



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 4 April 2025 and the information is correct at the time of publication (03:30 P.M., 04 April 2025). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

ATTORNEY GENERAL

■ Attorney General: Equality

Lee Anderson: [\[41941\]](#)

To ask the Solicitor General, what diversity, equality and inclusion targets her Department has for staff recruitment.

Lucy Rigby:

The Attorney General's Office does not have a set target for diversity, equality and inclusion (EDI) for staff recruitment or representation. The AGO welcomes applications from those of all backgrounds.

BUSINESS AND TRADE

■ Department for Business and Trade: Equality

Lee Anderson: [\[41934\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what diversity, equality and inclusion targets his Department has for staff recruitment.

Justin Madders:

Appointments to advertised vacancies in the Department for Business and Trade are made on the basis of fair recruitment open to all. The Department does not operate recruitment targets in relation to diversity, equality and inclusion. The Department does have an internally published Diversity and Inclusion plan that is focussed on embracing fairness for all.

■ Department for Business and Trade: Impact Assessments

Joe Robertson: [\[42163\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what accountability measures exist for civil servants producing regulatory impact assessments.

Justin Madders:

When producing regulatory impact assessments, the government expects all civil servants to adhere to published guidance including the Better Regulation Framework and HM Treasury Green Book.

All civil servants involved in the production of impact assessments are subject to the standards of integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality set out in the Civil Service Code and are held to account principally through their relevant performance management framework.

Joe Robertson:

[\[42167\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether his Department plans to require routine independent assessments of regulatory costs.

Justin Madders:

Assessments of regulatory costs that departments produce as part of the options assessments for major regulatory provisions within the scope of the Better Regulation Framework are subject to independent scrutiny by the Regulatory Policy Committee. On 13 March, the Prime Minister issued a new target for the government to cut the costs of regulation to business. This target for government departments and regulators will lead to less red tape and greater economic growth. The government will bring forward its plans to meet the target and its method for assessing progress towards it later this year.

Joe Robertson:

[\[42168\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how frequently his Department reviews initial compliance cost estimates in impact assessments.

Justin Madders:

Sections 28–31 of the Small Business, Enterprise and Employment Act 2015 set the legislative requirements for the inclusion of statutory review provisions in secondary legislation, including that a report of the first review must be published within five years of the relevant legislation's commencement date and subsequent reports published at intervals not exceeding five years. In the absence of a review provision, the post-implementation review statutory guidance made under section 31 of the act states that policies should still be subject to proportionate monitoring, evaluation and non-statutory review, where appropriate.

■ Department for Business and Trade: Regulation

Joe Robertson:

[\[42161\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what methodology his Department uses to identify potentially unnecessary regulations.

Justin Madders:

The government is reforming the regulatory landscape because it is not functioning as effectively as it should. Officials in the Department for Business and Trade are working with colleagues across government and have undertaken extensive engagement with businesses, think tanks and other key stakeholders to identify regulatory barriers to economic growth across the Industrial Strategy growth-driving sectors.

In particular, this work is being informed by responses to the Industrial Strategy Green Paper, so we are hearing directly from as many stakeholders as possible. These reforms will be published in due course as part of the Industrial Strategy.

■ Misrepresentation: Environment Protection

Ellie Chowns: [\[42053\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what progress the Competition and Markets Authority has made on its investigation into misleading environmental claims, announced on 26 January 2023.

Justin Madders:

Following the closure of the Competition and Markets Authority (“CMA”) investigation into certain claims made by Unilever in relation to some of its fast-moving consumer goods, which include everyday items such as toiletries and cleaning products, the CMA does not currently have any open investigations into misleading environmental claims.

The CMA remains interested in the issue and may take further enforcement action where this is warranted and appropriate, based on intelligence and its published prioritisation criteria.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Cabinet Office: Artificial Intelligence

Charlie Dewhirst: [\[41652\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether his Department has used AI software to help respond to (a) Freedom of Information Act requests and (b) written parliamentary questions.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

All FOI requests and written parliamentary questions are considered on a case by case basis. In the Cabinet Office, AI software is not currently used to respond to FOI requests or written parliamentary questions. AI software may be used in the future, as appropriate, to support certain elements of these processes.

■ Cabinet Office: Email

Charlie Dewhirst: [\[41645\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the length of time before an email in his Department's inbox is subject to automatic deletion; whether such deleted emails remain searchable on the Server; and whether (a) manually deleted and (b) auto-deleted emails remain held for the purposes of (i) public inquiries, (ii) subject access requests and (iii) Freedom of Information Act requests.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

Emails sent to or received by a minister's mailbox are retained permanently as an official record, and remain available for public inquiries, subject access or freedom of information requests. Individual emails may be reviewed at a future date for their historical relevance before transfer to The National Archives, but they are not subject to automatic deletion.

The mailboxes of permanent secretaries are similarly preserved, and those of senior staff (grade SCS PB2 and above) are retained for a period of seven years after they leave their post. After seven years the contents are reviewed and records of historic value selected for permanent preservation.

Unless there is a reason to retain them for a public or other inquiry, or to respond to litigation, all other staff mailboxes are destroyed twelve months after they leave Cabinet Office's employment.

■ Elish Angiolini

Charlie Dewhirst: [\[42043\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what information his Department held on the eligibility of Lady Elish Angiolini for the position of Lord High Commissioner to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland when her appointment was announced.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

Following the announcement in December of last year that Lady Elish Angiolini was to be appointed as Lord High Commissioner to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, it became clear that there is a legal restriction against a Catholic person being appointed to the role.

The Church of Scotland (Lord High Commissioner) Act 2025 has been passed by both Houses of Parliament with cross-party support and has received Royal Assent. This legislation removes the historical legal restriction and will ensure that Lady Elish can take up the role.

■ Government Departments: Communication and Marketing

Charlie Dewhirst: [\[42040\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 10 February 2025 to Question 27919 on Government Departments: Communications and Marketing, what the aggregate figure for spending on communications and marketing is on which the estimated £85 million reduction is based.

Georgia Gould:

The information used to form the aggregate figure for which the spending reduction on communications and marketing is based on can be found through the [Government efficiency, transparency and accountability page](#) on Gov.uk.

A comprehensive communications Spending Review identified 39 campaigns that were cancelled, 46 campaigns continuing with reduced budgets and 46 campaigns aiming to reduce their expenditure by 25%. The combined savings from these measures total £85 million in 2024-25 and up to £96 million in 2025-26.

■ Ministers: Vetting**Charlie Dewhirst:** [\[42049\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether there is a data sharing arrangement in place between the Cabinet Office and (a) HM Revenue and Customs and (b) the National Crime Agency on Ministerial vetting.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

As was the case under previous administrations, no such agreements are in place with HMRC and the National Crime Agency.

■ National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority: Statistics**Charlie Dewhirst:** [\[42046\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he plans to lay an Official Statistics Order to include the National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority.

Georgia Gould:

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

A response to the Hon gentleman's Parliamentary Question of 27th March is attached.

Attachments:

1. Letter from the National Statistician [PQ42046 (1).pdf]

■ Registrar of Consultant Lobbyists**Charlie Dewhirst:** [\[42050\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Office of the Registrar of Consultant Lobbyists in regulating lobbying by foreign-based firms.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

Under the provisions of the Transparency of Lobbying, Non-party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Act 2014, the Registrar of Consultant Lobbyists is required to maintain the UK Register of Consultant Lobbyists. Under the legislation, which was introduced by the then Government in 2013, all registrants must be UK VAT registered. As such, the Registrar of Consultant Lobbyists does not regulate foreign based consultant lobbyist firms.

■ School Support Staff Negotiating Body**Charlie Dewhirst:** [\[42048\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether his Department assessed the reinstatement of the School Support Staff Negotiating Body against the requirement set out in the Approvals Process for the Creation of New Arm's-Length Bodies that the creation of a new arms length body should only be considered as a last resort.

Georgia Gould:

The Department for Education is currently working through the approval process to establish the School Support Staff Negotiating Body as an Arm's Length Body, in parallel to the passage of the Employment Rights Bill. The completion of business cases as part of this process considers other viable delivery mechanisms and ensures there is a clear rationale for its creation.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT■ **Bet365****Sir Iain Duncan Smith:**[\[41783\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will withdraw Bet365's UK operating licence for openly operating in China.

Stephanie Peacock:

As the independent regulator, it is the Gambling Commission's duty to ensure that operators comply with the requirements set out in the Licence Conditions and Codes of Practice and to take appropriate regulatory action against those operators which fail to comply. Any decision to withdraw an operator's licence lies with the Gambling Commission.

■ **Gambling: Regulation****Sir Iain Duncan Smith:**[\[41784\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to regulate unregulated legal gambling.

Stephanie Peacock:

Gambling in Great Britain is regulated by the Gambling Commission, which operates a point of consumption licensing regime. Most legal gambling in Great Britain is regulated.

■ **Public Sector: Publicity****Dr Scott Arthur:**[\[42187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has plans to make changes to the rules on public notices for small online news publishers.

Stephanie Peacock:

Public notices are important for ensuring that the public is kept informed of decisions made by their council which may affect their quality of life, local services or amenities, or their property. The independent 2019 Cairncross Review into sustainable journalism found that public notices are also an important source of revenue for local newspapers.

However, the Government is aware of feedback from some sectors about the audience reach of these notices and the desire for greater digitalisation. In this

context, the sector's Public Notice Portal is a welcome innovation, intended to take advantage of print publishers' growing digital audiences and provide a centralised resource for all types of public notice. We are monitoring the progress of the Portal, and the effect that it has on the audience reach of public notices.

We also welcome the plans for expansion of the Portal, announced in December and funded by the Google News Initiative, including a fully searchable archive and new consultation functions to help public bodies and commercial entities engage with the public more effectively. We consider this type of industry innovation and collaboration to be integral to securing the sector's future, and will seek to further support and incentivise it through our Local Media Strategy.

DEFENCE

■ Defence Equipment: Iron and Steel

Sir Julian Lewis:

[\[42386\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will list the (a) domestic and (b) foreign sources of high-grade steel on which his Department will rely for the manufacture of (i) warships, (ii) armoured vehicles and (iii) jet aircraft (A) for the remainder of the parliament and (B) subsequently.

Maria Eagle:

The Defence Industrial Strategy will carefully consider the Ministry of Defence's approach to steel, as a sub-sector within Defence and a critical element of the UK's Defence industrial base. This will include consideration of the MOD's use of specialist steel and the potential for Defence procurements to support the steel sector, noting capability and value for money considerations. The Defence Industrial Strategy will have a remit extending to 2035.

The Government will also bring forward a Steel Strategy that will ensure a sustainable future for UK steelmaking. The Steel Strategy will establish a long-term vision for the industry, promoting long-term growth, that aligns with wider priorities including Invest 2035, the upcoming Industrial Strategy.

Defence programmes have some requirements for specialist steel which cannot currently be sourced from UK manufacturers. Steel therefore sometimes needs to be sourced from overseas suppliers. UK steel is utilised where feasible including in both shipbuilding and armoured vehicles manufacture.

As part of the Department for Business and Trade (DBT)'s Steel Procurement Pipeline, the MOD publishes information on the steel required for current Defence projects such as shipbuilding and armoured vehicles. As part of the Department for Business and Trade's Steel Public Procurement release the MOD also provides details on the country of origin for steel used in various Defence projects:

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

■ Defence: Procurement**James Cartlidge:** [\[42023\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to paragraph 2.8 of the Spring Statement, 26 March 2025, when he plans to achieve his target for major platforms to have an average of two years to contract.

James Cartlidge: [\[42024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to paragraph 2.8 of the Spring Statement, 26 March 2025, what his planned timetable is for achieving pace-setting modular upgrades to have an average of one year to contract.

James Cartlidge: [\[42025\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to paragraph 2.8 of the Spring Statement, 26 March 2025, what his planned timetable is to achieve his target for rapid commercial exploitation to have a three-months cycle.

Maria Eagle:

The Ministry of Defence is reforming its acquisition system to deliver defence capabilities at greater pace, drive productivity and secure the best possible value for money, under the leadership of a new National Armaments Director.

A timescale for practical application of a segmented approach to procurement will be developed in consultation with industry and closely integrated with implementation of wider defence reforms, the Strategic Defence Review and the Defence Industrial Strategy.

■ Estonia: Armed Forces and Armoured Fighting Vehicles**Mr Will Forster:** [\[42155\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) troops, (b) tanks and (c) other military vehicles the United Kingdom had in Estonia on 27 March (i) 2025 and (ii) 2021.

Luke Pollard:

Since 2017, the UK has been the Framework Nation to Estonia as part of the NATO construct, enhanced Force Presence (eFP). This construct provides members of the Alliance positioned along the Eastern Flank of NATO (Host Nations) with bilateral guarantees from other NATO members.

The UK's presence in Estonia has been centred on an Armoured Battle Group, based in Tapa and comprising up to 1,300 Service personnel and high end warfighting capabilities. These capabilities included the Challenger 2 Armoured Tank, numerous Anti-Tank capabilities, armoured infantry and artillery. In addition the Battle Group is supported by Divisional level assets such as Short Range Air Defence and long range strike artillery.

Following the Madrid NATO summit in 2022 and the full invasion of Ukraine by Russia, the Alliance increased the level of support to Host Nations, with Framework Nations agreeing to reinforce with up to a Brigade in times of crisis. This was termed

Forward Land Forces (FLF). To date, the UK has achieved this through the allocation of 12 Armoured Bde and associated capability. Bilaterally, the UK will reinforce Estonia with the balance of a Brigade. This year, 12 Bde are being replaced by 4 Bde, reinforced with an Aviation Task Force. This transition will be showcased on Ex HEDGEHOG, a Baltic wide demonstration of the FLF construct.

Both 2021 and 2025 saw UK personnel numbers remain stable at around 700 personnel in country.

■ Estonia: Foreign Relations

James Cartlidge: [\[41885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will publish a summary of his discussions with his Estonian counterpart that took place on 26 March 2025.

Luke Pollard:

As I am sure the hon. Gentleman will understand, we do not routinely publish readouts after individual bilateral meetings. The Secretary of State had productive discussions with his Estonian counterpart about our bilateral cooperation with Estonia and our cooperation through the JEF and NATO.

■ Military Aircraft: Procurement

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[42021\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 5 March 2025 to Question 34360 on Defence Equipment: Procurement, what discussions he has had with his (a) Italian and (b) Japanese counterpart on the inclusion of the Aermacchi M-346 fast jet trainer in the Global Combat Air Programme.

Maria Eagle:

The Royal Air Force continuously researches and assesses options for the sustainment, enhancement and development of hardware and systems to maintain competitive advantage within the flying training system. The Aermacchi M346 fast jet trainer is one of several market options available but no formal market engagement has been conducted.

No formal discussions have been held on training aircraft in the Global Combat Air Programme and for the UK no decisions have been taken on the replacement for the Hawk T2 aircraft which has a planned Out of Service date of 2040.

■ NATO: Military Exercises

Mr Will Forster: [\[42154\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the United Kingdom is contributing to the NATO Hedgehog Exercises.

Luke Pollard:

The UK has endorsed the deployment of 4 Brigade and four Typhoons to Exercise HEDGEHOG. The UK will provide roughly 2,500 Service personnel towards the

exercise, in addition to the Forward Land Forces armoured battle group already deployed in Estonia, comprising circa 800 soldiers. France will also provide support, alongside Finland and the US. This is an excellent demonstration of close cooperation in the name of European security.

■ **RAF Molesworth: US Air Force**

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[42680\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of the US Air Force European Infrastructure Consolidation (EIC) works at RAF Molesworth.

Maria Eagle:

The estimated cost to the UK public purse to deliver the European Infrastructure Consolidation construction works at RAF Molesworth is £51 million.

■ **Technology: Research**

James Cartlidge: [\[41898\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to paragraph 2.8 of the Spring Statement, 26 March 2025, what his Department's definition of novel technology is.

Maria Eagle:

At the Chancellor's Spring Statement the Ministry of Defence (MOD) committed to establishing UK Defence Innovation (UKDI). This new body will simplify and consolidate the current MOD structures for innovation.

The Spring Statement also confirmed that from next year the MOD will spend at least 10% of its equipment procurement budget on novel technology. Novel technology investments include dual-use technologies such as uncrewed and autonomous systems and AI-enabled capabilities. This list is not exhaustive, and work is ongoing to establish a formal definition of novel technology that UKDI and the wider Department will work against.

The creation of UKDI underlines this Government's commitment to exploiting new ideas and technologies to equip our Armed Forces with cutting edge tech and grow high tech businesses across the UK.

■ **Ukraine: Ammunition**

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[42022\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to replenish the artillery ammunition given to Ukraine.

Maria Eagle:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) continually manages and analyses its stocks of weapons and munitions against commitments and threats, while also reviewing industrial capacity and supply chains, both domestically and internationally. The MOD is also fully engaged with industry, allies and partners to ensure both the continuation

of supply to Ukraine, and that all of the equipment and munitions granted in kind from UK stocks are replaced as rapidly as possible.

To replenish weapons granted to Ukraine, we have rapidly and effectively adapted our procurement processes in a way that reflects that urgency of the situation, and have prioritised a more holistic munitions mix over a determination to always replace like for like. Stockpile details are highly classified for operational reasons, so I am unable to provide further detail.

■ **Ukraine: Peacekeeping Operations**

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[\[42032\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what Rules of Engagement British Forces would be under as part of Multinational Force Ukraine.

Luke Pollard:

The UK is playing a leading role in accelerating work on security guarantees for Ukraine. Operational planning continues but it is long-standing Government policy not to comment on Rules of Engagement. The only person who would benefit from that is Putin.

■ **USA: Ammunition**

Martin Wrigley:

[\[35453\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what munitions the UK sources (a) directly and (b) via supply chains from the United States.

Maria Eagle:

The UK's munitions stockpile is maintained through the procurement of new rounds and the refurbishment or upgrading of existing munitions. Many types of in-service munitions are from UK suppliers, and many components of systems procured from overseas are manufactured in the UK.

Munitions procured directly through the United States through Foreign Military Sale include complex weapons such as cruise missiles, anti-armour and anti-air weaponry.

Munitions procured by the Ministry of Defence from the United States via supply chains through other contractual arrangements include Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System (GMLRS) rounds, an Extended Range variant of GMLRS rounds, a range of small arms ammunition and explosive charges, and the Trident nuclear deterrent.

EDUCATION

■ **Dyslexia: Screening**

Chris Webb:

[\[41967\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the impact of late dyslexia diagnosis on children's educational outcomes; and whether

she will consider implementing a universal screening programme to ensure early intervention.

Chris Webb: [\[41969\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to ensure the early identification of dyslexia in primary school children.

Catherine McKinnell:

I refer my hon. Friend, the Member for Blackpool South to the answer of 31 March 2025 to Question [40829](#).

■ Dyslexia: Surrey Heath

Dr Al Pinkerton: [\[42129\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to support dyslexic children in education in Surrey Heath constituency.

Dr Al Pinkerton: [\[42130\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions she has had with Surrey Heath Borough Council on the adequacy of dyslexia provision for children in Surrey Heath constituency.

Dr Al Pinkerton: [\[42131\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions she has had with Surrey Heath Borough Council on the adequacy of dyslexia training for teachers in Surrey Heath constituency.

Dr Al Pinkerton: [\[42132\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to support dyslexic children with mental health difficulties in Surrey Heath constituency.

Catherine McKinnell:

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

Early identification of need and support is critical to improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND, including those with dyslexia. There are already a number of measures to help teachers do this, including the phonics screening check and statutory assessments at the end of key stage 2.

Measures have also been introduced to support the effective teaching of reading, including for those at risk of falling behind. This includes the English hubs programme, the publication of the reading framework and an updated list of high-quality systematic synthetic phonics programmes for schools. The initial teacher training and early career framework, which sets out the core body of knowledge, skills and behaviours that define great teaching, contains significantly more content related

to adaptive teaching and supporting pupils with SEND, and from September 2025 will underpin the minimum entitlement to training for new teachers.

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education has not had any conversations with Surrey Heath Borough Council regarding dyslexia support, as we believe schools are best placed to take these decisions locally, in consultation with parents, young people and the local authority, after a thorough assessment of the child or young person's needs and drawing on wider professional advice, as appropriate.

The department will also provide access to specialist mental health professionals in every school by expanding Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs), so every young person has access to early support to address problems before they escalate.

Further information on the support, as at 31 March 2024, for pupils provided by NHS funded MHSTs in Surrey schools is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transforming-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-provision>. We will recruit an additional 8,500 new mental health staff to treat children and adults, and open new Young Futures hubs with access to mental health support workers.

■ Educational Institutions: Sanitary Products

Anneliese Dodds:

[41920]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to her Department's guidance entitled Period product scheme for schools and colleges, published 9 September 2024, what proportion of organisations have ordered (a) environmentally friendly and (b) reusable products during the 2024-25 academic year to date.

Anneliese Dodds:

[41921]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to her Department's guidance entitled Period product scheme for schools and colleges, published 9 September 2024, what methods she uses to highlight to eligible schools and colleges the availability of (a) environmentally friendly and (b) reusable products.

Stephen Morgan:

The period product scheme provides a wide range of products for organisations to choose from. These include environmentally friendly tampons and pads, alongside reusable products such as menstrual cups and period pants. Schools and colleges know their learners best and therefore have the freedom to select the most suitable products for their learners, considering the cost and type of product.

When choosing products, girls and women will inevitably have a range of priorities including whether the product is familiar, comfortable and whether it is environmentally friendly. The department therefore offers a range of products to allow organisations and learners a choice. We will be monitoring product choice closely, while continuing to seek opportunities to encourage the use of sustainable products as the scheme develops.

In the 2024/25 academic year up to February 2025, 45% of ordering organisations had ordered environmentally friendly or reusable products.

■ GCSE: Sign Language

Mr Will Forster: [\[42158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a British Sign Language GCSE.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department is in the process of developing a British Sign Language (BSL) GCSE. This landmark GCSE is an important step towards greater recognition of BSL as a language and will foster better communication between Deaf and hearing communities.

The department published subject content for the BSL GCSE in December 2023. Ofqual, the independent qualifications regulator, is developing assessment arrangements and will launch a technical consultation on this in due course.

■ GCSE: Ukrainian Language

Mr Will Forster: [\[42156\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a GCSE in Ukrainian.

Catherine McKinnell:

I refer the hon. Member for Woking to the answer of 2 April 2025 to Question [HL5393](#).

■ Ofsted: Finance

Neil O'Brien: [\[41923\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much funding was allocated to Ofsted in (a) cash and (b) real terms in each year since 1995.

Catherine McKinnell:

This is a matter for His Majesty's Chief Inspector, Sir Martyn Oliver. I have asked him to write to the hon. Member for Harborough, Oadby and Wigston directly and a copy of his reply will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

■ Schools: Costs

James McMurdock: [\[42177\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions her Department has had with head teachers on (a) energy bills and (b) other costs for schools.

Catherine McKinnell:

Overall core revenue funding for schools totals almost £61.6 billion this 2024/25 financial year. The overall core schools budget is increasing by over £3.2 billion in the 2025/26 financial year, meaning the core schools budget will total over £64.8 billion.

The department holds discussions on energy costs and other cost pressures with sector bodies, including representatives for headteachers. This includes regular meetings with the Schools and Academies Funding Group and the Service-level Working Group on Education and Children's Services.

The department provides advice to headteachers and is developing a suite of productivity initiatives to support schools in making efficiencies in their budgets. This includes giving schools the opportunity to join the department's 'Energy for Schools' initiative. When schools' energy contracts are up for renewal, they can join the department's contract. During the pilot for this project, schools saved 36% on average compared to their previous contracts. The Schools Resource Management Advisor Programme works with headteachers by providing peer to peer advice on resources and costs at school level. We continue to work with schools to ensure, where needed, they are accessing our full suite of existing support to help manage budgets.

The department will continue to monitor cost pressures, as it usually does.

■ Schools: Debts

James McMurdock:

[42176]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent estimate she has made of the number of (a) primary and (b) secondary schools in debt in (i) England and (ii) Essex.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department trusts schools to manage their own budgets, and the vast majority are operating with a cumulative surplus, with only a small percentage having a deficit.

The latest published figures for academies show that at a national level, 98% of academy trusts are in cumulative surplus or breaking even nationally. These figures for academy trusts relate to 31 August 2023.

For maintained schools, at national level, 14.7% of maintained primary schools and 13% of maintained secondary schools were in deficit. In the Essex local authority 6.9% of maintained primary schools and no secondary schools were in deficit in the same period. The figures for maintained schools relate to 31 March 2024.

The department does not hold local authority level figures for academies, since their funding is managed at Trust level, and many Trusts operate across local authorities' boundaries. The financial benchmarking and insights tool on GOV.UK provides resources to review the finances of individual academies. This tool is available at: <https://financial-benchmarking-and-insights-tool.education.gov.uk/data-sources>.

■ Special Educational Needs: Training

Jo Platt:

[41980]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of (a) including training on (i) dyslexia and (ii) neurodiversity in

mandatory Continuing Professional Development requirements for teachers and (b) requiring Ofsted to consider that training in school inspections.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department is committed to improving support for all children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), including those with dyslexia and other neurodiverse conditions. The government is focusing on improving inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools and is working with families and education and care experts to deliver this in the best interests of all children and to restore parents' trust

The teachers' standards set clear expectations that teachers must understand the needs of all pupils, including those with dyslexia and other neurodiverse conditions. All initial teacher training (ITT) providers must ensure that their courses enable trainee teachers to meet the teachers' standards, to be recommended for the award of qualified teacher status

The ITT core content framework (CCF) and early career framework (ECF), set out the core body of knowledge, skills and behaviours that define great teaching and cover the first three years or more at the start of a teacher's career. They will be superseded by the combined initial teacher training and early career framework (ITTECF) from September 2025.

The department's review of content for the ITTECF paid particular attention to the needs of trainees and early career teachers (ECTs) when supporting pupils with SEND. There is now significantly more content related to adaptive teaching and supporting pupils with SEND, some of which has been adapted from the new National Professional Qualification for special educational needs co-ordinators to be relevant for trainees and ECTs.

The ITTECF deliberately does not detail approaches specific to particular additional needs but sets out what makes the most effective teaching for all pupils, including those with SEND. When reviewing the CCF and the ECF in 2023, the department tested this approach with SEND educational experts from the ITT sector and beyond, with consensus that the needs of most children can be met through high-quality teaching.

The department recognises that continuous improvement is essential and have recently committed to a full review of the Early Career Teacher Entitlement in 2027 to ensure it continues to provide the best possible support for ECTs. This review will focus on the support we provide new teachers in teaching pupils with SEND.

Beyond the ITTECF, decisions relating to teachers' professional development rest with schools, headteachers and teachers themselves, as they are in the best position to judge their own requirements. The 'School teacher pay and conditions' document, which applies to maintained schools, confirms that all teachers should have access to advice, training and developmental opportunities appropriate to their needs.

The focus of Ofsted inspections is on schools and how all the individuals within them work together to make sure that children receive the highest possible quality of education. The focus is not on inspecting the specific individuals that work in schools. Ofsted therefore does not require schools to provide any evidence of teachers' professional development. However, as part of their leadership and management judgement, inspectors will consider whether continuing professional development for teachers and staff is aligned with the curriculum.

Jo Platt:

[41981]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities training provided in Initial Teacher Training programmes; and what steps she is taking to improve that training.

Catherine McKinnell:

High quality teaching is the most important in-school factor for improving outcomes for all children, particularly those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) or from disadvantaged backgrounds, and we are committed to ensuring that all pupils receive excellent support from their teachers. The teachers' standards set clear expectations that teachers must understand the needs of all pupils, including those with SEND. All initial teacher training (ITT) providers must ensure that their courses enable trainee teachers to meet the teachers' standards, to be recommended for the award of qualified teacher status. Early career teachers (ECTs) are also assessed against the teachers' standards in order to pass their statutory teacher induction.

The ITT core content framework and early career framework, for trainee and ECTs respectively, cover the first three years or more at the start of a teacher's career. They set out the core body of knowledge, skills and behaviours that define great teaching. From September 2025, they will be superseded by the combined initial teacher training and early career framework (ITTECF), which sets out a minimum entitlement to training and must be used by providers of ITT and those delivering provider-led early career training to create their curricula.

The department's review of content for the ITTECF paid particular attention to the needs of trainees and ECTs when supporting pupils with SEND. There is now significantly more content related to adaptive teaching and supporting pupils with SEND, some of which has been adapted from the new National Professional Qualification for special educational needs co-ordinators to be relevant for trainees and ECTs. We have edited existing statements to improve inclusivity for SEND throughout the framework including, for example, developing an understanding of different pupil needs, and learning how to provide opportunities for success for all pupils. From September 2025, the department has also enhanced the requirement on providers of ECT training to develop SEND training materials. The department tested this approach with SEND educational experts with consensus that the approach of 'quality-first teaching' would be the best way to improve outcomes for all children, particularly those with SEND.

The department recognises that continuous improvement is essential and have recently committed to a full review of the ITTECF and Early Career Teacher Entitlement in 2027 to ensure it continues to provide the best possible support for trainees and ECTs. This review will focus on the support we provide new teachers in teaching pupils with SEND.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

■ Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: Equality

Lee Anderson: [\[41930\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what diversity, equality and inclusion targets his Department has for staff recruitment.

Michael Shanks:

The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero values the benefits of a diverse and inclusive workforce. We internally monitor our departmental diversity data and seek to increase representation amongst under-represented groups, especially at more senior grades, with a focus on Women, Ethnic Minority and Disability. We do not set targets as part of our recruitment processes but ensure that our processes are fair and equitable.

■ Domestic Visits: Suffolk

Nick Timothy: [\[41962\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how many ministerial visits he has made to Suffolk since 4 July 2025; and where those visits took place.

Michael Shanks:

The Secretary of State and the Ministerial team conduct visits across the UK on a regular basis including in Suffolk. A central list of every visit conducted is not publicly available.

■ Electricity Generation: Gas Fired Power Stations

Joe Robertson: [\[42112\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether his Department has conducted an impact assessment on energy payments to gas fired electricity generators during the winter period December 2024 to February 2025.

Michael Shanks:

The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero has not conducted a formal impact assessment on energy payments to gas fired electricity generators during the winter period December 2024 to February 2025. The Government is working closely with Ofgem and the National Energy System Operator to ensure the Balancing Mechanism, a tool that ensures electricity supply meets demand in real-time, remains competitive and transparent. The Government continues to monitor the Capacity

Market - the main tool for ensuring continued security of electricity supply - making improvements where necessary to ensure it remains fit for purpose.

■ Electricity: Infrastructure

James McMurdock:

[\[42114\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to (a) consult and (b) compensate local communities impacted by new electricity network infrastructure projects.

Michael Shanks:

The Government has announced measures to ensure that communities directly benefit from hosting clean energy infrastructure, to help support the rollout of grid infrastructure which will deliver our new renewable generation to homes and businesses. This includes community funds guidance that sets out the government's recommendations on how communities can benefit from hosting clean energy infrastructure, which provides a level of funding of £200,000 per km of overhead line and £530,000 per substation, and an electricity bill discount scheme providing a discount of up to £250 per year over up to 10 years for households within 500m of new or significantly upgraded transmission network infrastructure. Additionally, the Government intends to carry out further stakeholder engagement on the bill discount scheme in due course to gather evidence and feedback from stakeholders, including local communities.

■ Energy Supply

James McMurdock:

[\[42116\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to improve the process for procuring (a) transformers, (b) cables and (c) other critical components for electricity network expansion projects.

Michael Shanks:

The Government is committed to working with electricity operators and Ofgem to improve procurement processes for critical electricity network expansion projects. Ofgem recently launched the Advanced Procurement Mechanism to enable Transmission Owners to procure transformers, cables, and other critical components earlier in the project development cycle. This will enable Transmission Owners to secure supplier capacity and bulk procure multiple factory slots across a portfolio of projects. Transmission Owners will use this mechanism to address the current long delivery lead times for this key equipment. Officials are also engaging with further partners to examine wider policy options to address procurement challenges.

■ Energy: Infrastructure

James McMurdock: [\[42115\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he plans to take to (a) help decrease planning delays for energy infrastructure projects and (b) engage with the public on those projects.

Michael Shanks:

In December 2024, the Government published the Clean Power 2030 Action Plan which sets out an ambitious package of legislative and non-legislative reforms to our planning system to accelerate the development of energy infrastructure. The Government is currently progressing the Planning and Infrastructure Bill through parliament with measures to streamline planning processes for critical infrastructure, including energy projects.

The Government wants communities to continue to participate in the planning system and as a part of the examination process, have their say in decisions which may affect them. The Government has committed to ensuring communities benefit from new energy infrastructure they host.

■ Energy: Schools

James McMurdock: [\[42172\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to support (a) primary and (b) secondary schools with high energy costs.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government believes that our mission to deliver clean power by 2030 is the best way to break our dependence on global fossil fuel markets and protect billpayers permanently.

The creation of Great British Energy will help us to harness clean energy with less reliance on volatile international energy markets and help in our commitment to make Britain a clean energy superpower by 2030.

■ Great British Energy: Solar Power

James McMurdock: [\[42173\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the long-term sustainability of the solar panels being installed under the Great British Energy scheme in relation to their (a) lifespan, (b) efficiency degradation and (c) recyclability.

Michael Shanks:

We expect panels delivered under this scheme to have an estimated lifespan of 30 years [with a 0.5% yearly attrition rate] which is based on our published assumptions.

Recyclability is a critical factor in the sustainability of solar panels and the schools and NHS trusts receiving solar panels under this scheme will be responsible for ensuring appropriate end-of-life management of panels under this scheme.

■ Solar Power: Batteries

James McMurdock: [\[42175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what proportion of the solar projects under the Great British Energy scheme will include battery storage solutions.

Michael Shanks:

Complementary technologies including battery power are in scope for use in the scheme where they would be beneficial. Whilst parts of the programme are still in development, 16 out of the initial list of 132 NHS projects published last week currently intend to fund battery storage through the scheme.

The process to finalise the selection of schools is still underway; feasibility studies will then be undertaken to determine what interventions are most suited for each site.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Environment Protection: Planning

Blake Stephenson: [\[42689\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 19 March 2025 to Questions (a) 36880, (b) 36881, (c) 36882, (d) 36883 and (e) 36884, which stakeholders have been consulted.

Blake Stephenson: [\[42690\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 19 March 2025 to Questions (a) 36880, (b) 36881, (c) 36882, (d) 36883 and (e) 36884, when he plans to conclude this work; and if he will publish the results.

Mary Creagh:

To develop recommendations to address the reports' findings, we have met with a range of stakeholders, including environmental NGOs, forestry industry representatives and local planning directors. We have also met with relevant government bodies, such as Forestry Commission and Natural England. Initial engagement is helping to shape our recommendations for next steps and we will continue to work alongside these groups to establish the most effective actions for improving the implementation of the National Planning Policy Framework protections for ancient woodland and ancient and veteran trees. We have no plans to publish.

■ Horticulture: Peat**Mr James Frith:** [\[42315\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he plans to take to support the horticultural sector in the peat free transition.

Mary Creagh:

This is a devolved matter and the information provided therefore relates to England only. Defra is committed to protecting our nature-rich habitats, including peat bogs, and is looking at next steps regarding measures to ban horticultural peat including how the Department will continue to work alongside the horticultural sector to accelerate progress on the peat free transition.

■ Land: Nature Conservation**Kevin Hollinrake:** [\[42253\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to consolidate the different types of nature designation of land.

Mary Creagh:

The Government has no plans to consolidate the different types of nature designation of land.

■ Litter**Ellie Chowns:** [\[42917\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 12 March 2025 to Question 36460 on Litter, what steps he plans to take to support local authorities to tackle littering.

Mary Creagh:

Littering is a crime that blights communities and the environment. Local councils are usually best placed to respond to littering and related problems, in a way tailored to the community in which they occur. They have a range of enforcement tools at their disposal including fixed penalty notices and prosecution.

This Government is considering what further steps are needed to help local authorities reduce litter and keep their streets clean. Any new announcements will be made in the usual manner.

■ Nature Conservation: West Dorset**Edward Morello:** [\[42910\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will meet with the hon. Member for West Dorset to visit the West Dorset Wildings Brit Valley Project.

Mary Creagh:

The Secretary of State's private office handles all meeting requests. Please contact them directly to request a meeting.

■ Packaging: Recycling

Neil Duncan-Jordan:

[\[42346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the impact of Extended Producer Responsibility fees on businesses in the UK compared to similar schemes in (a) France, (b) Germany and (c) Canada.

Mary Creagh:

In October 2024, the Government published an updated assessment of the impact of introducing the pEPR scheme on packaging producers as a whole. This impact assessment did not compare the impact of fees to international schemes. Illustrative base fee estimates for the UK are in the same order of magnitude of other countries' fees. However, comparisons are not straightforward because of differences in waste infrastructure and waste management approaches.

Neil Duncan-Jordan:

[\[42347\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions his Department has had with international counterparts on best practices for balancing the environmental benefits of Extended Producer Responsibility with economic sustainability for affected industries.

Mary Creagh:

Defra and PackUK have engaged with multiple European and Canadian EPR schemes throughout development of pEPR, using international best practice to inform the drafting of the regulations. Many of the international EPR schemes are managed by Producer Responsibility Organisations (PRO's). Environmental benefits are considered to be enhanced by the PRO's having direct accountability for local recycling services infrastructure and driving investment. A PRO approach is also broadly considered to drive cost efficiency and ensure that Extended Producer Responsibility Schemes provide good value for money for obligated producers. Defra officials are currently working with devolved governments to bring forward amendments to pEPR Regulations that would enable appointment of a PRO.

■ Recycling: Public Houses

Neil Duncan-Jordan:

[\[42348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential financial impact of Extended Producer Responsibility fees on the beer and pub sector.

Mary Creagh:

In October 2024, the Government published an updated assessment of the impact of introducing the pEPR scheme on packaging producers as a whole. This impact assessment did not split the assessment by sector.

The Government has worked closely with industry, including the brewing sector, throughout development of Extended Producer Responsibility for Packaging (pEPR).

Feedback from stakeholders was factored into finalising the regulations, including formally consulting stakeholders on a draft of the pEPR regulations in 2023.

pEPR obligates brands and packaging producers to pay the costs of managing household packaging waste. In most cases, this will not be individual pubs but the business supplying the pub with packaged goods.

My officials have recently attended a number of events organised by the brewing industry, to discuss pEPR and to listen and respond to concerns raised by their members. We have provided extensive guidance to all sectors on how to comply with their obligations under pEPR and continue to work with the brewing sector and others to further refine both the guidance and the wider scheme.

■ Rights of Way: Rivers

Blake Stephenson: [\[42687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 19 March 2025 to Question 35439 on Forests and Rivers: Access, when he expects to confirm the National River Walk for the East of England.

Blake Stephenson: [\[42688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 19 March 2025 to Question 35439 on Forests and Rivers: Access, what the options under consideration are for the East of England's National River Walk.

Mary Creagh:

The Government continues to be committed to enhancing access to nature. We are still in the process of considering locations for the National River Walks and further information will be announced in due course.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Commonwealth: Cultural Relations

Stuart Anderson: [\[41475\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help increase opportunities for cultural exchange across the Commonwealth.

Stephen Doughty:

The UK works closely with the Commonwealth, its institutions and with our Commonwealth family through our network of High Commissions. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office supports a range of pan-Commonwealth initiatives, including through its annual contribution of over £1 million to the Commonwealth Youth Programme to promote cultural exchange by showcasing and celebrating the achievements of young people across the 56 member countries. The UK's broader financial contribution to the Commonwealth complements strong bilateral partnerships, trade relationships, supports initiatives like Commonwealth

Scholarships and promotes cultural exchange through events including the Glasgow Commonwealth Games in 2026.

■ Conflict Prevention

Wendy Morton: [\[39449\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help support efforts to promote conflict prevention in (a) the United Nations and (b) other multilateral fora.

Stephen Doughty:

As the Prime Minister said in New York in September 2024, we must put new energy and creativity into conflict prevention, reverse the trend towards ever-greater violence, make the institutions of peace fit for purpose.

The UK remains a steadfast supporter of United Nations' peacebuilding efforts, including as a top donor to the UN Peacebuilding Fund.

We continue to support the UN's Complex Risk Analytics Fund, investing in better data and analysis to strengthen global risk foresight and enable earlier response.

We will use this year's UN Peacebuilding Architecture Review to press for more systematic focus on early warning and conflict prevention across the UN system, encouraging national prevention approaches that are supported by affected communities, including women and youth.

We promote conflict prevention across our engagement with multilateral fora, including the G7, G20, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the African Union, and advocate for scaled up, targeted support in fragile settings from the World Bank and other international financial institutions.

■ Development Aid: Climate Change

Kanishka Narayan: [\[40853\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure international climate finance reaches children in communities impacted by climate change.

Stephen Doughty:

Our international climate finance continues to prioritise support to the most vulnerable communities who are experiencing the worst impacts of climate change, including children. In addition, we are committed to amplifying the voices of the most marginalised, empowering them as decision-makers, advocates, and leaders in the climate response, ensuring gender and inclusion characteristics are a key part of our policy and programming. Through our policy and programming in health, we are promoting climate resilience, sustainable and equitable systems for health, including for children. The UK is also supporting the Global Partnership for Education in a new initiative partnering with the Green Climate Fund to provide co-financing to support countries to build the resilience of their education systems to climate shocks.

■ Development Aid: Reviews

Abtisam Mohamed: [\[41579\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what progress he has made on the Development Review; and how he plans to use that review to inform the planned reduction in UK aid spending.

Stephen Doughty:

The Development Review considered how to maximise the UK's combined diplomatic and development expertise in its international development work. Reducing the overall size of our Official Development Assistance (ODA) budget will necessarily have an impact on the scale and shape of the work we do. The recommendations of the Development Review, alongside the Global Impact and Economic Diplomacy reviews, are now being considered as part of the Foreign Secretary's wider work to reform the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, and will also inform decisions on the ODA budget.

■ EU Countries: Religious Hatred

Jim Shannon: [\[34852\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had discussions with his European counterparts on (a) religiously motivated hate crimes and (b) hostility toward religious (i) figures and (ii) communities in Europe.

Stephen Doughty:

The UK condemns incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence, wherever this occurs, and we denounce hatred on the basis of religion or belief. We are committed to freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) for all. No one should live in fear because of what they do or do not believe in. We continue to address FoRB violations and protect the right to FoRB through our strong relationships with European counterparts, multilateral engagement - including through the UN, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and Article 18 Alliance - and through our bilateral work. Ministers and FCDO officials regularly raise cases of concern. The appointment of David Smith MP, as the Special Envoy for FoRB, is a clear signal of the UK's ongoing commitment to these efforts.

■ Members: Correspondence

Priti Patel: [\[41829\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when he will respond to the letter of 27 February 2025 from the House of Lords International Agreements Committee on the Review of Treaty Scrutiny.

Stephen Doughty:

A response was sent on 25 March 2025 and has now been published.

■ Roman Abramovich

Calum Miller:

[\[41775\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on seizing the interest that has accrued on Roman Abramovich's assets associated with the sale of Chelsea Football Club.

Stephen Doughty:

In a statement announcing the sale of Chelsea FC, Roman Abramovich stated the proceeds would be used to establish a foundation for the benefit of all the victims of the war in Ukraine. The Government is determined to see the proceeds reach humanitarian causes in Ukraine as quickly as possible, and we are exploring all options to bring that about.

■ Russia: Diplomatic Service

Dr Neil Shastri-Hurst:

[\[40311\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what proportion of British diplomats posted to Russia have language proficiency in Russian at CEFR level C1 or higher.

Stephen Doughty:

Around 70 members of staff of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office currently have valid exam passes in Russian at C1 level or above. Exam passes are valid for five years.

■ Special Envoy on Freedom of Religion or Belief

Stuart Anderson:

[\[40364\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if the Government will put the role of Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief on a statutory footing.

Stephen Doughty:

The UK is committed to championing freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) for all around the world. However, we do not see additional value in making the role of envoy statutory. No special envoy roles in the UK are enshrined in legislation and legislation is not required in order to create, or make more effective, the role of special envoys. David Smith MP was appointed as the UK Special Envoy for FoRB in December 2024.

■ Ukraine: Armed Conflict

Martin Wrigley:

[\[41249\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to his Oral Statement of 24 February 2025 on Ukraine, Official Report, columns

513 to 515, what diplomatic steps he is taking with his international counterparts to help end the war in Ukraine.

Stephen Doughty:

We remain in close contact with the United States, our European partners, and Ukraine on how to achieve a just and lasting peace that safeguards Ukraine's security and sovereignty. The UK, alongside France, is leading efforts to build a 'Coalition of the Willing' to defend any peace deal and support Ukraine's future security. The Prime Minister recently hosted over 200 military planners from 30 countries in London and attended the subsequent leaders meeting in Paris on 27 March. The Foreign Secretary took forward these discussions with Weimar+ Foreign Ministers on 31 March, and the Defence Secretary will chair the next meeting of the Ukraine Defence Contact Group on 11 April.

■ **Ukraine: Drug Resistance**

Wendy Morton:

[\[41877\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much funding his Department is providing to Ukraine to help tackle antimicrobial resistance.

Stephen Doughty:

We have provided £477 million in humanitarian support to Ukraine since the full-scale invasion, which includes support for healthcare services. Our support includes funding for the Ukrainian Red Cross, who have funded NHS doctors and nurses to share best practice with their Ukrainian counterparts, including how to prevent the spread of infections and antimicrobial resistance. Through the World Health Organisation, we are also strengthening Ukraine's health system to provide better care and rehabilitation services to meet the needs of those injured because of the war. In February, the Defence Secretary announced that we would double our funding to £40 million for Project Renovator, which draws on the UK's leading defence medical expertise to expand Ukraine's military rehabilitation and medical services.

■ **Ukraine: HIV Infection**

David Mundell:

[\[41801\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he is taking steps with (a) Ukrainian health authorities and (b) NGOs to ensure the continuity of HIV services in Ukraine.

David Mundell:

[\[41802\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to support HIV (a) prevention and (b) treatment programs in Ukraine.

Stephen Doughty:

As a founding member and third largest investor, the UK is a committed partner of the Global Fund to fight health risks including HIV/AIDS. Since 2002, the Global Fund

has invested more than US\$980 million in Ukraine for HIV and TB programmes and to support strong and resilient health systems. The Global Fund allocated US\$27.7 million in emergency funding to Ukraine between March 2022 and August 2023 to support the continuity of HIV (and TB) prevention, testing and treatment services. Through the investments of the Global Fund partnership, nearly 120,000 people received antiretroviral therapy for HIV in Ukraine in 2023 alone. Figures for 24/25 are not yet available.

■ United Nations

Wendy Morton: [\[39450\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of the UN Secretary General's UN80 Initiative.

Stephen Doughty:

In its 80th year, the need for an effective UN remains clear; however, the organization needs major reform if it is to meet the complex challenges of the future.

The UK welcomes the UN Secretary-General's decision to launch a UN80 Task Force on reform, to ensure that the UN focuses once again on core tasks and maximum impact. If done right, a reformed UN will serve as a multiplier for UK interests and priorities, as we work to build a safer, more prosperous and equitable world. Therefore, we will encourage the Secretary-General's reform initiative to be as ambitious and far-reaching as possible.

I was able to convey our support in person when I recently met with the Secretary General in Geneva.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Abiraterone

Danny Beales: [\[42127\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to take steps to allow doctors to prescribe Abiraterone.

Karin Smyth:

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is the independent body responsible for developing authoritative, evidence-based recommendations for the National Health Service on whether new, licenced medicines represent a clinically and cost-effective use of resources. The NHS in England is legally required to fund medicines recommended by the NICE for eligible patients in line with its recommendations.

The NICE has published guidance recommending abiraterone for the treatment of metastatic hormone-relapsed prostate cancer before chemotherapy is indicated and for castration-resistant metastatic prostate cancer previously treated with a docetaxel-

containing regimen. NHS England funds abiraterone for these indications of prostate cancer in line with the NICE's recommendations, making it routinely available for clinicians to prescribe to eligible patients.

NHS England considered abiraterone as an off-label treatment for hormone sensitive, non-metastatic prostate cancer through its clinical policy development process in 2024/25. Through this process, NHS England confirmed that there was sufficient supporting evidence to support the routine commissioning of abiraterone in this indication and it was ranked in the highest priority level. However, NHS England could not identify the necessary recurrent funding to support commissioning of abiraterone, or any other treatments within the prioritisation round. Ministers are considering further advice on this issue.

■ Acupuncture

Tom Morrison: [\[43319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what (a) safeguards and (b) support her Department has put in place to help protect people who experience (i) injury and (ii) illness from acupuncture.

Tom Morrison: [\[43320\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what mechanisms his Department has put in place to hold the British Acupuncture Council to account for (a) injuries and (b) illnesses from acupuncture treatment.

Karin Smyth:

Acupuncturists are not statutorily regulated in the United Kingdom. The Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care (PSA) operates a voluntary registers programme, which provides a proportionate means of assurance for unregulated professions and which sits between employer controls and statutory regulation by setting standards for organisations holding voluntary registers for unregulated health and social care occupations.

The British Acupuncture Council (BACC) holds a register of acupuncturists, which is accredited by the PSA. To gain accreditation from the PSA, organisations must meet its nine Standards for Accredited Registers. These standards require organisations: to have a focus on public protection; to have processes for handling complaints against practitioners; to set appropriate levels of education and training for entry to the register; to require registrants to undertake continuing professional development; and to understand and monitor the risks associated with the practices of registrants.

The BACC is an independent, representative body and as such, does not fall under Government oversight. Therefore, any decisions about the practice requirements for the professions it represents are a matter for the organisation and its members.

The Government would encourage anyone accessing acupuncture services to establish whether their practitioner is registered with a voluntary register accredited by the PSA, such as that held by the BACC.

■ Ambulance Services: Private Sector

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[42214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to decrease reliance on private emergency ambulance service companies.

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[42215\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much his department has spent on private emergency ambulance service companies in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Karin Smyth:

The information requested is not held. Decisions on the use of private ambulance companies to increase capacity are taken at a local level by the relevant ambulance trust.

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

■ Cancer: Young People

Sorcha Eastwood:

[\[42106\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to raise awareness during Teenage and Young Adult Cancer Awareness Month of the signs and symptoms of cancer in April 2025.

Sorcha Eastwood:

[\[42107\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to meet young people with cancer to discuss their experiences during Teenage and Young Adult Cancer Awareness Month in April 2025.

Ashley Dalton:

NHS England and other National Health Service organisations, nationally and locally, publish information on the signs and symptoms of many different types of cancer, including those that are most common in teenagers and young adults. Further information on cancer signs and symptoms is available on the NHS.UK website.

The Department is committed to improving outcomes for teenagers and young adults with cancer. That's why we have relaunched the Children and Young People Cancer Taskforce. The taskforce will explore opportunities for improvement in England, including detection and diagnosis, genomic testing and treatment, research and innovation, and patient experience. The taskforce will ensure that the unique needs of children and young people, including teenagers with cancer, are carefully considered as part of the National Cancer Plan for England, due to be published later this year.

As part of this work, the Department is committed to directly engaging with patients and their families to discuss their experiences. We are working with taskforce

members to assemble a Patient Experience Panel, made up of young people with lived experience of cancer and their families, which will feed directly into the work of the taskforce.

■ Catheters

Danny Beales: [\[42140\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the NICE Late Stage Assessment on intermittent catheters on the ambition to move more healthcare out of hospitals and into the community.

Ashley Dalton:

The Department commissions the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) to undertake Late-Stage Assessments (LSAs) to help commissioners, clinicians, and patients identify the most effective products that offer the best value for the National Health Service.

The NICE's LSA of intermittent urethral catheters for chronic incomplete bladder emptying focuses on urethral catheters used in primary care and community settings. This will ensure that as more healthcare is delivered in community settings, commissioners, clinicians, and patients will be better informed when identifying the most effective and best value for money intermittent catheters in a crowded market.

■ Chronic Fatigue Syndrome: Surrey Heath

Dr Al Pinkerton: [\[42165\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to support people impacted by myalgic encephalomyelitis in Surrey Heath constituency.

Ashley Dalton:

NHS Frimley does not currently have contracted support for myalgic encephalomyelitis, also known as chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS). Patients who require support are offered services within neighbouring systems.

At a national level, the responses to the Department's Improving the experiences of people with ME/CFS: interim delivery plan consultation, along with continued close engagement with stakeholders, will inform the development of the final ME/CFS delivery plan, which we aim to publish by the end of June 2025. The plan will focus on boosting research, improving attitudes and education, and bettering the lives of people with this debilitating disease, including those in the Surrey Heath constituency.

We also intend to provide additional support to ME/CFS researchers to develop high quality funding applications and access existing National Institute for Health and Care Research and Medical Research Council research funding. All research funding applications are subject to peer review and judged in open competition, with awards being made on the basis of the importance of the topic to patients and health and care services, value for money, and scientific quality. Our forthcoming ME/CFS delivery plan will outline the additional support we will offer to the research

community to increase the volume and quality of applications and, therefore, increase the allocation of funding to this area.

■ Clinical Commissioning Groups

Dr Neil Shastri-Hurst: [\[42195\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the abolition of NHS England on the (a) regulation and (b) oversight of clinical commissioning groups.

Dr Neil Shastri-Hurst: [\[42204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of the abolition of NHS England on (a) training and (b) development programmes for NHS staff.

Karin Smyth:

Ministers and senior Department officials will work with the new transformation team at the top of NHS England, led by Sir Jim Mackey, to lead this transformation. As we work to return many of NHS England's current functions to the Department, we will ensure that we continue to evaluate impacts of all kinds.

The abolition of NHS England will strip out the unnecessary bureaucracy and cut the duplication that comes from having two organisations doing the same job. We will empower staff to focus on delivering better care for patients, driving productivity up, and getting waiting times down.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Equality

Lee Anderson: [\[41935\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what diversity, equality and inclusion targets his Department has for staff recruitment.

Karin Smyth:

The Department does not have any diversity, equality, or inclusion targets for recruitment. The Department does, however, aim to ensure that its staff are drawn from all walks of life and are representative of the public it serves.

■ Doctors: Refugees

Steve Darling: [\[41979\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of offering (a) guidance or (b) funding support for charities who are assisting refugees with medical qualifications into the NHS.

Karin Smyth:

The Department has made no assessment of the potential merits of offering guidance or funding support for charities who are assisting refugees with medical qualifications into the National Health Service.

Many regulators, royal colleges, and other organisations provide support or prioritise services for refugees, including some flexibility in the information that candidates need to provide for employment checks.

■ Doctors: Training

Daisy Cooper: [\[42657\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 12 February 2025 to Question 28599 on Doctors: Training, if he will conduct a review of the selection process for medical specialty training places with a view to giving priority to UK medical graduates, in the context of that being the case in Canada, the US and Australia.

Karin Smyth:

Working with NHS England, we continue to keep the selection process for all applicants to medical speciality training under review.

NHS England launched an extensive engagement and listening exercise to help shape the future of postgraduate medical training in February 2025. This engagement exercise will run through to June, with findings evaluated and reported in the summer.

■ Earwax: Community Health Services

Alex Brewer: [\[41325\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that NHS Integrated Care Boards provide community-based ear wax removal services.

Karin Smyth:

Integrated care boards (ICBs) have a statutory responsibility to commission cost-effective healthcare to meet the needs of their local population. This includes the arrangement of ear wax removal services.

Manual ear syringing is no longer advised by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) due to the risks associated with it, such as trauma to their ear drum or infection, so general practitioners (GPs) will often recommend home treatment remedies to alleviate ear wax build-up.

However, in line with the NICE's guidance, a person may require ear wax removal treatment if the build-up of earwax is linked with hearing loss. A GP could then consider referring the patient into audiology services, which ICBs are responsible for commissioning.

■ Earwax: Health Services

Liz Jarvis: [\[41964\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support integrated care boards to offer ear wax removal services for patients when the ear wax is contributing to (a) hearing loss and (b) other symptoms.

Karin Smyth:

Integrated care boards (ICBs) have a statutory responsibility to commission cost-effective healthcare to meet the needs of their local population. This includes the arrangement of services for ear wax removal.

Manual ear syringing is no longer advised by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) due to the risks associated with it, such as trauma to their ear drum or infection, so general practitioners (GPs) will often recommend home treatment remedies to alleviate ear wax build-up.

However, in line with the NICE's guidance, a person may require ear wax removal treatment if the build-up of earwax is linked with hearing loss. A GP could then consider referring the patient into audiology services, which ICBs are responsible for commissioning.

ICBs should therefore arrange for the provision of ear wax removal services when a patient has a clinical need for ear wax removal beyond home treatments.

■ Endometriosis: Diagnosis**Markus Campbell-Savours:**[\[42370\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the average time taken to diagnose endometriosis was in each of the last five years.

Karin Smyth:

This data is not held centrally. The Government is committed to prioritising women's health and improving the care for gynaecological conditions, including endometriosis.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) published an update to the guideline on endometriosis diagnosis and management in November 2024. This makes firmer recommendations for healthcare professionals on referrals and investigations for women with suspected endometriosis, which will help women receive a diagnosis and treatment more quickly.

For many women with symptoms of endometriosis, the initial pharmacological treatment takes place in primary care and can be in parallel with a referral for further investigations. As a result, looking at diagnosis times alone is unlikely to be the only measure of whether women are receiving care for endometriosis in a timely matter. NHS England is looking into metrics that best reflect the timely access to care and outcomes for women, including for endometriosis. This work will explore whether time to diagnosis is the optimum measure.

An ongoing Office for National Statistics investigation is looking into the impact of endometriosis on women's labour market outcomes. One component of this study is linking primary and secondary care data to better understand diagnosis times for endometriosis.

■ Endometriosis: Surgery**Markus Campbell-Savours:** [\[42375\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of patients waiting for gynaecological surgery are waiting for surgery for thoracic endometriosis.

Karin Smyth:

This data is not held in the format requested. As set out in the Plan for Change, we will ensure that 92% of patients return to waiting no longer than 18 weeks from referral to treatment by March 2029, a standard which has not been met consistently since September 2015.

■ Health Services**Dr Neil Shastri-Hurst:** [\[42198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the abolition of NHS England on partnerships with external healthcare organizations.

Karin Smyth:

Ministers and senior Department officials will work with the new transformation team at the top of NHS England, led by Sir Jim Mackey, to lead this transformation. As we work to return many of NHS England's current functions to the Department, we will ensure that we continue to evaluate impacts of all kinds.

We recognise the role that external healthcare organisations have across our healthcare system, and we will continue to work closely with these organisations throughout the transition.

■ Health Services: Bournemouth West**Jessica Toale:** [\[42839\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help reduce waiting times for NHS services in Bournemouth West constituency.

Karin Smyth:

We have wasted no time in getting to work cutting National Health Service waiting lists and ensuring people have the best possible experience during their care, including in the Bournemouth West constituency. We promised change, and we've delivered early, with a reduction in the list of over 190,000 pathways, and two million extra appointments provided.

The Elective Reform Plan, published in January 2025, sets out a whole system approach to hitting the 18-week referral to treatment target by March 2029, a standard which has not been met consistently since September 2015.

The newly published Planning Guidance for 2025/26 sets a target that 65% of patients wait for 18 weeks or less by March 2026, with every trust expected to deliver a minimum 5% improvement on current performance over that period.

■ Health Services: Ethnic Groups

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[41915]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking with (a) NHS England and (b) healthcare professionals to ensure that patients from ethnic minority backgrounds are able to discuss any concerns they may have on the potential impact of (i) cultural and (ii) racial bias; and what steps he is taking to improve the experiences of patients who raise those concerns.

Ashley Dalton:

The Government recognises that racial health inequalities are linked to broader socioeconomic factors. Tackling these inequalities is central to building a fairer health system where outcomes are not dictated by race or background.

Community-led approaches, including peer support and culturally sensitive social prescribing, are integral to preventing poor health outcomes and improving self-management. These will be key features of the upcoming 10-Year Health Plan.

The NHS Framework for Action on Inclusion Health is advancing improvements in culturally competent and trauma-informed care, ensuring services are responsive to the needs of ethnic minority groups and other marginalised populations.

As raised in last year's health inequalities public board report, the National Health Service has also established the NHS Race and Health Observatory to better understand and address the stark health inequalities experienced by black and minority ethnic communities. Further information on last year's health inequalities public board report and the NHS Race and Health Observatory is available, respectively, at the following two links:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/annual-report-on-nhs-englands-work-on-healthcare-inequalities-and-the-nhs-race-and-health-observatory-2/>

<https://www.nhsrho.org/about-us/>

■ Health Services: Women

Chi Onwurah:

[42259]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential implications for his policies on the role women's health hubs in the 10-year health plan of the guidance by his Department entitled Women's health hubs: cost benefit analysis, published on 21 March 2024.

Karin Smyth:

We are committed to improving women's health. This will be taken forward as an important part of the 10 Year Plan. The plan will draw on a range of evidence and analyses when establishing our priorities for rebuilding and reforming our health system over the next ten years.

Health: Women**Mr James Frith:****[41970]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent progress his Department has made on the Women's Health Strategy in relation to (a) healthy lifestyle choices, (b) breast cancer and (c) women's health generally.

Karin Smyth:

The Government is committed to prioritising women's health as we build a National Health Service fit for the future.

The Government and the NHS provide a range of services to support people, including women, to make healthy lifestyle choices. For example, through stop smoking services, sexual health services, and weight management services. The National Smoke-free Pregnancy Incentives Scheme is also supporting pregnant women to quit smoking.

Reducing unwarranted variation in cancer treatment is a strategic priority for the NHS. On World Cancer Day this year, the Department announced a major world-leading artificial intelligence trial to transform cancer care, helping radiologists catch breast cancer earlier. Also, in February 2025 NHS England launched its first-ever awareness campaign to highlight the benefits of breast screening and encourage more women to participate. Further information about this campaign is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/2025/02/nhs-launches-first-ever-breast-screening-campaign-to-help-detect-thousands-of-cancers-earlier/>

We are continuing to improve the health of women and girls, for example by supporting those who have experienced pregnancy loss through a full rollout of baby loss certificates, through menopause support in the workplace, access to emergency hormonal contraception, and by boosting women's participation in research and clinical trials.

Hernias: Surgery**Damien Egan:****[42338]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the (a) availability and (b) eligibility requirements for NHS hernia operations.

Karin Smyth:

No specific assessment has been made of the adequacy of the availability of hernia operations. Integrated care boards are responsible for commissioning services, considering the needs of their local population and national guidance, such as that from the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence.

There are several types of hernia and therefore decisions about the eligibility to treat will be based on guidelines and clinical judgement appropriate to the individual circumstances.

■ **Ibuprofen and Paracetamol**

Melanie Ward:

[42104]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to bring guidance on the sale of (a) paracetamol and (c) ibuprofen into law.

Karin Smyth:

Paracetamol and ibuprofen are well-known medicines for pain, which, when taken in line with the recommended posology, have well-established safety profiles. The vast majority of patients use paracetamol responsibly, as an effective pain-reliever. However, if taken in excess, it can cause serious physical harm.

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) monitors the safety of medicines, including the sale of paracetamol and ibuprofen without a prescription. Paracetamol and ibuprofen may be obtained without a prescription, under the supervision of a pharmacist, or through general sales outlets. The Human Medicines Regulations 2012, Schedule 15, states that the maximum pack size for both paracetamol and ibuprofen that may be sold through general sales is 16 tablets. Larger packs, up to a maximum of 100 tablets, may be sold under the supervision of a pharmacist, where it becomes a prescription item.

The MHRA has recently updated the voluntary best practice guidance on the general sale of medicines for pain, to further highlight the risks of overdose, to address public concerns, and to recognise current sales techniques. Further risk mitigation measures are also being considered.

The update to the best practice guidance forms part of the suicide prevention strategy that is currently being developed, Suicide prevention strategy for England: 2023 to 2028, which includes a reference to paracetamol, and which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/suicide-prevention-strategy-for-england-2023-to-2028>

■ **Integrated Care Boards: Finance**

Clive Jones:

[R] [42618]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the abolition of NHS England on funding for integrated care boards.

Karin Smyth:

Ministers and senior Department officials will work with the new transformation team at the top of NHS England, led by Sir Jim Mackey, as we undertake the integration of NHS England and the Department, to ensure that the expected savings will be reinvested in frontline services to deliver better care for patients.

As part of the necessary changes to support the National Health Service to recover, NHS England has also indicated that integrated care boards (ICBs) should reduce in

size. We will work with the NHS to make the necessary choices that are needed to get the NHS back on its feet.

In a letter from Sir Jim Mackey to all ICBs and NHS trusts and foundation trusts on 1 April 2025, NHS England published further detail on the future of the ICBs. This letter is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/working-together-in-2025-26-to-lay-the-foundations-for-reform/>

■ Integrated Care Boards: Operating Costs

Julia Lopez: [\[42887\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when guidance will be issued to ICBs on where the expected 50% cuts in running costs should come from.

Karin Smyth:

As part of the necessary changes to support the National Health Service to recover, NHS England has indicated that integrated care boards (ICBs) should reduce in size. NHS England and the Department are working in close collaboration with ICBs to ensure implementation is carried out effectively and at a pace, to support the work to get the NHS back on its feet. Further detail on the future of ICBs was provided in a letter issued to all ICBs and NHS trusts and foundation trusts on 1 April 2025.

This letter is available at the following link: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/working-together-in-2025-26-to-lay-the-foundations-for-reform/>

■ London Ambulance Service: Finance

Andrew Rosindell: [\[42216\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much funding his Department is providing the London Ambulance Service.

Karin Smyth:

Responsibility for commissioning ambulance services is a matter for the local integrated care board. The London Ambulance Service received £704.2 million in the financial year 2024/25.

■ Long Covid: Surrey Heath

Dr Al Pinkerton: [\[42166\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to support people impacted by Long Covid in Surrey Heath constituency.

Ashley Dalton:

Integrated care boards (ICBs) are responsible for commissioning services for people with long COVID. ICBs are allocated funding by NHS England to meet local need and priorities, and to improve outcomes.

Due to the very low numbers of patients with long COVID now being referred for treatment, NHS Frimley has taken the decision to no longer operate dedicated long COVID services. As of 18 March 2025, patients presenting with symptoms that may be linked to long COVID will be referred, depending on their symptoms, to other available services, including chronic fatigue services, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, and mental health services such as talking therapies.

Every effort will be made to ensure that patients who are currently accessing the long COVID services complete their therapy and are transferred to other services specific to their need, if appropriate.

NHS Frimley recognises that this decision may cause concern for people who have been receiving care from its long COVID services. However, patients will continue to receive support and advice, and NHS Frimley is working with the providers of long COVID services to ensure that current patients complete their care treatment.

Anyone who has a long-term symptom following COVID-19 and needs assistance should speak to their general practitioner.

■ **Maternity Services: Ethnic Groups**

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[42014]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that ethnic minority women are adequately represented in the development of national maternity care (a) policies and (b) guidelines.

Karin Smyth:

It is unacceptable that there are stark inequalities for women and babies. It is a priority for the Government to make sure that all women and babies receive the high-quality care they deserve, regardless of their background, location, or ethnicity.

We recognise the importance of ethnic minority women being adequately represented within the development of policies and guidelines. Maternity and Neonatal Voices Partnerships are one such forum in place that ensures these voices are at the heart of the decisions made in maternity and neonatal services. These partnerships listen to the experiences of women and families, and bring together service users, staff, and other stakeholders to plan, review, and improve maternity and neonatal care. At a local level, 27% of Maternity and Neonatal Voices Partnerships leads are from ethnic minority groups. NHS England has provided support to improve the ethnic diversity of Maternity and Neonatal Voices Partnerships.

NHS England also has in place a National Service User Voice Group, which informs the development of national maternity care policies and guidelines. 35% of NHS England's National Service User Voice Group leads for maternity and neonatal care are from an ethnic minority group.

■ Maternity Services: Staff**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** [\[41916\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking through (a) recruitment and (b) retention practices to ensure the diversity of the maternity healthcare professional workforce.

Karin Smyth:

Decisions about recruitment are matters for individual National Health Service employers. NHS England's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion plan, published in 2023, includes a commitment to embed fair and inclusive recruitment processes and talent management strategies that target under-representation and lack of diversity.

It is important that the NHS workforce feels valued and well supported. NHS England is leading on a range of initiatives to boost the retention of existing staff, including building a compassionate and inclusive culture.

Targeted retention work for midwives is being undertaken by NHS England and led by the Chief Nursing Officer. This includes a midwifery and nursing retention self-assessment tool, mentoring schemes, and targeted efforts to improve the diversity of the workforce through four nationally run programmes to develop staff from ethnic minority backgrounds.

■ Medical Equipment: Prices**Danny Beales:** [\[42137\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the review of Part IX of the Drug Tariff does not adversely impact investment by the medtech sector.

Ashley Dalton:

The Department is working closely with industry through the Drug Tariff Committee to finalise the detail of the update to the product categorisation and listing process of Part IX of the Drug Tariff. The Department remains committed to ensuring that the reforms represent a positive change for patients, the National Health Service, and the medical technology sector. For example, to support innovation and inward investment, a new two-year temporary listing mechanism will be introduced so that innovative products can be made available for patients more quickly.

Danny Beales: [\[42139\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the review of Part IX of the Drug Tariff supports the NHS 10 Year Plan in shifting care from (a) hospital to the community, (b) treatment to prevention and (c) analogue to digital.

Ashley Dalton:

Part IX of the Drug Tariff covers medical technology products prescribed in the community. In 2025, the Department is updating the product categorisation and listing process, following extensive engagement with patient groups, the National Health

Service, and industry. The updated categorisation will support the NHS to prescribe the right products for patients. The new listing process will, for the first time, include the patient's voice and clinical subject matter experts in the decision-making process, and a new temporary listing process will support early access for patients of innovative products able to support the three big shifts.

Danny Beales: [\[42142\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of NICE's Late Stage Assessments on the attractiveness of the UK for inward investment from medtech companies.

Ashley Dalton:

The Department commissioned the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) to undertake Late-Stage Assessments (LSAs) to help commissioners, clinicians, and patients identify the most effective products that offer the best value for the National Health Service. LSAs benefit health technology manufacturers by giving all manufacturers a transparent, robust, and evidence-based process for demonstrating the added value of their products.

■ Medical Treatments

Clive Jones: [\[42959\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made on the potential impact of the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's severity modifier on the approval of treatments for severe conditions.

Clive Jones: [\[42960\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to assess the potential impact of National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's severity modifier on people with secondary breast cancer.

Clive Jones: [\[42962\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the requirement for opportunity cost neutrality in the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence severity modifier on funding for treatments for severe conditions.

Clive Jones: [\[42963\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of the requirement for opportunity cost neutrality in the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence severity modifier.

Karin Smyth:

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is responsible for developing the methods and processes that its independent committees use in their evaluations, independently and in consultation with stakeholders. The severity modifier is based on evidence of societal preferences and was introduced in 2022 as

part of a comprehensive review of the NICE's methods and processes, following extensive public and stakeholder engagement.

The NICE carried out a review of the severity modifier in 2024, and found that it is operating as intended. Since its introduction, the severity modifier has resulted in a higher approval rate for cancer medicines compared to the NICE's previous methods, and has also allowed greater weight to be applied to non-cancer medicines that address a broader range of severe diseases, enabling the NICE to recommend medicines for conditions such as cystic fibrosis, Duchenne muscular dystrophy, childhood epilepsy, hepatitis D, and sickle cell disease. The NICE has commissioned research to gather further evidence on societal preferences that will inform future method reviews, but there is no prospect of any change until it concludes, and any future changes would need to be consistent with the principle of cost neutrality.

■ NHS

Dr Neil Shastri-Hurst:

[\[42202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the abolition of NHS England on the implementation of the NHS 10 year plan.

Karin Smyth:

We do not envisage that the changes set out by the Prime Minister on 13 March 2025 will affect the implementation of the 10-Year Health Plan. We still intend to publish the plan in spring 2025.

The changes will set the National Health Service up to deliver on the three big shifts needed to make the service fit for the future: from hospital to community; from analogue to digital; and from sickness to prevention.

■ NHS England

Edward Argar:

[\[41904\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, which of NHS England's current responsibilities will be outsourced to private sector consultancies or external firms when it is abolished.

Edward Argar:

[\[41908\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, which of NHS England's responsibility will not be brought into the Department of Health and Social Care, following NHS England's abolition.

Karin Smyth:

Ministers and senior Department officials will work with the new transformation team at the top of NHS England, led by Sir Jim Mackey, to determine the structure and requirements needed to support the creation of a new centre for health and care.

At this stage, while we are scoping the programme, it is too early to say what the precise changes in organisational design will be.

Julia Lopez: [\[42877\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with the Leader of the House on the timetable for bringing forward legislative proposals to abolish NHS England.

Karin Smyth:

Ministers and senior Department officials will work with the new transformation team at the top of NHS England, led by Sir Jim Mackey, to determine the structure and requirements needed to support the creation of a new centre for health and care.

Primary legislation will be required, and we intend to bring this forward when Parliamentary time allows.

Julia Lopez: [\[42882\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has conducted an equality impact assessment on the decision to abolish NHS England.

Karin Smyth:

Ministers and senior Department officials will work with the new transformation team at the top of NHS England, led by Sir Jim Mackey, to lead this transformation.

As we work to return many of NHS England's current functions to the Department, we will ensure that we continue to evaluate impacts of all kinds, including equality impacts.

Freddie van Mierlo: [\[42945\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of closing NHS England on the (a) timeline for the production of the NHS 10-year plan and (b) publication date of that plan.

Karin Smyth:

We do not envisage that the changes set out by the Prime Minister on 13 March 2025 will affect the publication of the 10 Year Plan. We still intend to publish the plan later in the spring.

The changes will set the National Health Service up to deliver on the three big shifts needed to make the service fit for the future, from hospital to community, from analogue to digital, and from sickness to prevention.

■ NHS England: Assets

Dr Neil Shastri-Hurst: [\[42199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to manage the redistribution of NHS England's (a) assets and (b) resources.

Karin Smyth:

Ministers and senior officials in Department will work with the new transformation team at the top of NHS England, led by Sir Jim Mackey, to lead this transformation.

Work has begun immediately to start bringing teams in NHS England and the

Department together, and over the next two years, NHS England and the Department will combine to form a new joint centre.

We are currently scoping the programme for this change, which will include an approach to the assets and resources of NHS England.

The abolition of NHS England will strip out the unnecessary bureaucracy and cut the duplication that comes from having two organisations doing the same job. We will empower staff to focus on delivering better care for patients, driving productivity up, and getting waiting times down. The expected millions of pounds savings made by this transformation will be reinvested in frontline services to deliver better care for patients.

■ NHS England: Managers

Edward Argar: [\[41902\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what new roles at director level or above he plans to create in his Department following the closure of NHS England.

Edward Argar: [\[41903\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the projected net change in (a) civil service and (b) public sector employees is as a result of abolishing NHS England.

Edward Argar: [\[41906\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the proportion of NHS England's staff who will be retained in a new roles within government or other public services when NHS England is abolished.

Karin Smyth:

Ministers and senior Department officials will work with the new transformation team at the top of NHS England, led by Sir Jim Mackey, to determine the structure and requirements needed to support the creation of a new centre for health and care. The transition team will work across NHS England and the Department, bringing together the expertise and experience of both organisations.

As part of these changes, we intend to reduce the headcount across the Department and NHS England by 50%, which will deliver hundreds of millions of pounds of savings. At this stage, while we are scoping the programme, it is too early to say what the precise changes in personnel and organisational design will be.

■ NHS England: Privacy

Dr Neil Shastri-Hurst: [\[42194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure (a) data protection and (b) privacy during the transfer of NHS England's functions.

Karin Smyth:

Ministers and senior Department officials will work with the new transformation team at the top of NHS England, led by Sir Jim Mackey, to lead this transformation. As we work to return many of NHS England's current functions to the Department, we will ensure that we continue to evaluate impacts of all kinds.

It will remain the policy of the Department and NHS England before, during, and after this transition that information relating to people's identifiable health and care is shared appropriately, lawfully, and in line with their reasonable expectations.

■ NHS England: Redundancy Pay**Julia Lopez:**[\[42886\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has ring-fenced a sum for the cost of redundancy payments associated with the abolition of NHS England.

Karin Smyth:

As we work to return many of NHS England's current functions to the Department, we will ensure that we continue to evaluate impacts of all kinds. At this stage it is too early to say what the upfront costs of integration are, including any redundancy payments, while we are scoping the programme.

■ NHS: Buildings**Daisy Cooper:**[\[42316\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the (a) occupancy and (b) utilisation rates of clinical rooms in the NHS estate was in the latest period for which data is available.

Daisy Cooper:[\[42317\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an estimate of the cost to the NHS of (a) unused and (b) underused clinical (i) buildings and (ii) rooms.

Daisy Cooper:[\[42318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of adopting intelligent booking systems to maximise the utilisation of the NHS property estate.

Karin Smyth:

No assessment has been made of the potential merits of adopting intelligent booking systems to maximise the utilisation of the National Health Service's property estate. NHS trusts decide locally how best to manage their estate.

Data for the occupancy and utilisation rates of clinical rooms in the NHS estate for the latest period, from 2023 to 2024, published in December 2024, is available at the following link:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/estates-returns-information-collection/summary-page-and-dataset-for-eric-2023-24>

No estimate has been made of the cost to the NHS of unused and underused clinical buildings and rooms.

■ NHS: Private Sector

Steve Darling:

[42367]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is taking steps to ensure that the private sector is used to help reduce NHS waiting lists for the (a) most urgent procedures and (b) patients with the greatest clinical need.

Karin Smyth:

We have committed to tackling waiting lists and getting back to the National Health Service constitutional standard, that 92% of patients should wait no longer than 18 weeks from referral to treatment, by March 2029. We will use every lever to do this, and independent sector providers have a key role to play.

A new partnership agreement between the NHS and the independent sector was published in January 2025, the first of its kind for 25 years. The aim of this agreement is to ensure that private providers and the NHS work closely together to tackle waiting lists and improve elective services, providing NHS patients with the ability to choose to be treated privately where there is capacity, at no cost to them. The independent sector committed to reviewing their clinical exclusion criteria to ensure that they allow the choice of an independent provider to as broad a cohort of patients as possible. The agreement also set a shared goal to improve access to treatment in the independent sector for the most challenged specialties.

Local systems are best placed to commission activity, considering the patients and providers in their area, and ensuring assets are utilised effectively, and that patients requiring urgent procedures are treated quickly. All patients should be offered a choice of provider at the point of referral, including independent providers where clinically appropriate, and should be provided with information on waiting times to inform their decision.

■ NHS: Sanitary Products

Anneliese Dodds:

[41922]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to paragraph 17.7 of the NHS Standard Contract 2024/25 Service Conditions, published in February 2024, what steps her Department is taking to offer reusable period products.

Karin Smyth:

The Government recognises the importance of women and girls being able to access the care they need for their reproductive health, including period products.

Since 2019 it has been a requirement in the NHS Standard Contract that the National Health Service must offer period products to every hospital patient who needs them.

Paragraph 17.7 places an obligation on providers to ensure that supplies of appropriate sanitary products are available and are, on request, provided promptly to inpatient service users free of charge. It is for individual providers to decide what products to provide and how best to meet their obligations.

■ Parkinson's Disease: Health Services

Bambos Charalambous: [\[42319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to (a) help tackle shortages across the Parkinson's disease specialist workforce and (b) assess how current workforce shortages are impacting the delivery of multi-disciplinary care as outlined in NICE guidance; and what plans he has to increase the Parkinson's disease specialists workforce.

Bambos Charalambous: [\[42320\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking within current NHS workforce planning to improve uptake of digital consultations for Parkinson's patients as a mechanism to reduce neurology waiting times and reduce the backlog in accessing a neurologist.

Karin Smyth:

We have delivered an additional two million appointments, seven months ahead of schedule. This includes operations, consultations, diagnostic tests, and treatments. These additional appointments have taken place across a number of specialities, including neurology.

Whilst no specific assessment has been made of how workforce shortages are impacting the delivery of care, there are a number of initiatives supporting service improvement and better care for patients with Parkinson's disease in England, including the Getting It Right First Time Programme for Neurology, the RightCare Progressive Neurological Conditions Toolkit, and the Neurology Transformation Programme.

We have launched a 10-Year Health Plan to reform the National Health Service. The plan will set out a bold agenda to deliver on the three big shifts needed, to move healthcare from hospital to the community, from analogue to digital, and from treatment to prevention.

A central and core part of the 10-Year Health Plan will be our workforce and how we ensure we train and provide the staff, technology, and infrastructure the NHS needs to care for patients across our communities.

■ Phlebotomy: Lincolnshire

Sir John Hayes: [\[42399\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to support access to phlebotomists in Lincolnshire.

Karin Smyth:

The Government is committed to putting patients first, including in Lincolnshire. This means making sure that patients, including those waiting to see a phlebotomist, are seen on time, and ensuring that people have the best possible experience during their care.

The Government recognises that care, including phlebotomy, needs to be easily accessible, and in locations convenient to patients, in order to support the shift towards greater care being provided in the community.

That is why in January 2025, we published the Elective Reform Plan. The plan sets out the productivity and reform efforts needed to return to the 18-week constitutional standard by the end of this Parliament. The Elective Reform Plan commits to transforming and expanding diagnostic services and speeding up waiting times for tests, a crucial part of reducing overall waiting times and returning to the 18-week constitutional standard.

Community diagnostic centres, including those in Lincolnshire, are supporting one of the Government's key strategic shifts, moving care from the hospital to the community. They offer local populations a wide range of diagnostic tests, including those related to phlebotomy, closer to home, as well as greater choice on where and how they are undertaken, reducing the need for hospital visits and speeding up diagnosis, whilst also reducing pressure on hospitals.

■ Physician Associates

Navendu Mishra:[\[42866\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many physician associates were employed by the NHS in England in each of the last 10 years; and if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of trends in the number of physician associates employed by the NHS in England in the last 10 years.

Karin Smyth:

We do not hold data on physician associate (PA) numbers for each of the last ten years, but the table below provides figures for the number of full time equivalent (FTE) PAs employed in both National Health Service trusts and primary care from 2017 to 2024.

| | PHYSICIAN ASSOCIATES IN NHS TRUSTS AND OTHER CORE ORGANISATIONS IN ENGLAND - FTE | PHYSICIAN ASSOCIATES BY GENERAL IN PRIMARY CARE IN ENGLAND - FTE | OF WHICH, PHYSICIAN ASSOCIATES EMPLOYED IN GENERAL PRACTICES IN ENGLAND - FTE |
|---------------|--|--|---|
| December 2017 | Not Available | Not Available | 55 |
| December 2018 | Not Available | Not Available | 116 |

| | PHYSICIAN ASSOCIATES IN NHS TRUSTS AND OTHER CORE ORGANISATIONS IN ENGLAND - FTE | PHYSICIAN ASSOCIATES IN PRIMARY CARE IN ENGLAND - FTE | OF WHICH, PHYSICIAN ASSOCIATES EMPLOYED BY GENERAL PRACTICES IN ENGLAND - FTE |
|---------------|--|---|---|
| December 2019 | Not Available | Not Available | 268 |
| December 2020 | 973 | Not Available | 378 |
| December 2021 | 1,136 | 1,041 | 477 |
| December 2022 | 1,384 | 1,541 | 628 |
| December 2023 | 1,624 | 2,009 | 763 |
| December 2024 | 1,616 | 2,068 | 830 |

Sources: NHS Workforce Statistics, NHS England; General Practice Workforce Statistics, NHS England; Primary Care Quarterly Workforce Update, NHS England

Notes:

- Data is only published for PAs employed in hospital and other core organisation (commissioning bodies) settings from 2020 onwards.
- PAs in primary care settings may be employed directly by general practices (GPs) or may be employed through other routes such as by primary care networks. Data is only available for PAs employed directly by GPs prior to 2021 and as such will be an undercount of the total across primary care.

The Government has commissioned Professor Gillian Leng CBE to lead an independent review of physician and anaesthesia associate professions. It will consider the safety of the roles and their contribution to multidisciplinary healthcare teams. The conclusions of the review will inform the workforce plan to deliver the 10-Year Health Plan.

The review will consider the approach that was adopted in England to support the safe introduction, employment and deployment of these new roles.

■ Postnatal Care

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[\[41912\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to ensure that (a) all and (b) ethnic minority women have effective access to (i) postnatal care, (ii) mental health support and (iii) support for new mothers.

Karin Smyth:

The National Health Service's Three-Year Delivery Plan for Maternity and Neonatal Services sets national measures to improve maternity and neonatal services through

all stages of pregnancy and beyond. Measures include making care more personalised and equitable, covering both physical and mental health, and extending postnatal care and support for new mothers.

There is now a range of postnatal and mental health support, as well as broader support available for new mothers. For example, all women who have given birth should be offered a check-up with their general practitioner (GP) six to eight weeks after giving birth. The check-up will cover a range of topics such as mental health, physical recovery, breastfeeding, and support with family planning. This check provides an important opportunity for women to be listened to by their GP in a discreet, supportive environment, to provide personalised postnatal care for their physical and mental health.

NHS England is also rolling out perinatal pelvic health services and maternal mental health services to support women with the physical and mental impact of birth. Bespoke mental health pathways support women who experience mental health difficulties as a result of labour. These services are provided through specialist perinatal mental health services, maternal mental health services, and mother and baby units.

As part of the plan, all local areas have now also published Equity and Equality Action Plans, setting out tailored interventions that will tackle inequalities for women and babies from ethnic backgrounds and those living in the most deprived areas.

■ **Prostate Cancer: Disadvantaged**

Helen Maguire:

[\[42150\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of providing mobile PSA blood testing clinics in deprived communities on rates of early prostate cancer detection.

Helen Maguire:

[\[42151\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of implementing nurse-led mobile PSA blood testing clinics in deprived communities on (a) costs to and (b) staff productivity in the NHS.

Ashley Dalton:

Tackling health inequalities is a priority for the Government. Men aged 50 years old or over can ask their general practitioner for a Prostate-Specific Antigen (PSA) test, even if they do not have symptoms. This applies to anyone aged 50 years old or over in any part of England.

Screening for prostate cancer is currently not recommended in the United Kingdom. This is because of the inaccuracy of the current best test. Whilst it is recognised that the PSA test can be a valuable diagnostic tool in certain contexts, such as for men who present with symptoms, its limitations mean it is not currently recommended for population-level screening.

We are finding the best way to test for prostate cancer, which is why we are investing £16 million towards the Prostate Cancer UK led TRANSFORM screening trial, which is seeking to find better ways of catching prostate cancer in men.

The UK National Screening Committee, an independent scientific committee which advises ministers on screening, is also currently reviewing the evidence for both population wide screening and targeted prostate cancer screening. If the UK National Screening Committee makes a positive recommendation regarding screening for prostate cancer, an impact assessment will be produced using the HM Treasury Green Book methodology, which considers wider social and economic impacts.

■ Sexual and Reproductive Health: Surveys

Markus Campbell-Savours:

[42374]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to repeat the Reproductive Health Survey for England 2023; and whether he plans to take steps to record (a) the experiences of those with endometriosis and (b) diagnosis time for those with endometriosis.

Karin Smyth:

The Department recognises the importance of understanding the experiences of women living with endometriosis. In 2023, the Department commissioned the Women's Reproductive Health Survey to gather views on women's experiences in all aspects of their reproductive health, including menstrual problems and endometriosis. A report on the initial findings has been published, and is available at the following link:

<https://www.lshtm.ac.uk/research/centres-projects-groups/reproductive-health-survey-england#research>

The Department will update plans to conduct the survey again in due course. The Department also commissions research through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). The NIHR has recently funded a qualitative study into patient and healthcare professionals' experiences of the management, diagnosis, and treatment of endometriosis. Further information is available at the following link:

<https://fundingawards.nihr.ac.uk/award/NIHR156216>.

An ongoing Office for National Statistics study is investigating the impact of endometriosis on women's labour market outcomes. One component of this study is linking primary and secondary care data to better understand diagnosis times for endometriosis.

■ Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust: Agency Nurses

Helen Morgan:

[39595]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an estimate of the average cost to the public purse of one band 5 nursing hour supplied by (a) On-

framework staffing agencies and (b) Off-framework staffing agencies at the Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust in each year since 2019.

Helen Morgan:

[\[39596\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the average cost to the public purse is of one band 5 nursing hour supplied by (a) On-framework staffing agencies and (b) Off-framework staffing agencies to the NHS in each year since 2019.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 27 March 2025]: The Department does not hold the data requested.

The Government is committed to reducing off-framework agency use, the cost of which is at a premium, above the agreed framework rates. Additionally, staff hired through off-framework agencies are not subject to the same pre-employment checks as those carried out by on-framework agencies. Off-framework use is actively monitored through NHS England's governance mechanisms, with additional oversight applied to trusts with recurring non-compliance.

The NHS Planning Guidance 2025/26 states that trusts should reduce their agency spend by a minimum of 30%, and the accompanying Revenue Finance and Contracting Guidance sets the ambition that agency spend should be eliminated in the coming years.

■ **Strokes: Bedfordshire and Thames Valley**

Callum Anderson:

[\[42098\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to allocate capital funding to improve stroke care infrastructure within the (a) Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and West Berkshire Integrated Care Board and (b) Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care Board areas.

Karin Smyth:

The Government is committed to shifting the focus of the National Health Service out of hospitals and into the community through our 10-Year Health Plan, and recognises that delivering high-quality NHS healthcare services requires the right infrastructure in the right places.

The Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and West Berkshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) has been provisionally allocated £2.8 million from our Primary Care Utilisation fund for 2025/26 to upgrade existing buildings and space, boosting productivity and enabling practices to deliver more patient appointments. In addition, the ICB has been provisionally allocated £39.3 million from our Constitutional Standards Recovery fund to deliver new surgical hubs, diagnostic scanners, and beds to increase capacity for elective and emergency care.

The Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes ICB has been provisionally allocated £1.7 million from our Primary Care Utilisation fund and £32.5 million from our Constitutional Standards Recovery fund for 2025/26.

In addition to national programme allocations, the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and West Berkshire ICB and the Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes ICB have been provisionally allocated £123 million and £62 million respectively in operational capital for 2025/26, including primary care business-as-usual capital, which can be used to improve stroke care infrastructure where this is a local priority.

■ **Viral Diseases: Health Services**

Dr Al Pinkerton:

[\[42170\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of establishing a centre of excellence for the (a) care and (b) research of (i) post-viral and (ii) infection-associated conditions.

Ashley Dalton:

We do not anticipate setting up a new centre of excellence for care and research specifically for post-viral or infection-associated conditions. The Department funds research on post-viral conditions through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). The NIHR and the Medical Research Council (MRC) remain committed to funding high-quality research to understand the causes, consequences, and treatment of post-viral and infection-associated conditions such as myalgic encephalomyelitis, also known as chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS), and long COVID, and are actively exploring next steps for stimulating further research in this area. The MRC and NIHR currently fund research through a variety of routes, including infrastructure, research programmes, capacity building, for example with research fellowships, and in the case of the NIHR, research delivery to support recruitment to studies. Funding is available for post-viral and infection-associated research.

HOME OFFICE

■ **Asylum: Applications**

Euan Stainbank:

[\[42856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what information her Department holds on the average time taken to process an asylum claim after July 2024.

Dame Angela Eagle:

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

However, the Home Office does publish data on the number of asylum claims awaiting an initial decision by duration. This data can be found at table Asy_D02 of the 'Asylum and resettlement summary tables'.

Additionally, data on the percentage of applications processed within six months is published in table ASY_D03 of the 'Immigration and Protection' data of the Migration Transparency Data collection.

We are restoring order to the asylum system so that every part – border security, case processing, appeals and returns – operates swiftly.

As a result, asylum decision making increased by 52% in the last three months of 2024.

The Home Office continues to take action to speed up asylum processing whilst maintaining the integrity of the system.

■ Asylum: Syria

Euan Stainbank:

[\[42857\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether non-Syrian nationals displaced by the Syrian civil war seeking asylum have had their claims paused following the general pause of Syrian asylum claims from December 2024.

Dame Angela Eagle:

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. The pause also applies those who have previously been habitually resident in Syria. 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.

■ British Nationality

Mary Glendon:

[\[40163\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has made an assessment of the potential impact of recent changes made to her Department's guidance entitled Nationality: good character requirement, published on 10 February 2025, on community cohesion.

Seema Malhotra:

The British Nationality Act 1981 is clear that it is for the Home Secretary to determine the good character policy. There is no definition of good character in primary legislation, nor is there statutory guidance as to how this should be interpreted or defined. Changes to the good character policy are at the discretion of the Home Secretary.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is leading cross-Government efforts to develop a longer-term, more strategic approach to social cohesion - working in partnership with communities and local stakeholders to rebuild, renew and address the deep-seated issues. A new cross-government ministerial 'Communities & Recovery Steering Group' has been stood up to oversee this work and this group includes the Home Secretary.

■ Deportation

Euan Stainbank: [\[42860\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what information her Department holds on people who have been deported.

Dame Angela Eagle:

Statistics on the returns of foreign national offenders (FNOs) by nationality and destination are published on a quarterly basis. These returns are published in the Returns Detailed Datasets, and are currently available to the end of December 2024, which are available at: [Immigration system statistics data tables - GOV.UK](#).

In addition, a note providing an overview of the number of people who have been returned from the UK since 5 July 2024 was published on 31 March 2025, and can be found here: [Returns from the UK from 5 July 2024 to 22 March 2025 - GOV.UK](#).

3,594 FNOs were returned in this period, which is an increase of 16% compared to 3,101 FNO returns in the same period 12 months prior (FNO returns include both enforced and voluntary returns).

Figures on deportations, which are a subset of enforced returns, are not separately available.

We are committed to delivering justice for victims and safer streets for our communities. Foreign nationals who commit crime should be in no doubt that the law will be enforced and, where appropriate, we will pursue their deportation.

■ Migrant Workers: Sponsorship

Sir John Hayes: [\[42402\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps is she taking to tackle fraudulent Certificates of Sponsorship as a route for illegal immigration.

Dame Angela Eagle:

Certificates of sponsorship (CoS) are electronic documents created by sponsors licensed by the Home Office. If we identify that a fraudulent, non-genuine CoS has been submitted, that does not match our records, we shall refuse the application.

■ Refugees: Children

Martin Rhodes: [\[42337\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the number of children in the UK who are (a) stateless and (b) at risk of statelessness.

Dame Angela Eagle:

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

■ Visas: Asylum**Sir John Hayes:** [\[42400\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people in the UK on student visas later claimed asylum in each of the last five years.

Sir John Hayes: [\[42401\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people in the UK on tourist visas went on to claim asylum in each of the last five years.

Sir John Hayes: [\[42403\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people who entered the UK on a visa and who now live in (a) asylum hotels and (b) other state-funded accommodation are from (i) Pakistan, (ii) Nigeria and (iii) Sri Lanka.

Dame Angela Eagle:

Data on the '[Source of asylum claims in 2024](#)' was published by the Home Office on 30th March 2025. The remaining requested data is not available from published statistics and could only be collated and verified for the purposes of answering this question at disproportionate cost.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**■ Affordable Housing: Construction****Kevin Hollinrake:** [\[41852\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 3 March 2025 to Question 31973 on Affordable Housing: Construction, and with reference to the Update from MHCLG on targets on the 2021-26 Affordable Homes Programme, published on 30 July 2024, if she will provide a breakdown of the latest target or estimated total number of dwellings to be delivered under the 2021-26 programme, separate to the proposed extension to 2026-27 set out in 25 March 2025, Official Report, HCWS549.

Matthew Pennycook:

My Department published an update on targets in the 2021-26 Programme on 30 July 2024 on gov.uk [here](#).

At Spring statement, the government announced an immediate injection of £2 billion to support delivery of the biggest boost in social and affordable housebuilding in a generation and contribute to our ambitious Plan for Change milestone of building 1.5 million safe and decent homes in this Parliament. Further detail can be found in the Written Ministerial Statement made on 25 March 2025 ([HCWS549](#)).

In October 2024, this government announced £500 million in new in-year funding for the Affordable Homes Programme, found on gov.uk [here](#). As a result of significant demand from housing providers across the country, that additional funding is already oversubscribed.

In the Written Ministerial Statement made on 12 February 2025 ([HCWS447](#)), this government announced allocating a further £300 million to the Affordable Homes Programme. This will support the near-term delivery of more social and affordable housing, delivering up to 2,800 new homes with more than half being Social Rent homes.

In addition, at the multi-year Spending Review later this year, the government will set out details of new investment to succeed the 2021-26 Affordable Homes Programme. This new investment will deliver a mix of homes for sub-market rent and home-ownership, with a particular focus on delivering homes for Social Rent.

We will publish a new report after the summer recess.

■ Burns

Alison Bennett: [\[42973\]](#)

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 report entitled *Saving Lives Is Not Enough*, published by the British Burn Association in August 2019.

Alex Norris:

I note this report is from 2019, my officials will discuss this further with colleagues in the Department for Health and Social Care, and the National Fire Chiefs Council.

■ Council Housing: Nottinghamshire

Lee Anderson: [\[41984\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many disabled people have been allocated council housing in Nottinghamshire since 27 March 2024.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Department does not currently hold figures on allocated council housing since 27 March 2024.

However, the Department has begun collecting data for the 2024/25 financial year as part of our *Social Housing Lettings in England* statistical series and will publish the 2024/25 report in this series in November 2025 on gov.uk [here](#).

■ Deputy Prime Minister: Departmental Responsibilities

Kevin Hollinrake: [\[41853\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she has any staff permanently based in the Cabinet Office in the context of her role as Deputy Prime Minister.

Alex Norris:

The Deputy Prime Minister's core staff and budget allocation is assigned to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. The Deputy Prime Minister

is also supported by staff in other Government Departments, including the Cabinet Office, where relevant.

■ Historic Environment Records

Dr Simon Opher: [\[42631\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will bring section 230 of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 into force.

Matthew Pennycook:

The government is reviewing heritage planning policy in the context of wider reforms to the planning system. As part of that work we will consider the outstanding measures from the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 including statutory historic environment records in section 230 of the Act.

■ Housing: Pylons and Solar Power

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[41525\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions she has held with Cabinet colleagues on the extension of the £250 reduction in electricity bills for those living within 500m of a pylon to those living near to NSIP level solar farms.

Matthew Pennycook:

Ministers in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government regularly engage with Cabinet colleagues to deliver the government's priorities, including matters relating to planning and energy infrastructure.

I otherwise refer the hon. Member to the answer given by the Minister for Energy to Question UIN [39293](#) on 24 March 2025.

■ Local Government Finance

Kevin Hollinrake: [\[41859\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 14 March 2025 to Question 37069 on Local Government Finance, what information her Department holds on the financial impact of other forms of recent local government reorganisation.

Jim McMahon:

As set out in the English Devolution White Paper, the unitary proposals submitted to the Department from the most recently established unitary councils identified a range of efficiencies that could be achieved where council services are brought together in one organisation.

■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Equality

Kevin Hollinrake:

[\[41460\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 19 March 2025 to Question 37225 on Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Equality, what the training provided by (a) Ernst and Young and (b) Inclusive Employers Ltd included; and whether that spending was approved (a) before or (b) after 14 May 2024.

Alex Norris:

a. **Ernst and Young LLP:** Disability Confident Line Manager training. Enabling managers to become more confident and knowledgeable in supporting disabled colleagues in the workplace. Spend for this training was most recently approved in October 2024.

b. **Inclusive Employers Ltd:** Inclusion Allies Training. Providing CPD-accredited training to members of MHCLG's Inclusion Allies network. Spend for this training was approved in October 2024.

■ National Parks: Planning Permission

Rachel Gilmour:

[\[42133\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of planning applications without clear necessity on the boundaries of national parks on those areas.

Matthew Pennycook:

The government has made no such assessment. Impacts of development on National Parks are assessed by local planning authorities.

National Park authorities are the local planning authority within the National Park and are a statutory consultee for planning applications where development comes forward which is likely to affect a National Park.

■ Nature Restoration Fund

Kevin Hollinrake:

[\[41863\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether the Nature Restoration Fund levy will be subject to economic viability assessments.

Matthew Pennycook:

I refer the hon. Member to Clause 62, subsection (2) of the Planning and Infrastructure Bill.

■ New Towns: Construction

Kevin Hollinrake:

[\[41857\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether new towns will be built through development corporations.

Matthew Pennycook:

The independent New Towns Taskforce will publish its report this Summer, including recommendations on new town locations and delivery mechanisms.

■ **Private Rented Housing****Carla Denyer:**[\[41989\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to paragraph 2.62 of the Office for Budget Responsibility Economic and Fiscal Outlook, published on 26 March 2025, CP 1289, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the estimated increase in the housing stock on private rents.

Matthew Pennycook:

The factors affecting affordability in the private rented sector are complex and difficult to disentangle. As well as the size of the total housing stock, they include the movement of tenants into homeownership and social rented housing, house prices, taxation policy, and interest rates.

While it is difficult to isolate the specific impact of each of these factors, the government recognises that boosting supply is critical to improving housing affordability. This is why we are committed to achieving our ambitious Plan for Change milestone of building 1.5 million safe and decent homes in this Parliament.

■ **Private Rented Housing: Regulation****Kevin Hollinrake:**[\[41855\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to section one of the policy paper entitled A new approach to ensure regulators and regulation support growth, published on 17 March 2025, if she will make an assessment of the potential cumulative impact of these regulations on the private rented sector.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Renters' Rights Bill delivers our manifesto commitment to transform the experience of private renting, including by ending Section 21 'no fault' evictions.

While the majority of landlords provide a good service, the private rented sector currently provides the least affordable, poorest quality and most insecure housing of all tenures. A sector that does not work for those who depend on it is bad for economic growth and productivity, detrimental to good public health, and a drain on aspiration.

The government's Impact Assessment for the Bill indicated that, for landlords that already provide decent homes and a prompt repair service to their tenants, the costs of our reforms are estimated to be just £22 per rented property annually – only 0.2% of mean annual rents. Landlords are expected to benefit from our reforms too – we estimate a gross benefit to landlords of £9 per property per year.

Following Royal Assent of the Bill, we will allow time for a smooth transition to the new system. We will support tenants, landlords and agents to understand and adjust to the new rules.

■ Social Rented Housing

Kevin Hollinrake: [\[41873\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the press notice entitled £2 billion new investment to support biggest boost in social and affordable housebuilding in a generation, published on 25 March 2025, how many and what proportion of those new homes will be available for social rent.

Matthew Pennycook:

I refer the hon. Member to the Written Ministerial Statement made on 25 March 2025 ([HCWS549](#)).

■ Social Rented Housing: Rural Areas

Ben Maguire: [\[42135\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department plans to issue guidance to local authorities in rural areas with high levels of (a) executive housing and (b) second homes on revising the (i) points and (ii) banding systems used to allocate social housing.

Matthew Pennycook:

Local Authorities are responsible for designing and managing their own housing allocations policies to meet local need within the framework of legislation under which certain categories of people must be given priority. Social housing allocations guidance can be found [here](#). The Department has no plans to issue additional guidance to local authorities in rural areas.

■ Social Rented Housing: Waiting Lists

Lee Anderson: [\[41983\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department is taking to prioritise disabled people on waiting lists for social housing.

Matthew Pennycook:

Local authorities are responsible for designing and managing their own housing allocations policies to meet local need but have to do so within the legislative framework set by government.

As part of this, they are required to ensure they give 'reasonable preference' (priority) to people for medical or welfare reasons, which includes a physical or learning disability.

Allocations guidance also encourages local authorities to give additional preference to people who need to move urgently because of a sudden disability. Social housing allocations guidance can be found on gov.uk [here](#).

■ Tell MAMA: Finance

Tom Morrison: [\[40920\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of reinstating grant funding for Tell MAMA.

Alex Norris:

In 2024/25, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government made funding of £1m available for Tell MAMA.

We remain steadfast in our dedication to delivering comprehensive monitoring of anti-Muslim Hatred, and providing support for victims of it. The government has announced a new fund to provide a comprehensive service to monitor anti-Muslim hatred and support victims with applications opening on Monday 7 April 2025.

With cases of anti-Muslim hatred on the rise, up-to-date and detailed information on incidents and drivers of this hatred will play a fundamental part in supporting the government to combat Islamophobia and ensure Muslim communities feel safe and supported. We would encourage Tell MAMA to apply.

JUSTICE

■ Drugs: Misuse

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[42017\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps her Department is taking to support prisoners leaving prisons with drug addiction.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The Ministry of Justice works closely with the Department for Health and Social Care and NHS England to ensure that people leaving prison with a drug or alcohol problem stay in treatment and can get the support they need to recover from addiction.

To support prison leavers to continue their recovery journey in the community, we have Health and Justice Partnership Coordinators nationwide, who strengthen links between prisons, probation and treatment providers. We also have secure laptops across the prison estate to enable prisoners to meet with community treatment providers virtually, prior to release, and the Probation Notification Actioning Project makes probation aware of prison leavers who have been referred to community treatment, so they can support them to engage with treatment.

We have also established the new Drug and Alcohol Recovery Expert Panel, where panel members with wide-ranging expertise will help to identify ways to strengthen our approach.

■ Powers of Attorney

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[41913\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of allowing applicants to apply for lasting power of attorney without a (a) passport (b) driving license or (c) blue badge.

Sarah Sackman:

The current lasting power of attorney (LPA) system has significant safeguards but does not require identity verification. The Government plans to modernise the system and will introduce additional safeguards which include enabling the Office of the Public Guardian to carry out identity checks for the person making the LPA and their certificate provider. This aims to reduce the risk that an unknown party could obtain an LPA in another person's name without their knowledge.

We are exploring a range of identity verification options to ensure access to LPAs for everyone eligible to make one. A passport or driving licence are examples of the documentation we are considering. Blue Badges are issued by Local Authorities and the lack of a central database of verified data means they are not appropriate for use as a means to prove identity.

■ Pre-sentence Reports

Sir Julian Lewis:

[\[42387\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether it is her policy that pre-sentence reports to inform judges prior to passing sentences on offenders should be requested in light of (a) their individual circumstances only and (b) any specific groups to which they belong.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Pre-sentence reports can be vital tools for judges and for all offenders, regardless of their membership of a certain cohort. Courts are required to obtain and consider them unless, in the circumstances of the case they consider them unnecessary.

We are clear that decisions relating to sentencing of individuals are a matter for the independent judiciary.

Equality before the law is a guiding principle of our justice system. It is this Government's policy to protect this and to ensure that there is no differential treatment on the basis of race or ethnicity in our courts. That is why, on 01 April, we introduced legislation which has the effect of removing the specific reference to cohorts in the Imposition guidelines - and the Sentencing Council has agreed to pause the guidelines while we do so.

The Bill does not prevent the guidelines from advising that pre-sentence reports are sought in cases where the court would benefit from an assessment of an offender's personal circumstances, such as pregnancy, if someone is a young offender, or a victim of domestic abuse.

■ Prison Officers: Armed Forces and Civil Service

James Naish: [\[41604\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps she is taking to promote the Advance into Justice scheme; and whether she plans to take steps to establish continuity of service between the armed forces and civil service pension schemes.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

'Advance into Justice' is a Ministry of Justice recruitment initiative aimed at providing a direct recruitment channel for Armed Forces Service Leavers, Veterans and Veterans Spouses into key operational roles across HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS).

The Ministry of Justice recognises that Armed forces personnel have a wide range of transferable skills that are aligned with many HMPPS roles, allowing them to form a second career whilst continuing to protect the public.

Ahead of the launch of the next Advance into Justice campaign in May 2025, the Ministry of Justice is working on a marketing and communication strategy to promote the scheme externally using various media approaches.

The Ministry of Justice attends regular Armed Forces Recruitment events across the country managed by the Career Transition Partnership, the official resettlement provider for the Ministry of Defence and British Forces Resettlement Services.

The Department does not hold information on any plans to establish continuity of service between the armed forces and the Civil Service pension schemes as this is the remit of Cabinet Office.

■ Sentencing Council for England and Wales

Mr Peter Bedford: [\[41261\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate she has made of the potential savings to the public purse of abolishing the Sentencing Council for England and Wales.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The budget allocated to the Sentencing Council for 2024/25 is £1.92 million. The savings of abolishing any public body would though depend on a number of factors e.g. wind-up costs, and we do not have a detailed assessment of these factors in relation to the Sentencing Council.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

■ Artificial Intelligence: Copyright

Anneliese Midgley: [\[42003\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if he will list the dates of meetings he has held with (a) companies and (b) creators on the potential impact of artificial intelligence on copyright since July 2024.

Feryal Clark:

Ministers and officials have regular meetings with a range of stakeholders about artificial intelligence and copyright.

Ministerial meetings and engagements are published through quarterly transparency reports on GOV.UK.

■ Data Protection: Medical Records**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:**[\[42013\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he has had discussions with (a) the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care and (b) NHS stakeholders on the potential impact of the Data (Use and Access) Bill on protections for personal health data.

Chris Bryant:

The Secretary of State meets regularly with Health Ministers to discuss a range of topics. The Secretary of State has not met with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to specifically discuss impacts of the Data (Use and Access) Bill on protections for personal health data. Ministers have held discussions on the Bill with a wide range of stakeholders, including NHS stakeholders, providing opportunities to emphasise that the Bill does not impact on existing protections for personal health data. An impact assessment for the Bill can be found [here](#).

■ Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Equality**Lee Anderson:**[\[41933\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what diversity, equality and inclusion targets his Department has for staff recruitment.

Feryal Clark:

The Department for Science, Innovation and Technology does not currently have DEI recruitment targets.

■ Government Departments: Artificial Intelligence**Charlie Dewhurst:**[\[41651\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what guidance his Department has issued on the use of third-party AI tools in relation to topics with a security classification; and what assessment he has made of whether such AI tools transfer information outside of government further to their terms and conditions.

Feryal Clark:

The *AI Playbook for the UK Government* acknowledges the use of third-party AI tools, offering high-level guidance on commercial, legal, and security aspects. Principle 8 advises consulting Commercial colleagues on procurement (p. 39) to ensure that expectations around responsible and ethical AI use are the same for in-house and third-party systems. The legal section (p. 61) covers intellectual property

considerations when using third-party tools, while the security section (p. 74) examines risks and opportunities in third-party tools and embedded AI solutions.

As with any third-party tool, departments are required to undertake necessary risk assessments, including data protection impact assessment (DPIA) when using third-party AI tools. The DPIA process is designed to identify different types of sensitive data to be processed in different phases of use, including inputs and outputs. The AI Playbook outlines a section on data protection, which covers the importance of undertaking DPIAs for risk mitigation. The DPIA process would identify data governance risk areas, which would be covered in the terms and conditions of the suppliers' contract. Breaches of contractual clauses are legally binding. Security classifications are derived from the Government Security Classifications Policy (GSCP), and that the principles set out in the GSCP must also be adhered to for use of all tools.

■ Sickle Cell Diseases: Research

Chi Onwurah:

[\[42203\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of levels of research and development funding for sickle cell disorder.

Feryal Clark:

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) delivers a substantial portfolio of researcher-led projects and strategic investments, including research into sickle cell disease, for which UKRI had expenditure of approximately £0.2 million in 2023-24. UKRI also plays a key role in funding underpinning research which may not be attributable to a specific condition but will benefit medical research more generally.

The Department of Health and Social Care funds research through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). Over the past five years, the NIHR have awarded over £6 million for research related to sickle cell disease.

TRANSPORT

■ Roads: Repairs and Maintenance

Kevin Hollinrake:

[\[42474\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 18 March 2025 to Question 38041 on Roads: Repairs and Maintenance, whether the complete resurfacing of an existing road is classed as capital or revenue expenditure.

Lilian Greenwood:

It is up to local highway authorities' Section 151 officers to determine what types of highway maintenance expenditure can legitimately be classed as capital and what as revenue expenditure, following the advice provided by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy and others. There are some grey areas, but the

complete resurfacing of an existing highway by a local highway authority will almost always be classed as capital expenditure. This is because it would count as improving a council-owned asset and making it last longer.

■ **Speed Limits: Lincolnshire**

Sir John Hayes: [\[43013\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will take steps to help tackle speeding in Lincolnshire.

Lilian Greenwood:

Enforcement of the speed limit is for the police. The Department for Transport makes highways and local transport funding available to local transport authorities, who decide how to use the funding to support local priorities. Local authorities have the responsibility of making decisions about the roads under their care, based on their knowledge of the area and taking into account local needs and considerations. This includes setting local speed limits and introducing traffic calming measures.

TREASURY

■ **Debts: Private Sector**

Anna Sabine: [\[42121\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing legislation to compel private creditors to participate in debt relief.

Emma Reynolds:

The UK, alongside the G20 and Paris Club, expects creditors, including private creditors, to participate in international debt restructurings on comparable terms.

At this stage, the government is not pursuing a legislative approach that would force private or other lenders to participate in debt restructurings.

Overall, we have seen evidence of private creditors' willingness to engage and provide debt treatments where needed – though we continue to keep this under review.

The government is focused on delivering a market-based (contractual) approach to private sector participation, including taking the lead in developing Majority Voting Provisions for private group lending, to bind the minority to the terms of a restructuring. These promote more efficient restructurings and reduce the ability for creditors to hold out.

■ **Financial Services: India**

Callum Anderson: [\[42090\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what her Department's timetable is for the next phase of the UK-India financial services regulatory dialogue.

Callum Anderson: [\[42091\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent progress her Department has made on financial sector reform to facilitate bilateral investment flows between the UK and India.

Callum Anderson: [\[42092\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps her Department has taken to support the establishment of (a) fintech bridges and (b) equivalent co-operation frameworks with India.

Callum Anderson: [\[42093\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what progress her Department has made on establishing formal structures to implement the proposed UK-India infrastructure finance collaboration platform.

Callum Anderson: [\[42096\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what progress her Department has made on UK-India cooperation to improve regulatory frameworks for (a) sustainable finance and (b) climate-related financial disclosures.

Emma Reynolds:

India is an important emerging market, and we maintain several collaboration vehicles for discussing regulatory and market access barriers in financial services. Most recently there was a UK-India Financial Markets Dialogue held in GIFT City in December 2024 and we are looking forward to the upcoming UK-India Economic and Financial Dialogue in April 2025 which is jointly chaired by the Chancellor and the Indian Finance Minister. Both dialogues are an opportunity for both the UK and India's finance ministries and regulators to table important FS issues for collaborative working.

Boosting trade abroad is essential to delivering growth at home. That is why the UK is committed to negotiating a trade deal with India – one of the fastest growing economies in the world. Officials are continuing to negotiate the UK-India FTA, which includes FS provisions that will not undermine our future relationship and support our continued cooperation. A trade deal could unlock new opportunities for businesses and consumers in all regions and nations of the UK.

Fintech is an important sector for both the UK and India, we engage closely with the Indian Finance Ministry through an annual Joint Fintech Working Group. We also welcome advice from industry through the India-UK Financial Partnership (IUKFP), including through their recent 2023 report 'Harnessing the power of FinTech and data'.

We welcome the progress of the UK-India Infrastructure Financing Bridge (UKIIFB) led by the City of London Corporation and the National Institute for the Transformation of India (NITI Aayog) in its first year, and we look forward to supporting the second year of the UKIIFB and any new areas of focus.

The UK supported the establishment and development of the ISSB as a global standard setter for sustainability reporting at COP26. The government have also supported world-leading work on transition plan disclosures by co-chairing the Transition Plan Taskforce. We will be taking a pro-growth, pragmatic approach to sustainable finance, combining support for international and interoperable standards like ISSB with an openness to feedback about what policies we should be pursuing. The upcoming UK-India EFD will present a renewed opportunity to engage with India on our shared areas of interest in sustainable finance.

■ Financial Services: Switzerland

Callum Anderson: [\[42094\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of expanding the UK-Switzerland Financial Services Mutual Recognition Agreement to cover additional financial services sectors.

Callum Anderson: [\[42095\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of the UK-Switzerland Financial Services Mutual Recognition Agreement on cross-border financial services trade.

Emma Reynolds:

The Berne Financial Services Agreement is a ground-breaking mutual recognition agreement which enables financial services firms to provide certain services on a cross-border basis to wholesale and sophisticated clients. It is rooted in the high quality of each country's regulation.

The Agreement will enhance an already thriving financial services trade relationship with Switzerland. Between 2016 and 2023, UK trade in financial and insurance services with Switzerland grew by 85%. The ease of doing business under the agreement combined with the unprecedented new market access it opens will boost client choice and drive efficiencies in the financial sector – delivering growth in the UK economy and bolstering job opportunities in the sector. A document outlining the benefits for the UK can be found on the Berne Financial Services Agreement gov.uk page alongside the text of the Agreement.

The Government's priority is to implement the Agreement as soon as possible, by the end of 2025 at the latest, and enter the Agreement into force shortly thereafter

The Agreement includes a mechanism for the UK and Switzerland to expand in scope, including adding entirely new financial service sectors. The Agreement also commits the UK and Switzerland to enter into negotiations with a view to potentially expanding the Agreement to include sustainable finance at the appropriate time.

■ Taxation: Natural Gas and Oil**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** [\[42015\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, What assessment she has made of the potential impact of revoking the windfall tax on oil and gas companies on the revenues of the exchequer.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[42016\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, What assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of revoking the windfall tax on oil and gas companies on trends in the level of future renewable investment.

James Murray:

In its manifesto the Government committed to make changes to the Energy Profits Levy (EPL) to raise revenue towards clean energy goals, including raising the rate of the levy from 35% to 38% and extending the duration of the levy until 31 March 2030. Following confirmation of these changes at Autumn Budget 2024, the EPL is now due to end by 31 March 2030, or earlier if oil and gas prices fall consistently below the price thresholds set by the Energy Security Investment Mechanism. The OBR's latest forecast published at Spring Statement 2025 indicates that the levy will generate £13.5 billion in receipts between 2024-25 and 2029-30, on top of £7.4bn already raised since the levy's introduction.

Following a period of change and uncertainty, the government is committed to providing long-term certainty to the oil and gas sector over the future fiscal regime and published a consultation on 5 March exploring the design of a new permanent mechanism for responding to price shocks once the EPL ends.

Government is committed to delivering clean power by 2030 and will work in tandem with the private sector to unlock investment and deliver new clean infrastructure. Our Contracts for Difference scheme has driven significant investment in renewable energy generation. The Clean Power 2030 Action Plan sets out proposed reforms to ensure the scheme can support the volumes of capacity needed whilst minimising costs to consumers.