Talking Therapies services, which provide treatments, such as cognitive behavioural therapy, to adults with common mental health conditions including depression and anxiety. People can self-refer to NHS Talking Therapies Services or be referred by their general practitioner. All ICBs are expected to expand services locally by commissioning NHS Talking Therapies services integrated into physical healthcare pathways.

## ■ Mental Health Services: West Midlands

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

[\[36609\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps his Department has taken to help reduce the average waiting times for accessing NHS mental health services in the West Midlands.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

As part of our mission to build a National Health Service that is fit for the future and that is there when people need it, the Government will recruit an additional 8,500 mental health workers to reduce delays and provide faster treatment which will also help ease pressure on busy mental health services.

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

## ■ Ophthalmic Services: Special Educational Needs

**Daniel Francis:**

[\[38324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the NHS special schools eye care service will have an oversight and evaluation programme in 2025-26 (a) monitoring coverage and uptake and (b) assessing whether it is delivering comparable health and education outcomes to the proof of concept.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

NHS England is in the process of publishing a final service specification for sight testing in special educational settings that will provide for comparable health and education outcomes to the proof of concept. A process is also being established for ongoing reporting against service delivery which will be confirmed with integrated care boards shortly.

## ■ Palliative Care

**Wendy Morton:**

[\[37180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that hospice care services across England are sufficiently funded; and what assessment he has made of the potential impact of an ageing population on demand for palliative care services.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

Whilst the majority of palliative and end of life care is provided by National Health Service staff and services, we recognise the vital part that voluntary sector organisations, including hospices, also play in providing support to people at end of life and their loved ones.

Most hospices are charitable, independent organisations which receive some statutory funding for providing NHS services. The amount of funding each charitable hospice receives varies both within and between integrated care board (ICB) areas. This will vary depending on demand in that ICB area but will also be dependent on the totality and type of palliative and end of life care provision from both NHS and non-NHS services, including charitable hospices, within each ICB area.

We are pleased to confirm that the Government has released the first £25 million tranche of the £100 million capital funding, with Hospice UK kindly allocating and distributing the money to hospices throughout England. An additional £75 million will be available from April. We are also providing £26 million revenue funding to support children and young people's hospices for 2025/26. This is a continuation of the funding which until recently was known as the children and young people's hospice grant.

No formal assessment has been made of the potential impact of an ageing population on demand for palliative care services, but we know that currently approximately 600,000 people die per year in the United Kingdom. We are aware that the Office for National Statistics has projected that, by 2040, approximately 800,000 people a year will die in the UK, meaning that, the number of people needing palliative and end of life care is expected to increase by 42% by then.

#### ■ Pharmacy: Finance

**Dr Luke Evans:**

[\[33084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the NHS-commissioned independent economic analysis of pharmacy funding before the conclusion of the Community Pharmacy Contractual Framework contract negotiations.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

*[Holding answer 28 February 2025]:* NHS England commissioned Frontier Economics to undertake an independent economic analysis of National Health Service pharmacy funding in 2024. Both the interim and draft final reports of the economic analysis have been shared with Ministers and Community Pharmacy England and are informing the current consultation.

This work is nearing completion and will be published soon.

#### ■ Social Media: Mental Health

**Max Wilkinson:**

[\[37740\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the impact of social media addiction on (a) (i) adult and (ii) children's mental health and (b) the cost of mental health provision in the NHS.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

In 2019, the UK's Chief Medical Officers reviewed the evidence on the relationship between screen time and mental health in children. The commentary found an association between the two but could not establish a causal relationship.

In 2023, The National Institute for Health and Care Research commissioned a longitudinal study exploring the potential causal impact of social media use on young people's mental health in the United Kingdom. The study found little evidence to suggest that spending more time on social media is associated with more mental health problems in young people.

Our focus is on keeping young people safe, while also benefitting from the latest technology. By the summer, robust new protections for children will be in force through the Online Safety Act to protect them from harmful content and ensure they have an age-appropriate experience online.

The Department for Science, Innovation and Technology recently announced a feasibility study on methods and data to understand the impact of smartphones and social media on children; this began on 2 December 2024 and will be completed in May 2025.

### ■ Terminal Illnesses: Religion

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[38005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to work with faith groups to support the terminally ill.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

We do acknowledge the importance of access to psychological, social and spiritual support for those who wish to access such support, including those at the end of life, as well as those important to them.

NHS England's statutory guidance for palliative and end of life care states that integrated care board commissioners should work to ensure that there is sufficient provision of care service providers available to deliver high-quality end of life care, paying particular attention to access to mental health and wellbeing support and spiritual care.

Chaplains promote pastoral, spiritual and religious wellbeing through compassionate, person-centered care. This is available to patients, their families and carers, and to National Health Service staff, volunteers and students.

## HOME OFFICE

### ■ Anti-social Behaviour

**Jas Athwal:**

[\[37954\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to tackle anti-social behaviour in (a) England, (b) London, and (c) Ilford South constituency.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

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

That's why we are delivering on our commitment to strengthen neighbourhood policing, putting 13,000 neighbourhood police and community support officers into local communities by the end of the Parliament .

We will also equip the police to crack down on those causing havoc on our high streets and in communities. Through the Crime and Policing Bill, we have introduced tougher powers to tackle repeat offending, including the new Respect Order to tackle the most persistent ASB offenders.

## ■ Asylum: Children

**Kevin Hollinrake:** [\[37211\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 21 February 2025 to Question 26035 on Housing: Asylum, what information her Department holds on the average annual cost to local authorities for looking after (a) unaccompanied asylum seeking children who arrive in their area and (b) are transferred there under the National Transfer Scheme; and what funding her Department provides to local authorities for these.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

The Home Office does not hold the specific data requested in a readily reportable form, but the funding policy can be found online here: [Unaccompanied asylum seeking children and leaving care: funding instructions - GOV.UK](#).

## ■ Asylum: Poverty

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** [\[38381\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to prevent people seeking asylum from becoming (a) destitute and (b) in poverty.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

The Home Office has a legal obligation, as set out in the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, to support asylum seekers (including any dependants) who would otherwise be destitute. Asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute can receive accommodation, subsistence, or both accommodation and subsistence support. Details of the support provided can be found at the following link: [Asylum support: What you'll get - GOV.UK](#).

The level of the allowance given to those supported under section 95 and section 4 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 is reviewed each year to ensure it covers an asylum seeker's "essential living needs".

## ■ Burglary

**Jim Shannon:** [\[37557\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what information her Department holds on the number of people charged with aggravated burglary over the last 12 months.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

The Home Office collects and publishes information on the number of notifiable offences, and their investigative outcomes, recorded by the police in England and Wales, on a quarterly basis. This information, including aggravated burglary offences, can be accessed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-recorded-crime-open-data-tables>

Crime statistics for Northern Ireland are the responsibility of the devolved administration. These can be accessed here:

<https://www.psni.police.uk/about-us/our-publications-and-reports/official-statistics/police-recorded-crime-statistics>

**■ Clothing: Public Places****David Taylor:****[38911]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will bring forward legislative proposals to ban the wearing of balaclavas in public spaces.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

Face coverings have a variety of legitimate purposes and as such the Government does not support a general ban on the wearing of balaclavas or other types of face coverings in public.

However, the Crime and Policing Bill contains a new criminal offence of wearing, or otherwise using, an item that conceals identity in an area designated by police due to the risk of criminal activity taking place at protests. This will enable the police to put a stop to individuals hiding behind masks to avoid conviction for criminal activity at protests.

**■ Dangerous Dogs****Dr Luke Evans:****[37716]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions he has had with (a) police forces and (b) local authorities on the (a) effectiveness of current legislation on and (b) adequacy of resources for encouraging responsible dog ownership in public areas.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 provides the police and local authorities with a range of flexible tools and powers, including Community Protection Notices, Civil Injunctions and Public Spaces Protection Orders, that they can use to tackle irresponsible dog ownership.

Appropriate use of the powers is a local decision for police, local authorities and other agencies; however, the Home Office regularly engages with police and local authority partners to discuss the effectiveness of the legislation.

Set against our Safer Streets Mission, this government is committed to reducing anti-social behaviour (ASB). We are making changes to some of the powers in the 2014 Act via the Crime and Policing Bill, introduced to Parliament last month, to ensure the powers – based on engagement with police and local authorities – are as effective as possible. These changes include increasing the upper limit for a fixed penalty notice for breaches of Community Protection Notices and Public Spaces Protection Orders from £100 to £500 to act as a stronger deterrent to ASB.

## ■ Domestic Abuse: Victim Support Schemes

**Ben Maguire:**

[\[37872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to improve access to domestic abuse support services in (a) North Cornwall constituency and (b) other rural areas.

**Jess Phillips:**

This Government has set out an ambition to halve violence against women and girls (VAWG) within a decade and will treat it as the national emergency that it is. The Government has increased funding to all local authorities to £160 million for 2025-26, an uplift of £30 million from the previous year, to provide further support in safe accommodation for domestic abuse survivors. We will deliver a cross-government, transformative approach, underpinned by a new VAWG Strategy published later this year. This will take into account the needs of all victims, including those in rural areas.

The Government has also committed to introduce domestic abuse specialists in every 999 control room, under a new approach named Raneem's Law. Delivery began in February, with the first specialists embedded in five police forces to support and improve the police response to victims of domestic abuse.

We have launched new Domestic Abuse Protection Orders (DAPOs) in three select areas and with the British Transport Police. These orders are the first to introduce a robust range of restrictions for perpetrators such as the ability to impose electronic tagging and attendance on behaviour change programmes, substance misuse and mental health interventions.

It is important that services join up to best serve victims. The Duty to Collaborate, once in force, will require local policing bodies, local authorities, and integrated care boards to collaborate in relation to the commissioning of certain victim support services, and to prepare and publish a joint commissioning strategy for victims of domestic abuse in their area.

I am pleased to be able to confirm funding for a range of organisations for the next financial year, whose vital work will help us achieve our mission.



**Dr Al Pinkerton:**

[\[37931\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to (a) help tackle domestic abuse and (b) improve support services for domestic abuse survivors in Surrey Heath constituency.

**Jess Phillips:**

This Government has set out an ambition to halve violence against women and girls (VAWG) within a decade and will treat it as the national emergency that it is. The Government has increased funding to all local authorities to £160 million for 2025-26, an uplift of £30 million from the previous year, to provide further support in safe accommodation for domestic abuse survivors. We will deliver a cross-Government, transformative approach, underpinned by a new VAWG Strategy published later this year. This will take into account the needs of all victims, including those in rural areas.

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The health sector has a vital role to play in preventing, identifying and responding to violence and abuse, and providing healthcare to victims. Domestic abuse and sexual violence (DASV) is more likely to be disclosed to a healthcare professional than any other professional. Therefore, it is vital that all health professionals including GPs, midwives and health visitors recognise the signs early and know how to respond. DHSC has published and disseminated a working definition of trauma informed practice for the health and care sector.

## ■ Elections: Subversion

**Ellie Chowns:**

[\[37924\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 12 March 2025 to Question 35504 on Elections: Subversion, whether the Defending Democracy Taskforce plans to consider evidence on alleged Kremlin-linked interference in past UK elections.

**Dan Jarvis:**

We have robust systems in place to defend the UK from all forms of malign state interference in UK democratic processes, including from Russia.

The Defending Democracy Taskforce brings together Ministers from across Government, along with representatives from law enforcement and the intelligence

community, to coordinate a programme of work that aims to protect UK political parties, elected officials and core electoral infrastructure. A key part of this is ensuring we learn from previous elections.

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

### ■ **Electronic Travel Authorisations: Northern Ireland**

**Mr Gregory Campbell:** [\[38544\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people were identified as not being in possession of a valid Electronic Travel Authorisation in Northern Ireland in the first two months since its introduction.

**Seema Malhotra:**

Electronic travel authorisations were introduced in October 2023 to enhance our ability to screen travellers upstream, and stop those who pose a threat from travelling to the United Kingdom. They were more recently expanded to eligible non-European nationals (in November 2024) and Europeans (on 5 March this year). The Home Office will provide regular updates in the months and years ahead on how the ETA requirement is being implemented and enforced.

### ■ **Firearms: Licensing**

**Charlie Dewhirst:** [\[38267\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish the performance data sent to her Department on firearms licensing by the firearms and explosives licensing working group of the National Police Chiefs' Council since October 2022.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

The issuing of firearms certificates and the efficiency of police forces is a matter for individual Chief Officers of Police and they are held to account by Police and Crime Commissioners.

However, the performance of forces is actively being monitored by the National Police Chiefs' Council lead for firearms licensing, Deputy Chief Constable David Gardner, and he is developing a new performance framework for firearms licensing teams, which it is intended will be published soon, to provide greater transparency on application turnaround times.

### ■ **Home Office: Non-departmental Public Bodies**

**Mr Peter Bedford:** [\[38853\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of abolishing non-departmental public bodies on (a) her Department's costs and (b) democratic accountability.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

We keep all bodies sponsored and funded by the Home Office under review, to ensure they are delivering public outcomes efficiently and effectively.

■ **Home Office: Training**

**Kirsty Blackman:** [\[38361\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 14 March 2025 to Question 36658 on Home Office: Training, how many people have acted as mentors in the last 12 months.

**Kirsty Blackman:** [\[38362\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 14 March 2025 to Question 36658 on Home Office: Training, how many people have been mentored in the last 12 months.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

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

■ **Immigration: Syria**

**Carla Denyer:** [\[37789\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to develop new country information for Syria; and when she plans to begin processing (a) asylum claims and (b) settlement cases.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

Following the fall of the Assad regime, the Home Office has withdrawn the Country Policy Information Notes and Guidance relating to Syria and has temporarily paused all asylum interviews and decisions. However, we continue to register new claims from Syrians in the UK who wish to claim asylum.

The Country Policy and Information Team (CPIT) are continuing to monitor and review the situation in Syria. CPIT are gathering evidence from a wide range of reliable sources, including reputable media outlets; local, national and international organisations, including human rights organisations; and information from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.

The pause is being kept under constant review and when there is a clear basis upon which to make decisions, we will resume the processing of them.

**Sorcha Eastwood:** [\[38238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential implications for her policy of pausing indefinite Leave to Remain applications for Syrian families in the UK recent reports of sectarian and revenge violence in Syria.

**Seema Malhotra:**

Following the fall of the Assad regime, the Home Office withdrew the Country Policy Information Notes and guidance relating to Syria and has temporarily paused all asylum interviews and decisions. However, we continue to register new claims from Syrians in the UK who wish to claim asylum.

The Country Policy and Information Team (CPIT) are continuing to monitor and review the situation in Syria. CPIT are gathering evidence from a wide range of reliable sources, including reputable media outlets; local, national and international organisations, including human rights organisations; and information from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.

The pause is being kept under constant review and when there is a clear basis upon which to make decisions, we will resume the processing of them.

**■ Internet: Offensive Weapons****Ben Obese-Jecty:**[\[38723\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the outcome was of her Department's consultation on the accountability of social media executives for not removing adverts for weapons and knives.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

The Government will be publishing the response to the consultation on the personal liability measure this spring.

This measure, which implements a manifesto commitment, will introduce personal liability on senior executives of online companies that do not take down illegal content relating to knives and offensive weapons when requested to do so by the police.

**■ Knives: Crime****Ben Obese-Jecty:**[\[38722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what progress she has made on the implementation of her planned coalition to tackle knife crime.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

The Prime Minister launched the Coalition to Tackle Knife Crime in September 2024, bringing together campaign groups, families of those who have tragically lost their lives to knife crime, young people who have been impacted and community leaders, united in their mission to save lives.

The Coalition has already met six times to discuss key issues with further engagements planned over the coming months. We remain committed to drawing on a range of experiences and voices in our ambition to halve knife crime in the next 10 years.

## ■ **LGBT+ People: Hate Crime**

**Pippa Heylings:** [\[38181\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to (a) tackle hate crime against LGBTQ+ people and (b) make LGBTQ+ related hate crime an aggravated offence.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

All hate crimes, including those targeting LGBT+ people, are completely unacceptable and we back the police in taking strong action against the perpetrators of these appalling offences.

We have committed to ensuring parity of protection for LGBT+ and disabled people under legislation and are currently considering the best way to move forward with this implementation of this commitment.

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

## ■ **Metropolitan Police**

**Luke Taylor:** [\[37790\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking with the Metropolitan Police to help tackle police abstractions from Sutton Borough to Central London.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

Visible and responsive policing in communities is critical and that is why the Government's Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee is placing 13,000 additional police personnel into neighborhood policing roles.

The Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee will hold forces to account for ensuring neighbourhood policing teams are protected from routine abstraction to ensure neighbourhood teams remain focused on serving their local communities and providing a visible policing presence.

## ■ **Mobile Phones: Theft**

**Jas Athwal:** [\[37962\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has had discussions with representatives of the mobile phone industry on (a) using technology to prevent stolen phones from being re-used and (b) the adequacy of security on banking phone apps.

**Jas Athwal:**

[\[37963\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to help reduce phone theft in (a) east London and (b) Ilford South constituency.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

On 6 February the Home Secretary brought together police, the National Crime Agency, the Mayor of London and leading tech companies to drive greater collaboration in breaking the business model of mobile phone thieves.

As a result of the summit, representatives from policing and tech agreed to significantly boost the sharing of data and intelligence on mobile phone theft to build a comprehensive picture of the organised criminal networks driving this problem and to instigate new work to tackle the problem.

To aid police investigations and recovery of stolen goods, our Crime and Policing Bill includes a measure to give police the power to enter and search premises for stolen property which has been electronically geolocation tracked to those premises and it is not reasonably practicable to obtain a warrant without seriously prejudicing the entry and search purpose. We are also committed to strengthening neighbourhood policing and through our Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee, there will be thousands of additional police officers and police community support officers.

The Crime Survey for England and Wales provides national estimates of the number of victims of mobile phone theft in England and Wales; this data is not broken down to sub-national geographies.

## ■ Motorcycles: Pedestrian Areas

**David Taylor:**

[\[38912\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with the police in Hertfordshire on tackling the driving of (a) motorbikes and (b) mopeds on (i) pavements and (ii) other public spaces in Hertfordshire.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

Tackling anti-social behaviour involving vehicles is a priority for this Government and a key part of our Safer Streets Mission to take back our streets.

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

This will allow the police to quickly remove anti-social motorbikes and mopeds from pavements and other public spaces and send a clear message to antisocial drivers that their behaviour will not be tolerated.

Enforcement of the law in Hertfordshire, including in relation to illegal driving of motorbikes, mopeds, on pavements and other public spaces, is an operational matter for Hertfordshire Police.

**■ Neighbourhood Policing: Bedfordshire****Blake Stephenson:** [\[37780\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to her Department's news story entitled New powers for police to tackle neighbourhood crime, how many of the 13,000 additional neighbourhood policing roles will be in Bedfordshire.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

The Government has committed to restoring neighbourhood policing through the delivery of a Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee. This includes putting 13,000 more police personnel on the beat in neighbourhood policing roles up and down the country. Every part of the country needs to benefit from this pledge, including Bedfordshire, who have been allocated £1,803,234 funding in 2025/26 to bolster their neighbourhood policing teams.

Our approach to delivery in 2025/26, which will be year 1 of a 4-year programme, is designed to deliver an initial increase to the neighbourhood policing workforce in a manner that is flexible, and can be adapted to the local context and varied crime demands. This means the precise workforce mix is a local decision.

**■ Neighbourhood Policing: Finance****Wendy Morton:** [\[38594\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 11 March 2025 to Question 36082 on Neighbourhood Policing: Finance, how much and what proportion of the funding allocated for the financial year 2025-26 has been allocated to cover the increase in employer National Insurance contributions.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

The Government is committed to delivering our Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee, and that is why we have committed £200 million to kickstart the increase of 13,000 neighbourhood officers in communities across England and Wales by the End of this Parliament.

Our approach to delivery in 2025-26, which will be year 1 of a 4-year programme, is designed to deliver an initial increase to the neighbourhood policing workforce in a manner that is flexible and can be adapted to the local context and varied crime demands.

Funding for future years beyond 2025-26 will be set out in phase 2 of the Spending Review.

Finally, £230.3 million to support forces with the cost of the changes to employer National Insurance Contributions as set out by the Chancellor in the Autumn Budget. This will be allocated by total workforce headcount shares as at 31 March 2024.

**■ Offences against Children: Guinea-bissau and Portugal****Ben Obese-Jecty:**[\[37773\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many instances of (a) child sexual exploitation and (b) child-trafficking related to (i) Guinea-Bissau and (ii) Portugal have been recorded since 2010.

**Jess Phillips:**

The Home Office does not hold information centrally on instances of child sexual exploitation or child-trafficking offences related to Guinea-Bissau or Portugal.

**■ Offensive Weapons: Ashford****Sojan Joseph:**[\[38801\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to tackle the use of catapults against (a) people, (b) animals and (c) property in Ashford constituency.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

We are clear that catapults should not be used for illegal purposes, whether against wildlife, people or property.

The law already provides the police with powers relating to the use of any item as an offensive weapon including a catapult, and also if used in anti-social behaviour or for criminal damage.

Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996, there are also offences around injuring and inflicting unnecessary suffering on wildlife. These measures give the police powers to deal with cases where wildlife is attacked, including cases involving the misuse of catapults.

We continue to keep all relevant legislation under review in the interests of public safety.

**■ Police Custody: Suicide****Mary Kelly Foy:**[\[38138\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of suicide prevention training for staff in police custody suites.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

The Government is committed to preventing deaths in or following police custody, including suicides both in custody and following release.

The College of Policing's 'Vulnerability in Custody' training package, launched in 2022, seeks to improve the consistency and quality of custody training, focusing on identifying vulnerability and managing risk. This training was developed in response to recommendations made in the Independent Review of Deaths and Serious Incidents in Police Custody led by Dame Elish Angiolini. The College is undertaking an evaluation of the training package which will be completed in June.



The Independent Advisory Panel on Deaths in Custody is working with the National Police Chiefs' Council, College of Policing, and key health and voluntary sector stakeholders to improve support for those at risk of suicide following release from police custody.

## ■ Police: Domestic Abuse

**Ben Maguire:** [\[37862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that investigations of allegations of domestic abuse involving serving police officers in Devon and Cornwall are independent.

**Jess Phillips:**

Allegations of any crime involving serving police officers should be investigated robustly and independently by the police.

Outside of criminal investigations, disciplinary investigations (including those involving serious assault and serious sexual offences) are referred to the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) under the mandatory referral criteria. Victims of crime, including police officers, have rights afforded to them under the Victims' Code. The IOPC will make a decision as to whether to investigate themselves, direct the force to investigate or decide that the force should investigate locally. These decisions are made independently of the police force, with the protection of victims in mind.

The Government will continue to work with police leaders to ensure that the response to police-perpetrated domestic abuse is robust and that every relevant allegation is dealt with appropriately.

Last year, the Home Secretary also announced that the Government would be introducing reforms to strengthen police forces' use of suspension powers, in circumstances where a police officer is under investigation for domestic abuse or sexual offences. The Government is considering options on this and expects to introduce new legislation later this year.

## ■ Police: Fees and Charges

**Mike Tapp:** [\[38322\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make it her policy to prevent the police from charging people whose cars have been stolen for the cost of holding those vehicles for evidential purposes.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

Whilst the police are empowered to charge vehicle owners prescribed sums for the recovery, storage, and disposal of their vehicles, victims of theft are not charged storage costs whilst vehicles are undergoing forensics examinations or for the cost for forensic examinations following the recovery of stolen vehicles.

## ■ Public Spaces Protection Orders: Fixed Penalties

**Kevin Hollinrake:** [\[38055\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential implications for her policies of recent trends in levels of fixed penalty notices for Public Spaces Protection Orders that are issued by private enforcement companies outsourced from local government; and whether guidance has been provided on such contacts which (a) reward companies for increasing numbers of fines and (b) profit share revenue from fines.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 provides the police, local authorities and other local agencies with a range of tools and powers they can use to respond to anti-social behaviour (ASB), including the Public Spaces Protection Order.

The powers in the 2014 Act are deliberately flexible in nature, and it is for local agencies to determine whether their use is appropriate in the specific circumstances of each individual case.

Contracting enforcement to third parties is a common arrangement and it is for the local authority to ensure use of powers remains just and proportionate. Contractors are bound by the same legal obligations, and the same safeguards in legislation, as councils themselves. Local authorities are also obliged to follow the rules set out in the Public Contract Regulations 2015 in appointment of such companies.

## ■ Refugees

**Kirsty Blackman:** [\[38363\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 13 March 2025 to Question 36656 on Refugees, whether any statelessness determination applications have been granted since 5 July 2024.

**Kirsty Blackman:** [\[38364\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 13 March 2025 to Question 36656 on Refugees, whether any statelessness determination applications have been refused since 5 July 2024.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

The information requested is not available from published statistics, but, in general, casework actions on statelessness claims are taken daily and we routinely review and monitor outstanding statelessness cases to ensure they are progressed without delay. This includes making decisions to grant or refuse statelessness claims.

## ■ Sexual Offences

**Ellie Chowns:** [\[37826\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what information her Department holds on the incident rate per thousand people of (a) rape and (b) other sexual offences

in (i) Herefordshire and (ii) each of the other 14 comparators areas in the Most Similar Force group.

**Jess Phillips:**

The Office for National Statistics publishes information on rates per population for offences recorded by the police in England areas and Wales, by offence group and Community Safety Partnership level (CSP). Data for the CSP of Herefordshire, and the 14 respective comparator , for the year ending September 2024 can be found in Table C4 here: Crime in England and Wales: Police Force Area data tables - Office for National Statistics.

The Home Office publishes additional information on rape on an annual basis by Police Force Area only. These data include incidents, crimes and cancelled / transferred records and can be found on the Police recorded crime and outcomes open data webpage here: Police recorded crime and outcomes open data tables - GOV.UK.

■ **Undocumented Migrants: English Channel**

**Lee Anderson:**

[\[38127\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to help end crossings by small boat across the English Channel.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

I refer the Honourable Member to the statement made by the Home Secretary on 10 February 2025, when moving the Border, Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill for its second reading.

■ **Vehicle Number Plates: Automatic Number Plate Recognition**

**Sarah Coombes:**

[\[38714\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what number and proportion of vehicle number plates were unreadable by automatic number plate recognition cameras in each of the last three years.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

Data on the readability of ANPR reads is not collected or published.

■ **Vehicle Number Plates: Fraud**

**Sarah Coombes:**

[\[38712\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the use of modified number plates designed to evade detection by automatic number plate recognition cameras on levels of crime.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

The cloning and defacing of number plates is illegal. We are working with the police, the DVLA and other partners to crack down on these crimes.

We have begun work on a new Road Safety Strategy, the first in over a decade, which aims to reduce road deaths and prevent related crime.

### ■ Vehicle Number Plates: Registration

**Sarah Coombes:** [\[38713\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many fixed penalty notices were issued for vehicle registration offences in each of the last three years.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

The Home Office collects and publishes data on fixed penalty notices and other outcomes for motoring offences as part of its annual 'Police Powers and Procedures: Roads policing' statistical release. The latest data is available here [Police powers and procedures: Roads policing, to December 2023 - GOV.UK](#) and covers the calendar year ending December 2023.

Data on the number of fixed penalty notices issued for vehicle registration offences for the last three years is covered under offence classification 810, "vehicle registration and excise licence offences", and is provided in table FPN\_03 of the motoring offences data tables, available here:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67506ce8d12a2dad3bc97ab4/FPN-other-motoring-offences-statistics-police-powers-procedures-year-ending-dec-23.ods>

## HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### ■ Combined Authorities and Integrated Care Systems

**Kevin Hollinrake:** [\[37575\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to ensure that Integrated Care Systems operate on areas that co-terminate with Mayoral Combined Authorities.

**Jim McMahon:**

As set out in the English Devolution White Paper, the government recognises the benefits that aligned geographical boundaries can have for improving coordination between public services. The English Devolution White Paper therefore set out government's long-term ambition to align public service boundaries, including job centres, police, probation, fire, health services and Strategic and Local Authorities.

### ■ Community Development and Housing: Gloucestershire

**Dr Simon Opher:** [\[38400\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 13 March 2025 to Question 36815 on Community Development and Housing: Gloucestershire, if he will list the amount of funding allocated for each project.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

A total of £22.8 million was allocated through the Levelling Up Home Building Fund/The Home Builders Fund. As this involves development finance provided to private companies, details cannot be disclosed due to commercial sensitivity.

A total of £32.7 million was allocated through the Land Assembly Fund across three projects. Individual purchase prices cannot be disclosed due to commercial sensitivity.

A total of £10.3 million was awarded through the Affordable Homes Programme. Funding is provided to schemes either through Strategic Partnerships with Registered Providers or via Continuous Market Engagement. Site specific information is not shared due to commercial sensitivity but updates to the overall spend of the programme by region are published on gov.uk [here](#).

£249 million was awarded to the M5 J10 improvements through the Housing Infrastructure Fund.

Anything outside of this or linked to specific funding will unfortunately not be provided due to commercial sensitivities.

**■ Council Tax**

**Kevin Hollinrake:** [\[37576\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of a cap on Mayoral Combined Authorities precepts for 2025-26.

**Jim McMahon:**

The government has not set referendum principles for Mayoral Combined Authorities for 2025-26. The government held a consultation on the provisional local government finance settlement, providing opportunity for the public and local authorities to share views on the proposed referendum principles. The government keeps referendum principles under review, and decisions are made at the local government finance settlement, with the next due in 2026.

**■ Council Tax: Floods**

**Leigh Ingham:** [\[37837\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she has made an assessment of trends in the level of people being required to pay full council tax after vacating properties due to flooding.

**Jim McMahon:**

The government does not collect data on the council tax paid by all homes which are empty due to flooding. However, where a property is assessed as uninhabitable it may be removed from the council tax list, making it no longer liable for council tax. Councils also have the power to provide discretionary council tax discounts where they consider this appropriate. In exceptional circumstances the government may

activate the flood recovery framework, requesting councils to provide a 100% council tax discount for affected homes.

## ■ Democracy and Elections

**Kevin Hollinrake:** [\[38627\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the answer of 5 March 2025 to Question 33487 on Democracy and Elections, when she expects political parties to be consulted.

**Kevin Hollinrake:** [\[39032\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 19 February 2025 to Question 30633 on Democracy and Elections, if she will consult with political parties.

**Rushanara Ali:**

The government is currently in the process of consulting with various stakeholders, ahead of setting out our approach to elections and electoral reform for this Parliament.

## ■ Freehold: Service Charges

**Manuela Perteghella:** [\[37828\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will take steps to help tackle unregulated service charges in freehold developments.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

I refer the hon. Member to the Written Ministerial Statement made on 21 November 2024 ([HCWS244](#)).

## ■ Health Services: Devolution

**Sally Jameson:** [\[37845\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of English Devolution on investment in creative health as a solution to local health inequalities.

**Jim McMahon:**

As set out in the English Devolution White Paper, the government is introducing a new bespoke duty in relation to health improvement and health inequalities. This is intended to support Strategic Authorities to be active leaders and drive a “health in all policies” approach in line with our Mission government approach.

The duty will ensure Strategic Authorities have regard to the need to improve health, and the need to reduce health inequalities, in the exercise of their functions, and give them a clear stake in improving local health outcomes. This will complement the existing health improvement duty held by upper-tier Local Authorities. The government will engage Strategic Authorities, Local Authorities and the NHS as we take this forward.

## ■ High Rise Flats: Insulation

**James MacCleary:**

[\[37889\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment her Department has made of the (a) effectiveness and (b) adequacy of the pace of the existing system for identifying and remediating dangerous cladding and fire safety issues; and what steps she is taking to accelerate the process.

**Alex Norris:**

This government has been clear that the pace on remediation has been too slow. Seven years on from the Grenfell Tower tragedy, it is unacceptable that so many buildings still have unsafe cladding.

We have announced a step change towards addressing the building safety crisis through the publication of our ambitious Remediation Acceleration Plan (RAP). Our plan will drive the pace of remediation through new proposed legal duties and powers, new funding, new resources and new partnerships.

In December 2024, the Remediation Acceleration Plan was launched. We recognise that the scale and importance of the challenge is so significant that we expect to publish a further update on this plan in summer 2025 to report on progress and to reflect the second phase of the spending review.

Through this plan, we aim that by the end of 2029 all 18m+ (high-rise) buildings with unsafe cladding in a government funded scheme will have been remediated. Furthermore, by the end of 2029, every 11m+ building with unsafe cladding will either have been remediated, have a date for completion, or the landlords will be liable for severe penalties.

We are also driving pace and effectiveness through existing funding schemes. The Cladding Safety Scheme (CSS) was launched in 2023 to help fund work to address unsafe cladding for buildings between 11-18 metres, as well as those over 18 metres outside London, but has since been expanded to include all government funded remediation projects outside London. The benefits of transferring buildings to this scheme include increased pace through the use of automated processes, better experience for residents, and greater cost effectiveness. We are continuing to seek opportunities to exploit the benefits of the CSS further.

## ■ Housing

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[33442\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential implications for her policies of the damage cause by Storm Eowyn to housing.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

The revised National Planning Policy Framework published on 12 December 2024 sets out that the planning system should take full account of all climate impacts,

including storm and flood risk. Planning should help to ensure that development minimises vulnerability and improves resilience to the effects of climate change.

The Framework sets out overarching policy on flood risk from all sources. It states that inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding, whether an existing or a potential future risk, should be avoided. Where no alternative sites are available, permission should only be granted where it can be demonstrated that it will be safe for its lifetime taking account of the vulnerability of its users, without increasing flood risk elsewhere, and, where possible, will reduce flood risk overall.

## ■ Housing: Construction

**Kevin Hollinrake:** [\[37578\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether (a) long-term vacant and (b) derelict homes returned to use count towards local housing targets.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

I refer the hon. Member to the government response to the proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system consultation (Question 15) which can be found on gov.uk [here](#).

## ■ Housing: Warranties

**Lisa Smart:** [\[37746\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department is taking to prevent developers from deliberately delaying defect rectification until after the statutory liability period has expired.

**Lisa Smart:** [\[37747\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of developers (a) failing to rectify defects within the statutory period and (b) those defects being excluded from warranty coverage on the finances of homeowners.

**Alex Norris:**

The Building Safety Act ensures that those who built defective buildings take responsibility for remedying them.

The Building Safety Act extended the limitation period under section 1 of the Defective Premises Act 1972, which imposes a duty on a person providing a dwelling to see that the dwelling is fit for habitation from 6 to 30 years retrospectively and from 6 to 15 years prospectively.

The Building Safety Act also includes a robust package of measures designed to ensure that those responsible for relevant defects in relevant buildings fix them. Where remediation is needed and not progressing due to the building owner's inaction, remediation orders can be issued to compel a building owner to fix their building.



Regarding the costs of inaction, the Building Safety Act also includes remediation contribution orders, new tools that allow interested persons, including leaseholders, to apply to the First-tier Tribunal for an order requiring building owners to pay to fix unsafe buildings. A remediation contribution order can be used to require a landlord (or other specified body corporate or partnership) to make payments for the purpose of meeting costs already incurred (or to be incurred) in remedying relevant defects (or specified relevant defects) relating to the relevant building.

## ■ Leasehold: Service Charges

**Manuela Perteghella:**

[37829]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will take steps to tackle leasehold properties with high service charges in (a) new and (b) established developments.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

The government recognise the considerable financial strain that rising services charges are placing on leaseholders.

The level of service charge that leaseholders pay depends on many factors, including the terms of a lease and the age and condition of a building.

By law, variable service charges must be reasonable. Should leaseholders wish to contest the reasonableness of their service charges they may make an application to the appropriate tribunal.

The Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024 includes measures designed to drive up the transparency of service charges to make them more easily challengeable if leaseholders consider them to be unreasonable.

The government is committed to acting quickly to implement the provisions of the Act. Further detail can be found in the [written ministerial statement](#) published on Thursday 21 November ( [HCWS244](#) ).

## ■ Local Government: Leicestershire

**Mr Peter Bedford:**

[R] [38850]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department plans to introduce local referenda on local government reorganisation in Leicestershire.

**Jim McMahon:**

We do not have any plans to introduce local referenda as part of the local government reorganisation process. As per our invitation letter guidance we expect councils to engage locally when developing proposals. We expect local leaders to engage their MPs and to ensure there is wide engagement with local partners and stakeholders, residents and businesses. This engagement should both inform the development of robust proposals and build a shared understanding of the improvements they expect to deliver through reorganisation.

**■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Islands****Jayne Kirkham:** [\[38807\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to reconstitute the Islands Forum.

**Jim McMahon:**

My department is continuing to work closely with other UK Government departments to determine the future of the forum, which we will communicate in due course.

**■ Neighbourhood Boards****David Chadwick:** [\[37850\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, for what reason her Department is setting up new neighbourhood boards to decide how to spend funding from the new Plan for Neighbourhoods.

**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.

Communities are at the heart of this programme, and Neighbourhood Boards should therefore comprise of members with a deep connection to their area to consult the wider community and work with the local authority to develop their Regeneration Plan.

As outlined in the Plan for Neighbourhoods' governance and boundary guidance, published on 12 March, Neighbourhood Boards should comprise representatives from a cross-section of the local community to promote community leadership.

**■ Planning: Energy Supply****Ms Polly Billington:** [\[38229\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she has had discussions with the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero on the potential implications of the development of the Strategic Spatial Energy Plan for the Planning and Infrastructure Bill.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

Ministers in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) regularly engage with each other to deliver the government's priorities. Our departments will continue to work together to consider the interactions between the Planning and Infrastructure Bill and the Strategic Spatial Energy Plan.

## ■ Religious Hatred

**Jas Athwal:**

[\[37961\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department is taking to help tackle hate crimes based on religion in (a) England, (b) London and (c) Ilford South constituency.

**Alex Norris:**

All forms of racial and religious discrimination are completely unacceptable, and the Government continues to work closely with community partners to tackle it. The Government has worked with the police to fund True Vision, an online hate crime reporting portal, designed so that victims of hate crime do not have to visit a police station to report. The Government also funds the National Online Hate Crime Hub, which supports individual local police forces in dealing specifically with online hate crime. The Hub provides expert advice to police forces to support them in investigating these abhorrent offences.

In 2024/25, up to £50.9 million is available to protect faith communities. This includes £18 million through the Jewish Community Protective Security Grant, £29.4 million through the Protective Security for Mosques scheme and for security at Muslim faith schools, and £3.5 million for the places of worship and associated faith community centres of all other faiths.

The Government 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.

Since his appointment, the Minister for Faith, Communities and Resettlement has made it a priority to meet with people of all major faiths and beliefs across our diverse country.

## ■ Rented Housing: Utilities

**Lisa Smart:**

[\[34983\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department plans to (a) issue guidance and (b) strengthen regulations to ensure that landlords provide (i) transparent and (ii) fair billing when reselling utilities to tenants.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

Measures are already in place to protect tenants from landlords passing on inflated utility bills.

Where tenants pay their landlord for their water, rather than paying a water company directly, they are protected by Ofwat's guidelines on water resale. This means that a reseller cannot profit from selling water and sewerage to its purchasers beyond a small admin fee of £5 a year for an unmetered bill and £10 a year for a metered one.

Similarly, Ofgem's Maximum Resale Price Guidance protects tenants from being charged inflated gas and electricity costs by their landlord. It sets a maximum price

that can be charged for gas and electricity which has already been bought from an authorised supplier. The current maximum resale price is set at the same price as paid by the person reselling, including any discounts.

### ■ Resettlement: Afghanistan

**Steve Darling:** [\[35806\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will meet with the hon. Member for Torbay to discuss the Afghan Resettlement Programme.

**Alex Norris:**

Please write to ministers to outline your area of interest for discussion on the Afghan Resettlement Programme. As this is a cross-government programme your area of interests will determine which department is best to respond.

### ■ Right to Manage Companies

**Rachel Blake:** [\[37464\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to (a) lower the threshold for right to manage applications and (b) increase the maximum proportion of commercial property permissible for right to manage applications to occur.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

The government has commenced the Right to Manage measures in the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024. They came into effect on 3 March 2025.

These changes implement the Law Commission recommendation to increase the non-residential floorspace limit from 25 to 50 per cent for Right to Manage claims. This means that more leaseholders in mixed-use buildings will qualify for the right to manage, gaining control over the management of their building. Further changes mean that leaseholders making right to manage claims will no longer have to pay their freeholder's process costs for that claim.

Over the course of this Parliament, the government will enact remaining Law Commission recommendations relating to the Right to Manage. We do not plan to lower the participation requirement or further increase the non-residential limit for the Right to Manage at this time but will continue to evaluate how the Right to Manage operates following the recent changes.

### ■ Urban Areas: Greater London

**Jas Athwal:** [\[37958\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to encourage investment in high streets in (a) London and (b) Ilford South constituency.

**Alex Norris:**

The government is fully committed to revitalising our high streets and supporting businesses to make our towns, including those in London and Ilford South constituency, successful.

We recognise the important role Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) provide, such as Ilford BID, that attract investment and improve trade in local town centres. We have introduced High Street Rental Auctions, which give local authorities the power to auction off the lease of persistently vacant commercial premises, to make town centre tenancies more accessible and affordable for tenants.

Through our UK Shared Prosperity Fund, the London Borough of Redbridge is providing support for local businesses and has invested in improvements to Ilford town centre public realm. The Small Business Strategy Command Paper, to be published in 2025, will set out this Government's plans to improve access to finance and inward investment to foster thriving high streets.

**■ Voting Rights: Young People****Blake Stephenson:**[\[37781\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of reducing the voting age to 16 on the electoral equality of parliamentary constituencies.

**Blake Stephenson:**[\[37782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of reducing the voting age to 16 on electoral equality in local council elections.

**Blake Stephenson:**[\[37783\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will have discussions with the Boundary Commission on the impact of reducing the voting age to 16 on electoral equality at the next general election.

**Rushanara Ali:**

Drawing electoral boundaries is the responsibility of the independent parliamentary and local boundary commissions.

When they next conduct their reviews, they will update boundaries where necessary to reflect any changes in the electorate that have occurred since their last review.

**Blake Stephenson:**[\[37784\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether changing the minimum voting age would necessitate a change in the minimum age for voter registration.

**Jim McMahon:**

The government is committed to delivering on the manifesto commitment to give 16- and 17-year-olds the right to vote in all elections during this Parliament, strengthening

our democracy, empowering young people to participate and building an informed and empowered electorate. We want young people to find their voice and exercise their right to vote – registering to vote is a vital first step towards doing that.

This will be a major change to the electoral franchise. We are working across government and with a wide range of stakeholders to design and implement the change effectively. We are considering what other measures may be required in the implementation of this change to ensure young people have the tools they need and feel empowered to both register to vote and to vote, including the minimum age for voter registration.

## JUSTICE

### ■ Prisoners: Dyslexia

**Adam Dance:** [\[37938\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps she is taking to provide screening for dyslexia in prisons.

**Adam Dance:** [\[37940\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps she is taking to help dyslexic inmates improve their (a) reading and writing skills and (b) employment prospects.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

His Majesty's Prisons and Probation Service (HMPPS) offers screening to prisoners upon entry to prison for neurodiversity needs including needs associated with dyslexia. This helps us identify any additional needs they may have that might impact their ability to engage with the regime or learning opportunities in the prison. We would not attribute any additional needs that are identified during the screening process to a specific condition but do encourage individuals to self-declare any conditions or needs they consider themselves to have.

The Prisoner Education Service is in the process of procuring a new Additional Needs Indicator screening tool that will identify many of the traits and needs associated with dyslexia. This screening will be offered to all prisoners without a previous record of completing the new tool as part of introduction to education following reception into prison. Where needs are identified, appropriate support and reasonable adjustments can be put in place.

HMPPS takes a needs-led approach to supporting individuals with additional learning needs, such as dyslexia. To improve support for prisoners the Neurodiversity Support Manager (NSM) role has been rolled out across the prison service. NSMs implement a whole prisons approach to neurodivergence. They are responsible for improving processes to identify and support prisoner' needs and ensuring neurodivergent prisoners can access education, skills, and work opportunities within the prison.

Formal literacy teaching follows national accredited qualifications which must follow quality standards laid down by awarding organisations. All prisons have reading

strategies, and we have established a national reading panel, including experts from the British Dyslexia Association. Reader pens, which help those with low literacy levels including those with dyslexia, are available across the estate for Governors to purchase, and use is widespread.

The NSM role provides additional support for learners with neurodivergent needs such as dyslexia to access both education and work. After screening, a Personal Learning Plan is created. These provide people who work with a prisoner information about the prisoner's needs, goals and achievements. We are broadening prisoner employment pathways through an apprenticeship programme that can be used in open prisons. The Department for Education has recently announced that the requirements for English and maths qualifications for learners over 19 to access apprenticeships will be optional. This will support more prisoners with additional learning needs such as dyslexia to access apprenticeships.

## ■ Prisons and Probation: Training

**Ayoub Khan:**

[\[38330\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will publish the contents of the suicide prevention training provided to (a) prison and (b) probation staff.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

It is not appropriate to make the training publicly available as the content includes lived experience examples for which confidentiality must be maintained, and there is a need for HMPPS to retain oversight of dissemination, delivery and appropriate use of the products.

## ■ Sentencing

**Robert Jenrick:**

[\[38591\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Sentencing Council's guidance entitled Imposition of community and custodial sentences - Effective from 1 April 2025, whether her Department has made an (a) estimate of the (i) additional number of pre-sentence reports required and (ii) costs of those reports and (b) assessment of the potential impact of that guidance on the (A) quality of pre-sentence reports, (B) probation service, (C) time taken for sentencing and (D) number of appeals of sentencing decisions.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

Where a court is considering whether an offender should receive a sentence of immediate custody, a pre-sentence report must be obtained and considered before forming an opinion unless, in the circumstances of the case, the court considers that it is unnecessary to obtain a pre-sentence report. The Probation Service plays an essential role by providing an expert assessment of the nature and causes of the offender's behaviour and the risk the offender poses. Our priority remains the safety of the public and rehabilitation of offenders, and we will take all necessary steps to support the probation service in achieving these goals.

The Sentencing Council is responsible for carrying out its own impact assessments of its guidelines. The assessment for the recent *Imposition of community and custodial sentences* guidelines published on 5 March 2025, can be found here:

<https://www.sentencingcouncil.org.uk/html-publication/item/imposition-of-community-and-custodial-sentences-overarching-guideline-final-resource-assessment/#Resource%20impacts>.

The Lord Chancellor has been clear that these guidelines regarding pre-sentencing reports do not represent the views of this Government. The Lord Chancellor and the Chairman of the Sentencing Council have had a constructive discussion. It was agreed that the Lord Chancellor will set out her position more fully in writing, which the Sentencing Council will then consider before the guideline is due to come into effect. It remains the case that the Lord Chancellor is reviewing the role and responsibilities of the Sentencing Council – and look at whether a greater role for elected officials is needed.

## ■ Suicide

**Mary Kelly Foy:**

**[38137]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of suicide prevention training provided to (a) prison and (b) probation staff.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

All new members of prison staff with prisoner contact receive training on suicide and self-harm prevention, and all staff who undertake key roles relating to risk assessment and case management also receive specific training relating to those roles. This training is subject to regular review and feedback is sought from participants as part of this process. An e-learning module has recently been made available for all staff to access on postvention support following a self-inflicted death in custody, and the effectiveness of this will be reviewed in due course.

There are two suicide prevention learning packages for probation staff: a Zero Suicide Alliance package for all staff, and a package aimed at new entrant Professional Qualification in Probation and Probation Service Officers which was developed internally as part of a broader introduction to mental health. Following completion of this latter package the majority of the intended group stated that they felt more prepared to work in this area and more confident about this part of their role. The effectiveness of this learning will continue to be reviewed to ensure that it meets the needs of the business going forward.

## TRANSPORT

### ■ Active Travel

**Ellie Chowns:**

**[39383]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of requiring local authorities to (a) provide (i) active travel routes, (ii) all-



weather surfaces and (iii) appropriate signage and (b) regularly clear encroaching vegetation.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The Government recognises the merits of enabling local authorities to deliver and maintain high-quality, well-signed active travel routes to support its economic growth, health and net zero missions. Active travel can help to revitalise high streets, enable people to live longer, healthier lives and reduce transport emissions. In line with the Government's devolution agenda decisions on the design, delivery and maintenance of active travel routes are best made at the local level by local authorities in consultation with local communities.

■ **Bus Services: Disability**

**Mr Andrew Snowden:**

[\[38422\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment she has made of the potential impact of the Bus Services Bill on passengers with disabilities in (a) Fylde constituency and (b) Lancashire.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The Government is committed to improving public transport services so they are more inclusive and enable disabled people to travel safely, confidently and with dignity. The Bus Services (No.2) Bill, which was introduced on 17 December, will give local leaders the freedom to take decisions to deliver their local transport priorities and ensure networks meet the needs of the communities who rely on them, including for disabled people.

The Bill includes measures to make the design of bus and coach stations and stops more inclusive, and sets requirements for training for staff on disability-assistance and disability-awareness to ensure bus drivers and staff dealing directly with the travelling public are better informed of the rights and needs of disabled passengers.

In addition to this, the Government announced in the budget that we will be investing over £1 billion to support and improve bus services. Lancashire County Council has been allocated over £27 million for the 2025 to 2026 financial year to support and improve bus services. This funding can be used to improve services for passengers in whichever way they wish, including to improve access for disabled people.

■ **Bus Services: Employers' Contributions**

**Wendy Morton:**

[\[38592\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 11 March 2025 to Question 36079 on Bus Services and Railways: Employers' Contributions, how much and what proportion of the £1 billion additional funding for buses will be spent on the increase to employer's National Insurance contributions.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The £1 billion of funding for buses awarded as part of the Budget includes £712 million allocated to local authorities to support and improve bus services. Local

authorities can use this funding however they wish to improve bus services for passengers. In addition, over £150 million is being provided to bus operators to deliver the £3 cap on single bus fares in England outside London throughout 2025, and £243 million is being made available to bus operators through the Bus Service Operators Grant to support services.

### ■ **Buses: Electric Vehicles**

**Alex Mayer:**

[\[38240\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of exempting electric bus operators from Ofgem's residual network charge reforms in 2023 on those operators.

**Simon Lightwood:**

My department continues to support bus decarbonisation, and to engage closely with both Ofgem and the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero.

Ofgem is aware that the reforms are causing concerns for a small number of specialist sites, and are active in industry working groups relating to sites with high-capacity usage and low utilisation and EV charging. In addition, Ofgem is currently undertaking a broad review of system costs to consider whether other cost recovery options provide potential for improvements. Across this work, Ofgem will ensure bus charging is given consideration.

### ■ **Cycling and Walking: Investment**

**Olly Glover:**

[\[38844\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent progress she has made on the preparation of the third Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The Department's officials are scoping out options for the third Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy, and the Department will say more on this in due course. The Department will consult stakeholders before the publication of the Strategy, as required by the 2015 Infrastructure Act, and will also report to Parliament later this year on the delivery of the second Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy.

### ■ **Levelling Up Fund: Denton**

**Andrew Gwynne:**

[\[38014\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the letter from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary to the hon. Member for Gorton and Denton of 13 November 2024, what recent estimate she has made of when the memorandum of understanding between her Department and Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council will be signed in respect of the levelling-up funding for Denton.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The Department is working closely with Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council to allow progress all parts of the Destination Denton scheme that can be delivered and funding drawn down by March 2026. Funding after 2025/26 is subject to the outcome of the Spending Review, due to conclude in Spring.

■ **M6: Accidents****Adam Jogee:**[\[38756\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what information her Department holds on the number of motor vehicle accidents that have taken place between junctions 12 and 16 of the M6 in each of the last five years.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

The number of road injury collisions reported to police occurring between junctions 12 and 16 of the M6, for each of the last five years for which data is available, are shown in the table below.

YEAR	NUMBER OF COLLISIONS
2019	40
2020	27
2021	20
2022	25
2023	29

■ **Old Oak Common Station****Martin Wrigley:**[\[38461\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether all trains on the Great Western Mainline will be required to call at the proposed Old Oak Common station.

**Simon Lightwood:**

Future timetables for Great Western services will be continuously developed in the years to come, and timetable option assessment always evaluates the options for calling at Old Oak Common; but GWR trains will only stop there when there are good reasons for them to do so.

■ **Railway Stations: Access****Helen Morgan:**[\[38692\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 14 March 2025 to Question 37331 on Whitchurch (Shropshire) Station: Access, what her Department's

timetable is for its review of the option selection reports on step-free access at stations produced by Network Rail.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The feasibility work for Whitchurch station is underway and we expect all 50 of the feasibility studies announced last year to be complete in the spring. We expect to be able to confirm which stations will move forward over the summer. The Access for All programme continues to be heavily oversubscribed.

We remain committed to improving the accessibility of the railway and recognise the valuable social and economic benefits this brings to communities.

■ **Railway Stations: Upminster**

**Julia Lopez:** [\[38660\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress she has made on completing feasibility studies to provide step-free access to platform six at Upminster Station.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The feasibility work for Upminster station is underway and we expect all 50 of the feasibility studies announced last year to be complete in the spring. We expect to be able to confirm which stations will move forward over the summer. The Access for All programme continues to be heavily oversubscribed.

We remain committed to improving the accessibility of the railway and recognise the valuable social and economic benefits this brings to communities.

■ **Railways: Fares**

**James McMurdock:** [\[37880\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of rail fare increases on local economies that depend on affordable transport for (a) tourism, (b) business and (c) trade.

**James McMurdock:** [\[37881\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of rail fare increases on the number of people using trains.

**Simon Lightwood:**

Our aim is to keep the price of rail travel at a point that works for both passengers and taxpayers, where possible. This year's increase is the lowest absolute increase in three years and delivers a fair balance between taxpayers and passengers. It will also support the Government's long-term plans to achieve financial sustainability of the railway.

**■ Railways: Standards****James McMurdock:**[\[37877\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to improve (a) service reliability, (b) service quality, (c) infrastructure, and (d) accessibility for passengers of trainlines.

**Simon Lightwood:**

Improving both the reliability and quality of rail services for passengers is an important priority for this Government. We have already taken significant steps towards this, through resolving the long running industrial disputes and through meeting regularly with train operator management teams and holding them to account for the delivery of their services. As well as delivering for passengers, such steps have led to significant benefit for taxpayers.

We also continue to invest around £2 billion each year in rail infrastructure, committing funding to projects and programmes to enhance the railway across the country. This will enable us to increase connectivity and capacity on the railway, so people can get to where they need to be more easily. This funding continues to support physical accessibility improvement on the rail network, on top of which we have invested over £10 million in funding for the Passenger Assist scheme since November 2024, which will deliver improvements for passengers needing support over the next two years.

**James McMurdock:**[\[37878\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to reduce (a) delays and (b) overcrowding of train services.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The Department has been clear that rail services have been failing passengers. Cancellations are at a ten-year high and punctuality is inconsistent across the network. We need to improve services for passengers and deliver better value for money for the taxpayer.

The Rail Minister is meeting with the Managing Directors of all train operators and their Network Rail counterparts, to address poor performance and demand immediate action to raise standards.

Publicly-owned Great British Railways will end years of fragmentation – bringing together track and train to deliver for passengers with more reliable, better-quality services and simpler ticketing and fares

The Department holds operators to account on their service offer, ensuring they provide capacity where it is most needed, whilst maintaining performance and protecting the public purse.

**■ Roads: Horses****Mr Lee Dillon:**[\[38521\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to improve road safety for horses and horse riders.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

In 2022 The Highway Code was updated to improve the safety of all road users, particularly the most vulnerable. Key changes included the introduction of a Hierarchy of Road Users, which ensures that those who do the greatest harm have the greatest responsibility to reduce the danger or threat that they pose to others, along with the strengthening of guidance on safe passing distances and speeds when overtaking horse riders.

The Government's flagship road safety campaign, THINK!, ran campaigns to alert road users of the changes as they came into effect and broader behaviour campaigns to encourage understanding and uptake of the guidance. Results from the last campaign showed that by September 2023, 93% of drivers agreed it was their responsibility to give space to vulnerable road users. We will continue to promote The Highway Code changes on THINK! and DfT social media channels and via our partner organisations.

**■ Russia: Shipping****Martin Wrigley:**[\[38469\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 7 February 2025 to Question 27704 on Russia: Shipping, if she will list the Russian shadow fleet vessels that have entered UK waters in the last 12 months.

**Mike Kane:**

It is not possible to provide a list of suspected Russian shadow fleet vessels, due to national security considerations. However, the UK Government monitors vessels in UK waters which are of interest to the safety of mariners, the marine environment and the UK's national security.

**■ Vehicle Number Plates: Automatic Number Plate Recognition****Sarah Coombes:**[\[38711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions she has had with relevant stakeholders on tackling the use of modified number plates designed to evade detection by automatic number plate recognition cameras, also known as ghost plates.

**Sarah Coombes:**[\[38715\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions she has had with the DVLA on tackling the use of modified number plates designed to evade detection by automatic number plate recognition cameras, also known ghost plates.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) is working with the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC), various police forces and Trading Standards in relation to the supply and use of modified number plates, commonly known as 'ghost plates'. One element of the work underway is to quantify the number of illegal plates that are in circulation. The evidence received will support further action to address this issue.

**TREASURY****■ Electric Vehicles: Taxation****Luke Murphy:**[\[38253\]](#)

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 job creation 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.

**■ Geothermal Power: Investment****Noah Law:**[\[38283\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she has had discussions with the National Wealth Fund on establishing a platform for geothermal investment to commercialise the industry.

**James Murray:**

The Chancellor issued a new Statement of Strategic Priorities to the National Wealth Fund (NWF) on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2025, in which she set out that the NWF is at the forefront

of investing public money for our future to help deliver the investment that underpins the Government's growth and clean energy missions.

The Chancellor made clear that the NWF should prioritise investment into clean energy, digital and technologies, and advanced manufacturing, alongside transport sectors. An NWF investment into any geothermal project would be subject to the investment satisfying the NWF's normal requirements for investable proposals.

### ■ National Wealth Fund: Ports

**Jayne Kirkham:** [\[38913\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps she is taking to ensure that funding for port infrastructure through the National Wealth Fund is allocated according to the needs of each region.

**Jayne Kirkham:** [\[38914\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what her Department's timeline is for the allocation of funding to ports through the National Wealth Fund.

**James Murray:**

The National Wealth Fund (NWF) has financial capacity totaling £27.8 billion, of which at least £5.8 billion will be committed over this Parliament to the five priority sectors that the Chancellor announced at the International Investment Summit, including ports. This capital will be targeted into investable projects that meet the NWF's investment criteria and mandate – driving growth, clean energy and creating the jobs of the future.

The NWF will support regional and local strategies with advisory and lending support throughout the investment cycle to deliver on local priorities. In doing so, the NWF will act in partnership with central government, local government, and other public bodies, to help identify and deliver the right support for projects.

### ■ Private Education: VAT

**Wendy Morton:** [\[38598\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much revenue the Exchequer has raised from the application of VAT to private school fees since 1 January 2025.

**James Murray:**

The Annex to the Government Response to the Technical Note, [Government Response to the Technical Note on Applying VAT to Private School Fees and Removing the Business Rates Charitable Rate Relief.pdf](#), sets out the expected VAT revenue resulting from this measure and the costing methodology. The Government estimates that it will raise £460 million this year, rising to £1,725 million in 2029/30.

VAT revenue overall is recognised in the National Accounts on an accruals basis. As set out in the above Annex, the VAT liability in 2024/25 is time apportioned for the implementation date of 1 January 2025. The actual VAT liability reported on VAT



returns for any month or quarter will depend on various factors, including the date when schools meet the requirement to register for VAT (if not already registered), and which of the staggered quarterly accounting periods apply to the business. VAT returns are generally due one month and seven days after the end of the accounting period.

## ■ Rural Areas: Lancashire

**Mr Andrew Snowden:**

[\[38173\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the Autumn Budget 2024 on levels of business confidence in rural communities in (a) Fylde constituency and (b) Lancashire.

**Darren Jones:**

The Autumn Budget delivered fiscal stability. Recent surveys from EY and PwC show overall business and investor confidence is rising.

The government has taken significant steps to support rural businesses across the country. We are restoring stability and investment in our public services as the best way to support growth across the country, including in rural areas. We are investing £5 billion in broadband connectivity which will support growth in rural areas across the UK. We confirmed over £650 million of funding for local transport beyond City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements in 2025-26 to ensure that transport connections improve in our towns, villages and rural areas.

We have also committed £5 billion for the farming budget over two years – which includes the largest ever amount of funding directed at sustainable food production and nature's recovery in our country's history.

## ■ Unemployment: Young People

**Anna Gelderd:**

[\[38310\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of trends in the level of NEET rates on (a) household poverty, (b) tax revenue, (c) benefit expenditure, (d) mental health and (e) productivity.

**Darren Jones:**

The government is committed to supporting young people who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET), as set out in the Get Britain Working White Paper, published on 26 November 2024. That is why it has announced a Youth Guarantee, so that every young person aged 18-21 in England has access to further learning, help to get a job or an apprenticeship.

In addition to this, the government is taking steps to transform the Apprenticeship Levy into a more flexible Growth and Skills Levy by investing £40 million which will help to deliver new foundation and shorter apprenticeships in key sectors, giving young people a route to careers in critical sectors. The Autumn Budget also provided an additional £300 million for further education to ensure young people are developing the skills this country needs.

To support young people with poor mental health who may be at risk of becoming NEET, the government will provide access to a specialist mental health professional in every school in England.

## WALES

### ■ Plan for Neighbourhoods: Wales

**David Chadwick:** [\[37865\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, which towns in Wales were considered for funding through the Plan for Neighbourhoods; and on what evidential basis the successful towns were chosen.

**Jo Stevens:**

I refer the Hon Member to the answer I gave on 17 March 2025 (UIN 37472).

## WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

### ■ Conversion Therapy

**Pippa Heylings:** [\[38180\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, whether she is taking steps to ban conversion practices.

**Dame Nia Griffith:**

This Government's position is that conversion practices are abuse. Such practices have no place in society and must be stopped. In the King's Speech, the Government committed to bring forward a full, trans-inclusive ban on conversion practices.

Previous administrations failed to deliver on this issue and allowed the debate to become ever more toxic and divided.

We are committed to bringing forward legislation to finally ban these abusive practices, starting with publishing our draft Bill later this session.

### ■ Equal Pay

**Vikki Slade:** [\[37821\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, whether she plans to complete the Pay Transparency pilot, launched on 8 March 2022.

**Dame Nia Griffith:**

We are a mission-led government and women's equality is at the heart of all our missions.

This means tackling the gender pay gap, where we are taking action much wider than just pay transparency. We are taking the first steps towards requiring employers to publish action plans alongside their figures, detailing the steps they are taking to

narrow their gender pay gap and support employees during the menopause, as well as introducing stronger protections against sexual harassment.

Our plan to Make Work Pay will move further and faster to tackle the gender pay gap, improve access to flexible working and provide stronger protections at work. We are also expanding access to high-quality, accessible early years education with more free hours for working families.

Many employers understand that when women succeed, so does their business. As women's equality and economic growth go hand in hand we need to ensure that every organisation is harnessing the talent, creativity and brilliance of women in their workforce.

## ■ Hospitality Industry: Freedom of Expression

**Lee Anderson:** [\[38128\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, whether her Department is taking steps to help protect freedom of speech in the hospitality sector.

**Dame Nia Griffith:**

Free speech is a cornerstone of British values. The right to freedom of expression is a long-held fundamental right under Article 10 of the European Convention of Human Rights.

The Equality Act 2010 provides protection from discrimination protects people with a religion or philosophical belief from discrimination, as well as to those who lack a religion or belief. The definition of religion or religious or philosophical belief is in line with Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights which stipulates that everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. It is also compatible with Article 10 which covers the right to freedom of expression, including the freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authorities.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) is Great Britain's national equality and human rights body. The Commission safeguards and enforces the laws that protect people's rights to fairness, dignity and respect.

## ■ LGBT+ People: Fertility

**Pippa Heylings:** [\[38182\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, whether she has had recent discussions with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on equal access to fertility treatment for same sex couples.

**Pippa Heylings:** [\[38183\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, whether she has had recent discussions with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on the (a) experiences and (b) needs of LGBTQ+ elders in social care.

**Dame Nia Griffith:**

We want everyone to have fair access to high quality care, which is respectful, inclusive and supports choice, control, and independence.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) sets out clinical guidelines for the provision of IVF services. NICE is currently reviewing its guidelines. In the light of broader pressures on the NHS and on-going changes within NHS England, the Department of Health and Social Care is looking again at achievable ambitions to improve access to services and fairness for all affected couples.

**WORK AND PENSIONS****■ Childcare: Flexible Support Fund and Universal Credit****Laura Trott:**[\[37714\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to (a) assess the take-up levels of the (i) childcare element of Universal Credit and (ii) Flexible Support Fund to pay upfront childcare costs and (b) increase this number.

**Sir Stephen Timms:**

Universal Credit (UC) childcare element statistics are published quarterly. In the latest month for which data is available (November 2024), 177,000 UC households were paid the UC childcare cost element. In November 2024, 29% of households on Universal Credit with pre-school children and in which all claimants had earnings received the childcare element. For households with any child aged 16 or under, the figure is 13%. This proportion has remained broadly consistent for around two years. We will continue to monitor this closely.

Take-up of the upfront childcare offer is assessed from monthly data on the number of upfront childcare transactions and their value, compared to an estimated number eligible. This data is shared with operational leaders to support conversations on how to increase take-up.

Recent initiatives to increase take-up of upfront childcare costs awards through the Flexible Support Fund (FSF) include improved internal FSF guidance to work coaches. Imminent changes to Gov.uk and the Childcare Choices websites will highlight support for upfront childcare costs from DWP. We are also finalising the implementation schedule for UC Journal messages to customers with children, highlighting childcare support and the simplification of the application process.

**■ Children: Maintenance****Patrick Hurley:**[\[37733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will bring forward legislative proposals to ensure equitable treatment of parents with shared custody arrangements by the Child Maintenance Service.

**Andrew Western:**

The Child Maintenance Service operates on the principle that both parents have financial responsibility for their child, including their food and clothing, as well as contributing towards the associated costs of running the home that the child lives in.

Reductions can be made for the extra cost of care where it is shared by the paying parent. The paying parent must have overnight care of any qualifying children for at least 52 nights a year, equivalent of 1 night per week. The amount payable is reduced by a maximum of fifty per cent within bands based on the number of nights overnight care is provided over a 12-month period. The bands are used to give greater stability to maintenance payments and as a result there is greater reliability of payments, which contributes towards the welfare of the children in the case.

If evidence shows that both parties are providing equal day-to-day care of a qualifying child, in addition to sharing overnight care, there is no requirement for either parent to pay child maintenance.

**Susan Murray:**[\[37818\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of fees to use the Child Maintenance Service's Collect and Pay system on people using that system.

**Andrew Western:**

The Government is dedicated to ensuring parents meet their obligations to children, taking robust enforcement action against those who do not.

Cases in Collect & Pay represent the most difficult cases, as many of these have been unwilling to pay voluntarily or have not been compliant in a Direct Pay arrangement. Cases where the paying parent has missed payments or demonstrated behaviour that suggests they are unlikely to pay, can be put on the Collect & Pay service. Fees only apply to the Collect and Pay Service. A fee of 20% is added to what the paying parent needs to pay, while 4% is deducted from maintenance paid to receiving parents.

Fees were introduced in 2014, with the objectives of subsidising the cost of the service; encouraging greater collaboration and more family-based arrangements; and encouraging compliance.

When Collect and Pay charges were introduced, an assessment was carried out by the previous government and published in [The Child Maintenance Reforms: 30 Month Review of charging](#). The government response to the assessment was that application fees may influence some parents' decisions regarding their maintenance arrangement.

On 8 May 2024 the consultation *Child Maintenance: Improving the collection and transfer of payments* was published by the previous government before being extended on the 31 July by the current government. The consultation included a range of proposals with the key one being to remove the Direct Pay service and consolidate the CMS into a single streamlined service that monitors and transfers all

payments. In addition, it also proposed a new fee structure of just 2% for receiving parents, deducted from maintenance received; 2% for compliant paying parents, on top of maintenance owed; and 20% for non-compliant paying parents, on top of maintenance owed.

Following consideration of public responses concerning fees and other proposals in the consultation, and subsequent ministerial decisions, next steps will be detailed in the Government Response, which will be published in due course.

## ■ Disability: Advisory Services

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[37555\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has made an assessment of the potential implications for her policies of Advice UK's report entitled *Voices of Deaf and Disabled people*, published on 10 December 2024.

**Sir Stephen Timms:**

We are grateful to Advice UK for sharing their insights and concerns from their '*Advice Saves*' campaign and findings in their '*Voices of Deaf and Disabled People*' report.

Ensuring the views and voices of disabled people are at the heart of everything we do is a priority for this government and we are committed to listening and engaging closely with disabled people and their representative organisations as we develop policies that may impact them, including the reforms set out in the recent '*Get Britain Working*' White Paper and the Health and Disability Green Paper.

## ■ Disability: Discrimination

**Liam Conlon:**

[\[37874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to help end discrimination against disabled people.

**Sir Stephen Timms:**

This Government is committed to creating a more inclusive society, and championing the rights of disabled people. We will build on the insights shared by disabled people and their representative organisations, working closely with them so that their views and voices are at the heart of everything we do.

Our new Lead Ministers for Disability network will help to ensure that we represent the interests of disabled people effectively and champion disability inclusion and accessibility across each government department, as they drive forward progress on our manifesto commitments and five missions.

Our Equality (Race and Disability) Bill will introduce disability pay gap reporting for large employers and extend equal pay rights to protect workers suffering discrimination on the basis of race or disability. Mandatory pay gap reporting will help employers to identify and address where issues might lie.

These recent steps work alongside the Equality Act 2010, which is the principal means through which disabled people are protected from discrimination in Great Britain. The Equality Act 2010 provides protection against discrimination, harassment and victimisation in the workplace and in wider society. It also requires employers and service providers to make reasonable adjustments for both job applicants and employees who meet the Act's definition of disability. Failure to make a reasonable adjustment is likely to be unlawful disability discrimination under the 2010 Act.

## ■ G4S: Fines

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:**

[\[38383\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what financial penalties have been imposed on G4S for failing to meet key performance indicators on officer deployment or site availability in the last twelve months.

**Andrew Western:**

*[Holding answer 19 March 2025]:* DWP have applied the full contract performance management regime across the last 12 months, including service credits (pre-determined costs associated with a supplier failing to deliver a service or missing a target). Over the last 12 months, strike activity on the contract has increased the amount of Service Credits applied. DWP have worked with G4S collaboratively to mitigate the impact on front line services while G4S sought a resolution to the dispute with their workforce.

The exact value of the service credits is commercially sensitive and I am therefore unable to set out exact amounts.

## ■ Pension Credit

**Dr Luke Evans:**

[\[37719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 12 March 2025 to Question 36448 on Pension Credit, how many staff were seconded from the Child Maintenance Services and Counter Fraud, Compliance and Debt to process pension credit applications; and for what time period.

**Torsten Bell:**

100 colleagues have been redeployed from Child Maintenance Services and 20 colleagues redeployed from Counter Fraud, Compliance and Debt to support Pension Credit activity.

## ■ Social Security Benefits: Disability

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[37556\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she plans to take to engage with deaf and disabled people's organisations when preparing reforms to disability benefits.

**Sir Stephen Timms:**

This government is committed to putting the views and voices of disabled people at the heart of all that we do. We have developed proposals for reform to the system of health and disability benefits, set out in the Pathways to Work Green Paper published on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2025. A full 12 week consultation will run from when all accessible versions are published on GOV.UK. We are keen to hear views from a wide group of people, in particular disabled people and people with health conditions and disability organisations, and encourage responses to the consultation through the online form, email and post.

We also intend to run a number of accessible virtual and face to face events on the consultation, to hear from stakeholders, including deaf and disabled people and their representative organisations, directly. More information on these events and registration will be advertised on the consultation pages on GOV.UK in due course.

In the Green Paper, we have also announced that we will set up collaboration committees to develop our reforms further, directly with disabled people and people with health conditions and experts. This will involve bringing together disabled people, experts and civil servants around specific issues to collaborate, provide ideas, challenge, and input into recommendations. We look forward to developing these initiatives over the coming months.

**Ellie Chowns:**[\[37827\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of proposed changes to (a) the level of and (b) eligibility criteria for (i) disability and (ii) incapacity benefit payments on child poverty.

**Alison McGovern:**

Delivering our manifesto commitment to tackle child poverty is an urgent priority for this Government, and the Ministerial Taskforce is working to publish a Child Poverty Strategy which will deliver lasting change.

The Strategy will look at all available levers across four key themes of increasing incomes, including considering social security reforms, reducing essential costs, increasing financial resilience; and better local support especially in the early years. This will build on the reform plans underway across Government and work underway in Devolved Governments.

We will publish a poverty impact assessment once the OBR has assessed GP measures on the day of the Spring Statement.

**■ Unemployment****Ben Maguire:**[\[37864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of trends in mental health waiting lists on the number of people out of work.



**Alison McGovern:**

The Department has not assessed the impact of trends in mental health waiting lists on the number of people out of work.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) plans to link NHS waiting times data to Census, DWP Benefits and HMRC PAYE records to analyse the relationship between waiting time duration (for various health conditions and procedures) and labour market outcomes (such as employment status, gross pay and benefit receipt) in England.

This may shed light on the potential impact of trends in waiting lists for various healthcare services, including mental health waiting lists, on the number of people out of work.

**Ben Maguire:**[\[37866\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of waiting times for mental health treatment on levels of health-related economic inactivity.

**Alison McGovern:**

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) plans to link NHS waiting times data to Census, DWP Benefits and HMRC PAYE records to analyse the relationship between waiting time duration (for various health conditions and procedures) and labour market outcomes (such as employment status, gross pay and benefit receipt) in England.

This assessment has potential to shed light on the potential impact of waiting times for various health services, including mental health treatment, on levels of health-related economic inactivity.

**■ Universal Credit: Childcare****Martin Wrigley:**[\[37794\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 11 March 2025 to Question 34683 on Universal Credit: Childcare, if she will have discussions with claimants on the potential merits of establishing definitions for those terms.

**Sir Stephen Timms:**

The Government recognises that childcare needs vary from customer to customer and area to area, and we are committed to working with the Department for Education to increase availability so that we can support customers' varied needs.

At all times we want work coaches to ensure the requirements they impose on customers are reasonable given the customer's capability and circumstance, and they do this through engaging with customers.

There are times where the customer's circumstances are such that both work search and work availability requirements must be switched off completely for a period of

time, known as easements. This includes, for example, customers caring for a child in considerable distress.

Work coaches can also use their discretion to switch off requirements when a customer's child is ill in hospital or when they have other temporary childcare responsibilities.

## MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

### CABINET OFFICE

#### ■ Business: Powys

David Chadwick:

[\[37475\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many active businesses were registered in (a) Powys and (b) Brecon, Radnor and Cwm Tawe constituency on the Companies House register in each of the last five financial years.

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 18 March 2025. The correct answer should have been:**

**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.~~

**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. [PQ37474\\_37475 \(1\).pdf](#)

## WRITTEN STATEMENTS

### CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

#### ■ Varying the Leveson Order

**Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (Lisa Nandy):** [\[HCWS535\]](#)

This is a joint statement made with the Secretary of State for the Home Department.

As Ministers with joint responsibility for the Leveson Inquiry into the culture, practices, and ethics of the press, today under section 20(7) of the Inquiries Act 2005, we have decided to vary the restriction orders issued by Sir Brian Leveson on 2 December 2011 and 29 November 2012. This variation, at the request of Associated Newspapers Limited, will enable Associated Newspapers Limited to fulfil its preservation and disclosure obligations in relation to documents provided to the Leveson Inquiry in its possession, obligations that come from claims brought against Associated Newspapers Limited by Baroness Lawrence of Clarendon, Elizabeth Hurley, Sir Elton John, David Furnish, Sir Simon Hughes, Prince Harry, The Duke of Sussex and Sadie Frost Law.

The documents were prepared by the Information Commissioner's Office and consist of spreadsheets of the materials seized from the private detective Steven Whittamore/JJ Services during the course of Operation Motorman, a 2003 investigation by the Information Commissioner's Office into allegations of offences under the Data Protection Act 1998 by the British press.

We have decided to vary the restriction orders so as to allow Associated Newspapers Limited to retain the documents (previously retained in breach of the restriction orders) and disclose them solely for the purposes of the claims. In this case, in our judgement, the paramount public interest lies in enabling Associated Newspapers Limited to meet its disclosure obligations so that justice can be done.

A variation notice has been shared with the parties to the legal proceedings, and published on gov.uk.

This decision makes no comment on the merits of the claims, which is wholly a matter for the courts to determine.

### EDUCATION

#### ■ Families First Partnership Programme

**Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, The Minister for Children and Families (Janet Daby):** [\[HCWS539\]](#)

Today, I am launching the programme guide for the Families First Partnership programme, which will begin delivery from April 2025. This represents a major milestone in the government's commitment to rebalancing the children's social care system to

earlier intervention – and ensuring that we break down barriers to opportunity and provide all children with the best start in life.

The publication of the programme guide confirms our expectations of statutory safeguarding partners – children’s social care, police and health - and relevant agencies, including education and childcare settings, to **implement reforms to Family Help, multi-agency child protection and Family Group Decision-Making** – building on a body of evidence of what we know works to support families to stay together and thrive.

The programme guide is just one aspect of the wider implementation support offer we are providing through the Programme, which includes sharing learning from the Families First for Children Pathfinder – which has been testing reforms in 10 local areas – along with the best practice and best evidence from across children’s social care.

The Families First Partnership Programme is backed by over £500 million of funding in financial year 25/26, via the Local Government Finance Settlement – nearly doubling investment in preventative services. Over time, we expect this investment to safely reduce the number of looked after children.

Our ambition is for high-quality local services that place children and families at the centre of their design and provide meaningful and appropriate support and protection for families as their needs change over time. We will only achieve this if our journey of change is taken as a team – using a multi-agency approach to enact whole system reform. We envision a transformed system where practitioners from social work, police, health, education and beyond collaborate to promote the wellbeing of children and keep them safe from harm.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all staff across children’s social care, police, health, and education for their tireless efforts in ensuring all children receive the support and protection they need.

Together, we can create a system which provides children and families with the right support at the right time, ensuring more children can grow up with the right love and support around them.

## HOME OFFICE

### ■ Publication of the Report on Part One of the Independent Review of Disclosure and Fraud Offences

**The Minister of State for Security (Dan Jarvis):**

[\[HCWS538\]](#)

I am pleased to inform the House that the Home Office has today published Jonathan Fisher KC’s Independent Review of Disclosure Report, *‘Disclosure in the Digital Age.’*

The Review’s findings highlight the significant challenges caused by the exponential growth of digital material in criminal investigations, particularly in serious and complex cases. This has placed significant burdens on law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, and criminal courts. The growing scale of the problem now impedes the ability of the Crown to swiftly bring criminals to justice.

In response, Jonathan Fisher KC has made 45 recommendations which mirror the disclosure regime's impact on the full breadth of the criminal justice system. As published today, his key overarching recommendations for reform are:

- to modernise existing legislation and reduce administrative burdens by utilising advanced technology.
- to improve criminal court processes with consideration for an entirely new Intensive Disclosure Regime court pathway, designed for the most complex criminal cases.
- to enhance disclosure quality by designing a new national learning standard across all law enforcement agencies

I thank Jonathan Fisher KC for his work in providing us with such a comprehensive review. The government will now carefully consider all recommendations made in the report and will work at pace to provide a Government Response later this year.

I am confident that we can work together to design a modern disclosure regime that can keep pace with the rising level of digital material, facilitate swifter justice for both victims and defendants and continue to build public confidence in the criminal justice system.

The Report has been laid before Parliament today (CP 1285) and it will also be available on the [Independent Review GOV.UK page](#).

## HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### ■ Update to Contingent Liability arising from the EWS1 Professional Indemnity Insurance Scheme following closure

**Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Local Growth and Building Safety (Alex Norris):** [\[HCWS537\]](#)

In September 2022, the EWS1 professional indemnity insurance (PII) scheme launched for competent fire safety professionals undertaking EWS1 assessments, fire safety assessments for the External Wall Systems in residential buildings. The scheme aimed to enable competent professionals to access the indemnity cover they need to undertake external wall assessments.

On 27 June 2022, the Minister of State for Housing published a Written Ministerial Statement notifying Parliament of an unlimited contingent liability, with the Government Actuary's Department (GAD) making a best estimate of expected losses as c£100m.

The scheme closed on 30 October 2023. Departmental research showed that assessors can access suitable insurance from the open market at a competitive premium and with a wider scope of coverage. The market has responded to the protection gap the government was looking to address, which removes the requirement for the government backed scheme. Continuing with the scheme would no longer be a good use of public funds.

Government action has helped to get the market moving again and address this issue. The relevance of EWS1 forms is declining as wider government interventions have taken

effect that support lenders to reduce their reliance on EWS1 forms and instead use other forms of documentation to support mortgage lending decisions. The changes we have made have helped improve access to cover across the Professional Indemnity Insurance market.

Policies sold under the scheme to date will continue to be insured under the original terms. Due to improving market conditions, fewer policies were sold than anticipated. The maximum possible loss from claims arising is £70m, which may decline further should policies be cancelled. The policies have a 15-year term, meaning that claims are possible until 2038. The risk is limited by the number of buildings, and number of EWS1 assessments. To further mitigate this risk, we only offered professional indemnity insurance cover for accredited professionals who have the requisite training, expertise and knowledge to undertake the EWS1 assessment. In addition, completed EWS1 assessments are subject to an audit process to ensure they are being completed in line with the British Standards Institution PAS 9980 methodology.

The Treasury approved the proposal to launch the scheme and have been informed of its closure. My department will keep Parliament informed of any changes to this contingent liability on a regular basis.

A Departmental Minute will today be laid in Parliament providing more detail on this contingent liability.

## JUSTICE

### ■ Whiplash reform: The Whiplash Injury (Amendment) Regulations 2025

**Minister of State for Justice (Sarah Sackman):**

[\[HCWS534\]](#)

I would like to inform the House that I am laying the draft Whiplash Injury (Amendment) Regulations 2025 by way of affirmative procedure.

Subject to approval by both Houses, the Regulations will increase the fixed tariff of compensation for whiplash injuries lasting up to two years which occur on or after 31 May 2025. In doing this, the Regulations will implement the recommendations made by the Lord Chancellor in her report of the statutory review of the Whiplash Injury Regulations 2021, published on 21 November 2024.

The whiplash tariff compensation figures will be around 15% higher than the original tariff which was brought into force in 2021 by the Whiplash Injury Regulations 2021. This is to both account for the effects of inflation since 2021 (by measure of the Consumer Prices Index) and to include a buffer for expected inflation until 2027. The uplift will ensure that claimants can continue to receive appropriate compensation for whiplash injuries that occur before the next statutory review of the tariff. The original whiplash tariff from 2021 will continue to apply to relevant whiplash injuries from road traffic accidents that occur before 31 May 2025.

**TREASURY****■ Annual European Union Finances Statement****The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Darren Jones):****[[HCWS536](#)]**

I am today laying before Parliament, “The European Union Finances Statement 2024 on the implementation of the Withdrawal Agreement” (CP 1296). This is an annual publication; this year’s edition covers the period from 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024. This publication is available on GOV.UK:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/eu-annual-statement>

The publication sets out the Government’s updated estimate of the financial settlement on withdrawal from the EU. HM Treasury estimates that the current total net value of the financial settlement is £30.7bn since the UK ceased to be an EU Member State in February 2020. Of this, £25.0bn has been paid up to the end of December 2024, and the forecast of future outstanding net liabilities is £5.7bn.