



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 8 April 2025 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:56 P.M., 08 April 2025). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

CONTENTS

ANSWERS	12	CABINET OFFICE	18
ATTORNEY GENERAL	12	■ Admiralty House: Repairs and Maintenance	18
■ Homicide: Aiding and Abetting	12	■ Alex Chisholm	19
■ Military Aid: Yemen	12	■ Cabinet Office: Freedom of Information	19
BUSINESS AND TRADE	12	■ Civil Servants: Pay	19
■ Bakeries	12	■ Civil Service: Ethnic Groups	20
■ Bayer: Compensation	13	■ Departmental Responsibilities	20
■ Boats: West Dorset	13	■ Emergencies: Departmental Responsibilities	20
■ British Steel: Nationalisation	14	■ EU Countries: British Nationals Abroad	20
■ Business: Regulation	14	■ EU Countries: Visas	21
■ Department for Business and Trade: Public Appointments	15	■ European Court of Justice	21
■ Fair Work Agency	15	■ Government Departments: Public Relations	21
■ Horizon IT System: Compensation	15	■ Honours	22
■ Hospitality Industry and Retail Trade: West Midlands	15	■ Intelligence Services: Finance	22
■ Import Duties: USA	16	■ Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy: National Security Adviser	22
■ Metals	16	■ Long Covid: Surveys	23
■ Motor Vehicles: Import Duties	17	■ Ministers: Visits Abroad	23
■ Overseas Trade	17	■ Prime Minister: Information Officers	23
■ Public Houses: Devon	17		
■ Small Businesses: Government Assistance	18		
■ Trade Agreements: India	18		

■ Prime Minister: Travel	23	■ Defence: Expenditure	35
■ Public Bodies: Disclosure of Information	24	■ Defence: Reform	35
■ Public Sector: Procurement	24	■ Defence: Small Businesses	36
■ Small Businesses	25	■ Estonia: Armed Forces	36
■ Stonewall: Subscriptions	25	■ F-35 Aircraft: Procurement	36
CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT	25	■ France: Foreign Relations	36
■ Arts: Artificial Intelligence	25	■ Helicopters: Finance	37
■ Arts: Conditions of Employment	26	■ HMS Vanguard: Repairs and Maintenance	37
■ BBC: Broadcasting Programmes	27	■ Israel: Military Bases	43
■ Broadcasting: Competition	27	■ Ministry of Defence: Israel	44
■ Cycling: Training	27	■ Multi-role Support Ships: Procurement	44
■ Leisure Centres: Deeping St James	28	■ Navy: Body Armour	44
■ Media: Men	28	■ Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Associations: Standards	45
■ Musicians: EU Countries	29	■ Reserve Forces: Recruitment	45
■ Sports	29	■ Royal Marines: Firearms	46
■ Sports: Facilities	29	■ Russia: Shipping	46
■ Tower of London	30	■ UK Defence Innovation	46
■ Welsh National Opera	30	■ Ukraine: Peacekeeping Operations	47
DEFENCE	31	■ USA: Import Duties	47
■ A400m Aircraft: Procurement	31	■ Veterans: LGBT+ People	47
■ Ammunition: Lost Property and Theft	31	■ Veterans: Radiation Exposure	48
■ Armed Forces	32	EDUCATION	49
■ Armed Forces: Body Armour	32	■ Apprentices: Buckinghamshire	49
■ Armed Forces: Families	32	■ Breakfast Clubs	50
■ Armed Forces: Finance	33	■ Chemistry: Education and Research	50
■ Armed Forces: Housing	33	■ Childcare: Disadvantaged	51
■ Armoured Fighting Vehicles: Standards	34	■ Children: Health	52
■ Defence: Bedfordshire	34	■ Citizenship: Education	52
■ Defence: Climate Change	34	■ Construction: Apprentices	53
		■ First Aid: Curriculum	54

■ Further Education: Buckinghamshire	54	■ Work Experience: Buckinghamshire	71
■ GCE A-level	57	ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO	72
■ GCE A-level: Derbyshire	58	■ Biomethane: Production	72
■ GCSE and IGCSE	58	■ Biomethane: UK Emissions Trading Scheme	72
■ Lifelong Education	59	■ Carbon Capture and Storage	73
■ Mathematics: Adult Education	59	■ Carbon Capture, Usage and Storage	73
■ Music and Dance Scheme	60	■ Carbon Emissions	73
■ Music: Education	60	■ Carbon Emissions: Industry	74
■ Now Teach	61	■ Clean Energy: Risk Assessment	74
■ Overseas Students: Ukraine	61	■ District Heating	75
■ Physical Education	62	■ Energy Company Obligation	75
■ Physics: Education	62	■ Energy Supply	76
■ Private Education	63	■ Great British Energy	76
■ Racial Discrimination: Palestinians	63	■ Great British Energy: Contracts	76
■ Schools: Employers' Contributions	64	■ Great British Energy: Logos	77
■ Schools: Finance	64	■ Housing: Heating	77
■ Schools: Transport	66	■ Renewable Energy	78
■ Special Educational Needs: Buckinghamshire	66	■ Renewable Energy: Regulation	78
■ Special Educational Needs: Central Suffolk and North Ipswich	67	■ Small Businesses: Energy	79
■ Special Educational Needs: Finance	67	ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS	79
■ Special Educational Needs: Staffordshire	68	■ Agriculture: Carbon Emissions	79
■ Special Educational Needs: Travel	69	■ Agriculture: Lancashire	81
■ Teachers: Labour Turnover and Recruitment	69	■ Air Pollution	81
■ University of Sussex: Disciplinary Proceedings	70	■ Animal Welfare: Trapping	81
		■ Avian Influenza	82
		■ Bread: Regulation	82

■ Common Organisation of the Markets in Agricultural Products (Fruit and Vegetable Producer Organisations, Tariff Quotas and Wine) (Amendment Etc.) Regulations 2021	82	FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE	92
■ Domestic Waste: Recycling and Waste Disposal	83	■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]	92
■ Domestic Waste: Waste Disposal	83	■ Afghanistan: Home Country Nationals	92
■ Electronic Cigarettes: Litter	83	■ Africa: Human Rights	92
■ Environment Protection	84	■ Bangladesh: Foreign Relations	93
■ Floods: Insurance	84	■ BBC World Service	93
■ Fly Tipping and Litter	85	■ Belarus: Sanctions	94
■ Forests and Peatlands: Conservation	85	■ China: Overseas Investment	94
■ Game: Hunting	86	■ Darfur: Armed Conflict	95
■ Hare Coursing	86	■ Egypt: Human Rights	95
■ Horses: Tagging	86	■ Emergency Travel Documents: Fees and Charges	96
■ Incontinence: Men	87	■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Disability	96
■ Inland Waterways: Rights of Way	87	■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Flags	96
■ Litter: Fines	88	■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Legal Opinion	97
■ Meat Products: Imports	88	■ Freezing of Assets	97
■ Nitrogen Dioxide: Pollution Control	89	■ Gaza: F-35 Aircraft	98
■ Packaging: Recycling	89	■ Gaza: Hamas	98
■ Per- and Polyfluorinated Alkyl Substances	89	■ Gaza: Health Services	98
■ Per- and Polyfluorinated Alkyl Substances: Environment Protection	90	■ Gaza: Humanitarian Aid	99
■ School Milk: Packaging	90	■ Gaza: Israel	99
■ Sustainable Farming Incentive	91	■ Gaza: Reconstruction	101
■ WRAP: Finance	91	■ Ghana: Cultural Relations	102
■ WRAP: Publications	91	■ Ghana: Development Aid	102
		■ Ghana: Educational Exchanges	102
		■ Hamas: Hostage Taking	103
		■ Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham	103

■ International Court of Justice: Public Appointments	103	■ USA: Middle East	119
■ Iran: Baha'i Faith	104	HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	119
■ Iran: Hamas	104	■ Air Pollution: Children	119
■ Iran: Nuclear Power	105	■ Alcoholic Drinks and Drugs: Custodial Treatment	120
■ Iran: Terrorism	105	■ Alcoholic Drinks and Drugs: Young People	121
■ Israel: Arms Trade	105	■ Alcoholism: Health Services	122
■ Israel: International Law	106	■ Ambulance Services: Private Sector and Voluntary Organisations	123
■ Israel: Lebanon	106	■ Antidepressants	123
■ Israeli Settlements: Crimes of Violence	107	■ Arthritis: Health Services	124
■ Kenya: Health Services	107	■ Autism	125
■ Lebanon: Hezbollah	108	■ Baby Care Units	126
■ Mercy Tarfa and Richard Solomon Tarfa	108	■ Bedfordshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust: Solar Power	126
■ Nigeria: Schools	109	■ Bipolar Disorder: Diagnosis	127
■ Occupied Territories: Humanitarian Aid	109	■ Bipolar Disorder: Mental Health Services	127
■ Sudan: Armed Conflict	109	■ Blood	128
■ Sudan: Arms Trade	110	■ Brain: Injuries	128
■ Sudan: Children	110	■ Cancer: Artificial Intelligence	130
■ Sudan: Civil Society	111	■ Cancer: Bournemouth West	130
■ Sudan: Development Aid	111	■ Cancer: Children and Young People	131
■ Sudan: Food Aid	112	■ Cancer: Screening	132
■ Sudan: Food Insecurity	113	■ Cancer: Young People	132
■ Sudan: Human Rights	114	■ Carers: Coronavirus	133
■ Sudan: Humanitarian Aid	115	■ Cervical Cancer: Northern Ireland	133
■ Sudan: Internally Displaced People	115	■ Charcot Marie Tooth Disease: Cannabis	134
■ Sudan: Refugees	116	■ Childbirth	134
■ Sudan: Sanitation and Water	116	■ Chronic Fatigue Syndrome: Health Services	135
■ Sudan: Vaccination	117		
■ Tigray: Development Aid	118		
■ Tigray: Peacekeeping Operations	119		

■ Compulsorily Detained Psychiatric Patients: Learning Disability	137	■ Healthy Start Scheme: Bournemouth West	151
■ CPR and Defibrillators: Schools	138	■ Healthy Start Scheme: South Shields	151
■ Defibrillators and Heart Diseases: Isle of Wight East	138	■ Hinchingsbrooke Hospital: Staff	152
■ Dementia: Diagnosis	139	■ HIV Infection: Vaccination	153
■ Dental Services: Leigh and Atherton	140	■ Hospitals: Renewable Energy	154
■ Dental Services: Maidenhead	141	■ Hospitals: Waiting Lists	155
■ Department of Health and Social Care: Written Questions	141	■ Infant Foods: Sugar	155
■ Domestic Waste: Fires	141	■ Influenza: Vaccination	156
■ Down's Syndrome	142	■ Joint Replacements	156
■ Electronic Cigarettes: Lincolnshire	142	■ Junior Doctors: Training	157
■ Endometriosis: Health Services	143	■ Leukaemia: Lincolnshire	158
■ General Practitioners	143	■ Lung Cancer: Screening	158
■ General Practitioners: Bournemouth West	144	■ Maternity Services: Racial Discrimination	159
■ General Practitioners: Cornwall	144	■ Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Independent Review	159
■ General Practitioners: Nurses	145	■ Members: Correspondence	161
■ General Practitioners: Pay	146	■ Mental Health Services	161
■ General Practitioners: Recruitment and Training	147	■ Mental Health Services: Bournemouth West	162
■ General Practitioners: Sussex	147	■ Mental Health Services: Special Educational Needs	162
■ GP Practice Lists	148	■ Mental Health Services: Waiting Lists	163
■ GP Surgeries	149	■ Musculoskeletal Disorders: Research	163
■ GP Surgeries: Burton	149	■ Neuroendocrine Cancer: Radiotherapy	164
■ Health Services: Sportsgrounds	150	■ NHS England	164
■ Health Visitors: Worcestershire	150	■ NHS: Artificial Intelligence	165
■ Health: Disadvantaged	151	■ NHS: Buildings	165
		■ NHS: Carbon Emissions	166
		■ NHS: Drugs	167

■ NHS: Environment Protection	167	HOME OFFICE	183
■ NHS: Finance	168	■ Ali Kololo	183
■ NHS: Workplace Pensions	168	■ Animal Experiments	183
■ Nurses: Devon	169	■ Animal Experiments: Animal Welfare	184
■ Organs: Donors	170	■ Animal Experiments: Inspections	184
■ Orthopaedics: Surgical Hubs	171	■ British National (Overseas): Hong Kong	185
■ Osteoporosis: Menopause	171	■ British Nationality	185
■ Patient Choice Schemes	172	■ Data, Statistics and Research on Sex and Gender Independent Review	186
■ Pharmacy: Business Rates and Minimum Wage	172	■ Domestic Abuse: Men	186
■ Pharmacy: Closures	173	■ Emergency Services: Medals	187
■ Pharmacy: Finance	173	■ Events Industry: First Aid	187
■ Plastic Surgery	174	■ Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority: Complaints	188
■ Prescriptions: Fees and Charges	174	■ Home Office: Public Expenditure	189
■ Primary Care: Buildings	175	■ Immigration	189
■ Prostate Cancer	176	■ Immigration Controls: Republic of Ireland	189
■ Radiotherapy: Artificial Intelligence	176	■ Immigration: Inspections	190
■ Respiratory Diseases: Health Services	177	■ Intimate Image Abuse: Internet	190
■ Sickle Cell Diseases: Medical Treatments	178	■ Jews: Safety	191
■ Social Services: Labour Turnover and Recruitment	178	■ Offences against Children: Guinea-Bissau and Portugal	191
■ Strokes: Bedfordshire and Thames Valley	179	■ Offences against Children: Inquiries	192
■ Sunbeds	179	■ Passports: Applications	193
■ Tuberculosis: Medical Treatments	180	■ Police: Biometrics	193
■ Urinary Tract Infections: Mid Bedfordshire	181	■ Police: Employers' Contributions	193
■ Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme	181	■ Police: Freedom of Information	193
■ Work Experience: Nurses	183	■ Refugees	194

■ Resettlement: Chagossians	194	■ Coroners	204
■ Security Guards: Licensing	195	■ Coroners: Standards	205
■ Shops: Money Laundering	196	■ Courts: Greater Manchester	205
■ South Wales Police: CCTV	196	■ Criminal Records	205
■ Vetting	197	■ Data, Statistics and Research on Sex and Gender Independent Review	206
■ Visas: Seasonal Workers	197	■ Family Proceedings	206
■ Voyeurism	197	■ HMP Latchmere House: Rehabilitation	207
HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT	198	■ Offenders: Rented Housing	207
■ Anti-Muslim Hatred/Islamophobia Definition Working Group	198	■ Prisoners: Accident and Emergency Departments	207
■ Care Homes: Fire Prevention	199	■ Sentencing	208
■ Civil Society: Islam	199	■ Youth Custody: Self-harm	208
■ Community Development: Disadvantaged	199	LEADER OF THE HOUSE	209
■ Democracy and Elections	200	■ Government Departments: Written Questions	209
■ Holiday Accommodation	200	NORTHERN IRELAND	209
■ Homelessness: Finance	201	■ Coroners: Clonoe	209
■ Homes England: Equality	201	■ Data, Statistics and Research on Sex and Gender Independent Review	210
■ Housing: Construction	201	■ Import Controls: Northern Ireland	210
■ Housing: Energy Performance Certificates	202	■ UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland	210
■ Levelling Up Fund: Lancashire	202	SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY	211
■ Local Government: Elections	202	■ 5G: Infrastructure	211
■ Members: Correspondence	203	■ Animal Experiments	211
■ Private Rented Housing: Bournemouth East	203	■ Artificial Intelligence	212
■ Tell MAMA: Finance	203	■ Arts: Artificial Intelligence	212
■ Temporary Accommodation: Domestic Abuse	203	■ Broadband: Power Failures	212
JUSTICE	204	■ Broadband: Rural Areas	213
■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]	204	■ Chemical Engineering	214
■ Child Trust Fund	204		

■ Data, Statistics and Research on Sex and Gender Independent Review	214	■ Railway Stations: Access	228
■ Intimate Image Abuse: Internet	214	■ Railway Stations: Surrey	228
■ Mobile Phones: Rural Areas	215	■ Railways: North of England	228
■ New Businesses: Investment	215	■ Railways: Stockport	229
SCOTLAND	216	■ Road Works: Utilities	229
■ Data, Statistics and Research on Sex and Gender Independent Review	216	■ Roads: Repairs and Maintenance	230
TRANSPORT	216	■ Taxis: Licensing	232
■ A19: Roundabouts	216	TREASURY	233
■ A27: Chichester	217	■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]	233
■ Air Routes: Ghana	217	■ Agriculture: Seasonal Workers	234
■ Aviation: Ghana	218	■ Air Passenger Duty	234
■ Bus Services: Disability	219	■ Betting: Regulation	236
■ Civil Aviation Authority	219	■ Civil Servants: Redundancy	236
■ Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency: Standards	220	■ Employers' Contributions: Pre-school Education	237
■ Driving Tests: Personation	220	■ Empty Property: Business Rates	237
■ Driving Tests: Waiting Lists	221	■ Film: Business Rates	238
■ Driving Tests: Wiltshire	221	■ Foreign Relations: China	238
■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points	222	■ Motor Vehicles: Excise Duties	239
■ Excise Duties: Motor Vehicles	223	■ National Wealth Fund: Bedfordshire	240
■ Great British Railways: Public Appointments	223	■ Public Expenditure	240
■ High Speed 2 Line: Lichfield	224	■ Railways: Expenditure	240
■ Large Goods Vehicles: Concrete	224	■ Valuation Office Agency	241
■ Low Traffic Neighbourhoods	226	■ Veterans: Employers' Contributions	242
■ Lower Thames Crossing: Environment Protection	226	WORK AND PENSIONS	242
■ M25: Repairs and Maintenance	226	■ Access to Work Programme: Cost Benefit Analysis	242
■ Public Transport: Infrastructure	227	■ Access to Work Programme: Small Businesses	242
		■ AEA Group: Workplace Pensions	243

■ Carer's Allowance	243	■ Sick Leave and Statutory Sick Pay	252
■ Employment and Support Allowance	243	■ Social Security Benefits: Applications	253
■ Employment: Chronic Illnesses and Disability	244	■ Social Security Benefits: Costs	253
■ Employment: Disability	244	■ Universal Credit: Disability	254
■ Health: Disadvantaged	245	■ Universal Credit: Young People	254
■ Household Support Fund	245	■ Winter Fuel Allowance	254
■ Housing Benefit and Pension Credit	245	■ Winter Fuel Payment: Death	255
■ Jobcentres: Staff	246	MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS	256
■ Motability: Payments	247	CABINET OFFICE	256
■ Pathways to Work: Employment	247	■ Civil Service: Standards	256
■ Pathways to Work: Homelessness	247	HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	256
■ Pathways to Work: Impact Assessments	248	■ Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme: Coronavirus	256
■ Pension Credit: Information Sharing	248	WRITTEN STATEMENTS	258
■ Pensioners: Housing Benefit	248	BUSINESS AND TRADE	258
■ Personal Independence Payment	249	■ Horizon Redress	258
■ Personal Independence Payment: Chronic Illnesses	250	■ Upgraded Free Trade Agreement with the Republic of Korea: Round Four of Negotiations	258
■ Personal Independence Payment: Local Housing Allowance	250	ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO	259
■ Personal Independence Payment: Medical Examinations	250	■ Statement by the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero	259
■ Personal Independence Payment: Reform	251	HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	260
■ Personal Independence Payment: Tipton and Wednesbury	251	■ Clinical Trials and the Health Data Research Service	260
■ Public Authorities (Fraud, Error and Recovery) Bill	251	■ Recruitment of General Practitioners	261

HOME OFFICE	262	TREASURY	263
■ Consultation on Third Party Material Request Code of Practice and associated definition of counselling services	262	■ Oil and Gas Decommissioning Relief Deeds	263

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

■ Homicide: Aiding and Abetting

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[44004\]](#)

To ask the Solicitor General, with reference to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) Joint Enterprise Pilot 2023, whether the CPS has updated its case management system to flag joint enterprise cases for detailed manual assessment.

Lucy Rigby:

In early 2024, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) updated its case management system to enable a new national 'flag' to be applied to prosecutions for homicide and attempted homicide brought on a joint enterprise basis. Each prosecution also now receives an enhanced level of supervision from a case management panel, chaired by a senior legal manager.

The CPS will publish a report on the monitoring data collected during the 2024/25 financial year in the summer.

■ Military Aid: Yemen

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[43913\]](#)

To ask the Solicitor General, what legal advice she has sought on the UK's military assistance to the US in Yemen.

Lucy Rigby:

The Law Officers' Convention applies to advice which may or may not have been given by the Law Officers, or requested of the Law Officers, and the Convention applies to your question.

The Law Officers' Convention can be found at paragraph 21.27 of Erskine May:

"By long-standing convention, observed by successive Governments, the fact of, and substance of advice from, the law officers of the Crown is not disclosed outside government. This convention is referred to in paragraph [5.14] of the Ministerial Code [updated on 6 November 2024]. The purpose of this convention is to enable the Government to obtain frank and full legal advice in confidence."

BUSINESS AND TRADE

■ Bakeries

Freddie van Mierlo: [\[44075\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps he is taking to support British bakeries.

Gareth Thomas:

We intend to introduce permanently lower tax rates for retail, hospitality, and leisure properties from 2026 - 27. Ahead of these changes being made, we have extended retail, hospitality, and leisure relief for one year at 40 per cent up to a cash cap of £110,000 per business and frozen the small business multiplier.

The Government will protect the smallest businesses by increasing the Employment Allowance to £10,500. This means that 865,000 employers will pay no National Insurance Contributions at all. We are also working with businesses to understand their barriers to growth and High Streets will be a key pillar of our forthcoming Small Business Strategy.

■ Bayer: Compensation

Dr Marie Tidball: [\[44152\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps he is taking to ensure patients affected by Essure sterilisation devices manufactured over 10 years ago can claim financial compensation.

Dr Marie Tidball: [\[44153\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps he is taking to ensure patients affected by Essure products receive financial compensation.

Justin Madders:

Manufacturers can generally be held liable for any harm caused by a defective product under Part 1 of the Consumer Protection Act 1987, but claims must be brought within 10 years of the product being supplied.

NHS Resolution manages clinical negligence and other claims against the NHS in England. NHS Resolution has confirmed that there is no specific NHS compensation scheme for such claims or any group action against the NHS relating to Essure.

NHS Resolution's website gives some general advice for claimants wishing to make a claim for clinical negligence.

■ Boats: West Dorset

Edward Morello: [\[42904\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment his Department has made of the contribution of traditional boat building to the economy in West Dorset constituency.

Sarah Jones:

The Department for Business and Trade recognises the economic value of traditional boat building, particularly in areas like West Dorset. Training in traditional methods can contribute transferable skills for preserving cultural heritage, promoting sustainability and growing businesses.

Traditional boat building forms part of the wider leisure marine sector which contributed £1.4 billion in GVA and supported 29,000 jobs in 2019 [1]. The South West region alone generated £4 billion in turnover [2]. We continue to support the sector through events like the Southampton Boat Show and METSTRADE and promote its heritage and skills as vital to the UK's maritime economy.

[1] State of the Maritime Nation, 2022

[2] State of the Maritime Nation, 2022

■ **British Steel: Nationalisation**

Sir Christopher Chope:

[43813]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make it his policy to take British Steel into temporary public ownership (a) before the remaining blast furnaces are closed down and (b) until the future of virgin steel production in the UK is assured.

Sarah Jones:

Our priority is respecting workers, safeguarding jobs, and retaining steelmaking. We have been clear that the best way forward is for British Steel to continue as a commercially run business with private investment and Government acting in support. We call upon British Steel to accept our generous offer of financial support, and the associated conditions. However, no options are off the table. The Government remains resolute in our desire to secure a long-term future for the Scunthorpe steelworks, retaining steel production and putting an end to the years of uncertainty.

■ **Business: Regulation**

Mike Wood:

[43474]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 1 April 2025 to Question 40907 on Business: Regulation, what metric is used for the 25% reduction from 2005 to 2010; whether it was gross or net of EU regulation; and if he will provide a relevant hyperlink or source to that reduction.

Justin Madders:

The Administrative Burden Reduction Programme of 2005-10, which delivered a total reduction of 26.62% by May 2010, defined the administrative costs of regulation as "the annual recurring costs of administrative activities that businesses and the third sector are required to perform, in order to comply with the obligations that are imposed through central government regulation." The programme calculated these administrative costs net of EU regulation. The final report is available at the following address: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/simplifying-regulation-and-administration-of-businesses-final-report>

■ Department for Business and Trade: Public Appointments**Mike Wood:** [\[43475\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to uphold the Nolan principles on standards in public life in public appointments.

Justin Madders:

All appointments are made in accordance with the Governance Code on Public Appointments which states that all public appointees uphold the standards of conduct set out in the Seven Principles of Public Life. All terms of appointment specify that individuals adhere to the Nolan Principles throughout their appointment and compliance is monitored on an ongoing basis.

■ Fair Work Agency**Sarah Champion:** [\[43872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether his Department plans to publish a timeline for the Fair Work Agency becoming fully operational.

Justin Madders:

Creating the Fair Work Agency (FWA) is a complex process that requires primary legislation. The Employment Rights Bill is the first phase of delivering the FWA.

Implementation will occur in phases following Royal Assent to ensure a smooth and effective transition. We will provide more information on timings in due course.

■ Horizon IT System: Compensation**Ben Lake:** [\[42651\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether levels of compensation payments reflect the impact that failures in the Horizon system had on the families of affected sub-postmasters.

Gareth Thomas:

Many of the impacts experienced by family members of affected postmasters will already be compensated for under the relevant scheme in which postmasters are seeking redress. For example, there will be full compensation paid to the affected postmaster for joint losses such as where a family home has been lost, and this will take account of the financial impacts on family members.

The Government is however considering whether to extend additional redress to members of postmasters' families who were affected by the scandal and will provide an update in due course.

■ Hospitality Industry and Retail Trade: West Midlands**Mr Andrew Mitchell:** [\[41793\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to support (a) retail and (b) hospitality businesses in the West Midlands.

Gareth Thomas:

We are delivering across government to create better conditions for retail and hospitality businesses to thrive.

This government has introduced the Crime and Policing Bill, which will scrap the effective immunity for low-value shoplifting and do more to protect retail workers from assault. We have introduced High Street Rental Auction powers for local authorities, which will make town centre tenancies more accessible and affordable for SMEs, local businesses and community groups. And we are delivering permanently lower tax rates for retail, hospitality, and leisure properties from 2026-27.

Last year the Business Secretary announced a new Business Growth Service which will make it easier and quicker for businesses across the United Kingdom to get the help, support and advice they need to grow and thrive. The West Midlands Growth Hub is where small and medium businesses in the West Midlands can benefit from specialist business advice on how to grow, access new markets and receive government support.

■ Import Duties: USA**Tracy Gilbert:**[\[44042\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of tariffs applied by the US Government on (a) jobs and (b) exports in (i) Edinburgh North and Leith constituency and (ii) Scotland.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

We know that this will be a concerning time for businesses in Scotland; in 2024, 7.3% of goods exported from Scotland were to the US. That is why the government has been focused on negotiating an economic deal with the US and we remain committed to these discussions.

The government is resolute in our support for industry across the whole of the UK, and ministers and officials will continue to engage with businesses to understand the impact of these tariffs.

■ Metals**Ruth Jones:**[\[39562\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what estimate his Department has made of (a) the amount of scrap metal produced in the UK, (b) the maximum demand for scrap metal that can be used in the UK and (c) the impact that a ban on scrap metal exports would have on the UK economy and metals recycling sector.

Sarah Jones:

My department funded a Warwick University report entitled 'Domestic Scrap Steel Recycling – Economic, Environmental and Social Opportunities', published February 2021, which shows that UK produces around 11.3mn tonnes of steel scrap and 1.1mn tonnes of aluminium per year. The Government has not conducted research into the volume of other types of metal scrap.

The same report highlighted that in the years leading up to 2020, the UK's demand for steel scrap was around 2.6mn tonnes and 800k tonnes for aluminium.

My department is in close discussion with steel and aluminium producers and metal recyclers on a range of options to improve the supply of scrap, including export controls.

■ **Motor Vehicles: Import Duties**

Sir Christopher Chope: [\[43814\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will remove tariffs on the import of motor vehicles from the United States.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

On 3 April, the government launched a Request for Input from businesses to help inform our response to US tariffs. We remain committed to discussions with the US on a wider economic deal that works for both the UK and the US. But nothing is off the table; this government will do what is necessary to defend the UK's national interest.

■ **Overseas Trade**

Jim Shannon: [\[42452\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps he is taking to improve export capacity within the UK.

Gareth Thomas:

We recognise the importance of increasing the capacity of businesses to export and succeed around the world.

UK businesses can access DBT's export support via Great.gov.uk. This comprises an online support offer and a wider network of support including the Export Academy, UK Export Finance, the International Markets network and one-to-one support from International Trade Advisers.

As part of our work on a new trade strategy and a small business strategy, we are looking at further proposals to help UK businesses to export more.

■ **Public Houses: Devon**

Martin Wrigley: [\[43337\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to help support pubs in Devon.

Gareth Thomas:

Hospitality businesses, including pubs and breweries in Devon, are at the heart of our communities and play a vital role in supporting economic growth across the UK.

The Government is creating a fairer business rate system and reducing alcohol duty on qualifying draught products. This work will be supported by the publication of The

Small Business Strategy Command Paper which will be published later this year. Through the Hospitality Sector Council, we are addressing strategic issues for the sector related to high street regeneration, skills, sustainability, and productivity.

■ **Small Businesses: Government Assistance**

Harpreet Uppal: [\[43358\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps he is taking to support (a) small businesses and (b) independent retailers.

Gareth Thomas:

Small businesses are the backbone of our communities. The Government has a wide range of business support offers aimed at independent retailers, engaging directly and through key trade associations. We will be launching the Business Growth Service later this year to support small businesses further with productivity and growth working closely with Growth Hubs in England. We are also taking measures to tackle late payments, reform business rates, improve access to finance and encourage tech adoption for all businesses and independent retailers. Key growth-driving programmes such as Help to Grow: Management help businesses unlock their potential through bespoke support and resources.

■ **Trade Agreements: India**

Jim Shannon: [\[42451\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what progress his Department has made on trade talks with India.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

The Business and Trade Secretary travelled to New Delhi to meet his counter Piyush Goyal in February 2025 where they relaunched negotiations.

We are continuing to work closely with the Government of India to progress negotiations towards a deal that drives economic growth for every region and nation.

CABINET OFFICE

■ **Admiralty House: Repairs and Maintenance**

Kevin Hollinrake: [\[42471\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what information his Department holds on the total planned cost of the repairs to doors in Flat 1 of Admiralty House; and whether any other works are planned for that property.

Georgia Gould:

We are not able to comment on specific repairs to Admiralty House on security grounds. Admiralty House is a Grade I listed government freehold property and any necessary repairs undertaken have to be compliant with those regulations.

■ Alex Chisholm**Mike Wood:**[\[43946\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 31 March 2025 to Question 40573 on Alex Chisholm, for what reasons the final advice from the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments, dated 30 October 2024, was not published before 12 March 2025.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

The Advisory Committee on Business Appointments is operationally independent of government and is responsible for publishing its advice on applications once the appointment or employment has been taken up or announced by the applicant.

In this case, the Committee has publicly stated that the timing of the publication of the advice on GOV.UK was impacted by staffing issues within the Secretariat.

■ Cabinet Office: Freedom of Information**Charlie Dewhirst:**[\[42614\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 27 November 2024 to Question 14976 on Cabinet Office and Prime Minister: Travel and with reference to the Freedom of Information Act response with reference FOI2025/01531, disclosed on 28 February 2025, if he will publish that response.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

We have deposited a copy of the policy in the House library.

■ Civil Servants: Pay**Mr Richard Holden:**[\[42817\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 27 November 2024 to Question 14354 on Civil Servants: Pay, what the budget for civil service pay is (a) including and (b) excluding National insurance employer contributions in (i) 2024-25 and (ii) 2025-26.

Georgia Gould:

Departments are responsible for pay, terms and conditions of civil servants, within the parameters set out in the Civil Service Pay Remit Guidance, this includes setting budgets for annual increases for its own workforce.

Salary data for the Civil Service is published annually as part of Civil Service Statistics, an Accredited Official Statistics release. Civil Service Statistics 2025 is due to be published on 30 July 2025.

For 2025/26, departmental pay awards have not yet been made and the 2025/26 Pay Remit Guidance will be published in due course.

■ Civil Service: Ethnic Groups**Sir John Hayes:** [\[42410\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the cost to the public purse was of the Civil Service Race Forum in each year since its creation.

Georgia Gould:

The Civil Service Race Forum (CSRF) is a volunteer collaborative group of Civil Service ethnic minority staff. The CSRF does not hold a budget, but a department can choose to provide support where there is a business case to do so. We are not aware of any such financial support since 2020. We do not hold any records prior to this date. The CSRF was created in 2016.

■ Departmental Responsibilities**Mike Wood:** [\[43077\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Written Statement of 5 December 2024 on Plan for Change: Milestones for mission-led government, HCWS285, if he will make it his policy to establish a unit to monitor the Government's progress in meeting the targets set out in the Plan for Change document.

Ellie Reeves:

A specialist Mission Delivery Unit has already been set up in the Cabinet Office to support delivery of the Missions. It advises the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on the delivery of the government's five missions and the milestones set out in the Plan for Change.

■ Emergencies: Departmental Responsibilities**Blake Stephenson:** [\[43279\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he plans to appoint a dedicated Minister for Resilience.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has overall responsibility for resilience policy across government. He is supported by a number of ministerial colleagues with resilience responsibilities in their departments. The full List of Ministerial Responsibilities is available on GOV.UK [here](#).

■ EU Countries: British Nationals Abroad**Mary Kelly Foy:** [\[42730\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he is having discussions with counterparts in the EU on the impact of the Withdrawal Agreement on UK citizens with homes in both the UK and Schengen Area.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

UK nationals lawfully resident in the EU prior to 31 December 2020 are protected under the Withdrawal Agreement and enjoy certain rights, including the right of residence in their host state provided that they maintain continuity of residence.

The Government takes these rights extremely seriously and engages regularly with the European Commission and Member States to resolve difficulties UK nationals face in accessing their rights.

UK nationals not protected under the Withdrawal Agreement should ensure that they comply with the Schengen rules: these allow for certain third country nationals, including UK nationals, to travel within the Schengen Area for up to 90 days in any rolling 180-day period.

■ EU Countries: Visas**Mary Kelly Foy:**[\[42729\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to improve mobility arrangements for UK citizens within the Schengen Zone.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

The UK and the EU allow for visa-free short-term travel in line with their respective arrangements for third country nationals. The UK allows EU citizens short-term visa-free travel for up to six months. Meanwhile, the EU allows for travel within the Schengen Area for up to 90 days in any rolling 180-day period; this is standard for third countries travelling visa-free to the EU. UK nationals planning to stay longer will need permission from the relevant Member State. This may require a visa and/or permit. The UK Government will continue to listen to and advocate for UK nationals.

■ European Court of Justice**Mike Wood:**[\[42238\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2025 to Question 26195 on European Court of Justice, what discussions he has had with the European Commission on the jurisdiction of European Court of Justice rulings in the UK.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

There has been no change in the jurisdiction of European Court of Justice rulings in the UK. I have regular exchanges with my EU counterparts on our obligations under the Withdrawal Agreement and the Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

■ Government Departments: Public Relations**Mr Richard Holden:**[\[42806\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what guidance his Department has issued on delivering efficiency savings through reducing spending on external public relations.

Georgia Gould:

The Government regularly evaluates the effectiveness of all communication activities to ensure they are delivering and providing the best value for money for taxpayers. An example of this is the recent comprehensive communications Spending Review that delivered savings of £85 million in 2024-25 and up to £96 million in 2025-26.

■ **Honours**

Lisa Smart: [\[42632\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the average time taken to process nominations for national honours.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

Processing the large number of nominations for national honours can be lengthy but it is critical to ensure the integrity of national honours is maintained. Verifying information about nominees can take time to ensure the independent process has been completed to the standards expected.

Of course we are always looking at ways to use technology to improve and speed up processes, including in honours.

■ **Intelligence Services: Finance**

Mike Wood: [\[42572\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Security and Intelligence Agencies Financial Statement 2023-24, for what reason the administration cost estimate for 2023-24 was higher than the outturn; and what assessment he has made of the accuracy of financial planning for the Security and Intelligence Agencies.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

As has been the policy of successive governments, the government does not comment on matters relating to the intelligence agencies. The Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament scrutinises the policies, expenditure, administration and operations of the intelligence agencies on behalf of Parliament.

■ **Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy: National Security Adviser**

Charlie Dewhirst: [\[42038\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will ensure that the National Security Adviser gives evidence to the Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

The Government welcomes the important work of the JCNSS to scrutinise the national security decision making.

I refer the Honourable Member to the letter sent by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on 24 February 2025, to the Chair of the JCNSS, which has been published here

<https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/46888/documents/241917/default/>.

■ Long Covid: Surveys

Ruth Jones: [\[43203\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he has had discussions with the Office for National Statistics on designing a standard set of long covid survey questions.

Ruth Jones: [\[43205\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he has had discussions with the Office for National Statistics on the potential merits of consulting (a) patients, (b) carers, (c) academics, (d) clinicians and (e) devolved Administrations on the design of long covid survey questions.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

No. The design of surveys is the responsibility of the ONS which is operationally independent and accountable to Parliament.

■ Ministers: Visits Abroad

Mr Richard Holden: [\[43123\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether his Department has issued guidance to Ministers on whether they may undertake personal visits whilst on official Ministerial visits overseas.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

Guidance on overseas visits by Ministers is found in Chapter 10 of the Ministerial Code.

■ Prime Minister: Information Officers

Mike Wood: [\[43464\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the value is of the severance payment to the outgoing director of communications.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

It is a longstanding policy not to comment on individuals. The Model Contract for Special Advisers is published online and details the circumstances in which severance is payable.

■ Prime Minister: Travel

Mike Wood: [\[41415\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Prime Minister has taken steps to reduce his business travel since 4 July 2024.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

Travel plans will always vary and are decided with consideration of the best use of a Minister's time and in the interests of the taxpayer. Security considerations are also taken into account.

As was the practice under the previous Administration, information about official overseas ministerial travel will be published as part of the Cabinet Office transparency returns and made available on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk).

■ Public Bodies: Disclosure of Information

Lisa Smart: [\[41606\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what his planned timetable is to establish a duty of candour for public servants.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

The Government remains committed to implement a 'Hillsborough Law' which will place a legal duty of candour on public servants and authorities. The details of this Bill will be announced in due course.

■ Public Sector: Procurement

Sarah Champion: [\[42455\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that only suppliers that (a) offer secure jobs, (b) treat workers fairly, (c) pay a decent wage and (d) recognise trade unions can (i) bid for and (ii) hold public contracts.

Georgia Gould:

This government is committed to creating jobs that provide security, treat workers fairly, and pay a decent wage. The government's Social Value Model provides an opportunity to reward suppliers who provide good working conditions for staff working on public contracts.

Max Wilkinson: [\[42774\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what changes he plans to make to rules governing SME procurement in public contracts, in the context of the Spring Statement 2025.

Georgia Gould:

This Government is taking major steps to give SMEs greater access to public contracts - including the publication of the National Procurement Policy Statement (NPPS) which sets out a mission-led procurement regime focused on driving economic growth that supports Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) and Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSEs), giving them greater opportunities to win public contracts by instructing contracting authorities to maximise their spend with these organisations. To support implementation of the NPPS in central government, we have announced new rules requiring all government departments and their executive agencies and non-departmental public bodies to set three-year targets for direct spend with SMEs from 1 April 2025, and from 1 April 2026 for VCSEs, and publish progress annually.

We will be consulting on more reforms including a requirement for large contracting authorities to publish their three-year targets for small business and social enterprise

spend and report on this annually - as well as the exclusion of suppliers from contracts worth more than £5million if they don't complete prompt payments of invoices.

In the Spring Statement, the Chancellor also announced measures to reform our procurement system to give small businesses across the UK better access to Ministry of Defence contracts.

■ Small Businesses

Wendy Morton: [\[43071\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what estimate he has made of the number of new (a) Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and (b) micro businesses created between 30 October 2024 and 31 March 2025.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

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

A response to the Hon lady's Parliamentary Question of 1st April is attached.

Attachments:

1. Letter from the National Statistician [PQ43071 (1).pdf]

■ Stonewall: Subscriptions

Mr Richard Holden: [\[42602\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the (a) Office for National Statistics, (b) National Audit Office, (c) Northern Ireland Civil Service, (d) Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman, (e) GCHQ, (f) MI5, (g) SIS and (h) Crown Commercial Service pay subscription fees to Stonewall.

Georgia Gould:

As the sponsoring department for the following bodies, the Cabinet Office can confirm that the Office for National Statistics, the Public Health Service Ombudsman, and the Crown Commercial Service do not pay subscription fees to Stonewall.

All other bodies asked about are not sponsored by the Cabinet Office, and are therefore a matter for their individual sponsoring departments.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Arts: Artificial Intelligence

Max Wilkinson: [\[42775\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what advice her Department provides to creative industries considering the use of legal recourse when artificial intelligence has been used in breach of copyright.

Chris Bryant:

It would be inappropriate for the Government to provide direct legal advice to individual creators or organisations, but we fully recognise the serious and evolving challenges posed by the use of copyrighted material in AI development.

The current UK Copyright Framework enables creative rights holders to prevent the unauthorised use of protected works, but this can be very difficult to implement in the context of AI, especially for individual firms and creators. We encourage rights holders who believe their work has been used unlawfully to seek independent legal advice.

More broadly, the Government is working to ensure that copyright and intellectual property frameworks remain robust and fit for purpose in the age of AI. We have received over 11,500 responses to our consultation, principally from creators. It is only right that we take the time to read and understand those responses and use them to shape our approach. We have been clear that AI developers must be more transparent about the content they use to train their models and that rights holders should have effective control of their works.

Addressing this is an urgent priority for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, but no decisions will be taken until we are absolutely confident we have a practical plan that delivers for the creative industries.

■ Arts: Conditions of Employment**Max Wilkinson:**[\[42853\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department has taken to assess the impact of the proposed streamlining of workers definitions on the creative industries.

Max Wilkinson:[\[43107\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make it his policy to consult on any changes to (a) actors' and (b) performers' employment rights within the cultural sector.

Chris Bryant:

We are committed to giving British creators increased security at work, and providing the creative industries with a regulatory and fiscal environment where imagination and innovation can flourish. To support this aim, DCMS is working closely with the sector to understand the implications of the Government's Plan to Make Work Pay on the Creative Industries.

The Plan to Make Work Pay will represent the biggest upgrade in employment rights in a generation, bringing the UK back into line internationally. It tackles poor working conditions and job security, and by making work more flexible and more family-friendly, will support our wider programme across employment, health and skills policy to get Britain working.

This includes a commitment to consult on a simpler, two-part framework for employment status. Some reforms in The Plan to Make Work Pay will take longer to undertake and implement, and we see this consultation as a longer-term goal.

■ **BBC: Broadcasting Programmes**

Mark Pritchard: [\[42427\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will hold discussions with the BBC on ensuring that the programmes it commissions reflect the views of people from across the UK.

Stephanie Peacock:

As a public service broadcaster that matters hugely to public life, the BBC must be responsive to viewers and listeners and tell inclusive stories about the lives of all people, in all parts of the UK. Under the current Charter, the BBC has an obligation to 'reflect, represent and serve the diverse communities of all of the United Kingdom's nations and regions'. The BBC is operationally and editorially independent of the Government in determining how it meets that obligation, and it is for the independent regulator Ofcom to hold the BBC to account.

As part of the next Charter Review, the Government will engage with the BBC and others to consider how to ensure the BBC thrives well into the next decade and beyond. This will include discussions on a range of important issues and will start a national conversation to make sure the BBC truly represents and delivers for every person in this country

■ **Broadcasting: Competition**

Mark Pritchard: [\[42426\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will hold discussions with Ofcom on encouraging competition in broadcast news media.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Department regularly engages with Ofcom on a range of issues including the importance of a competitive and diverse broadcasting sector.

Ofcom has a statutory duty under the Communication Act 2003 to secure and maintain a sufficient plurality of providers of different TV and radio services. Ofcom also has a duty to review the operation of media ownership rules across TV, radio and press every three years. Ofcom published their latest review on 15 November 2024.

■ **Cycling: Training**

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[43255\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what elite-level training facilities are used by British Cycling to support BMX (a) freestyle and (b) racing.

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[43256\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what elite-level training facilities are used by British Cycling to support mountain bike (a) cross-country and (b) downhill.

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[43257\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what elite-level training facilities are used by British Cycling to support (a) road cycling and (b) cyclocross.

Stephanie Peacock:

British Cycling has a dedicated elite training facility at the National Cycling Centre in Manchester.

Whilst not all disciplines use centralised facilities, all riders on the Olympic and Paralympic world class programme are supported by world-class coaching and support staff according to their specific needs.

■ Leisure Centres: Deeping St James

Sir John Hayes: [\[43016\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will help fund the (a) repair and (b) reopening of Deepings Leisure Centre in Deeping St James.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Government recognises the importance of ensuring public access to leisure facilities which are vital spaces for people of all ages to stay fit and healthy, and which play an important role within communities.

The ongoing responsibility of providing access to public leisure facilities lies at local authority level. We share your ambition to ensure that people in Deeping St James can benefit from quality sport and physical activity opportunities. The Government encourages local authorities to make investments which offer the right opportunities and facilities for the communities they serve, investing in sport and physical activity with a place-based approach, to meet the needs of individual communities.

■ Media: Men

Mark Pritchard: [\[42425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will hold discussions with media production companies on producing more content to promote positive male role models.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Government recognises the important positive contribution made by our creative industries, including our public service broadcasters, in informing, educating, and entertaining audiences. However, editorial decisions are ultimately a matter for individual production companies.

■ Musicians: EU Countries

Steve Darling: [\[43783\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to support British musicians touring in the EU.

Chris Bryant:

We are working closely with the music industry to tackle the challenges facing UK musicians and their support staff when touring in the EU. We remain in open and constructive dialogue with the EU, with a view to improve arrangements across the European continent without seeing a return to free movement. Most recently, on 7 April, I attended the Informal Meeting for EU Culture Ministers in Warsaw as a guest of the Polish Presidency of the Council of the European Union. This is the first time a UK minister has been invited since Brexit. Our aim is to identify practical solutions to ensure that UK artists can continue to perform across Europe with minimal barriers while respecting the regulatory frameworks on both sides.

■ Sports

Jim Shannon: [\[42450\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to increase access to grassroots sports in local communities.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Government recognises the vital role that grassroots sports provide for people across the UK, including the physical and mental health benefits of participating in sport and how grassroots clubs can foster a sense of community cohesion and pride in place.

The Home Nation's sports councils are responsible for the majority of investment in grassroots sport across the UK. However, DCMS is committed to improving the provision of high-quality grassroots sports facilities across the whole of the UK to enable as many people as possible to get active.

On 21 March, we announced an additional £100 million to be invested through the Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programme. £3 million of this additional funding is to be invested in Northern Ireland through the Irish Football Association. This funding is designed to benefit the areas most in need, with 50% of investment going to the 30% most deprived areas in the UK. There will also be a strong focus on increasing provision for under represented groups, such as women and girls, ethnic minorities groups and disabled players. At least 40% of funded projects will also have a multi-sport offer, ensuring more can participate and get active across a variety of sports.

■ Sports: Facilities

Amanda Hack: [\[42639\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to improve access to outdoor sports facilities during school holidays.

Stephanie Peacock:

Everyone, including children and young people, should have the opportunity to play sport and do regular physical activity. The Government has committed to continued funding for grassroots facilities which will ensure that communities have access to high-quality, inclusive facilities, no matter where they live.

The Government recently announced £100 million additional funding for the UK-wide Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programme which funds new and upgraded pitches, facilities, and equipment, so that sites can provide a more inclusive and sustainable offer throughout the year, including the school holidays.

More widely, the Government has confirmed more than £200 million of funding for the Holiday, Activities and Food (HAF) programme over the 2025/26 financial year. The HAF programme provides healthy meals, enriching activities and free childcare places to children from low-income families over the school holidays, benefiting their health, wellbeing and learning.

■ Tower of London**Kevin Hollinrake:**[\[43101\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 11 March 2025 to Question 35700 on Tower of London, whether the Government has had discussions with UNESCO on the potential impact of the planning application for a new Chinese Embassy at the Royal Mint on the Tower of London World Heritage site.

Chris Bryant:

On 25 February 2025, DCMS submitted a 'paragraph 172 notification' letter to the World Heritage Centre that included updated information on a range of developments relating to the Tower of London World Heritage Site.

The letter included an update on the planning process for the redevelopment of the Royal Mint Court, noting that Historic England does not disagree with the conclusions of the Heritage Impact Assessment that any impacts on the Tower of London World Heritage Site from the proposed development would be minimal.

As the Heritage Impact Assessment has been submitted to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government and since the Public Inquiry has closed, DCMS as State Party has not requested further specific advice from ICOMOS (the advisors to UNESCO).

■ Welsh National Opera**Kanishka Narayan:**[\[43535\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions she has had with the Welsh Government on (a) the long-term sustainability of Welsh National Opera's full-time orchestra and (b) ensuring the continuation of its touring programme across England and Wales.

Chris Bryant:

On behalf of the Secretary of State, last year I held a series of productive meetings with the Wales Office, Welsh Government, Arts Council England, and Welsh National Opera (WNO) to understand the issues in more detail and to see how, within the parameters of the arm's length principle, DCMS can best help ensure a strong and secure future for the WNO.

Across all these meetings there was a recognition of the value of the WNO and its work - both for the people of Wales, and for people elsewhere in the UK. It was clear that all partners were keen to achieve a positive long-term future for the organisation.

Everyone wants to sustain the WNO, and so I was pleased to see additional funding of £755,000 allocated by the Arts Council of Wales to WNO last December. Funding decisions are of course for the Arts Council of Wales and Arts Council England, however, I welcome the tenure of the new joint CEOs and General Directors at WNO, and I am confident that they are now in a strong place to succeed.

DEFENCE**■ A400m Aircraft: Procurement****Ben Obese-Jecty:**[\[43232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the merits of the former Secretary of State's plans to purchase more Airbus A400M aircraft.

Maria Eagle:

All capability requirements, including those for tactical airlift, are being considered as part of the Strategic Defence Review process.

■ Ammunition: Lost Property and Theft**James Cartlidge:**[\[43147\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 20 March 2025 to Question 37603 on Ammunition: Lost Property and Theft, if he will list incidents recorded on the Defence Incident Management Database since 5 July 2024.

Luke Pollard:

Since 5 July 2024 to 31 March 2025 11,763 security incidents have been raised and recorded in the Defence Incident Management Database. When any type of security incident is raised, it is reviewed by security personnel and subjected to an initial security risk assessment, with further action taken on a proportionate basis. As has been the policy for successive Governments, for security reasons we would not publish details of suspected or reported security incidents.

■ Armed Forces**James Cartlidge:** [\[43985\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his Written Ministerial Statement of 1 April 2025 on Defence Reform, HCWS 573, whether the Military Strategic Headquarters will have its own secretariat.

Maria Eagle:

The detailed requirement for the Military Strategic Headquarters organisational structure is in development and will include a secretariat function. This will be drawn from existing resource within the Department.

■ Armed Forces: Body Armour**Ben Obese-Jecty:** [\[43254\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to develop reduced threat level hard body armour plates.

Maria Eagle:

The Ministry of Defence will deliver a Personal Hard Armour Framework (PHA-F). This framework will enable the inclusion of emerging technologies and future requirements. Reduced threat level hard body armour plates could therefore be considered in the future under PHA-F.

■ Armed Forces: Families**Margaret Mullane:** [\[42984\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of service life on non-UK nationality families of serving personnel.

Al Carns:

This Government recognises and values the vital support which all Service families provide to our Armed Forces, which enables them to serve our country both in the UK and overseas in order to maintain national security.

We are therefore committed through the Armed Forces Covenant to continuously work to improve the lives of the Armed Forces community in conjunction with other Government Departments, and work is currently underway to fully extend the legal duty further.

For our non-UK families, much of that work focusses on their UK immigration status, and the Ministry of Defence works very closely with the Home Office to ensure that those who serve or have served in the Regular Armed Forces and their families are not disadvantaged by Service life. This includes special Immigration Rules [Appendix HM Armed Forces](#) which offer a number of advantages for families such as being exempt from paying the Immigration Health Surcharge to access NHS services; being granted visas for entry to the UK valid for up to 60 months compared to 30 months on other family routes; being able to count time outside the UK on accompanied overseas assignments towards future Settlement or naturalisation applications; and

children born in the UK or qualifying territories to Serving personnel are British by birth.

Support and information is also available to families on a range of issues including relocation, accommodation, education and NHS facilities through the Single Services, the HIVE Information Centres, the new [Families Hub](#) and the Families Federations.

■ Armed Forces: Finance

Mel Stride: [\[43441\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether capital departmental expenditure by his Department can fund an expansion in the size of the armed forces; and how much and what proportion of the additional defence expenditure announced at the Spring Statement (a) is expected to and (b) could potentially fund an expansion in the size of the armed forces.

Luke Pollard:

Any expansion in the size of the Armed Forces would predominantly result in an increase to resource spending rather than capital spending. However, the capitalisation of workforce costs directly employed in bringing a capital asset into service is allowed under International Accounting Standards. Further detail on how the Department applies workforce capitalisation can be found in the Annual Report and Accounts, available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66aa3e400808eaf43b50db19/Ministry_of_Defence_annual_report_and_accounts_2023_to_2024.pdf

The £2.2 billion uplift to the Ministry of Defence (MOD) budget for 2025-26 will support investment in:

- Enhancing the UK's programme of joint exercises with NATO allies to ensure we are ready to respond together to the threats we now face.
- Investment in advanced technology such as Directed Energy Weapons, which will revolutionise our Armed Forces' capabilities.
- Capitalising on the opportunity presented by the buy-back of the MOD Service Families housing stock, to refurbish the defence estate and provide our military families with the homes they deserve.

■ Armed Forces: Housing

Alex Brewer: [\[43703\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Spring Statement published on 26 March 2025, where the 37,000 new military homes will be located.

AI Carns:

The Ministry of Defence is currently undertaking an extensive review of its Service Family Accommodation portfolio. To ensure a strategic and structured approach is taken, all options will be assessed during the review. The Defence Housing Strategy will be published Summer 2025.

Armoured Fighting Vehicles: Standards**Helen Maguire:****[43259]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what proportion of (a) Challenger 2, (b) Warrior, (c) Boxer and (d) protected patrol vehicles were (i) fit for service and (ii) not fit for service in each year since 2015.

Maria Eagle:

We do not routinely disclose a breakdown of total capability fleets in the interests of security and operational effectiveness.

However, the total fleet figures of Challenger 2, Warrior and Protected Mobility Vehicles since 2016 can be found in the annual UK Armed Forces Equipment and Formations statistics. This is accessible here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/uk-armed-forces-equipment-and- formations>.

Defence: Bedfordshire**Blake Stephenson:****[43276]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an estimate of the potential economic impact on Bedfordshire of increased defence spending.

Maria Eagle:

We are ensuring UK defence is on the cutting-edge of technology and innovation, with Defence spending meeting our military needs, supporting 434,000 jobs across the breadth of the UK and increasing the productive capacity of the UK economy to drive sustainable, long-term growth. The Ministry of Defence's allocation of the 2.5% uplift will be agreed as part of the Spending Review.

Defence: Climate Change**John Glen:****[43450]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential implications for its policies of divestment in the UK defence industry as a consequence of (a) the Paris Climate Agreement and (b) UK Climate Transition Benchmarks.

Maria Eagle:

We have not carried out an assessment into the impacts of divestment in the UK's Defence Industry due to (a) the Paris Climate Agreement and (b) UK Climate Transition Benchmarks. This is because we see no conflict between investment in

Defence and sustainable investment. The [Defence Industrial Strategy - Statement of Intent](#), published in December 2024, identified the mobilisation of additional private sector investment as essential to the Government's agenda to strengthen our nation's defences and grow our economy.

Reducing the carbon footprint of Defence is not differentiated from this investment. Accelerating the development and adoption of dual use energy and circular economy technologies can deliver operational advantage and resilience while reducing emissions. For example, trials integrating alternative fuel sources and renewable energy technology can further unlock an ability to operate for longer periods without resupply and at greater reach across a dispersed battlefield.

Our ambition is for a better, more integrated, more innovative and more resilient defence industry and we will be publishing a Defence Industrial Strategy aligned to this ambition.

■ Defence: Expenditure

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[42784\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what proportion of the Defence budget is spent on Government Major Projects Portfolio programmes.

Maria Eagle:

Information on the costs of the Department's Defence Major Programmes for financial year 2024-25 is still being collated.

I will write to the hon. Member once this is complete.

■ Defence: Reform

James Cartlidge: [\[43983\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his Written Ministerial Statement of 1 April 2025 on Defence Reform, whether he plans to publish the Defence Industrial Strategy (a) before or (b) after the creation of the National Armaments Director Group.

James Cartlidge: [\[43984\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his Written Ministerial Statement of 1 April 2025 on Defence Reform, HCWS 573, whether he plans to publish the Defence Industrial Strategy before the post of National Armaments Director has been filled.

Maria Eagle:

The National Armaments Director Group, set up on 1 April 2025, will fix the broken procurement system within the Ministry of Defence and make defence an engine for economic growth in every corner of the UK. It will bring together teams delivering the national 'arsenal', the Government's Defence Industrial Strategy and end to end acquisition under one leader, the National Armaments Director.

Recruitment for a permanent National Armaments Director is ongoing. They will take up the role after appointment once the appropriate notice period from any previous employment has been served.

On current plans, the Defence Industrial Strategy will be published in late-Spring 2025.

■ Defence: Small Businesses

Graeme Downie: [\[43629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when the new support hub for SMEs will be operational.

Maria Eagle:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 10 March 2025 to the hon. Member for South Suffolk (James Cartlidge) to Question 34903.

Attachments:

1. Defence: Procurement [34903 - Defence Procurement.docx]

■ Estonia: Armed Forces

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[43403\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the rules of engagement are for the armed forces under Operation CABRIT.

Luke Pollard:

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will understand that for operational security reasons I cannot comment on the specific rules of engagement for the Armed Forces under Operation CABRIT.

■ F-35 Aircraft: Procurement

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[42744\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what his planned timetable is for the creation of a third frontline F-35 squadron.

Maria Eagle:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 20 March 2025 to Question 37763.

Attachments:

1. F-35 Aircraft: Procurement [37763 - F-35 Aircraft Procurement.docx]

■ France: Foreign Relations

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[43315\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of reported comments by President Macron on 27 March 2025.

Luke Pollard:

France is one of the UK's most important European partners. The UK continues to work closely with France to lead Europe's efforts on Ukraine's long term defence. UK and French led planning is ongoing and discussions continue around military planning of air, sea and land forces that would be required to support a just and lasting peace in Ukraine.

■ Helicopters: Finance

James Cartlidge: [\[43217\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 24 March to Question 39042 on Helicopters: Finance, if he will outline the prioritisation decisions made by the multiple front line commands to lay out an estimated budget for (a) 2024-25 and (b) 2025-26.

Maria Eagle:

Prioritisation decisions made by front line commands regarding spending on rotary wing will take account of capability requirements, as well as the Accounting Officer principles set out in Managing Public Money.

■ HMS Vanguard: Repairs and Maintenance

James Cartlidge: [\[42477\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Vanguard since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42478\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Victorious since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42479\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Vigilant since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42480\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Vengeance since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42481\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Astute since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42482\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Ambush since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42483\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Artful since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42484\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Audacious since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42485\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Anson since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42486\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Queen Elizabeth since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42487\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Prince of Wales since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42488\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of Daring since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Dauntless since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42490\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Diamond since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42491\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Dragon since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42492\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Defender since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Duncan since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Lancaster since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42495\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Iron Duke since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42496\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Richmond since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42497\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Somerset since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42498\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Sutherland since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42499\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Kent since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42500\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Portland since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42501\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS St Albans since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42502\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Tyne since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42503\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Severn since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42504\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Mersey since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42505\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Forth since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42506\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Medway since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42507\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Trent since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42508\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Tamar since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42509\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Spey since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42510\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Ledbury since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42511\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Cattistock since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Brocklesbury since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Middleton since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42514\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Chiddingfold since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Hurworth since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42516\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Archer since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Biter since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42518\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Smiter since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Pursuer since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42520\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Blazer since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42521\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Dasher since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42522\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Puncher since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42523\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Charger since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42524\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Ranger since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42525\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Trumpeter since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42526\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Express since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42527\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Example since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42528\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Explorer since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42529\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Exploit since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42530\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Tracker since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42531\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Raider since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42532\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Albion since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42533\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Bulwark since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42534\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Argyll since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42535\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Northumberland since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42536\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Westminster since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42537\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of RFA Wave Knight since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42538\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of RFA Wave Ruler since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42539\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of RFA Tideforce since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42540\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of RFA Tiderace since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42541\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of RFA Tidespring since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42542\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of RFA Tidesurge since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42543\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of RFA Cardigan Bay since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42544\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of RFA Lyme Bay since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42545\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of RFA Mounts Bay since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42546\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of RFA Argus since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42547\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of RFA Fort Victoria since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42548\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Bangor since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42549\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Penzance since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42550\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Cutlass since 5 July 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[42551\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) upkeep and (b) maintenance of HMS Dagger since 5 July 2024.

Maria Eagle:

The volume of detailed information requested is such that it will take time to consider in full. Consequently, I will write to the hon. Member and a copy of the letter will be placed in the Library of the House.

■ Israel: Military Bases

Brian Leishman: [\[42830\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when an Israeli Air Force aircraft last landed at an RAF station in the UK; and what its purpose was.

Luke Pollard:

For operational security reasons and as a matter of policy, the Ministry of Defence will neither confirm, deny, nor comment on any foreign nations' military aircraft movement or operations within UK airspace or UK overseas bases, whether they may or may not have happened.

Ministry of Defence: Israel**Brian Leishman:**[\[42829\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 14 March 2025 to Question 36262 on Ministry of Defence: Israel, what the purpose of the meeting was; and who the senior British official was who attended.

Luke Pollard:

The Israeli Air Force delegation, led by their Head of Personnel Division, visited Ministry of Defence Main Building to meet and receive a briefing from the Defence Human Resources Transformation Team, as part of their visit to the UK focussing on HR and People issues.

Multi-role Support Ships: Procurement**James Cartlidge:**[\[43145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 20 March 2025 to Question 38652 on Multi-role Support Ships: Procurement, on what date it was renamed.

James Cartlidge:[\[43146\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 20 March 2025 to Question 38652 on Multi-role Support Ships: Procurement, whether external consultants were involved in the renaming process.

Maria Eagle:

The name change from Multi-role Support Ship to Multi-role Strike Ship (MRSS) took effect on 25 February 2025. No external consultants were involved.

Navy: Body Armour**Ben Obese-Jecty:**[\[42786\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department has taken to develop buoyant body armour plates for use in maritime operations.

Maria Eagle:

The Ministry of Defence will deliver a Personal Hard Armour Framework (PHA-F). This framework will enable the inclusion of emerging technologies and future requirements. Buoyant plates could, therefore, be considered in the future under PHA-F.

■ Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Associations: Standards

Helen Maguire: [\[42926\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Professor Alice Sullivan's review entitled Independent review of data, statistics and research on sex and gender, published on 19 March 2025, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to establish a new non-departmental public body to (a) standardise and (b) improve the effectiveness of the work of the (i) Council of Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Associations and (b) the Reserve Forces and Cadets Associations.

Al Carns:

The 2019 Review of the Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Associations (RFCAs) was published on 24 March 2020 and placed in the Library of the House. The Review recommended that the Council of Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Associations (CRFCA) and the 13 RFCAs should be merged into a single Executive Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB), with a National Office and a set of regional organisations. The review can be found at the following address:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-the-reserve-forces-cadets-associations-2019>.

The NDPB implementation work was paused in March 2023 due to it failing to obtain a legislative slot in the last Parliament, but this work has now re-commenced, and we are currently progressing work on the required legislation.

■ Reserve Forces: Recruitment

James Cartlidge: [\[43212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) full time and (b) reservist armed forces personnel were working on recruitment for the (i) British Army, (ii) Royal Navy, (iii) RAF and (iv) Royal Marines as of 01 April 2025.

James Cartlidge: [\[43216\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) of his Department's civilian personnel, (b) Armed Forces personnel and (c) external private contractors work on recruitment for the (i) Royal Navy, (ii) British Army, (iii) Royal Air Force and (iv) Royal Marines.

Luke Pollard:

The requested information is presented in the table below. A separate return for the Royal Marines is not available as Royal Navy and Royal Marines recruiting are combined under the Royal Navy Recruit and Attract organisation.

	ARMY	ROYAL NAVY	ROYAL AIR FORCE
Regulars	417	228	250
Reservists	84	266	105

	ARMY	ROYAL NAVY	ROYAL AIR FORCE
Civil Servants	18	35	67
Contractors	708	17*	14*

*Note: contractors provide a range of outsourced Services, some held jointly. For the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force we hold no details on the numbers of individuals who work for the provider on each contract.

■ Royal Marines: Firearms

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[\[42787\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, for what reason Royal Marines within the Littoral Response Group will be equipped with the Sig Sauer MCX rather than the L403A1-AIW.

Maria Eagle:

The L143A2 (Sig Sauer MCX) is a flexible capability that is far more specialised and can be tailored to fit niche and mission specific roles required by the UK Commando Force (UKCF). It is therefore better suited to the specialist maritime roles of the Littoral Response Group (LRG).

The L403A1 is the new general purpose firearm of the UKCF, and is therefore less suited to some of the specialist roles that the LRG fulfils.

■ Russia: Shipping

Helen Maguire:

[\[42976\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many incidents of Russian military activity in (a) the North Sea, (b) the English Channel, (c) the Irish Sea and (d) the North Atlantic his Department has recorded per month for the last 24 months.

Luke Pollard:

The Royal Navy continuously monitors UK waters and stands ready to respond to the presence of Russian vessels. For reasons of national security, we cannot disclose the specific number of incidents of Russian military activity recorded during any given period.

■ UK Defence Innovation

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[43125\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether UK Defence Innovation will be an arm's length body.

Maria Eagle:

No. UK Defence Innovation will report to the National Armaments Director in the Ministry of Defence, as part of the new operating model being established through Defence Reform.

Ukraine: Peacekeeping Operations**Ben Obese-Jecty:**[\[43785\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 1 April 2025 to Question 42031 on Ukraine: Peacekeeping Operations, what definition his Department uses of a just and lasting peace in Ukraine.

Luke Pollard:

A just and lasting peace in Ukraine should be in accordance with the UN Charter. This must uphold Ukraine's sovereignty and security, including by preventing renewed Russian aggression.

As the Prime Minister said in Paris on 27 March 2025, "robust and credible security arrangements are the best way to ensure that any deal ends in a lasting peace", and "Ukraine must be able to defend itself and deter future Russian aggression".

The UK is taking a leading role in supporting efforts to achieve such a peace and to build a coalition of the willing to support Ukraine's future security.

USA: Import Duties**James Cartlidge:**[\[43981\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of US tariffs on (a) current, (b) pending and (c) future contracts held by his Department.

Maria Eagle:

Officials remain engaged with our suppliers to continually monitor the situation. This Government will continue to hold discussions with the US administration on a wider economic deal that strengthens our existing fair and balanced trading relationship.

Veterans: LGBT+ People**Noah Law:**[\[42947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what progress his Department has made on issuing payments under the LGBT Veterans Financial Recognition Scheme.

Al Carns:

The LGBT Financial Recognition Scheme launched on 13 December 2024. As of 31 March 2025, 917 applications had been received. Fighting With Pride, the Royal British Legion and Veterans UK are providing ongoing support to veterans with their applications.

The process of gathering evidence and records for the creation of casefiles is underway for these applications. This is the largest part of the process as this

requires the collation of information from a variety of sources, including historical records.

Terminally ill veterans are being prioritised and we expect payments to begin for these veterans by the end of April 2025.

■ Veterans: Radiation Exposure

Sir John Hayes: [\[43418\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has (a) budgeted for and (b) spent to date on the internal review of records relating to nuclear test veterans.

Sir John Hayes: [\[43419\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many staff in his Department are working (a) full time and (b) part time on the internal review of records relating to nuclear test veterans.

Sir John Hayes: [\[43420\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he plans to publish the findings of the internal review of records relating to nuclear test veterans; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Hayes: [\[43421\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what his planned timetable is for updating Parliament on plans to mediate a solution with nuclear test veterans on their missing medical records.

Sir John Hayes: [\[43422\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what information his Department holds on allegations of medical monitoring of nuclear test veterans since 2022.

AI Carns:

The Government is deeply grateful to all those who participated in the UK nuclear testing programme. We recognise their Service and the huge contribution they have made to the UK's security.

I am fully committed to meeting Nuclear Test Veterans, organisations that represent them, and Parliamentarians to discuss the important issue of records. I held a meeting with a Nuclear Test Veteran organisation most recently on 31 March 2025, and I look forward to further engagement, including with Members of Parliament.

We understand the range of concerns from members of the Nuclear Test Veteran community and their families. The records exercise is a priority. While there is no ringfenced budget associated with this exercise, I have directed teams across the Ministry of Defence and Atomic Weapons Establishment to deliver the records exercise in a meaningful way so that I can then update Nuclear Test Veterans and this House about what information the Department holds in relation to the medical

testing of Service personnel who took part in the UK nuclear weapons tests. Many officials from across the Department are involved in roles ranging from supporting the recall of files from various archives, to analysing the files. Collating information on the number of officials involved would be time consuming and detract from those officials delivering the records exercise itself.

At this stage, we cannot confirm when the records exercise will be complete. We are not currently certain how many files need to be reviewed, and the content of those files varies significantly over time and between the Services, which were under separate Ministries during the period of the nuclear tests.

EDUCATION

■ Apprentices: Buckinghamshire

Callum Anderson:

[\[42087\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of funding structure on the number of apprenticeships available for 16-24-year-olds in (a) Milton Keynes and (b) Buckinghamshire.

Janet Daby:

To support younger people into apprenticeships, the government pays both employers and training providers £1000 when they take on apprentices aged 16 to 18 or apprentices aged 19 to 24 who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan or have been in local authority care. This is in recognition of the additional support that younger apprentices may require when entering employment. The government also pays the full training costs for young apprentices aged 16 to 21, and for apprentices aged 22 to 24 who have an EHC plan or have been in local authority care, when they undertake apprenticeships with non-levy paying employers. Additionally, employers benefit from not being required to pay anything towards employees' National Insurance for all apprentices aged up to age 25 where they earn less than £967 a week, £50,270 a year.

The government is reforming the apprenticeship levy into a more flexible growth and skills levy that will include new foundation apprenticeships to give more young people a foot in the door at the start of their working lives. Construction will also be one of the key sectors that will benefit from new foundation apprenticeships backed by an additional £40 million, which will be launching in August 2025. This will inspire more young people into the construction industry and give them the tools they need for a sustained and rewarding career. As part of this new offer, employers will be provided with £2,000 for every foundation apprentice they take on and retain in the construction industry.

The availability of apprenticeships in Milton Keynes and Buckinghamshire will be determined by employers choosing to offer apprenticeships. The department publishes data on apprenticeships starts by geographical area, including local authority district and parliamentary constituency at: <https://explore-education->

statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/fast-track/2325414e-eb99-439f-20ca-08dd18600198.

■ Breakfast Clubs

Dr Luke Evans: [\[42809\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of schools have pulled out of the Free School Daily Breakfast club pilot in (a) Leicestershire and (b) England.

Dr Luke Evans: [\[42815\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many schools have withdrawn from the Free School Daily Breakfast Club pilot in (a) Leicestershire and (b) England.

Stephen Morgan:

The evidence is clear on the impact breakfast clubs can have to support children to arrive at school ready to learn. That is why this government is committed to introducing free and universal breakfast clubs in every state funded school with primary aged pupils.

The early adopter scheme has not yet started. We were delighted that over 3,000 schools applied to be early adopters and 750 schools will start delivering from the summer term, bringing change now for pupils and parents in every corner of the country.

■ Chemistry: Education and Research

Mary Kelly Foy: [\[43166\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to ensure the sustainability of high-quality chemistry (a) teaching and (b) research.

Catherine McKinnell:

High and rising school standards are at the heart of the government's mission to break down barriers to opportunity and give every child the best start in life. The government recognises that science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects, such as chemistry, are vital for the UK's future economic needs and to drive up productivity.

The department has therefore put in place an initial teacher training financial incentives package for the STEM subjects for 2025/26, including bursaries worth £29,000 and scholarships worth £31,000 tax-free. We are also offering a targeted retention incentive worth up to £6,000 after tax for chemistry teachers in the first five years of their careers who choose to work in disadvantaged schools. Oak National Academy provides optional, high-quality curriculum resources which teachers can use to support their lessons.

In relation to higher education (HE), the department, along with the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, is providing an additional £1.3 billion in capital investment for teaching and research over the current spending review period. This

academic year 2024/25, more than two thirds of the £1.4 billion strategic priorities grant recurrent budget allocated to providers, is supporting the provision of high-cost subjects, for example medicine and dentistry, science, engineering and technology subjects, and specific labour market needs. We are also increasing core research funding to over £6.1 billion to offer real-terms protection to the UK's world leading research base and to support UK Research and Innovation to deliver on the UK's key research priorities.

■ **Childcare: Disadvantaged**

Mrs Elsie Blundell:

[42698]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to ensure families from disadvantaged backgrounds have access to high quality childcare provision.

Stephen Morgan:

The government's Plan for Change sets out a commitment to give children the best start in life. Low-income families, children with education, health and care plans and looked after children are eligible for 15 hours funded early education from age two until they start school. In addition to this, eligible disadvantaged children can get early years pupil premium (EYPP). This additional funding supports the delivery of high quality early education that improves disadvantaged children's outcomes. In December 2024, the department announced an unprecedented 45% increase to EYPP from 1 April 2025.

Support for disadvantaged children is also reflected when distributing core funding for the entitlements. The early years national funding formulae (EYNFFs) are used to determine the hourly rates to fund individual local authorities for early years entitlements. The EYNFFs target funding to local authorities where it is needed most and each include an additional needs factor that accounts for 10.5% of entitlement funding. This needs factor comprises of an 8% deprivation factor, a 1.5% English as an additional language factor and a 1% Disability Allowance factor. Local authorities are responsible for setting individual provider funding rates in consultation with their providers and schools forum, and fund providers using their own local funding formula, which may include a deprivation supplement.

Local authorities are required by legislation to provide sufficient childcare places for children in their local area. The department has regular contact with each local authority in England about their sufficiency and any issues they are facing. Where local authorities report sufficiency challenges, we discuss what action they are taking to address those issues and, where needed, support the local authority with any specific requirements through our childcare sufficiency support contract. If a parent is unable to secure a place, they should contact their local authority.

The department is also supporting the creation of new places. School-based nurseries are a key part of this government's opportunity mission, delivering on our Plan for Change by expanding high quality early education across England. We have awarded 300 primary-phase schools £37 million to repurpose spare space for new or

expanded nursery provision, opening from September 2025, to support the expansion of childcare entitlements. School-based nurseries are particularly well-placed to support families in disadvantaged areas, with over a quarter of providers in the most deprived areas based in schools. For the school-based nurseries grant, applications for the grant were scored more highly if they clearly evidenced a focus on supporting children from disadvantaged families. This was validated using departmental data relating to established disadvantaged factors.

■ Children: Health

Stuart Andrew:

[\[42434\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential implications for her policies of the finding from The University of Manchester article entitled Transforming children and young people's futures through PE, school sport, and physical activity, published in February 2025, that 43% of pupils spend over four hours daily on screens.

Catherine McKinnell:

The government is committed to breaking down the barriers to accessing sport and physical activity for children and young people, including girls. Our manifesto set out our intention to support more children to be active by protecting time for physical education in schools and working across government to support the role grassroots clubs play in expanding access to sport and physical activity.

The department acknowledges that there is a potential opportunity cost where excessive screen time displaces positive activities for children, including exercise. Across departments, the government is also considering the recommendations of the previous Education Committee's report 'Screen Time: Impacts on education and wellbeing'.

In November 2024, the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology announced a feasibility study on methods and data to understand the impact of smartphones and social media on children. The study, being conducted by the University of Cambridge and a wider consortium of experts from a range of universities, began on 2 December 2024 and will run for six months, until May 2025.

■ Citizenship: Education

Mary Kelly Foy:

[\[43497\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of (a) increasing the provision and (b) improving civic education.

Catherine McKinnell:

Civic education is already taught through the national curriculum for citizenship at key stages 3 and 4. This covers parliamentary democracy, the key elements of the constitution of the United Kingdom, the power of government and how citizens and Parliament hold it to account. Primary schools can choose to teach citizenship, using non-statutory programmes of study at key stages 1 and 2.

Support for curriculum delivery is available through optional, free and adaptable resources from Oak National Academy, freeing teachers to teach using the best possible resources and reducing workload so that they can concentrate on delivering lessons. Oak National Academy launched its new curriculum sequences for secondary citizenship earlier this academic year, with the full package of curriculum resources expected to be available by autumn 2025. Resources from the Oak National Academy can be found here: <https://www.thenational.academy/>.

The government has established an independent Curriculum and Assessment Review, covering ages 5 to 18, chaired by Professor Becky Francis CBE. The Review is looking at all subjects, including citizenship, and seeks to deliver a rich, broad, inclusive and innovative curriculum that readies young people for life and work. The final report with recommendations will be published this autumn, along with the government's response.

■ Construction: Apprentices

Jim Shannon:

[41416]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she plans to take to support the availability of more construction apprenticeships.

Janet Daby:

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

The government is reforming the apprenticeships offer into a growth and skills offer, which will provide greater flexibility to employers and learners across England. This will create routes into skilled jobs in growing industries, such as construction.

The department is developing new foundation apprenticeships, a work-based training offer that will provide young people with clear progression pathways into further work-based training and employment.

Construction will be one of the key sectors that will benefit from new foundation apprenticeships, which will be launching in August 2025. This will inspire more young people into the construction industry, giving them the tools they need for a sustained and rewarding career. As part of this new offer, employers will be provided with £2,000 for every foundation apprentice they take on and retain in the construction industry.

There is £140 million industry investment in Homebuilding Skills Hubs. The hubs are projected to deliver over 5,000 fast track apprenticeships per year by the 2027/28 financial year, in shortage occupations including bricklaying and groundwork.

Additionally, on the 23 March, my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, announced measures to address skills shortages in the construction sector. This package commits over £600 million over the Parliament to help deliver up to 60,000 skilled construction workers.

■ First Aid: Curriculum**Gregory Stafford:**[\[43627\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will take steps with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to promote first aid training for school pupils.

Catherine McKinnell:

All state-funded schools are required to teach about first aid as part of the statutory health education set out within the relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) statutory guidance. Independent schools are required to cover health education as part of their responsibility to provide personal, social, health and economic education.

The statutory guidance includes basic first aid for primary school children, for example dealing with common injuries, such as head injuries. Pupils in secondary schools will be taught further first aid, for example how to administer CPR and the purpose of defibrillators.

The department is currently reviewing the statutory RSHE curriculum, which includes considering whether any additional content is needed, and will be publishing revised guidance as soon as possible.

■ Further Education: Buckinghamshire**Callum Anderson:**[\[42082\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of funding arrangements on the ability for further education colleges to expand existing provision in (a) Milton Keynes and (b) Buckinghamshire.

Janet Daby:

This government inherited a challenging fiscal context which means tough decisions are needed across the public sector. However, the department invested over £7.5 billion in 16-19 programme funding during the 2024/25 academic year to help to ensure that all young people have access to high-quality education and training that meets their needs and provides them with opportunities to thrive.

On 5 March 2025 the department gave details of 16-19 funding that means we will be spending over £400 million more on 16-19 education in the 2025/26 financial year (over £100 million more than the £300 million announced at the Autumn Budget 2024) to ensure enough funding is available given the very significant increase in student numbers and other pressures on the system. In addition, we are providing funding to compensate colleges and schools for increased employer National Insurance Contributions, which will add a further £155 million to funding for post-16 education in the 2025/26 financial year.

We are spending around £87 million in the 2024/25 academic year to support In Year Growth costs, acknowledging the very large increase in students this year. The amount represents more In Year Growth Payment than in any previous year, despite amending the rules on how the department calculates in-year growth to ensure the

affordability of payments for the exceptionally high growth in the 2024/25 academic year.

All the national funding rates for students on 16-19 study programmes and T Levels will increase by 3.78% in the 2025/26 academic year. This means a full-time study programme student will attract a rate of £5,026, with T Level students attracting higher rates due to these being larger programmes. The department will consider future needs as part of the spending review.

Callum Anderson:

[\[42084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions she has had with further education colleges on the impact of post-16 assessment methods on student outcomes in (a) Milton Keynes and (b) Buckinghamshire.

Janet Daby:

The department knows the importance of ensuring that we have the right balance of assessment methods for students studying post-16 qualifications, so that we can best capture the strengths of every young person, while maintaining the important role of examinations. My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, has had no specific recent discussions with further education (FE) colleges in Milton Keynes and/or Buckinghamshire but is working on improving both curriculum and assessment for student outcomes, considering young people across the country.

That is why last year we launched the independent expert-led Curriculum and Assessment Review chaired by Professor Becky Francis CBE. The Review will consider the existing national curriculum and statutory assessment system, and pathways for learners in 16 to 19 education. As part of the first phase of the Review, a call for evidence was undertaken. This included a wide range of educational institutions, including FE colleges. The Panel's Interim Report was published on 18 March and the department will consider the Review's final recommendations around assessments methods when the final report is published.

Callum Anderson:

[\[42085\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to support further education colleges to provide post-16 literacy and numeracy education in (a) Milton Keynes and (b) Buckinghamshire.

Janet Daby:

The department considers level 2 English and mathematics to be essential for enabling students to develop the skills they need to seize opportunities in life, learning and work. That is why we have the mathematics and English condition of funding, which enables all students on 16 to 19 study programmes or T Levels, who have not yet attained grade 4+ GCSE, or equivalent, in English and mathematics, to access support that leads to the best outcomes for them.

The department is strengthening the support offered to students under the mathematics and English condition of funding. This includes requiring providers to

offer planned minimum hours of in-person, whole class, stand-alone teaching in English and mathematics, and for more students to be offered this.

The department also supports adults aged 19+ to participate in mathematics and English provision through our 'essential skills entitlements' which fully-fund adults who do not have essential literacy and numeracy skills up to and including level 2. This allows learners who have not previously attained a GCSE grade 4 or higher or equivalent, or who are assessed as having below level 2 skills to undertake a range of courses fully-funded through the Adult Skills Fund including GCSEs, Functional Skills and other relevant qualifications from entry level to level 2.

Callum Anderson:

[42088]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to support further education colleges to secure industry-standard vocational training facilities in (a) Milton Keynes and (b) Buckinghamshire.

Janet Daby:

My right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer has announced an additional £625 million of funding to support construction skills training, with the detail set out in Spring Statement 2025. This is expected to deliver up to 60,000 additional skilled construction workers this Parliament. The funding includes capital investment through the establishment of Technical Excellence Colleges and the creation of an employer match funding pot worth £80 million.

Furthermore, on 5 March 2025 we gave details of 16 to 19 funding that means the department will be spending over £400 million more on 16 to 19 education in the 2025/26 financial year. All national funding rates for students on 16 to 19 study programmes and T Levels will increase by 3.78% in the 2025/26 academic year. This means a full-time study programme student will attract a rate of £5,026, with T Level students attracting higher rates due to these being larger programmes.

On 1 April 2025, the department provided £302 million to further education (FE) colleges to support them to maintain, improve and ensure suitability of their estates. This new allocation for FE colleges in 2025/26 will help address the maintenance backlog and ensure a great environment for learning.

Under the FE college condition allocation, Milton Keynes College will receive £1.47 million and Buckinghamshire College Group will receive £1.3 million. The full list of FE college condition allocations can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-education-college-condition-allocation-2025-to-2026>.

Callum Anderson:

[42089]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to help improve the recruitment and retention of staff in further education colleges in (a) Milton Keynes and (b) Buckinghamshire.

Janet Daby:

The department recognises the vital role that further education (FE) staff and providers play in equipping learners with the opportunities and skills that they need to succeed in their education and to drive growth in our economy.

The department will be spending over £400 million more on 16 to 19 education in the 2025/26 financial year to ensure enough funding is available to respond to the significant increase in student numbers and other pressures on the system. We are making approximately £50 million of this funding available to colleges for April to July 2025 to respond to current priorities and challenges as they see fit, including workforce recruitment and retention.

In addition, the department is providing funding to colleges and schools to support them with increased National Insurance contributions, which will add a further £155 million to funding for post-16 education in the 2025/26 financial year.

The department's Targeted Retention Incentive gives eligible early career teachers working in FE colleges in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and priority technical subjects up to £6,000 after tax annually, in addition to their usual pay. This includes those in eligible FE colleges in the Milton Keynes and Buckinghamshire area.

The department has also continued to offer financial incentives for those undertaking teacher training for the FE sector in priority subject areas. FE teacher training bursaries will be offered for the 2025/26 academic year, and we have increased the top value of bursaries for STEM subjects to £31,000 each, tax free.

The national FE teacher recruitment campaign, Share Your Skills, targets those with industry skills to think about a career in FE teaching. The campaign raises awareness and increases consideration by encouraging industry professionals to think about using their skills to teach in FE.

■ GCE A-level**Claire Hughes:****[33680]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what information her Department holds on the number of the countries that teach GCE A-Level qualifications in state schools or their equivalent.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department does not hold information on the number of countries that teach A level qualifications in state schools or their equivalent.

There are examples of countries which have developed an A level offer. For example, Singapore delivers the Singapore-Cambridge GCE A level. International A levels are also offered in many countries worldwide.

Ofqual publishes a range of information about exported qualifications. The latest information can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/annual-qualifications-market-report-academic-year-2022-to-2023/annual-qualifications->

[market-report-2022-to-2023-academic-year#in-focus-international-market](#). However, this report does not include information on the number of countries that teach A level qualifications in state schools or their equivalent. Ofqual's data does also not include unregulated qualifications, such as International A levels.

■ GCE A-level: Derbyshire

Natalie Fleet:

[\[37353\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate she has made of the number of 18 year olds achieving three or more A level passes in (a) Bolsover constituency and (b) its neighbouring constituencies.

Catherine McKinnell:

The requested data can be found in the attached table. The table shows the number and proportion of students entering at least 3 A levels, broken down by the number of A level entries in the Bolsover constituency and the bordering constituencies of Amber Valley, Ashfield, Bassetlaw, Chesterfield, Derbyshire Dales, Mansfield, North East Derbyshire, and Rother Valley.

There were zero A level students in the Bolsover constituency in the 2023/24 academic year.

Data is based on students attending schools and colleges located in, rather than those resident in, each constituency who have reached the end of 16-18 study.

Attachments:

1. A Level entries in Balsover and surrounding areas
[37353_attachment_number_of_18_year_olds_achieving_three_or_more_a_level_passes_in_bolsover_and_bordering_constituencies_2023_2024_academic_year.xls]

■ GCSE and IGCSE

Mr Joshua Reynolds:

[\[42892\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to ensure academic consistency between (a) GCSEs and (b) iGCSEs; and whether she has held discussions with (i) teachers and (ii) parents on perceptions of the differences between those qualifications.

Catherine McKinnell:

International GCSEs, which includes iGCSEs, and GCSEs in England are different qualifications. Unlike GCSEs, international GCSEs are not developed by the department, regulated by Ofqual or funded for use in state schools. International GCSEs have also not counted in school performance tables since GCSEs were last reformed.

International GCSEs were introduced to serve the large international market for British qualifications and are also offered by some independent schools. The awarding organisations that offer international GCSEs decide the content for these qualifications and how that content is assessed. The department has no role in setting grading standards for these qualifications.

■ Lifelong Education

Danny Beales:

[\[42148\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 28 February to Question 31745 on Universities: Industry, whether her Department has made an estimate of the number of adults who are likely to take up the opportunity for Life Long Learning across (a) the UK, (b) Greater London and c) West London.

Janet Daby:

The department is due to announce outstanding policy details related to the Lifelong Learning Entitlement later this year. These details will inform our demand projections for this specific programme, and we will share further information about this in due course.

This government recognises the importance and value of investing and creating a culture of lifelong learning in our country to support our industrial strategy and economic growth. This starts with activity already underway, such as the independent Curriculum and Assessment Review, establishing Skills England, utilising local skills improvement plans, further supporting skills bootcamps and apprenticeships and devolving the adult skills fund to support learning and development in all stages of life.

■ Mathematics: Adult Education

Darren Paffey:

[\[42358\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of the Multiply Programme on adult numeracy skills; and whether she plans to introduce further funding or alternative provisions to support (a) adults with learning difficulties and (b) other adults improve their maths skills following the programme's conclusion.

Janet Daby:

The extensive Multiply programme evaluation is ongoing and will conclude in winter 2025.

The final evaluation report will provide valuable lessons to take into future policy development and delivery of the adult skills fund (ASF) and Tailored Learning.

The government remains committed to ensuring opportunity for all as one of its key missions. This includes building a skills system for opportunity and growth, and delivering a stronger skills offer.

The department continues to support participation in mathematics provision through the essential skills entitlements which fully fund adults who do not have essential numeracy skills up to and including level 2. This allows learners to undertake a range of courses fully funded through the ASF, including GCSEs, Functional Skills and other relevant qualifications from entry level to level 2.

Tailored Learning also offers the flexibility within the ASF for non-qualification based provision that is similar to Multiply, including outreach and engagement. Tailored

Learning is available to all grant funded providers. The ASF supports adults to improve their numeracy skills, including adults with learning difficulties.

■ Music and Dance Scheme

Nesil Caliskan: [\[42627\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department plans to fund the Music and Dance Scheme in 2025-26.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department will inform Music and Dance Scheme providers about funding for the 2025/26 academic year following the conclusion of the spending review in the spring.

■ Music: Education

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[42721\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to improve access to music education in schools.

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[42722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to provide opportunities for children from disadvantaged backgrounds to learn a musical instrument.

Catherine McKinnell:

Music is an essential part of supporting children and young people to develop creativity and find their voice. The government believes creative subjects like music, art and drama are important elements of the rounded and enriching education every child deserves.

On 18 March 2025, the department announced its intention to launch a National Centre for Arts and Music Education to promote opportunities for children and young people to pursue their artistic and creative interests in school, including through the government's network of music hubs. The department intends to launch this centre in September 2026, with a delivery lead appointed through an open procurement. Further details will be released in due course.

To support the delivery of music education, the government has committed £79 million per year for the music hubs programme, including the 2024/25 academic year. The 43 music hubs partnerships across England offer a range of services, including musical instrument tuition, instrument loaning and whole-class ensemble teaching. All partnerships have a local plan in place with an inclusion strategy that sets out specific support for disadvantaged children, including young people eligible for the pupil premium and those identified with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). To widen access to musical instruments, the government is investing £25 million in capital funding for musical instruments, equipment and technology from the 2024/25 academic year.

The government is also investing £2 million to support the Music Opportunities Pilot over a four-year period from the 2024/25 academic year to the 2027/28 academic

year, backed by a further £3.85 million funding from Arts Council England and Youth Music. This pilot is delivered by Young Sounds UK in 12 areas of the country and aims to help disadvantaged children and young people, as well as those with SEND, to learn how to play an instrument of their choice or learn to sing to a high standard. The findings from the pilot will inform future policy on widening music opportunities.

■ Now Teach

Munira Wilson: [\[36786\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, on what evidential basis she does not plan to renew her Department's contract with Now Teach, in the context of meeting teacher recruitment targets.

Munira Wilson: [\[36787\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of renewing her Department's contract with Now Teach, in the context of meeting teacher recruitment targets.

Catherine McKinnell:

Career changers make a valuable contribution to the teaching profession and the department remains committed to recruiting and supporting them into initial teacher training, including as part of our efforts to recruit an additional 6,500 new expert teachers across our schools and our colleges over the course of this Parliament.

Our wider offer to all potential teachers, including career changers, supports them through their journey to apply for teacher training and during the critical early years of teaching. This includes the Get Into Teaching service, which offers one-to-one support and advice to all candidates, including career changers.

The current contract for the career changers programme will come to its natural end in autumn 2026, with no option to directly renew the contract with Now Teach. The department is currently working with Now Teach to support their exit planning and ensure that the final cohort of trainees complete the programme successfully. We have no plans to reprocur the contract at this stage.

The department has contracts with many organisations in support of teacher recruitment and training and continues to fund and support those organisations in line with the terms of the agreed contracts.

■ Overseas Students: Ukraine

Mr Will Forster: [\[42205\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the fee status is of Ukrainian refugees when applying for university; which fee level they fall under; and what financial support they are provided with.

Janet Daby:

Those who have been granted leave under one of the Ukraine schemes generally qualify for home fee status and higher education student support in England, without being required to meet the normal 3 year ordinary residence test.

Higher education providers set their own fees in line with the relevant legislation.

Physical Education**Stuart Andrew:**[\[42435\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will hold discussions with (a) educators, (b) other practitioners and (c) school leaders on the development of physical education infrastructure in schools.

Catherine McKinnell:

This government is committed to securing the infrastructure needed to protect time for physical education in schools and to support the role grassroots clubs play in expanding access to sport.

The department will continue to engage with a wide range of stakeholders including teachers, school leaders and sports organisations on how to achieve these manifesto commitments.

Physics: Education**Rebecca Smith:**[\[37097\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans she has to replace the funding of the Stimulating Physics Network.

Catherine McKinnell:

This government has inherited significant pressures on public finances and difficult decisions must be made on how money is spent right across the public sector to ensure we deliver on our priorities. Despite these challenges, the department continues to promote physics and support participation in the subject.

As part of this support, the department is continuing to fund the Subject Knowledge for Physics Teaching programme. This is a series of blended learning courses covering the key stage 3 and key stage 4 physics curriculum to support non-specialist teachers of physics to enhance their subject knowledge.

The government is additionally continuing to fund the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) Ambassadors programme, a nationwide network of more than 28,000 volunteers registered from over 7,500 employers, reaching over 3 million young people every year. These volunteers engage with young people to spark interest in STEM subjects and showcase the wide variety of STEM careers by sharing their personal experiences.

Further, the Oak National Academy aims to support teachers to improve curriculum delivery, reduce workload and support improved pupil outcomes up to key stage 4. This will ensure that all pupils have access to high-quality physics content giving

them the best opportunity to progress to study physics or other STEM subjects at higher levels.

■ Private Education

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[42805\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many private schools she has visited since 5 July 2024; and which schools.

Stephen Morgan:

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education and the wider ministerial team visit a wide variety of education settings, including private schools. The Secretary of State for Education prioritises visits to our state schools, which serve 93% of pupils in England.

■ Racial Discrimination: Palestinians

Nadia Whittome:

[\[41229\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 20 March to Question 38689 on Racial Discrimination: Palestinians, if she will hold discussions with Educate Against Hate on developing resources to tackle anti-Palestinian racism.

Catherine McKinnell:

This government is committed to ensuring that teachers, parents, and young people are equipped with the guidance and resources designed to develop critical thinking, logical reasoning, and empathy, to build resilience to, and reject hateful narratives.

The department's Educate Against Hate website hosts quality-assured resources to help teachers and school leaders teach students about extremism, conflict, spotting misinformation and disinformation, online safety, and our shared fundamental British values.

Following the events of 7 October 2023, a blog containing practical advice for discussing ongoing conflicts was published on the Educate Against Hate website. The blog signposts relevant resources from reputable organisations that can support schools to teach about this sensitive topic in a balanced way, avoiding antisemitic, anti-Muslim and/or other discriminatory narratives.

Educate Against Hate provides a range of resources and guides to support teachers and education practitioners in confidently facilitating conversations around the ongoing Israel-Palestine conflict. The resources are wide ranging and address why it is important to discuss this topic, how to navigate the news and social media, and how to support young people who may be directly affected by the conflict. All guidance and teaching resources hosted on Educate Against Hate are drawn from reputable organisations.

There are also practical resources designed to be used in classrooms, that focus on Palestine and Israel and cover the history of the conflict. They challenge students and learners to examine a range of sources such as images, maps and documentation to

debate and discuss different perspectives in a polite and respectful way, and in the controlled environment of a classroom, before they reach their own views on the topic.

■ Schools: Employers' Contributions

Max Wilkinson: [\[42764\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the formula for reimbursing schools after increases in employer National Insurance contributions.

Max Wilkinson: [\[42765\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of the increase in employer National Insurance contributions on school budgets.

Max Wilkinson: [\[42770\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions her Department has had with the Association of School and College Leaders on increases in employer National Insurance contributions.

Catherine McKinnell:

In developing our National Insurance contributions (NICs) grant methodology for mainstream schools and academies, the department considered both the impact of the change to National Insurance rates and the changes to the threshold at which NICs are applied. By taking this approach, we have ensured that funding accounts for where increases to NICs will be most significant.

The department knows that the impact of the increase to NICs differs depending on the proportions of staff on relatively higher or lower salaries and have taken that into account in determining how much funding is allocated to primary, secondary and special schools. The technical details of how the funding is split between those phases of education has been discussed with stakeholders, including the Association of School and College Leaders.

We keep our grant methodology under review to ensure funding can best support schools and their pupils. That is why, for the first time, we are providing additional grant funding for mainstream schools with special units and resourced provision to support them with the higher staffing costs they typically face.

■ Schools: Finance

Max Wilkinson: [\[42763\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the differences in school funding across different counties.

Catherine McKinnell:

Every year the department uses the schools national funding formula (NFF) to distribute core funding for 5- to 16-year-old pupils in mainstream state-funded schools in England. In the current NFF, the vast majority of funding is distributed on the basis of pupil numbers and characteristics.

The purpose of the NFF is not to give every school the same level of per pupil funding. It is right that pupils with additional needs attract additional funding to help schools respond and meet their needs. In addition, schools in more expensive areas, like London, attract higher funding per pupil than other parts of the country to reflect the higher costs they face.

Through the dedicated schools grant, Gloucestershire County Council is receiving over £522 million for mainstream schools in the 2025/26 financial year, which equates to £6,201 per pupil on average, excluding growth and falling rolls funding. Schools' final funding allocations are determined by local authority funding formulae and based on updated pupil numbers, and so the final per pupil funding amounts for individual schools may differ.

The department is reviewing the schools NFF for both the 2026/27 financial year and the ensuing years, recognising the importance of a fair funding system that directs funding where it is needed.

Max Wilkinson:[\[42766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to support schools with budgetary challenges resulting from teacher salary increases.

Catherine McKinnell:

Overall school funding is increasing by over £3.2 billion in the 2025/26 financial year, meaning it will total over £64.8 billion compared to almost £61.6 billion in 2024/25. The department recognises that the increases for individual schools will vary, with some getting more and some getting less than the average increase.

The guidance 'Schools' costs: technical note' forecasts £400 million of headroom in schools' budgets nationally in the 2025/26 financial year, before staff pay awards.

This follows the government's written evidence to the School Teacher's Review Body, published in December, which proposed a pay award for teachers of 2.8%. Schools will be expected to fund the 2025 pay award from the additional investment provided at the Autumn Budget 2024, alongside their existing funds.

All parts of the public sector are being asked to improve their efficiency. The department will be developing a suite of productivity initiatives to help schools manage their budgets to maximise opportunities for learners.

■ Schools: Transport

Kevin Hollinrake:

[\[34620\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made an assessment of the potential impact of pupils transferring from private to state schools on the cost to local authorities of home school transport.

Catherine McKinnell:

Local authorities are required to arrange free home-to-school travel for children of compulsory school age who attend their nearest school and would be unable to walk there because of the distance, their special educational needs, disability or mobility problem, or because the route is unsafe. As such, most pupils do not need home-to-school transport.

Departmental officials work closely with local authorities in relation to home-to-school transport and will continue to engage on this. As set out in HMT's impact assessment, we expect the level of movement from private to state-funded schools following tax changes to be very small. We have not seen any evidence to contradict our expectations.

Most central government funding for home-to-school travel is provided through the Local Government Finance Settlement (LGFS) administered by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government. The provisional LGFS makes £69 billion available to local authorities in the 2025/2026 financial year, the majority of which is not ringfenced. Together with local income from council tax and business rates, this will provide a real-terms increase in core spending power of around 3.2%.

■ Special Educational Needs: Buckinghamshire

Callum Anderson:

[\[42086\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the availability of specialist further education provision for students with special educational needs in Milton Keynes and Buckinghamshire.

Janet Daby:

The department is committed to improving access to educational opportunities for all young people in all parts of the country by ensuring that they can access a quality educational offer that adds value and helps them to achieve their long-term career aspirations and goals.

Local authorities have a statutory duty to secure enough suitable education and training provision to meet the reasonable needs of all young people in their area who are over compulsory school age but under 19, or aged 19 or over and for whom an education, health and care plan is maintained. They must therefore ensure there are sufficient school places for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

The Children and Families Act 2014 requires local authorities to keep the provision for children and young people with SEND under review, including its sufficiency, working with parents, young people and providers.

■ **Special Educational Needs: Central Suffolk and North Ipswich**

Patrick Spencer:

[\[37002\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of the Partnership and Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools programme on attainment for pupils in Central Suffolk and North Ipswich; and what the cost is per child of the programme.

Catherine McKinnell:

Partnerships for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS) is a cross-government programme, backed by £13 million of investment, delivered through collaboration between the Department for Education, the Department of Health and Social Care and NHS England. PINS brings together integrated care boards (ICBs) local authorities and schools, working in partnership with parents and carers to support schools to better meet the needs of neurodivergent children and their families.

The programme which began under the previous government deploys specialists from both health and education workforces to strengthen training for teachers and upskill around 1,600 mainstream primary schools, which equates to approximately 10% of the total number of mainstream primary schools in England. Building teacher and staff capacity to identify and meet the needs of neurodivergent children provides the opportunity to enhance support and improve outcomes for all children in this whole-school approach. As the programme takes this whole-school approach and the benefits support all children, the department would therefore not be able to indicate a specific cost per child.

The department has commissioned an independent evaluation of the PINS programme. This has been designed to look at the implementation of the programme in primary schools and explore the impact on primary schools' ability to better support neurodiverse pupils. The evaluation includes exploring attainment, and it covers all ICB areas currently participating in the programme.

■ **Special Educational Needs: Finance**

Max Wilkinson:

[\[42767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to support secondary schools with increases in SEND costs.

Max Wilkinson:

[\[42769\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what her policy is on support for schools with budget shortfalls due to levels of high needs funding.

Catherine McKinnell:

Through the national funding formula in the 2025/26 financial year, secondary schools are being allocated over £4 billion through formula factors that act as a proxy for their pupils' special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and other additional needs. In addition, high needs funding will total over £12 billion this financial year, a proportion of which local authorities will use for supporting secondary schools with their pupils who have more complex SEND. Of the total high needs funding, Gloucestershire County Council is being allocated over £105 million through the high needs funding block of the dedicated schools grant.

In the high needs funding system, it is the top-up funding allocated to schools by the local authority which is intended to reflect the cost of provision for pupils with complex SEND. Schools should therefore discuss with their local authority the funding that they believe is necessary to make the provision that has been commissioned, taking into account expected levels of inflation and particular costs such as for energy and staff pay, as well as any reprioritisation within their budget that schools can achieve to ensure best value from their overall resources.

■ Special Educational Needs: Staffordshire**Adam Jogee:**[\[42658\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many individual representations her Department has received from Staffordshire County Council in relation to SEND provision in (a) Newcastle-under-Lyme and (b) North Staffordshire in each of the last five years.

Catherine McKinnell:

The information is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

This government's ambition is that all children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) or in alternative provision receive the right support to succeed in their education and as they move into adult life. The department is committed to taking a community-wide approach in collaboration with local area partnerships, improving inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools, as well as ensuring special schools cater to those with the most complex needs.

Following the last Ofsted/Care Quality Commission visit, departmental officials have been working with Staffordshire County Council and hold regular discussions to closely monitor progress against the areas for improvement identified by inspectors. An Accelerated Progress Plan is in place and progress is monitored regularly.

The areas for improvement were:

- Area 1: Co-production was weak. Parents felt that the local area did not listen to them or their child. The 'tell it once' approach was not embedded. The area's relationships with schools and families were fragile.
- Area 2: The quality of education, health and care (EHC) plans was poor. Health and care workers did not contribute to the process effectively. The targets and

outcomes in plans were not aspirational enough. The annual reviews of EHC plans were often not completed on time or did not contribute effectively to the review of the children and young people's needs or the support and help they received.

The department has appointed a SEND Advisor along with a bespoke package of support from the Research and Improvement for SEND Excellence Consortium to support and work alongside the Local Area Partnership.

■ Special Educational Needs: Travel

Damien Egan:

[\[42623\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions she has had with local authorities on the provision of independent travel training for young people with SEND.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department publishes statutory guidance to assist local authorities in meeting their home to school travel duties. The guidance says that wherever possible, local authorities should offer independent travel training to children with special educational needs or disabilities who are eligible for free travel to school and who they think will be able to complete the programme. This guidance can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/home-to-school-travel-and-transport-guidance>.

Departmental officials engage regularly with local authorities and host bi-monthly online meetings, to which all local authority school travel officers are invited, to share good practice and seek advice from one another and the department.

■ Teachers: Labour Turnover and Recruitment

Max Wilkinson:

[\[42762\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to increase levels of recruitment and retention of teachers in (a) primary and (b) secondary schools.

Catherine McKinnell:

High quality teaching is the most important in-school factor to a child's educational outcomes. Recruiting and retaining more qualified, expert teachers is critical to the government's mission to break down barriers to opportunity and boost the life chances for every child. This is why the department will recruit 6,500 new expert teachers, get more teachers into shortage subjects, support areas that face recruitment challenges and tackle retention issues. To deliver this pledge we are resetting the relationship with the sector to ensure teaching is once again a valued and attractive profession.

The department agreed a 5.5% pay award for teachers in 2024/25, and increased the funding available for bursaries for trainee teachers to £233 million from 2025/26, to support teacher trainees with tax-free bursaries of up to £29,000 and scholarships of up to £31,000 in some shortage subjects. The department has also expanded its

school teacher recruitment campaign, 'Every Lesson Shapes a Life', and the further education teacher recruitment campaign 'Share your Skills'.

A successful recruitment strategy starts with a strong retention strategy and we want to ensure teachers stay and thrive in this profession. In the first five years of their careers, new teachers of mathematics, physics, chemistry and computing will now receive a targeted retention incentive of up to £6,000, after-tax, if working in disadvantaged schools. There are three schools in the Cheltenham constituency where teachers are eligible for targeted retention incentives.

The department has also taken steps to improve teachers' workload and wellbeing, to support retention and help re-establish teaching as an attractive profession. This includes opportunities for greater flexible working, by making key resources to support wellbeing, developed with school leaders, available to teachers.

The department is also funding bespoke support provided by flexible working ambassador schools and multi-academy trusts, ensuring schools are capturing the benefits of flexible working, whilst protecting pupils' face-to-face teacher time. Malmesbury School is the flexible working ambassador school providing local, tailored peer support for Cheltenham schools.

High quality Continuing Professional Development is also key to ensuring the retention of an effective teaching workforce. The department has established teaching school hubs across the country, who play a significant role in delivering initial teacher training, the early career framework and National Professional Qualifications. Balcarras Teaching School Hub is a centre of excellence supporting teacher training and development across Cheltenham, Cotswolds and Stroud.

■ University of Sussex: Disciplinary Proceedings

Siân Berry: [\[42110\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Office for Students' regulatory case report for the University of Sussex, published on 26 March 2025, what was the cost to the public purse of the investigation which led to this report.

Siân Berry: [\[42188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many Office for Students' staff hours were spent on work relating to the Office for Students' regulatory case report for the University of Sussex, published on 26 March 2025 broken down by grade.

Siân Berry: [\[42190\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the Office for Students commissioned external legal counsel in relation to their (a) regulatory case report for the University of Sussex, published on 26 March 2025 and (b) investigation which led to that report.

Siân Berry:

[\[42191\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Office for Students' regulatory case report for the University of Sussex, published on 26 March 2025, whether the Office for Students plans to issue guidance to higher education institutions following the report.

Janet Daby:

This government is committed to free speech as a non-negotiable, and expects universities to take their responsibilities to upholding it seriously.

The Office for Students (OfS) is an independent regulator responsible for ensuring that higher education (HE) in England delivers positive outcomes for students. While the OfS operates within the broader policy framework set by the department, it maintains operational independence in its regulatory decisions and activities.

Their core regulatory activity is funded primarily through fees paid by registered providers, rather than the public purse. The OfS may also require a provider in relation to which a sanction has been imposed, to pay the costs incurred by the OfS in relation to imposing the sanction.

Investigations on breaches to conditions of registration forms the core regulatory purpose of the OfS, it is therefore not possible to calculate the specific costs for individual investigations.

The OfS's published policy on monetary penalties, 'Regulatory advice 19', makes provision for a reduced penalty where a settlement is reached at an early stage of an investigation. This is intended to avoid the OfS and a provider needing to expend resources to complete the detailed work necessary to draft and respond to provisional and final decisions.

Whether the OfS sought external legal advice on any matter, including the investigation into Sussex, is a matter for the OfS, and it is strictly confidential.

The OfS plans to publish further guidance on providers' duties to take steps to secure free speech shortly, ahead of new duties on HE providers under the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023 coming into force. This is currently planned for 1 August.

■ Work Experience: Buckinghamshire

Callum Anderson:

[\[42083\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the availability of T Level industry placements in (a) Milton Keynes and (b) Buckinghamshire.

Janet Daby:

The department works closely with education providers and employers to ensure the availability and quality of T Level industry placements across the country.

We do not hold industry placement data at regional level, but our latest national results data shows that 97.5% of T Level students from the 2022 cohort (those who finished their T Level in 2024) completed their industry placement.

Whilst it is the overall responsibility of T Level providers to source industry placements for their students, the department has a range of support in place to help ensure the availability and quality of placements. This includes online guidance, workshops, and practical tools to help providers identify, plan and design placements, and a 900+ strong ambassador network to raise the profile of T Levels across different industries, including representatives across Milton Keynes and Buckinghamshire. In January 2025 we also updated our industry placement delivery approaches to enable students to access a wider range of placement opportunities. This can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/678a7a302080f65f988bd3a1/T_Level_industry_placement_delivery_guidance.pdf.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

■ Biomethane: Production

Andrew Bowie: [\[42756\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of setting a national target for the production of biomethane.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

In February 2024, the Department issued a Call for Evidence (CfE) on a future policy framework for biomethane production, which included consideration of a national target.

We are considering the responses to the CfE as part of policy development and will set out further details in due course.”

■ Biomethane: UK Emissions Trading Scheme

Andrew Bowie: [\[42752\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of making biomethane eligible for the UK Emissions Trading Scheme.

Sarah Jones:

The Government recognises biomethane as a practical and cost-effective way of contributing to net zero greenhouse gas emissions. The UK Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) applies a zero emissions factor to combustion of biomethane where supplied directly to ETS installations. Where biomethane is injected into the gas grid, there is not currently a mechanism to ensure biomethane is accounted for separately.

As outlined in the future policy framework for biomethane production call for evidence, the Government is working with the ETS Authority to consider whether the ETS could account for biomethane injected into the gas grid and will provide an update on this in due course.

■ Carbon Capture and Storage

Edward Morello: [\[42909\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will meet with the hon. Member for West Dorset to discuss carbon removal.

Sarah Jones:

Invitations to meet should be sent in the normal way by post or by email.

Edward Morello: [\[42911\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to support the development and implementation of carbon removal and storage technologies to achieve the UK's net-zero targets.

Sarah Jones:

Greenhouse Gas Removal technologies will be important for reaching net zero. The Government has been developing Business Models to incentivise private investment into large-scale removal projects, commissioned the British Standards Institution to develop a Greenhouse Gas Removal Standard, has delivered £100 million in innovation funding, including through the Direct Air Capture and Greenhouse Gas Removal Innovation Programme and published a consultation on the inclusion of Greenhouse Gas Removals in the UK Emissions Trading Scheme. Greenhouse Gas Removal and Power Bioenergy with Carbon Capture and Storage projects were allowed to apply to the HyNet Track-1 expansion cluster.

■ Carbon Capture, Usage and Storage

Andrew Bowie: [\[42758\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, when he plans to make a decision on the selection of new emitter projects assigned to Track-2 carbon capture, usage and storage clusters.

Sarah Jones:

CCUS requires significant resources, and it is right that it is considered within the Spending Review. We continue to engage at both working and ministerial level with all future projects, including Track-2, and further decisions for future CCUS deployment will be taken in due course.

■ Carbon Emissions

Andrew Bowie: [\[42750\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to review compliance costs related to net-zero regulations.

Kerry McCarthy:

Regulation plays a critical role in supporting the low-carbon technologies of the future, whether in electric vehicles or sustainable aviation fuel. DESNZ is taking steps to review the compliance costs of regulation as part of the Government's Regulation Action Plan. For example, the Department has started a review of the energy and emissions reporting landscape to identify opportunities to reduce undue administrative burden, and has launched its Review of Ofgem.

Carbon Emissions: Industry**Andrew Bowie:**[\[42753\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether his Department has issued guidance to industrial producers on how they can effectively decarbonise their operations.

Sarah Jones:

Since July last year, we have provided a host of support and guidance to industry. This has included: guidance to SMEs through our Business Energy Advice Service (BEAS) pilot and to local clusters through our Local Industrial Decarbonisation Plans scheme; funding for further studies and projects supporting industrial decarbonisation under the Industrial Energy Transformation Fund; and providing updates to the market on our hydrogen and carbon capture business models and support, as well as confirming £21.7bn funding to launch the UK's first carbon capture sites.

To give longer-term confidence for industry to decarbonise, we will publish an Industrial Decarbonisation Strategy ensuring growth opportunities are captured in tandem with emissions reductions.

Andrew Bowie:[\[42754\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an estimate of the cost to industrial producers of decarbonising their operations.

Sarah Jones:

Carbon savings through fuel switching from fossil fuels to low carbon alternatives and improvements in resource and energy efficiency are needed for the industrial sector to transition to net zero. We are developing a suite of policies to enable industry to deliver these savings. As we do so, we are closely engaging with industry, both with sector trade associations as well as with manufacturers directly, to identify and understand the challenges, barriers and costs of their decarbonisation pathways.

Clean Energy: Risk Assessment**Pippa Heylings:**[\[42789\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has made an assessment of the potential implications for the Government's Clean Power 2030 target of limiting the supply of solar and battery storage projects as a result of the 2035 regional technology capacities.

Michael Shanks:

The Clean Power Action Plan (CPAP) sets out regional capacities for solar and battery storage required to achieve Clean Power by 2030. Regional capacities out to 2035 are also included to provide a 10-year time horizon for connections offers.

2035 capacities are based on the top of the range of NESO's Future Energy Scenarios. NESO analysis suggests that projects allocated to the 2031-35 period may be able to connect pre-2030 where there is spare network capacity or if needed to deal with attrition. However, the reformed queue to 2030 will already contain additional capacity beyond the amount needed to achieve Clean Power by 2030.

■ District Heating**Chi Onwurah:**[\[43865\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to encourage the connection of residential developments to district heating schemes.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Committee for Climate Change has recommended the government grows the heat network sector from providing 3% of national heat demand to 20% by 2050.

To deliver this ambition we are transforming the heat network market through policies like heat network zoning, which identifies areas of England where heat networks are expected to be the lowest cost solution for decarbonising heat.

Through heat network zoning, certain types of buildings including communally heated residential buildings could be required to connect to a network within a prescribed timeframe.

This will allow for large-scale strategic heat networks to be built in towns and cities across the country.

■ Energy Company Obligation**Perran Moon:**[\[44092\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of shared ground loops qualifying as an Innovative Measure under point 6 of eligibility requirements in the Energy Company Obligation 4 Scheme.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

There is provision within the rules of ECO4 for shared ground loops to be delivered. Following the government consultation on mid-scheme changes to ECO4 and GBIS, legislation will be updated to specify that shared ground loop systems can be considered for Innovation Measures under ECO4. Amendments to legislation are expected to take effect later this year.

■ Energy Supply

Freddie van Mierlo: [\[44072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to ensure sufficient energy supply to meet demand in the next 10 years.

Michael Shanks:

Great Britain is expected to have sufficient supplies of electricity and gas to meet consumers' demands over the short and long-term ([Statutory Security of Supply Report 2024](#)). The government's mission is to secure our energy supply with home-grown, clean power – and we have set out the steps to achieve this in the [Clean Power 2030 Action Plan](#). These include: cleaning up a dysfunctional grid system by prioritising the most important projects; speeding up decisions on planning permission by empowering planners to prioritise critical energy infrastructure; and expanding the renewable auction process to stop delays and get more projects connected.

■ Great British Energy

Mr Richard Holden: [\[42605\]](#)

Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, for what reason his Department intends to establish Great British Energy as an arm's length body.

Michael Shanks:

It is our intention that Great British Energy will be a publicly owned energy company and an Arm's Length Body in line with Cabinet Office guidance. Setting up GBE in this way will ensure the right balance between operational independence and accountability to Parliament.

■ Great British Energy: Contracts

Andrew Bowie: [\[42759\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, pursuant to the Answer of 28 March 2025 to Question 39646 on Photovoltaics: Import Controls, whether the Government considers Great British Energy to be a public sector contracting authority for the purposes of the Procurement Act 2023.

Michael Shanks:

Yes, Great British Energy (GBE) will be considered a "public authority", and thereby a "contracting authority", where it is not operating on a commercial basis.

Under the Procurement Act 2023, GBE can reject bids and terminate contracts with suppliers that are known to use forced labour themselves or anywhere in their supply chain. In addition, GBE will utilise the debarment list to ensure that suppliers with unethical supply chains cannot participate in procurement or be awarded contracts. The company will appoint a senior individual in the organisation to lead on ethical supply chains and modern slavery.

■ Great British Energy: Logos

Joe Robertson: [\[42936\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, pursuant to the Answer of 28 March 2025 to Question 40054, what the total staff time spent on the redesign of the Great British Energy logo was.

Michael Shanks:

As per my answer to Question [40054](#), Great British Energy's logo was created in-house and with government resources. However, since the staff involved were not recruited specifically to design the logo a detailed breakdown of the time and costs involved is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

I can however assure the hon Member that the Government is committed to ensuring that staff resources are used efficiently and effectively.

Joe Robertson: [\[44029\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, pursuant to the Answer of 28 March 2025 to Question 40054 on Great British Energy: Logos, what the internal costs were for the redesign of the Great British Energy logo.

Michael Shanks:

As per my answer to Questions 42936 and 42937 the staff involved in the creation of Great British Energy's logo were not recruited specifically to design the logo.

Therefore, a detailed breakdown of the time and costs involved is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

I can however assure the hon Member that the Government is committed to ensuring that staff resources are used efficiently and effectively.

■ Housing: Heating

Andrew Bowie: [\[42757\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what guidance his Department has issued on the methods of decarbonising home heating that cause the least disruption.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

Guidance on recommended home energy efficiency improvements is devolved. In Scotland, constituents can visit the Home Energy Scotland webpage for advice.

The Warm Homes Plan will help people find ways to save money on energy bills and transform our ageing building stock into comfortable, low-carbon homes that are fit for the future. We will upgrade up to 5 million homes across the country by accelerating the installation of efficient new technologies like heat pumps, solar, batteries and insulation.

We will partner with combined authorities and local and devolved governments to roll out this plan. Further details on the Warm Homes Plan will be set out in due course.

Edward Morello:[\[42912\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what plans his Department has to incentivise the adoption of low-carbon heating solutions in residential properties to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in West Dorset constituency.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

Under the Warm Homes Plan, officials are exploring the role of incentives and private finance for households to support homeowners with the upfront costs of energy efficiency improvements and low carbon heating.

The Government has launched the 'Warm and Fuzzy' campaign to promote the Boiler Upgrade Scheme (BUS). The campaign seeks to build consumer awareness and understanding of heat pumps, as well as publicising the £7,500 government grant. The BUS is available to homeowners in England and Wales, including West Dorset.

There is also a zero-rate of VAT until March 2027 on energy saving measures, such as insulation and low-carbon heating.

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

Renewable Energy**Yasmin Qureshi:**[\[42431\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he plans to set targets for the building of new (a) pumped storage hydroelectricity systems, (b) solar panels and (c) flywheel energy storage systems.

Michael Shanks:

The Clean Power 2030 Action Plan provides a 'Clean Power Capacity Range' as a foundation to guide rapid policy development and focus delivery, based on scenarios that meet our Clean Power ambitions. There is a breakdown of capacity ranges for the different technology sectors necessary for clean power in 2030, including long duration electricity storage (LDES) - which includes pumped storage hydro (PSH) - and solar. The scenarios developed cannot be exhaustive or definitive, so it is right that government retains some optionality.

Renewable Energy: Regulation**Andrew Bowie:**[\[42751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether any renewable energy compliance regulations are under review by his Department.

Michael Shanks:

The government has inherited a fragmented consumer protection framework for installation of measures that improve the energy efficiency of homes. This will be reviewed and reforms brought forward in the Warm Homes Plan, so that people can be confident of the quality of upgrading and insulating homes, which could help save money on their bills.

■ Small Businesses: Energy

Rachel Blake:

[\[42999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what support his Department is providing to small businesses 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.

Non-domestic consumers with contracts agreed at higher prices may benefit from approaches such as 'blend and extend' contracts where the original, higher, unit rate is 'blended' with a new lower rate, spreading the cost over the course of a longer contract.

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

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Agriculture: Carbon Emissions

John Whitby:

[\[41708\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to provide funding to help support low carbon farming.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Government is committed to our net zero ambitions and boosting nature's recovery, which are the foundations of a productive and profitable farming sector.

Our Environmental Land Management schemes (ELMs) pay farmers to take up land management practices that contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The farming budget will be £2.4 billion in 2025/26, which includes the largest ever budget directed at sustainable food production and nature's recovery in our country's history: £1.8 billion for ELMs to boost Britain's food security and accelerate the transition to a more resilient and sustainable farming sector.

The Government has spent £51.8 million through the Farming Innovation Programme (FIP), with a further £98 million committed to ongoing projects in support of Agri-technology research and innovation. Many FIP projects support low carbon farming practices. FIP competitions for 2025/26 will include up to £12.5 million for the Net Zero Farming thematic competition.

Since 2021, Defra's Farming Investment Fund awarded more than 11,000 grants worth over £130 million to farmers, growers and foresters to invest in technology, equipment and infrastructure, much of which supports low carbon farming practices. Of this, £107 million was through the Farming Equipment and Technology Fund (FETF). The next window of FETF will launch in Spring 2025.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[43542\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the emissions reductions required in agriculture to deliver the sixth carbon budget.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Government is absolutely committed to our net zero targets. We will publish an updated Carbon Budget Delivery Plan that sets out the policy package out to the end of Carbon Budget 6 in 2037 for all the sectors in due course. This will outline the policies and proposals needed to deliver Carbon Budgets 4-6 and our Nationally Determined Contribution commitments on a pathway to net zero.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[43543\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to financially support low carbon farming.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Government is committed to our net zero ambitions and boosting nature's recovery, which are the foundations of a productive and profitable farming sector.

Our Environmental Land Management schemes (ELMs) pay farmers to take up land management practices that contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The farming budget will be £2.4 billion in 2025/26, which includes the largest ever budget directed at sustainable food production and nature's recovery in our country's history: £1.8 billion for ELMs to boost Britain's food security and accelerate the transition to a more resilient and sustainable farming sector.

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■ Agriculture: Lancashire

Mr Andrew Snowden:

[\[38175\]](#)

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

Mary Creagh:

The Government does not comment on individual projects which have yet to be consented via the independent planning process.

The Government has launched a consultation on land use in England which will inform the publication of the Land Use Framework this year. The framework will set out how the Government will protect land with the greatest long-term potential for food production, while delivering on the need for new infrastructure which will bring forward green growth, good jobs and investment across the country.

The Land Use Framework and the Strategic Spatial Energy Plan are being designed alongside each other to work cohesively together and with other sectoral plans.

■ Air Pollution

Daisy Cooper:

[\[42655\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to help ensure that air pollution levels near (a) schools, (b) hospitals and (c) GP surgeries do not exceed the World Health Organisation's recommended limits.

Emma Hardy:

This Government is committed to continue reducing everyone's exposure to air pollution. We are developing a series of further interventions to reduce emissions from key sources. We have set a Population Exposure Reduction Target for PM2.5, which will continue to reduce peoples' average exposure across the country. We will consider WHO guidelines as part of an evidence led process when considering future targets and plan to publish a revised Environmental Improvement Plan later this year, which will set out the action we intend to take on air quality.

■ Animal Welfare: Trapping

Joe Morris:

[\[43740\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what his planned timetable is for banning animal snares.

Mary Creagh:

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

The Government will introduce the most ambitious programme for animal welfare in a generation. As outlined in our manifesto, we will bring an end to the use of snare

traps. We are considering the most effective way to deliver this commitment and will be setting out next steps in due course.

■ Avian Influenza

Jim Shannon: [\[43053\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of trends in the level of bird flu.

Daniel Zeichner:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on 17 December 2024 to question [UIN 19297](#).

An updated [outbreak assessment](#) for highly pathogenic avian influenza in Great Britain and Europe was published by the Animal and Plant Health Agency on 18 March 2025, and an updated [veterinary risk assessment](#) for notifiable avian influenza incursion into poultry in Northern Ireland was published by the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute in December 2024.

■ Bread: Regulation

Freddie van Mierlo: [\[44074\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has made a recent assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward regulations on the composition of bread marketed as sourdough.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Government has no current plans to introduce regulations to specifically cover the composition of 'sourdough bread'. The UK maintains high food standards including on requirements relating to food labelling and information. Existing legislation ensures the labelling and marketing of food, including sourdough products, does not intentionally mislead consumers.

■ Common Organisation of the Markets in Agricultural Products (Fruit and Vegetable Producer Organisations, Tariff Quotas and Wine) (Amendment Etc.) Regulations 2021

Rachel Taylor: [\[42611\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to help enforce the Common Organisation of the Markets in Agricultural Products (Fruit and Vegetable Producer Organisations, Tariff Quotas and Wine) (Amendment etc.) Regulations 2021.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Government is committed to resetting our EU relationship, including by seeking to negotiate an SPS agreement. We have been clear that an SPS agreement could boost trade and deliver significant benefits on both sides. It's too early to discuss any specific areas in detail and we will not be providing a running commentary on discussions with the EU.

A public consultation on proposals to improve and extend current mandatory method of production labelling was undertaken last year by the previous Government. We are now carefully considering all responses before deciding on next steps and will respond to this consultation in due course

■ Domestic Waste: Recycling and Waste Disposal

Joe Robertson: [\[43343\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 4 March 2025 to Question 32569 on Domestic Waste: Recycling and Waste Disposal, whether WRAP provided guidance on the Simpler Recycling reforms to residual waste collection.

Mary Creagh:

WRAP, supported by Defra, and with input from local authorities, has developed good practice guidance on household and commercial waste collections designed to help local authorities deliver quality waste and recycling services to citizens in England. This will include guidance on residual waste collection and is intended to be published shortly.

■ Domestic Waste: Waste Disposal

Joe Robertson: [\[43623\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 21 February 2025 to Question 26635 on Domestic Waste: Waste Disposal, whether (a) his Department and (b) WRAP has undertaken research on restricting residual waste volumes by capping the quantity of bin bags provided to local households for collection.

Mary Creagh:

No, Defra has not undertaken research on this. WRAP, supported by Defra, and with input from local authorities, has developed good practice guidance on household and commercial waste collections designed to help local authorities deliver quality waste and recycling services to citizens in England. This will include guidance on residual waste collection and is intended to be published shortly.

■ Electronic Cigarettes: Litter

Rachel Blake: [\[43711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to reduce pollution from plastic cigarette butts.

Mary Creagh:

Cigarette butts are the most littered item according to a survey commissioned by Defra. Littered filters are not just an eyesore, they can also release toxins into the environment. The best way to reduce cigarette litter is to reduce smoking rates and we continue to support all measures that do so. We will however continue to monitor the available evidence on the prevalence of littered cigarette filters.

Dropping litter, including cigarette butts, is a crime and councils can issue fixed penalty notices of up to £500. An effective and proportionate local enforcement strategy can deter people from littering.

■ Environment Protection

Dr Simon Opher:

[\[39981\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to integrate his planned updates to the (a) Environmental Improvement Plan and (b) Carbon Budget Delivery Plan.

Mary Creagh:

Nature and climate action must be taken together and will underpin the delivery of this Government's missions, from clean energy to economic growth.

Our revised Environmental Improvement Plan will set out the vital role of nature in mitigating and adapting to climate change, such as through tree planting and management and peatland restoration, recognising that tackling climate change in turn supports nature's recovery.

The Government will publish an updated plan that sets out the policy package out to the end of Carbon Budget 6 in 2037 for all the sectors in due course. This will outline the policies and proposals needed to deliver Carbon Budgets 4-6 on the pathway to net zero.

■ Floods: Insurance

Blake Stephenson:

[\[42682\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will have discussions with (a) insurance companies and (b) the Association of British Insurers on the sharing of data on surface water flood claims with the Environment Agency.

Emma Hardy:

The Floods Resilience Taskforce was formed by this Government to provide oversight of national and local flood resilience and preparedness and improve policy delivery and implementation. Bringing together key stakeholders in order to ensure that we are comprehensive and inclusive in our approach.

The Association of British Insurers (ABI) represent the insurance industry at this forum; my officials also routinely engage with the ABI at working level to enhance everyone's understanding of prevailing issues. As part of these conversations, we routinely seek various industry data through the ABI to inform policy development.

The Taskforce will also play a key role in speeding up and coordinating national and local flood preparation ahead of the winter flood season. To drive work forward, Action Groups have been created to help focus on specific areas, one group will be leading on insurance, which the ABI is party too. The Action Groups will feed into the main group.

■ Fly Tipping and Litter

Wendy Morton:

[\[43069\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to support local government to help tackle flytipping and littering.

Mary Creagh:

Local councils have wide ranging enforcement powers to help them tackle littering and fly-tipping. These include fixed penalty notices of up to £1000 to fly-tippers and £500 to those who litter, prosecution action and, in the case of fly-tipping, vehicle seizure. We encourage councils to make good use of their enforcement powers, and we are currently seeking powers in the Crime and Policing Bill to issue statutory fly-tipping enforcement guidance.

We have committed to forcing fly-tippers and vandals to clean up the mess that they have created as part of a crackdown on anti-social behaviour. We will provide further details on this commitment in due course.

Defra also chairs the National Fly-Tipping Prevention Group through which we work with a wide range of stakeholders, such as local authorities and the Environment Agency, to promote and disseminate good practice with regards to preventing fly-tipping. Various practical tools are available from their webpage which is available [here](#).

■ Forests and Peatlands: Conservation

Martin Wrigley:

[\[43673\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 1 April to 2025 to Question 41338 on Nature Restoration Fund, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of a long term plan to help protect irreplaceable (a) peatlands and (b) ancient woodlands.

Mary Creagh:

This Government is committed to protecting our irreplaceable peatlands. That's why we are investing £400 million to protect and restore nature, including our peatlands and trees including ancient woodlands. We have large ambitions to restore hundreds of thousands of hectares of peatlands across the country, and we are working to ensure that we have the most effective mechanisms in place to go further than we have before.

Defra recently conducted and published a review into how ancient woodland and ancient and veteran trees are protected by the National Planning Policy Framework. This revealed that the policy is not being consistently implemented and we are looking at how this can be improved. Defra is also currently revising the Environmental Improvement Plan, which includes actions to protect ancient woodlands.

■ Game: Hunting**Anna Dixon:** [\[35972\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of the licensing of grouse shooting in England.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Government recognises well-managed grouse shooting can be an important part of a local rural economy, providing direct and indirect employment. We also appreciate that many people hold strong views on the issue of grouse shooting and there is evidence to suggest a link between it and crimes against birds of prey as well as potential risks to biosecurity. Work will continue to ensure a sustainable, mutually beneficial relationship between grouse shooting, biosecurity and conservation.

■ Hare Coursing**Matt Bishop:** [\[42933\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to strengthen legislation on tackling hare coursing.

Mary Creagh:

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

This government recognises the importance of tackling rural crimes such as Hare Coursing.

The previous Government made changes to address illegal hare coursing through a package of measures in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022. This broadened the circumstances in which police can investigate and bring charges for hare coursing related activity. There are no plans to further change the legislation of Hare Coursing.

■ Horses: Tagging**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[38950\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to help increase the number of microchipped horses.

Daniel Zeichner:

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

It is a legal requirement in the Equine Identification (England) Regulations 2018 that all equines resident in England (except certain populations of wild or semi-wild equines on designated areas) are microchipped. The law applies retrospectively, to include older equines born before microchipping legislation was introduced and

applies to equines imported to GB for more than 90 days. Enforcement of these requirements is the responsibility of Local Authorities.

The Government recognises the importance of improving equine identification. Defra is engaging with industry to consider improvements to this.

■ Incontinence: Men

Tom Morrison:

[\[43327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has had discussions with Cabinet colleagues on increasing provision of sanitary bins for men suffering from incontinence.

Mary Creagh:

I have not discussed increasing provision of sanitary bins for men suffering from incontinence with Cabinet colleagues. In 2024, officials met with campaigners and discussed the provision of sanitary bins in public and workplace toilets with other relevant departments.

The Government oversees policy and legislation with respect to the safe management of waste and litter as well as the protection of drains and sewers in England. This however does not extend to compelling local authorities regarding types of waste receptacles or their placement. These decisions are for local authorities to make.

The Building Regulations for England were updated in 2024 with the addition of a new 'Part T' which sets out toilet requirements in new non-domestic buildings in England. Part T is supported by statutory guidance which includes space for disposal bins in the design layouts. However, the Building Regulations are limited to the provision and design of toilet facilities and do not extend to the management and use of disposal bins.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is reviewing the Approved Code of Practice (ACOP) and guidance of the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 regarding provision of disposal facilities in workplace toilets. This work is included within the Government's wider plans under Make Work Pay, and HSE will hold appropriate consultation in due course.

■ Inland Waterways: Rights of Way

Olly Glover:

[\[43307\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing a right to roam for waterways.

Emma Hardy:

The Government recognises the importance of providing access to the outdoors including blue spaces for people's health and wellbeing and is working to ensure this is safe and appropriate. This is why we have set out our ambitious manifesto

commitments to create nine new national river walks and three new national forests in England, expanding access to the great outdoors. We are currently developing policy to improve access to nature, including onto unregulated inland waterways, working closely with other government departments and key stakeholders to reduce barriers preventing people from accessing green and blue spaces.

■ Litter: Fines

Joe Robertson:

[\[43348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 4 March 2025 to Question 32568 on Litter: Fines, if he will take steps to issue guidance to local authorities on establishing a mechanism to (a) appeal and (b) review fixed penalty notices.

Mary Creagh:

There is no formal right of appeal against a fixed penalty notice. If an alleged offender does not accept their liability for the offence, there is no requirement on them to pay the fixed penalty. They may have to defend their case in court. We consider it good practice for councils to operate an informal dispute process to minimise the number of cases that reach court.

Advisory enforcement guidance attached to the Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse provides enforcing authorities with advice on how to operate a process for informally disputing liability. The Government is currently considering the benefits of placing this guidance on a statutory footing.

Joe Robertson:

[\[43624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 4 March 2025 to Question 32568 on Litter: Fines, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse being non-statutory on levels of compliance with that guidance.

Mary Creagh:

The Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse, as it relates to cleaning standards, is statutory guidance. The code was amended in 2019 to include advisory guidance on litter enforcement. We do not intend to make an assessment of levels of compliance with the enforcement guidance. The Government is however currently examining the benefits of making it statutory.

■ Meat Products: Imports

Alison Bennett:

[\[43346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that farmers are not undercut by imports from countries with lower animal welfare standards.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Government shares the public's high regard for the UK's environmental protections, food standards and animal welfare. This Government will uphold and protect our high environmental and animal welfare standards in future trade deals. We will promote robust standards nationally and internationally and will always consider whether overseas produce has an unfair advantage

All agri-food products must comply with our import requirements in order to be placed on the UK market. This includes ensuring imported meat products have been slaughtered to animal welfare standards equivalent to our domestic standards

The Government recognises farmers' concerns about imports produced using methods not permitted in the UK. We have been clear that we will use our Trade Strategy to support economic growth and promote the highest standards of food production.

■ Nitrogen Dioxide: Pollution Control**John Whitby:**[\[43324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many times his Department has met with the Joint Air Quality Unit and the Department for Transport to discuss the implementation of the NO₂ programme in the last eight months.

Emma Hardy:

The Joint Air Quality Unit (JAQU) is a joint Defra/DfT division. Members of JAQU attend meetings with officials across both Departments regularly.

■ Packaging: Recycling**Dr Allison Gardner:**[\[42928\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if his Department will publish a breakdown of how extended producer responsibility fees will be allocated, in the context of transparency in funding for local authority waste management services.

Mary Creagh:

PackUK will publish annual reports and financial statements, which will provide transparency on the allocation of funds received through the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) fees. These reports will clarify how the collected fees are distributed and used to support the scheme's objectives.

■ Per- and Polyfluorinated Alkyl Substances**Anna Gelderd:**[\[43004\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he plans to take to further restrict the use of Per- and Polyfluorinated Alkyl Substances where there are clear alternatives.

Emma Hardy:

Following the publication of a Regulatory Management Options Analysis (RMOA) on PFAS in April 2023, my department asked the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) to investigate whether to restrict PFAS in firefighting foams under the UK REACH (Restriction, Evaluation, Authorisation & Restriction of Chemicals) regime. HSE's restriction dossier is due to be published for consultation in Spring 2025. Alongside this, my department is also considering further measures on PFAS.

■ Per- and Polyfluorinated Alkyl Substances: Environment Protection**Anna Gelderd:**[\[43002\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 9 September 2024 to Question 3449 on Per- and Polyfluorinated Alkyl Substances, when he plans to set out his plans for addressing Per- and Polyfluorinated Alkyl Substances; and whether he plans to consider this as part of the review of the Environmental Improvement Plan.

Emma Hardy:

The revised Environmental Improvement Plan, which will be introduced in 2025, will set out the Government's approach to managing PFAS.

■ School Milk: Packaging**Bob Blackman:**[\[43447\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of including school milk cartons in the Extended Producer Responsibility obligations on (a) Government and (b) school spending.

Bob Blackman:[\[43448\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will meet with representatives of the school milk supply chain to discuss the classification of school milk as a household waste.

Mary Creagh:

I am responding to these PQs as the Minister who is responsible for Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging (pEPR). In autumn last year my department published an assessment of the impacts of implementing pEPR, including on inflation, when the regulations were laid in parliament, however, this impact assessment does not include an assessment of the impact on specific sectors/products. The governments of the four nations of the United Kingdom will monitor the effectiveness and impact of the regulations and will amend them when and where appropriate.

I will politely decline the meeting as I am aware of the issues around the definition of household packaging and its impact across a number of sectors. However my officials, who have been working with stakeholders on assessing the possibility of

amending the household packaging definition, would be happy to meet representative of the milk supply chain.

■ Sustainable Farming Incentive

Martin Wrigley: [\[38211\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department's objectives on support for sustainable farming have changed, in the context of the closure of the SFI scheme.

Daniel Zeichner:

We have closed Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) for new applications because the current SFI budget has been successfully allocated, with large-scale uptake of the scheme and 37,000 live SFI agreements delivering towards our environmental targets. This will allow us to align SFI with our work on the Land Use Framework and the 25-year farming roadmap to protect the most productive land and boost food security, whilst delivering for nature.

■ WRAP: Finance

Joe Robertson: [\[43345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 4 March 2025 to Question 32571 on WRAP: Finance, how much funding to WRAP has been budgeted for the 2025-26 financial year.

Mary Creagh:

A WRAP grant provision of £5,952,500 for 2025-26 is planned, this is provisional subject to agreement of the 2025-26 programme proposal from WRAP.

Joe Robertson: [\[43350\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 11 February 2025 to Question 26631 on WRAP, if he will publish the contract or memorandum of understanding between his Department and WRAP that provides the basis for his Department funding WRAP.

Mary Creagh:

Details of the WRAP grant agreement are published on the Grants register held on GOV.UK. The WRAP grant agreement details the purpose and objectives of the grant, standard terms and conditions, performance monitoring and financial assurance.

■ WRAP: Publications

Joe Robertson: [\[43334\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has funded any publications produced by WRAP in each of the last three years.

Mary Creagh:

Yes, Defra has funded a number of publications produced by WRAP in each of the last three years including publications on food waste reduction, recycling and textiles.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Mr Will Forster:**[\[903555\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to strengthen diplomatic cooperation with European allies in the context of US foreign policy.

Stephen Doughty:

In March, the Prime Minister convened international leaders to shape our support for Ukraine. The Foreign Secretary met EU High Representative Kallas, spoke to his Polish and French counterparts, and attended a Weimar+ meeting in Madrid. We are setting up structures to ensure our partnerships deliver in the long-term, including through summits with Ireland, France and the EU, and groups like the European Political Community, Calais Group and Joint Expeditionary Force. We look forward to re-starting negotiations on a UK-Germany treaty once the new German government forms. We continue to work closely with European partners in multilateral fora such as the Council of Europe and OSCE.

■ **Afghanistan: Home Country Nationals****Liz Jarvis:**[\[44148\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to monitor the safety and well-being of family members of individuals who worked with the UK Government in Afghanistan prior to Taliban rule.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

We are continuing to support eligible Afghans who worked with us to resettle in UK. His Majesty's Government has welcomed over 31,000 eligible individuals, including family members, to the UK and continue to support relocation of the remaining eligible Afghans through our schemes.

■ **Africa: Human Rights****Helen Hayes:**[\[41482\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help increase capacity building within the African Union to tackle human rights violations.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK is committed to supporting the African Union's capacity to tackle human rights violations across Africa. This includes support to African Union-led efforts on

conflict resolution, governance and security, which help to reduce the factors that often underpin human rights abuses. The UK is a leading supporter of the African Union's peacekeeping mission in Somalia, their continued mediation efforts in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sudan and their efforts to call for a return to democracy in countries such as Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso.

■ Bangladesh: Foreign Relations

Martin Wrigley:

[\[43677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of anti-corruption measures in UK relations with Bangladesh.

Catherine West:

The UK is committed to assisting investigative, prosecuting and judicial authorities in combating international crime. Whilst we cannot comment on any individual asset recovery cases, we have robust illicit finance legislation and instruments which can be used to support asset recovery requests. The UK is providing support to the Interim Government of Bangladesh through the International Anti-Corruption Coordination Centre hosted by the UK's National Crime Agency and the International Centre for Asset Recovery. We will continue to support these recoveries to the extent that we can.

■ BBC World Service

Damien Egan:

[\[40790\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions his Department has had with the BBC on the long-term sustainability of the BBC World Service's operations.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office Ministers engage routinely with the BBC on a range of issues relating to the BBC World Service, including funding.

The Government is committed to determining a long-term sustainable funding model for the World Service. This will be done through Charter Review.

Damien Egan:

[\[40791\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure the BBC World Service is able to continue broadcasting to audiences in regions impacted by censorship and media regulations.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The BBC are operationally and editorially independent and decide the most effective and efficient way to deliver the BBC World Service.

At a time where media freedom is under threat across the world, the World Service provides impartial accurate news to a global audience of 320 million.

It reaches audiences living in authoritarian and conflict-affected states, where accurate information is most restricted. 75 per cent of its audience are based in countries with low or no media freedom.

■ Belarus: Sanctions

Wendy Morton:

[\[41878\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department is taking steps to harmonise sanctions against Belarus with those imposed on Russia; and if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of such harmonisation on (a) the protection of human rights, (b) support for political prisoners and (c) other UK foreign policy objectives in Belarus.

Stephen Doughty:

The UK has sanctioned over 200 Belarusian individuals and entities to date, in response to both human rights abuses in Belarus, and the Lukashenko regime's support for Putin's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. There are also a range of broad UK sanctions measures in place in Belarus, targeting goods and technologies. We keep further sanctions against Belarus under review.

Sanctions are just one of the tools we use. Alongside our partners and multilateral organisations, the UK consistently calls for human rights abuses to be investigated and for the release of all political prisoners immediately and unconditionally. In August 2024, the UK announced £2.5 million of funding to support the survival of Belarusian human rights and civil society causes in the face of continued political pressure.

■ China: Overseas Investment

Sir Edward Leigh:

[\[42394\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to monitor UK funding in the People's Republic of China; and how much has been allocated to the provinces of (a) Tibet and (b) Xinjiang.

Catherine West:

As an open economy, the Government welcomes foreign trade and investment where it supports growth and jobs in the UK, meets our stringent legal and regulatory requirements, and does not compromise our national security.

The Government expects all UK businesses to respect human rights and the environment throughout their operations and supply chain relationships in line with the OECD Guidelines for Responsible Business Conduct and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

The UK's Overseas Business Risk guidance makes clear to UK companies the risks of operating in certain regions and urges them to conduct appropriate due diligence when making business decisions. The UK also has reporting requirements for companies with a turnover of £36 million or more under Section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act.

This Government stands firm on human rights, including the repression of people in Xinjiang and Tibet. We are committed to working with international partners and businesses to ensure global supply chains are free from human and labour rights abuses.

■ **Darfur: Armed Conflict**

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

[\[41791\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the [humanitarian OR security] situation in (a) Zamzam and (b) El Fashir in north Darfur.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The security situation in El Fasher and around the ZamZam camp remains tense and civilians are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance. The UK led a United Nations Security Council press statement on 31 January 2025 to condemn the intensifying assaults on El Fasher by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), and the attack on the Saudi Teaching Maternal Hospital. This followed our leadership on resolution 2736 in June 2024 which demanded the RSF ends its siege on El Fasher, and that the crucial Adre border crossing be re-opened for humanitarian delivery. All sides must commit to protecting civilians. The UK continues to engage with all sides in this conflict to ensure this is the case.

■ **Egypt: Human Rights**

Dan Carden:

[\[42314\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the implications for its policies of the human rights situation in Egypt.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

Egypt is a human rights priority country for the UK. This informs our policies towards the country, and we do not shy away from raising our human rights concerns with the Government; our strong relationship with Egypt enables us to do so. The Prime Minister raised a human rights concern with President Sisi on 28 February. The National Security Advisor raised a human rights concern with the Foreign Minister Abdelatty on 2 March. The UK participated in the Universal Periodic Review of Egypt at the UN Human Rights Council on 28 January, expressing concern about the arbitrary detention of journalists, activists and human rights defenders, recommending that Human Rights Defender Alaa Abd El-Fattah be released, that all detainees held for exercising their right to freedom of expression are released, that restrictions on news and social media websites be lifted, and that the new Criminal Procedures Code guarantees fair trial standards, and ends the practice of 'rotating' detainees in pre-trial detention.

■ Emergency Travel Documents: Fees and Charges**Manuela Perteghella:** [\[40329\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made an assessment of the adequacy of the £570 fee for an emergency travel document.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The current cost for an Emergency Travel Document is £100 as published on gov.uk and in all consular public waiting rooms.

Manuela Perteghella: [\[40330\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will publish a breakdown of the costs that contribute to the £570 fee for an emergency travel document.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The fee for an Emergency Travel Document is £100. The costs break down as follows: 69% on staffing for our Emergency Travel Document Centres, 27% on the online application system and other digital services, and 4% on consumable items.

■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Disability**Richard Baker:** [\[43387\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when he plans to publish his Department's updated Disability Inclusion and Rights Strategy.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The 2022 - 2030 Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) Disability Inclusion and Rights strategy provides a long-term framework for the FCDO's international approach to disability inclusion. When we published it, we committed to updating it at midpoint to ensure that it would remain current and reflective of Government priorities.

On 25th February, the Prime Minister delivered the government's commitment to increase defence spending to 2.5% of gross domestic product from April 2027, to be funded by a reduction to Official Development Assistance spending. While we had anticipated updating the strategy in advance of the Global Disability Summit in Berlin on 2-3 April, we will explore the options for updating it following the conclusion of the multi-year Spending Review and resource allocation processes.

■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Flags**Kevin Hollinrake:** [\[43485\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 19 March 2025 to Question 35702 on Foreign, Commonwealth

and Development Office: Flags, whether his Department had previously applied for planning permission to fly that particular flag.

Catherine West:

The bisexual flag was flown on the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) internal Quad flagpole in September 2024. It was thought the flag would not be visible to the public, and so no planning permission was sought. It has subsequently been noticed that the flag may have been partially visible to the public through the FCDO's security gates if stood in the driveway.

■ **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Legal Opinion**

Mr Mark Francois:

[\[42421\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether (a) Philippe Sands and (b) Dapo Akande have provided external legal advice to his Department since 4 July 2024.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

It is not normal practice to comment on the provision of external legal advice.

However, in this case we can confirm that neither Philippe Sands KC nor Professor Dapo Akande have provided external legal advice to the FCDO since 4 July 2024.

■ **Freezing of Assets**

Wendy Morton:

[\[41838\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has faced legal challenge on the use of assets derived from sanctioned (a) individuals and (b) entities.

Stephen Doughty:

UK financial sanctions limit the provision of certain financial services and restrict access to financial markets, funds, and economic resources. Financial sanctions do not involve a change in ownership of the frozen funds, or economic resources, nor are they confiscated or transferred to the Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation for safekeeping.

The G7 is providing Ukraine with \$50 billion of funding as part of the Extraordinary Revenue Acceleration scheme. The first £752 million of the UK's £2.26 billion contribution was received by Ukraine earlier this month and will be used to strengthen their defence capabilities in the face of Russian aggression. The G7's funding will be repaid by the profits generated on holdings of immobilised Russian sovereign assets in the EU.

Separately, we continue our work at pace with allies to consider all lawful routes to ensure Russia pays for the damage it is causing Ukraine. The Foreign Secretary is having regular discussions with key partners on this issue, including at the Weimar+ Group on Monday 31 March.

■ Gaza: F-35 Aircraft**Ayoub Khan:**[\[41334\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether UK-made F-35 parts have been used in airstrikes in Gaza since 18 March 2025.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK's robust export licensing criteria states that the Government will not issue export licences if there is a clear risk that the items might be used to commit or facilitate serious violations of International Humanitarian Law (IHL). In September 2024, following an IHL review, we have suspended certain export licences to Israel where we have assessed there is a clear risk that they might be used to commit or facilitate serious violations of IHL. The suspension of relevant export licences for Israel will be kept under review and we hope to see evidence of sustained improvements that address concerns relating to IHL. We would not comment on speculation about future export licensing decisions.

■ Gaza: Hamas**Priti Patel:**[\[40464\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions (a) he has and (b) his ministerial colleagues have had with counterparts from countries in the Middle East on the ending of Hamas' role in the future governance of Gaza.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The Foreign Secretary welcomed the Arab initiative of a Recovery and Reconstruction Plan for Gaza, alongside Foreign Ministers of France, Germany and Italy on 8 March. Reconstruction efforts must be based upon a solid political and security framework that provides long-term peace and security for Israelis and Palestinians alike. We are committed to working with the Arab initiative, Palestinians and Israel, including on security and governance, and are engaging international partners to support efforts. We are clear there can be no role for Hamas. The UK supports a central role for the Palestinian Authority.

■ Gaza: Health Services**Sarah Green:**[\[40848\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help ensure that medical aid reaches civilians (a) at the Nasser Hospital and (b) elsewhere in Khan Younis.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

We remain deeply concerned about the impact of Israel's aid block and military operations activity on healthcare in Gaza. Medical staff and facilities must be protected, and civilians should be able to safely access medical treatment. On 21 March, the Foreign Secretary issued a joint statement with the Foreign Ministers of France and Germany, in which they called on Israel to ensure access to medical care

and temporary medical evacuations in accordance with International Humanitarian Law. The Foreign Secretary called Israeli Foreign Minister Sa'ar and Minister for Strategic Affairs Dermer on 20 and 21 March to press Israel to restore humanitarian access and raise serious concerns about civilian deaths in Gaza. Since 7 October 2023, the UK has provided £5.5 million in funding to UK-Med, enabling them to provide vital care to over 373,000 Gazans, including critical limb and life-saving surgeries, physiotherapy, and rehabilitation.

■ Gaza: Humanitarian Aid

Priti Patel:

[\[40467\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of allegations that (a) Hamas and (b) other terrorist and criminal groups have control over aid in Gaza.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

We are aware of allegations from the Government of Israel that Hamas is using humanitarian aid for their own gain and have encouraged Israel to share any evidence of this with the UN/INGOs. We have not seen clear evidence of systematic aid diversion to Hamas, and given the ongoing hostilities in Gaza we are not able to verify allegations through direct monitoring. FCDO humanitarian programmes in the Occupied Palestinian Territories operate with enhanced sensitivity and additional safeguards to manage the risk of aid diversion. Our emergency humanitarian response is delivered through trusted, credible partners to minimise risk. These partners operate in line with humanitarian principles, including neutrality, and have demonstrated their ability to deliver aid to the most vulnerable in this challenging context. We remain in regular contact with partners regarding operational delivery, risk management and monitoring of delivery.

■ Gaza: Israel

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[39396\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an estimate of the number of civilian casualties resulting from Israeli air strikes on Gaza on 18 March 2025.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

At least 400 people were killed by Israeli air strikes on Gaza overnight on 18 March according to the Gaza Ministry of Health, the biggest wave of strikes since the January ceasefire was announced. We have made clear that the UK strongly opposes Israel's resumption of hostilities in Gaza. Our priority is urging all parties to return urgently to dialogue and to ensuring the ceasefire agreement is implemented in full - most notably hostage releases and humanitarian scale-up - and becomes permanent.

Iqbal Mohamed:

[39730]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on (a) the enforcement of an immediate ceasefire and (b) unrestricted humanitarian access to aid in Gaza.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

As the Foreign Secretary said to the House on 20 March, we strongly oppose Israel's resumption of hostilities and urgently want to see a return to a ceasefire. We have been clear that Hamas must release all the hostages, negotiations must resume and in all scenarios Israel must allow the entry of humanitarian aid. We are appalled by recent attacks on aid workers and their premises - they must be protected and never targeted. The Government of Israel must urgently ensure that effective deconfliction mechanisms are in place to enable them to conduct their lifesaving work safely. We've repeatedly called on Israel at the UN and elsewhere to immediately allow urgently-needed aid back into Gaza. The Foreign Secretary spoke to Israeli Minister of Strategic Affairs, Ron Dermer on 20 March and to Israeli Foreign Minister Sa'ar on 21 March and pressed them to reopen humanitarian access, restore a ceasefire and work for a negotiated path forward, and has discussed the situation with UN leadership.

Ellie Chowns:

[40053]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will hold discussions with his Israeli counterpart on whether UK-made (a) arms and (b) arms components for (i) F35 aircraft and (ii) other arms have been used in the Israeli Defence Force air strikes that commenced in Gaza on 18 March 2025.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK's robust export licensing criteria states that the Government will not issue export licences if there is a clear risk that the items might be used to commit or facilitate serious violations of International Humanitarian Law (IHL). In September 2024, following an IHL review, we have suspended certain export licences to Israel where we have assessed there is a clear risk that they might be used to commit or facilitate serious violations of IHL. The suspension of relevant export licences for Israel will be kept under review and we hope to see evidence of sustained improvements that address concerns relating to IHL.

Priti Patel:

[40463]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will list which of his counterparts from countries in the Middle East region (a) he and (b) his ministerial colleagues have met with to discuss (i) the release of hostages held and (ii) securing a lasting peace in Gaza.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

Securing an immediate ceasefire and the safe release of all hostages has been a priority for this government since the start of this conflict. We will not stop until they are all home.

We thank Qatar, Egypt, and the US for their support in bringing these individuals' and their families' horrific ordeal to an end. Our thoughts are also with those still waiting to be reunited with their loved ones, including the family of UK linked hostage's. Since the renewed outbreak of hostilities, the Foreign Secretary has spoken to Israeli Minister of Strategic Affairs, Ron Dermer on 20 March and to his Israeli counterpart Foreign Minister Sa'ar on 21 March during which he urged that Israel do all it can to return to a ceasefire in Gaza. The Foreign Secretary also remains in regular contact with US Secretary of State Rubio.

Priti Patel:

[\[40465\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his international counterparts on securing phase 2 of the Israel-Hamas ceasefire.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The Foreign Secretary recently spoke with US Secretary of State Rubio and Middle East Envoy Steve Witkoff on how we can work together to secure a ceasefire in Gaza which sees the release of all remaining hostages. We are in close contact with the US Administration and international partners on our priorities, in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and will continue to work with them to secure a long-term political solution. The UK also welcomed the Arab initiative of a Recovery and Reconstruction Plan for Gaza. We welcome proposals from the region that begin to chart a way forward on reconstruction and building a lasting peace. We are clear there can be no role for Hamas in Gaza's future.

■ Gaza: Reconstruction

Wendy Morton:

[\[39446\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had discussions with regional partners on the potential reconstruction of Gaza.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The Foreign Secretary welcomed the Arab initiative of a Recovery and Reconstruction Plan for Gaza, alongside Foreign Ministers of France, Germany and Italy on 8 March. Recovery and reconstruction efforts must be based upon a solid political and security framework that provides long term peace and security for both Israelis and Palestinians alike. We are committed to working with regional partners on the Arab initiative, and Palestinians and Israel. The UK is engaging with international partners to help cohere support for Palestinian-led recovery. We are funding technical expertise to support Palestinian Authority planning for Gaza's recovery and reconstruction.

■ Ghana: Cultural Relations**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** [\[43918\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what initiatives his Department is supporting to strengthen cultural ties between the UK and Ghana.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The British High Commission in Accra hosts regular networking events with the Ghana diaspora to share information and build connections to promote culture, trade and investment. This includes our annual Diaspora New Year networking event hosted by the High Commissioner which gathers up to 1,000 influential people from the UK/Ghana diaspora. Through collaboration with the British Council, the UK supports emerging creative talent through the Creative Economy Programme and sponsors projects across theatre, dance, visual arts and design.

■ Ghana: Development Aid**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** [\[43917\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what funding the UK has provided to support social programmes benefiting cocoa farming communities in Ghana in the last five years.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK has supported a number of global programmes relevant to the cocoa sector in Ghana, most notably 'Partnerships for Forests' (£120 million for 2015-24 across six countries including Ghana) and the 'Ghana Cocoa Forest REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation) Programme' (£141.5 million since 2019, of which £17 million was allocated to Ghana). In addition, a bilateral 'Ghana Agricultural Transformation Programme' (£900,000 over four years) also included investments supporting cocoa companies to trial schemes to improve cocoa farmers' livelihoods.

■ Ghana: Educational Exchanges**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** [\[43919\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department is taking steps to promote educational exchanges between the UK and Ghana.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

Over the last 40 years, the Government's Chevening and Commonwealth Scholarship programmes have funded Masters-level education for almost 2,500 Ghanaian nationals at UK universities. This support allows talented and motivated Ghanaians to gain knowledge and skills in areas such as education, health and STEM subjects. The British High Commission in Accra hosts an annual Young Leaders Summit on International Youth Day to highlight the UK's role in promoting educational exchanges in Ghana, to support the development of young leaders. The

UK-Ghana Science Technology and Innovation strategy also recognises and celebrates dozens of university-to-university partnerships operating across the two countries.

■ **Hamas: Hostage Taking**

Andrew Gwynne: [\[39400\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had discussions with his international counterparts on re-establishing the processes for the remaining hostages held by the Hamas regime to be released.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

We thank Qatar, Egypt, and the US for their support in bringing these individuals' and their families' horrific ordeal to an end. Our thoughts are also with those still waiting to be reunited with their loved ones, including the family of UK linked hostages hostage's. Since the renewed outbreak of hostilities, the Foreign Secretary has spoken to Israeli Minister of Strategic Affairs, Ron Dermer on 20 March and to his Israeli counterpart Foreign Minister Sa'ar on 21 March during which he urged that Israel to do all it can to return to a ceasefire in Gaza. The Foreign Secretary also remains in regular contact with US Secretary of State Rubio.

■ **Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham**

Priti Patel: [\[40470\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to review the status of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham as a proscribed terrorist group.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The Government does not routinely comment on whether a group is being considered for proscription or de-proscription.

■ **International Court of Justice: Public Appointments**

Mr Mark Francois: [\[42422\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what criteria was used to select Dapo Akande KC to represent Britain at the International Court of Justice in the 2026 election.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

Members of the Permanent Court of Arbitration from each contracting State form "National Groups". Under the International Court of Justice (ICJ) statute, national groups are entitled to nominate candidates for election to the ICJ and should consult its highest court of justice and academia before doing so.

The independent UK National Group intends to nominate Professor Dapo Akande as the UK candidate for the 2026 ICJ election. Professor Akande was selected following a robust selection process based on merit which is independent of Government.

The UK Government is delighted to support Professor Dapo Akande's nomination. Professor Akande is an elected member of the International Law Commission and a renowned legal scholar and practitioner. He is an outstanding candidate who would make a formidable judge on the ICJ. Professor Akande's nomination reflects the UK's firm commitment to international justice, human rights and the international rule of law.

■ Iran: Baha'i Faith

Jim Shannon:

[\[40474\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make representations to his Iranian counterparts on the findings of the UN Special Rapporteur's report A/HRC/58/49 on the obstruction of Baha'i burials in Iran; and whether he plans to call for international action to help tackle the desecration of Baha'i cemeteries and wider religious persecution in Iran.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

We are aware of the United Nations Special Rapporteur's report which details the severe repression Baha'is face in Iran. We continue to make representations to Iran in multilateral fora regarding our opposition to its treatment of Baha'is, including at the Human Rights Council on 18 March 2025. We were integral to the delivery of the Iran human rights resolution, adopted by the United Nations Third Committee in November 2024, which spotlighted Iran's restrictions against Freedom of Religion or Belief, particularly the undue restrictions on burials carried out under religious tenets, and called on Iran to cease the desecration of cemeteries. The UK raised the ongoing repression of Baha'is at Iran's Universal Period Review on 24 January. We continue to raise human rights directly with the Iranian government, including through our Ambassador in Tehran.

■ Iran: Hamas

Priti Patel:

[\[40466\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the level of (a) support, (b) resources and (c) financing provided by Iran to Hamas.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

Iran's support for Hamas is unacceptable and further destabilises regional stability and security. The Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary have reiterated to our Iranian counterparts that Iran must cease providing its proxies and partners with weaponry and financing.

We will continue to work with our international partners to hold Iran to account for its destabilising regional activity, and to reiterate our commitment to a ceasefire in Gaza and the release of all hostages by Hamas.

■ Iran: Nuclear Power

Priti Patel: [\[38982\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of the outcome of the Iranian nuclear talks undertaken by Iran, China and Russia in March 2025; and what steps he plans to take following those talks.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

Iran's nuclear programme has never been more advanced and threatens international peace and security. The UK continues to work with international partners in pursuit of a diplomatic solution. We welcome efforts to this end and we will track the outcomes of the recent meeting between Iran, China, and Russia. The onus is now on Iran to take the offer of diplomacy as proposed by President Trump. We will use all diplomatic options to ensure Iran never develops a nuclear weapon including UN snapback, if necessary.

■ Iran: Terrorism

Priti Patel: [\[40468\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps he is taking to prevent Iran from providing (a) weapons and (b) resources to terrorist proxies in the Middle East.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary have both made clear to their Iranian counterparts that Iran must restrain its proxies and partners and cease providing them with weaponry and other resources.

We will continue to work with our international partners to tackle this malign behaviour, including by holding Iran to account in multilateral fora and through sanctions; addressing Iranian weapons proliferation and illicit finance channels; and maintaining our permanent defence presence in the region.

■ Israel: Arms Trade

Ayoub Khan: [\[41335\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of his policy on arms trade with Israel.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

We have continued to review export licences for items to Israel and assess that there are no extant licences for items that might be used to commit or facilitate a serious violation of International Humanitarian Law. This is subject to the specific measures set out to Parliament excluding exports to the global F-35 programme from the scope of the suspension. There are a number of export licences which we have assessed are not for use by the Israeli Defense Forces in military operations in Gaza and therefore do not require suspension. These include military items such as

components for trainer aircraft or components for air defence systems, and other, non-military, items such as food-testing chemicals, telecoms, and data equipment.

■ **Israel: International Law**

Ayoub Khan: [\[41336\]](#)

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 International Criminal Court's granting of arrest warrants for the Israeli prime minister and former defence minister.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

We respect the independence of the International Criminal Court (ICC) which is the primary international institution for investigating and prosecuting the most serious crimes of international concern. As the Foreign Secretary said last week, we urgently want to see a return to a ceasefire. Our focus is on urging all parties to return to talks, implement the ceasefire agreement in full and work towards a permanent peace.

■ **Israel: Lebanon**

Andrew Gwynne: [\[41810\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions his Department has had with (a) officials and (b) Ministerial counterparts in (i) Israel and (ii) Lebanon about the situation in southern Lebanon.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK has raised the ceasefire and other related issues with Israeli and Lebanese counterparts and will continue to do so. The Foreign Secretary has discussed ceasefire implementation with President Aoun. Most recently, the Foreign Secretary discussed a range of issues with Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar and Israeli Minister of Strategic Affairs Ron Dermer. I have also discussed the ongoing situation with Lebanese Prime Minister Salam and recently spoke with the Lebanese Foreign Minister. Officials maintain regular contact with their Israeli and Lebanese counterparts.

Andrew Gwynne: [\[41812\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of (a) Hezbollah's presence and (b) Israeli military action on the (i) civilian and (ii) refugee populations of southern Lebanon.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

A political solution consistent with resolution 1701 is the only way to ensure lasting security and stability for the people living on either side of the Israel-Lebanon border. The devastation from this conflict and the human suffering must be addressed. The UK has played a leading role in addressing the humanitarian situation in Lebanon. In total, UK government has announced £41 million of support for Financial Year 24/25 so far, this includes £25 million to respond to the widespread lack of shelter, reduced

access to clean water, hygiene and healthcare, and to address basic needs. The UK will continue to play its part to support those in need.

Mary Glendon: [\[41822\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to support a cessation of hostilities between Israel and Lebanese Hizballah.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK has made clear the importance that all sides maintain a cessation of hostilities and work towards securing a lasting peace. This is the only way to restore security and stability for the people living on either side of the border. The UK continues to engage Israel and Lebanon to urge them to build on the progress made and implement fully the terms of the ceasefire agreement.

■ Israeli Settlements: Crimes of Violence

Anneliese Midgley: [\[41926\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had discussions with his Israeli counterparts on reported Israeli settler attacks on Masafer Yatta in the West Bank.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The Foreign Secretary continues to raise the rights of Palestinians and the need for Israel to hold settler violence to account in his engagements with Israeli counterparts. and The Foreign Secretary has also met Palestinian community members in the West Bank where he heard how communities are affected. We have always been clear that Israeli settlements are illegal under international law and harm prospects for a two-state solution. We condemn settler violence, and we are clear that the Israeli government must crack down on settler violence, stop settlement expansion and reject annexation of the West Bank. The demolitions of Palestinian homes causes unnecessary extensive suffering to Palestinians. In all but the most exceptional of cases, demolitions by an occupying power are contrary to international law. Israel must cease its policy of demolitions and provide a clear route to construction for Palestinians in Area C.

■ Kenya: Health Services

Steve Yemm: [\[40768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support (a) LGBTIQ+ people and (b) women human rights defenders to access (i) sexual and reproductive health services, (ii) abortions, (iii) family planning services, (iv) HIV medication and (v) crisis response support in Kenya.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK is committed to championing LGBT+ human rights around the world; this work is enabled by our global, £40 million LGBT+ rights programme which supports organisations such as 'United in Health and Agriculture Improvement - East African

Sexual Health and Rights Initiative', which is Africa's first indigenous activist fund that advances the human rights of LGBT+ persons. The UK proudly defends and promotes universal and comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). Through the £28.3 million Delivering Sustainable and Equitable increases in Family Planning programme (2019-2025), the UK has strengthened family planning in Kenya through contributing towards averting over 1.72 million unintended pregnancies, averting over 4,500 maternal deaths and over 400,000 unsafe abortions. UK co-funding of the Kenya Maternal and Newborn Health programme supports an emergency transport system in Kenya, using mobile technology to connect pregnant women to care when needed during pregnancy and childbirth.

■ **Lebanon: Hezbollah**

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[41809\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the (a) presence and (b) military capacity of Hezbollah in southern Lebanon.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK expects Lebanese Hizballah to abide fully by the terms of the ceasefire agreement. This means withdrawing from areas of southern Lebanon and to enable an enhanced Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) deployment into these areas as stipulated under the terms of the ceasefire agreement and support implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1701. The LAF are essential to the future security and stability of Lebanon and the UK stands ready to support their deployment to southern Lebanon.

■ **Mercy Tarfa and Richard Solomon Tarfa**

Jim Shannon:

[\[43456\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will hold discussions with his Nigerian counterpart on the decision by the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Development in Kano State, Nigeria, not to return children to the care of Professor Solomon and Mrs Mercy Tarfa on 19 March 2025.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The Government is aware of a Kano State court ruling instructing the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Development to return children removed from Du Merci orphanage to the custody of Professor Solomon Tarfa and Mrs Mercy Tarfa. We have previously raised the case with the Nigerian authorities and stressed the need to prioritise the welfare of the children involved. Enforcing the court ruling is a matter for the Nigerian authorities.

■ Nigeria: Schools**Jim Shannon:**[\[43457\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will hold discussions with his Nigerian counterpart on the decision by (a) Bauchi, (b) Kano, (c) Katsina and (d) Kebbi States to close (i) public and (ii) private (A) primary and (B) secondary schools for Ramadan.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

Improving access to education in Nigeria is a key priority for the UK and we are working with the Nigerian Government to ensure that all Nigerians have access to a quality education. Through the Partnership for Learning for All Nigerian Education (PLANE) programme, we have commissioned research to document the number of school days lost through ad hoc closures, insecurity, religious holidays and climate-related factors in states in Northern Nigeria. We will share the key finding of this research with the Nigerian Government.

■ Occupied Territories: Humanitarian Aid**Nesil Caliskan:**[\[39726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department plans to provide further aid to (a) the Occupied Palestinian Territories and (b) Gaza.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

As the Prime Minister made clear in the House on 25 February, this Government is proud of the UK's pioneering record on overseas development, and we will continue to play a key humanitarian role in Gaza. As with all Official Development Assistance (ODA) spend, any new allocations to humanitarian partners will be announced in the usual way. The UK has now announced £129 million for the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs) this financial year, including £41 million for the United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), providing essential services to civilians in Gaza, the West Bank, and Palestinian refugees across the region delivered through partner agencies.

■ Sudan: Armed Conflict**Stephen Gethins:**[\[43493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department is taking steps through the UN Security Council to (a) protect Sudanese (i) women and children and (ii) other civilians and (b) hold people responsible for (A) violence and (B) displacement to account.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The conflict in Sudan is having a devastating impact on children. An estimated 17 million children are out of school. More than 50 per cent of Sudan's caseload of 8.8 million internally displaced persons are children. The UK is playing an active role at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to help protect Sudanese civilians. For

example, through public interventions, senior engagements, Council products and sanctions, we continue to push the warring parties to take every precaution to safeguard Sudanese civilians, including children. In November 2024, the Minister for Africa chaired a meeting of the UNSC to address the plight of Sudanese civilians, including women and children. The UK also tabled a UNSC resolution on protection of civilians in Sudan which shamefully Russia vetoed. Last month, the Minister for Africa chaired a UNSC Briefing on conflict related sexual violence in Sudan, emphasising the need for an immediate cessation of hostilities. The UK has also led efforts at the Human Rights Council to establish and renew the mandate for the UN Fact-Finding Mission which is crucial for supporting future accountability efforts in Sudan.

■ Sudan: Arms Trade

David Taylor: [\[39719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he is taking steps with his international partners to reduce arms sales to warring parties in Sudan.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

Support from external actors to both warring parties only prolongs the conflict and the terrible human suffering. In our engagement with international partners, the UK continues to emphasise the importance of refraining from activity that prolongs the fighting and rather use their influence to support a peaceful resolution to the conflict. We will continue to work closely with partners at the UN Security Council to enforce the existing UN sanctions regime and arms embargo on Darfur. There is also a longstanding UK arms embargo in place for the whole of Sudan.

■ Sudan: Children

Wendy Morton: [\[39002\]](#)

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 risks of (a) radicalisation and (b) human trafficking to children not in school in Sudan.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The conflict in Sudan is having a devastating impact on children. An estimated 17 million children are out of school and children comprise over 50 per cent of Sudan's 8.8 million caseload of internally displaced persons. We urge the warring parties to take every precaution to safeguard the wellbeing of children. And we will push hard for those suspected of targeting, abusing or exploiting children to face justice, including through our position on the United Nations Security Council.

Wendy Morton: [\[39003\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to support frontline workers in Sudan working to (a) immunise and (b) educate children.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The conflict in Sudan is having a devastating impact on children. Malnutrition rates are at critical levels and an estimated 17 million children are no longer attending school. The context for children will worsen as the fighting continues. This financial year (2024/25) the UK will provide £226.5 million in life-saving aid towards the crisis. As part of this, we support the United Nations Children's Fund who are providing lifesaving nutrition programmes and immunisations to some of the most vulnerable children in Sudan. The UK supports Education Cannot Wait, providing safe learning spaces and psychological support to 200,000 vulnerable children in refugee and host communities in Chad, Ethiopia, Libya, South Sudan, Central Africa Republic and Uganda. We are also one of the largest donors to the Global Partnership for Education who are delivering urgent support to children across Sudan. The UK is also a major donor to the UN-led Sudan Humanitarian Fund (SHF) which provides support to local and national responders, Emergency Response Rooms (ERRs) and a consortium of international non-governmental organisations. These frontline workers are also working on healthcare and education provisions across Sudan.

■ Sudan: Civil Society

Wendy Morton: [\[39007\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what (a) support, (b) funding and (c) capacity building his Department is providing to Sudanese civil society organisations.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

This financial year (FY) the UK will provide £226.5 million towards the crisis in Sudan. UK funding is delivered through key UN agencies such as the World Food Programme and UNICEF. We are also one of the largest donors to the UN-led Sudan Humanitarian Fund which provides support to local and national responders, Emergency Response Rooms and international non-governmental organisations. The majority of the UK's work with national civil society actors has been paused following the outbreak of hostilities. In Darfur the UK continues to support local conflict mitigation initiatives via national organisations.

■ Sudan: Development Aid

Wendy Morton: [\[39010\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when he plans to publish information on the level of funding he plans to provide to Sudan in the 2025-26 financial year.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

Addressing the humanitarian crisis in Sudan remains a priority for the Prime Minister and Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office Ministers. The UK has been a longstanding and major humanitarian donor to Sudan with £226.5 million allocated in Financial Year 2024/25 towards the crisis. 2025/26 budgets are now being finalised, and we will share information in due course.

Wendy Morton:

[\[39011\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the proposal to reduce official development assistance to 0.3% of gross national income on the level of funding he plans to provide to Sudan in the 2025-26 financial year.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK has been a longstanding and major humanitarian donor to Sudan with £226.5 million allocated in the financial year of 2024/25 towards the crisis. In his statement to Parliament on Defence and Official Development Assistance spend, the Prime Minister made clear that Sudan would remain a humanitarian priority. The Prime Minister is committed to returning 0.7 per cent spending when fiscal conditions allow. The ongoing obfuscation of relief operations by Sudan's warring parties is imperilling millions of people. More funding is required from across the international community. However, without a step change in access the already dire situation will drastically deteriorate.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

[\[41792\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the proposed reduction to Official Development Assistance on trends in the levels of aid delivered to Sudan.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK has been a longstanding and major humanitarian donor to Sudan with £226.5 million allocated in the financial year of 2024/25 towards the crisis. In his statement to Parliament on Defence and Official Development Assistance spend, the Prime Minister made clear that Sudan would remain a humanitarian priority. The Prime Minister is committed to returning 0.7 per cent spending when fiscal conditions allow. The ongoing obfuscation of relief operations by Sudan's warring parties is imperilling millions of people. More funding is required from across the international community. However, without a step change in access the already dire situation will drastically deteriorate.

■ Sudan: Food Aid

Wendy Morton:

[\[39454\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the Sudanese Government's response to the findings of the report by the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification entitled Famine Review Committee: Sudan, published on 24 December 2025, on the effectiveness of (a) UK and (b) multilateral nutrition and food programmes operating in that country.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The findings from the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC)'s Sudan assessment makes clear the gravity of the humanitarian context across the country. The IPC's findings show the presence of famine in at least five areas of the country

and projecting it could expand into at least ten areas by May 2025. The Sudanese authorities since the report's publication have consistently denied the existence of famine and have also announced its withdrawal from IPC-led analyses. The UK remains steadfast in its support to the people of Sudan. This financial year, we will provide £226.5 million in life-saving aid towards the crisis. As part of this, we are supporting the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) who are delivering lifesaving nutrition programmes to some of the most vulnerable children in Sudan as well as the World Food Programme who are delivering urgent food aid.

Stephen Gethins: [\[43184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure access to nutritional treatment in areas (a) experiencing and (b) at risk of famine in Sudan.

Stephen Gethins: [\[43187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help improve primary health care in hard-to-reach areas of Sudan.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The humanitarian crisis in Sudan is the largest and most severe globally. Tens of millions of people require life-saving aid with almost 640,000 people projected to be experiencing catastrophic famine conditions. In the financial year ending 31 March 2025, the UK provided more than £226 million in life-saving aid towards the crisis. As part of this, we supported the United Nations Children's Fund who provided lifesaving nutrition and health programmes to some of the most vulnerable and hard-to-reach people in Sudan. This includes integrated nutrition, water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), and health programming. We also supported the International Committee of the Red Cross who provided health and WASH programmes.

■ Sudan: Food Insecurity

Anneliese Dodds: [\[42648\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to United Nations World Food Programme press release entitled Tens of millions at risk of extreme hunger and starvation as unprecedented funding crisis spirals, published on 28 March 2025, whether he has had discussions with the World Food Programme on Sudan.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The humanitarian crisis in Sudan is the largest and most severe globally. Tens of millions of people require life-saving aid with almost 640,000 people projected to be experiencing catastrophic famine conditions. Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office Ministers and officials are in regular communications with representatives from the World Food Programme (WFP). On 10 March, the Minister for Development met the WFP Country Director for Sudan alongside other senior United Nations staff. More recently, WFP staff participated in a UK organised

roundtable meeting about the crisis in Sudan as part of preparations for the UK's Sudan London Conference, taking place on 15 April.

■ **Sudan: Human Rights**

Wendy Morton:

[\[39005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps is he taking to (a) support and (b) strengthen the UN Fact-Finding Mission for the Sudan.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

Human rights violations and abuses by all sides in Sudan's brutal conflict must be investigated impartially. In October 2023 in support of this objective, the UK led work at the United Nations on the resolution that established the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM). Its mandate was extended in October 2024 with an increased majority as a direct result of UK-led advocacy. The FFM published its first report in September 2024 and concluded there are reasonable grounds to believe that violations of international humanitarian and human rights law by both warring parties constituted war crimes and, in the case of the Rapid Support Forces, additionally crimes against humanity. To amplify these findings the Minister for Africa hosted a roundtable in Geneva in February where experts from the FFM briefed member states about the situation in Sudan to increase understanding regarding the atrocities being perpetrated. The FFM is the most effective mechanism to support accountability in Sudan. The UK will strongly support its expected mandate renewal later this year in voting at the Human Rights Council.

Wendy Morton:

[\[39006\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help support the UN fact finding mission to collect and preserve evidence of potential human rights and international humanitarian law violations in Sudan.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

UK-led lobbying at the United Nations Human Rights Council in October 2024 directly led to the UN Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) securing a mandate extension with an increased majority. The Minister for Africa hosted a roundtable in Geneva in February where experts from the FFM briefed member states about the situation in Sudan to increase understanding regarding the atrocities being perpetrated. This year we will provide roughly £1 million to support the Centre for Information Resilience (CIR), a research body gathering open-source evidence about the conflict in Sudan with a view to supporting future accountability. The CIR has been able to assist the FFM in verifying reports of violations through its use of digital information. Human rights violations and abuses by all sides in Sudan's brutal conflict must be investigated impartially. The FFM is the most effective mechanism to support accountability in Sudan. The UK will strongly support its expected mandate renewal later this year in voting at the Human Rights Council.

■ Sudan: Humanitarian Aid**Wendy Morton:** [\[39008\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of (a) seasonal weather changes, (b) road closures and (c) border closures on (i) the delivery of and (ii) access to humanitarian aid in Sudan.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

Road and border closures continue to impede the delivery of and access to humanitarian aid in Sudan. The continued obfuscation of humanitarian aid into and across Sudan is causing huge suffering for civilians. The upcoming rainy season will further complicate the already dire operating context for relief agencies. The upcoming Foreign Secretary-led Sudan Conference in London we hope will re-energise efforts to coordinate international action on humanitarian access, including border closures.

Stephen Gethins: [\[43494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department is taking steps to increase funding for international humanitarian organisations that provide aid in Sudan.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK has been a longstanding and major humanitarian donor to Sudan with £226.5 million allocated in financial year 2024/25 towards the crisis. In his statement to Parliament in February about defence and Official Development Assistance spend, the Prime Minister made clear that Sudan would remain a humanitarian priority for the UK. The Prime Minister is committed to returning to 0.7 per cent spending when fiscal conditions allow. The ongoing obfuscation of relief operations by Sudan's warring parties is imperilling millions of people. More funding is required from across the international community. However, without a step change in access the already dire situation will drastically deteriorate. The UK will however continue to support international humanitarian organisations, including the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Food Programme, who are providing life-saving food commodities and nutritional programmes to those most in need.

■ Sudan: Internally Displaced People**Wendy Morton:** [\[39000\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to support capacity building with local partners in Sudan to support displaced people.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The humanitarian crisis in Sudan is the most severe and largest globally. The conflict has caused significant levels of forced displacement with more than three million Sudanese refugees seeking safety in neighbouring countries and a further 8.8 million

people internally displaced within Sudan. This financial year (2024/25) the UK will provide £226.5 million in life-saving aid towards the crisis. Since the conflict started more than 2.5 million people have received UK funded humanitarian aid. Local organisations are an important part of our humanitarian response and UK funding has contributed to building their capacity through partnerships with the United Nations and international non-governmental organisations. These local organisations are continuing to provide critical support and assistance to displaced people across Sudan.

Wendy Morton: [\[39001\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment has he made of the potential implications for his policies of the risks to displaced people in Sudan of (a) human trafficking and (b) exploitation for crime.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

We are concerned by reports of the increasing prevalence of human trafficking as a result of the conflict in Sudan. The UK continues to prioritise the protection of civilians and we are taking action on this agenda. In November 2024, the Minister for Africa chaired a meeting of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to address the plight of Sudanese civilians. The UK tabled a UNSC resolution on protection of civilians in Sudan which Russia vetoed. We will continue to use our position on the UNSC and as leader of the Core Group on Sudan at the UN Human Rights Council to keep a spotlight on, and take actions in response to, the appalling human rights situation in Sudan.

■ Sudan: Refugees

Wendy Morton: [\[39012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what proportion of Official Development Assistance funding to Sudan has been spent on Sudanese refugees in Chad.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

Since the start of the conflict in Sudan, almost one million people have crossed the border into Chad which now has Africa's largest refugee caseload. On average, 200 people each day seek safety in Chad from Sudan. In January, whilst in Chad, the Foreign Secretary announced a doubling of aid to Sudan with an overall allocation of £226.5 million for financial year 2024/25. We have also provided over £40 million this financial year to address humanitarian needs in eastern Chad among refugees and host communities which has benefited 300,000 people with food assistance.

■ Sudan: Sanitation and Water

Wendy Morton: [\[39439\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of access to (a) water and (b) sanitation in Sudan.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The conflict in Sudan is causing a nationwide humanitarian crisis - the most severe and largest globally with over 30 million people in need. Water access remains woefully inadequate in part due to the targeting of water supply infrastructure by armed actors. More than 17 million people now lack access to safe drinking water with 24 million people without access to adequate sanitation facilities. Combined these factors have contributed to a huge spike in cases of cholera and malnutrition among children. These conditions will only get worse as we approach the rainy season. This financial year (2024/25) we will provide £226.5 million in life-saving aid towards the crisis. As part of this, we support the United Nations Children's Fund, who conduct a wide range of water, sanitation and hygiene interventions across Sudan.

■ **Sudan: Vaccination**

Mr Andrew Mitchell: [\[41787\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support his Department is providing to GAVI to ensure equitable vaccine distribution in Sudan.

Mr Andrew Mitchell: [\[41788\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support vaccine distribution in conflict affected areas of Sudan.

Mr Andrew Mitchell: [\[41790\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to tackle vaccine preventable diseases including (a) measles and (b) cholera in hard to reach areas of Sudan.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The conflict in Sudan and the widespread destruction of sanitation and health services has caused a devastating cholera outbreak. Two-thirds of states in Sudan are experiencing more than three different disease outbreaks, which are exacerbated by the widening climatic shocks. In response, the UK is supporting United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and others who are delivering lifesaving emergency health interventions including cholera vaccines, treatment, and prevention. Specifically, we are also contributing to an ongoing cholera vaccination campaign in Kosti and Rabak, targeting one million people. UK aid is also addressing related needs across the region given the cross-border risks of Sudan's cholera outbreak. We continue to urge all parties in Sudan to facilitate humanitarian access so that aid reaches those most in need.

Stephen Gethins:

[\[43188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure the prevention of vaccine-preventable diseases in hard-to-reach areas of Sudan.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The conflict in Sudan and the widespread destruction of sanitation and health services has caused devastating disease outbreaks across the country. Two-thirds of states in Sudan are now experiencing more than three different disease outbreaks, which are exacerbated by the impacts of climate change. In response, the UK is supporting the United Nations Children's Fund and others who are delivering lifesaving emergency health interventions including cholera vaccines, treatment, and prevention. Specifically, we are also contributing to an ongoing cholera vaccination campaign in Kosti and Rabak, targeting one million people. UK aid is also addressing related needs across the region given the cross-border risks of Sudan's cholera outbreak. We continue to urge all parties in Sudan to facilitate humanitarian access so that aid reaches those most in need.

■ **Tigray: Development Aid**

Helen Hayes:

[\[41480\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what development aid his Department is providing to Tigray in Ethiopia to help (a) support the victims of sexual violence and (b) tackle violence against women and girls.

Helen Hayes:

[\[41481\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of proposed funding reductions to (a) Overseas Development Assistance and (b) USAID on the rebuilding of Tigray following the cessation of the civil war in Ethiopia.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

Women and girls are a priority focus of UK aid across Ethiopia. UK aid is providing safe spaces for women and girls as well as support across health, social and legal services.

Detailed decisions on how the future Official Development Assistance budget will be used will be determined as part of the ongoing Spending Review. We are assessing implications of the US funding pause across development sectors and geographic regions including Ethiopia. We are gathering information and working with donor partners to share analysis of the pause and understand its impact.

■ Tigray: Peacekeeping Operations

Helen Hayes: [\[41479\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help prevent a breakdown of the peace agreement in Tigray.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK is working with partners to prevent a return to conflict in the region by supporting implementation of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement. On 13 March, the UK issued a joint statement with the European Union and 23 other countries emphasising our support for the agreement and urging all parties to refrain from violence and engage in urgent dialogue.

We regularly engage all parties and the African Union guarantors of the agreement, to encourage implementation on the return of internally displaced persons and other outstanding issues. The UK also provides support for the demobilisation, disarmament, and reintegration process and funds the African Union's monitoring of the agreement as well as international and Ethiopian human rights monitoring. We also support investigatory capacity building across the country.

■ USA: Middle East

Priti Patel: [\[40469\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies in the Middle East of the US's approach to (a) Iran, (b) the Houthis in Yemen and (c) Hamas.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

We work closely with the US on all of our Middle East priorities and the Foreign Secretary has discussed the situation in the Middle East with Secretary Rubio on multiple occasions.

We will continue to work with the US to advance regional peace and stability. This includes reiterating the UK's commitment to a ceasefire in Gaza, the release of all hostages by Hamas and holding Iran to account for its malign regional activity, including in multilateral fora and through our sanctions regimes. We also continue to work with the US to contain the Houthi threat and protect Freedom of Navigation in the Red Sea.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Air Pollution: Children

Daisy Cooper: [\[42654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the potential impact of air pollution on children's health.

Ashley Dalton:

Children can be susceptible to the health effects from long and short-term exposure to air pollution. The Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants published advice on susceptibility to air pollution in March 2025. They concluded that, based on the latest evidence, advice for children with asthma should continue to be included in the Daily Air Quality Index. The full review is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/advice-given-to-the-air-quality-information-system-aqis-review-steering-group>

In addition, the UK Health Security Agency has a Cleaner Air Programme which aims to reduce people's exposure to air pollution, particularly in the most vulnerable groups, including children. The programme is organised around three core outcomes, namely increasing the evidence base, influencing and supporting stakeholders, and improving awareness and understanding. Further information is available at the following link:

<https://ukhsa.blog.gov.uk/2022/06/16/clean-air-day-how-ukhsa-is-tackling-air-pollution-and-how-you-can-help/>

■ Alcoholic Drinks and Drugs: Custodial Treatment**Lisa Smart:****[43698]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much NHS England has spent on (a) drug and (b) alcohol treatment in (i) prisons, (ii) young offender institutions, (iii) immigration removal centres and (iv) other secure settings in the last three financial years.

Ashley Dalton:

A detailed analysis of NHS England's spend on drug and alcohol treatment in prisons, young offender institutions (YOIs), immigration removal centres (IRCs), and other secure settings is not available at the level requested. This is because mental health and substance misuse are not necessarily individual contracts and, in most instances, are part of combined total healthcare contracts. Therefore, we are only able to report combined figures for both mental health and substance misuse treatment. The following table shows the combined costs of mental health and substance misuse treatment in the secure estate, from 2021/22 to 2023/24:

SCHEDULE OF MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE MISUSE IN SECURE SETTINGS	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Mental health and substance misuse in adult prisons	£205,900,000	£195,700,000	£211,000,000
Mental health and substance misuse in YOI's and other youth secure settings	£13,600,000	£13,000,000	£18,300,000
Mental health and substance misuse in IRC's	£2,800,000	£4,300,000	£4,700,000

■ Alcoholic Drinks and Drugs: Young People

Jessica Toale:

[\[42799\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help safeguard young people from drug and alcohol addiction in (a) England and (b) Bournemouth West constituency.

Ashley Dalton:

The most effective and sustainable approach to safeguarding children and young people from harm due to drugs and alcohol is by giving them the best start in life, and by keeping them safe, well, and happy. Our mission-based approach will ensure that every child has the best start in life, and that we create the healthiest generation of children ever.

Statutory guidance on relationships, sex, and health education requires all primary and secondary schools to ensure that pupils know the key facts and risks associated with alcohol and drug use, as well as how to manage influences and pressure, in order to keep themselves healthy and safe. The Department has worked with the Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education Association to develop lesson plans on alcohol and drugs and commissioned an update of the existing resources, which was published at the end of last year.

The Government also has an alcohol and drug information and advice service called Talk to FRANK, which aims to reduce alcohol and drug use and their harms by providing awareness to young people, parents, and concerned others. Further information on Talk to FRANK is available at the following link:

<https://www.talktofrank.com/>

Children and families affected by parental alcohol and/or drug use can experience adverse health, social, and economic outcomes, which can continue for generations without effective interventions to break the cycle. The Department is continuing to invest in improvements to local alcohol and drug treatment services, to ensure that those in need can access high quality help and support.

Local authorities are responsible for commissioning drug and alcohol treatment and recovery services as part of their public health responsibilities. In addition to the Public Health Grant (PHG), in 2025/26, the Department is providing a total of £310 million in additional targeted grants to improve services and recovery support, which includes housing and employment. Further details are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/drug-and-alcohol-treatment-and-recovery-funding-2025-to-2026/drug-and-alcohol-treatment-and-recovery-funding-allocations-2025-to-2026>

In 2025/26, the Department is providing Bournemouth, Christchurch, and Poole with £3,023,086 through the Drug and Alcohol Treatment Recovery and Improvement Grant, which is on top of the amount the local authority invests in their drug and alcohol treatment and recovery system through the PHG. It is for the local authority to determine what proportion of that funding it spends on supporting children and young people. In 2023/24, there were 150 children and young people, those under 18 years old, who received support through specialist services in the area. In the year to January 2025, this had risen to 163.

■ Alcoholism: Health Services

Daisy Cooper:

[42656]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what funding his Department provides to support services for the children of alcoholics.

Ashley Dalton:

Our mission-based approach will ensure that every child has the best start in life and that we create the healthiest generation of children ever. This includes supporting the children of parents with alcohol problems and other adverse childhood experiences.

Local authorities are responsible for commissioning drug and alcohol treatment and recovery services as part of their public health responsibilities. In addition to the Public Health Grant, in 2025/26 the Department is providing a total of £310 million in additional targeted grants to improve services and wider recovery support, which includes housing and employment. Further details are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/drug-and-alcohol-treatment-and-recovery-funding-2025-to-2026/drug-and-alcohol-treatment-and-recovery-funding-allocations-2025-to-2026>

All local authorities can invest some of their allocation on interventions that strengthen the support available to children and families affected by alcohol and/or drugs, according to local need.

The Government also has an alcohol and drug information and advice service called Talk to FRANK, which aims to reduce alcohol and drug use and its harms by providing awareness to young people, parents, and concerned others. Further information on Talk to FRANK is available at the following link:

<https://www.talktofrank.com/>

■ Ambulance Services: Private Sector and Voluntary Organisations

Mr Richard Holden: [\[43226\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how often the NHS has made use of Private and Voluntary ambulances in the last five years; whether the NHS is planning to reduce or increase their use; and what is the estimated impact of their use on costs to his Department.

Karin Smyth:

The requested information is not held. National Health Service ambulance trusts may procure support from private ambulance services during periods of peak demand to supplement the NHS' ambulance fleet. Ambulance availability is therefore monitored on a daily basis by each NHS ambulance trust.

With regard to expenditure on private ambulance services, NHS England does not collect this data, as decisions to engage private emergency ambulance support are made at the frontline operational level.

■ Antidepressants

Joe Robertson: [\[43678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what type of mental health support will patients who are prescribed antidepressants be able to receive from community pharmacies.

Stephen Kinnock:

The New Medicine Service (NMS) is an advanced service offered by community pharmacies, providing patients with advice to address any possible side effects, issues, or questions that patients who are prescribed a new medicine may have. The service focuses on treatments for long-term conditions, including asthma and hypertension.

Early interventions of this type can improve medication adherence, patient outcomes, and can reduce pressure on the wider National Health Service. From October 2025, the NMS will expand to introduce depression as a further therapeutic area for which patients can receive support.

■ Arthritis: Health Services**Martin Wrigley:** [\[43661\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will work with Versus Arthritis to (a) bring down waiting times for people with arthritis and (b) support them while waiting for treatment.

Martin Wrigley: [\[43668\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will work with Versus Arthritis to improve (a) care and (b) support for young people with arthritis.

Ashley Dalton:

On 6 January 2025, NHS England published the new Elective Reform Plan, which sets out a whole system approach to hitting the 18-week referral to treatment target by the end of this Parliament.

Integrated care boards (ICBs) are responsible for commissioning services that meet the needs of their populations, including for those with arthritis. To support this, the Department of Health and Social Care is delivering the Getting It Right First Time (GIRFT) Musculoskeletal (MSK) Community Delivery Programme jointly with NHS England and the Department for Work and Pensions. With a £3.5 million funding boost, GIRFT will work with the ICBs to reduce MSK community waiting times.

The Department funds research into MSK conditions, including arthritis, through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). Through that route, the Department spent approximately £26.3 million on MSK research in 2023/24, and £79.2 million since 2019/20. In particular, the Leeds Biomedical Research Centre aims to improve treatment for osteoarthritis. The NIHR, in collaboration with Versus Arthritis, also funds a dedicated UK MSK Translational Research Collaboration, aligning investment in MSK translational research and creating a United Kingdom-wide ambition and focus to drive cutting edge research and improve outcomes for patients.

The GIRFT programme in NHS England has had a paediatric rheumatology workstream since April 2024. The team has assembled the largest ever set of data and information about paediatric rheumatology in England and is visiting every department in England to discuss its findings. It will produce its national report with recommendations later this financial year. This will include a focus on supporting young people and their parents as they transition to adult services.

The GIRFT team will be working with the British Society for Rheumatology and rheumatology departments in England to implement the findings and recommendations of the GIRFT paediatric rheumatology national report.

NHS England Specialised Commissioning has a Clinical Reference Group for specialised paediatric rheumatology, which has produced a service specification naming juvenile idiopathic arthritis as one of the conditions that should be managed by a specialist paediatric rheumatology team. The service specification also sets out that specialised paediatric rheumatology teams will provide transitional care to

facilitate transfer to, and ongoing care in, adult rheumatology. Specialised paediatric rheumatology services are expected to be commissioned in line with this service specification.

The Department will continue to work with Versus Arthritis as we consider how best to provide National Health Services for people with MSK conditions such as arthritis.

Martin Wrigley: [\[43666\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will work with Versus Arthritis to improve work-related support for people with arthritis.

Ashley Dalton:

The Department will continue to work with Versus Arthritis as we consider how best to address ill-health related economic inactivity, including improving work-related support for people with musculoskeletal (MSK) conditions such as arthritis.

The Get Britain Working White Paper set out that the Government is investing £240 million to tackle the root causes behind why people are not working and join up help and support, based on the needs of local people and places.

In terms of the wider provision of work-related support for people with MSK, and as part of the localism agenda, the WorkWell service is piloting low-intensity work and health support. This support is led by local partnerships of health systems, local authorities, and job centres in 15 areas of England. By spring 2026, WorkWell pilots aim to support 56,000 disabled people and people with health conditions, including MSK conditions, to get into work and to get on at work.

The Government is also mobilising eight inactivity trailblazers in England and Wales that will lead the way in delivering a joined-up local work, health and skills offer.

Three of these areas will receive a share of £45 million to become Health and Growth Accelerators. The Accelerators will focus on prevention and early intervention to improve population health outcomes and reduce health-related economic inactivity. MSK is one of the key drivers of health-related inactivity and integrated care boards will consider targeted interventions as part of their plans.

■ Autism

Dr Luke Evans: [\[43191\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an estimate of the number of (a) adults and (b) children currently waiting for an diagnosis of autism.

Stephen Kinnock:

In England, in December 2024, the Autism Waiting Time Statistics show that there were a total of 212,964 patients with an open suspected autism referral. 129,179 of these patients were aged zero to 17 years old, and 83,837 of these patients were aged 18 years old and over. The median waiting time of all patients across England with an open suspected autism referral, where their first care contact was in the quarter, was 427 days for zero to 17 year olds, and 266 days for over 18 year olds.

It should be noted that since each metric is rounded to the nearest five in the published data, the number of adults and children do not add up to the total number of patients. Data on children and young people in this dataset is expected to be an underestimate and caution should be used when interpreting these statistics, since they are experimental rather than official statistics. The majority of children assessed for autism in the United Kingdom are seen in child development services, which are out of the scope of this dataset. This means the published figures will underestimate the volume of referrals or diagnoses, and the associated impact on health services. NHS England continues to conduct exploratory analysis into the Community Services Dataset, with a view to including autism waiting times data from that dataset.

■ **Baby Care Units**

Ayoub Khan: [\[43394\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the (a) availability and (b) quality of overnight accommodation for parents in neonatal units.

Karin Smyth:

We understand that not all neonatal estates allow parents to be fully involved in their babies' care, and the impact this has on providing the appropriate level of care to meet a baby's needs.

NHS England has conducted a survey to understand compliance with current estates standards, which includes the requirements for neonatal parental accommodation. This information will inform future investment decisions regarding maternity and neonatal estates.

■ **Bedfordshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust: Solar Power**

Blake Stephenson: [\[43761\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason Bedfordshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust was not included in the Great British Energy Solar project.

Karin Smyth:

NHS England received an extremely positive response to this scheme, with over 300 bids (covering 140 trusts) that could potentially have been taken forward.

The Department worked closely with NHS England and our partners at Great British Energy to apply a rigorous evaluation process to this longlist. This included a thorough deliverability screening, value for money assessment, and final assurance process to ensure that all projects were focused on core estate (to ensure the expected lifetime of the building matched or exceeded that of the new assets), alongside careful verification of the funding, value for money, and delivery data provided by trusts.

Regrettably, this meant that many projects missed out despite offering significant value.

■ Bipolar Disorder: Diagnosis

Olly Glover: [\[43798\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help reduce the average time taken to diagnose bipolar disorder in line with early intervention targets for other conditions

Olly Glover: [\[43799\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help establish specialist care pathways for people with bipolar to (a) improve treatment and (b) reduce the levels of misdiagnosis

Stephen Kinnock:

We recognise that there can often be a long time taken to diagnose bipolar disorder because of under-reporting, the episodic nature of the condition, and the prevalence of comorbid conditions in individuals.

We are committed to increasing access to community mental health services for people with severe mental illness, including those with bipolar disorder. The community mental health framework, developed by NHS England, sets out the National Health Service's vision for transforming community mental health services. This includes ensuring that services are needs led and that individuals do not require a specific diagnosis or care pathway to access care.

■ Bipolar Disorder: Mental Health Services

Olly Glover: [\[43802\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of extending Early Intervention in Psychosis services to include people with bipolar who do not experience psychosis.

Stephen Kinnock:

Early Intervention in Psychosis services provide evidence-based, specialist interventions, and treatment for individuals presenting with psychosis. These services recognise that bipolar disorder diagnoses can be uncertain and are therefore available to individuals irrespective of their diagnosis, including individuals experiencing bipolar 1 and bipolar 2.

The aim is for individuals who experience psychosis as part of a manic episode to be seen by an early intervention in psychosis service within two weeks of referral. If an individual experiences mood disturbance over time, bipolar disorder may be identified and treated.

Early Intervention in Psychosis services are not affective disorder services. It would therefore not be appropriate to extend services to individuals who are not experiencing psychosis. Individuals with bipolar 2 who do not experience mania or psychosis will receive support and treatment from primary care and community mental health teams as appropriate.

■ Blood

Chris Hinchliff: [\[42344\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of outsourcing on collection and delivery of blood products to hospitals.

Chris Hinchliff: [\[42345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish a report on the potential impact of outsourcing on collection and delivery of blood products on the NHS and hospices.

Ashley Dalton:

NHS Blood and Transplant (NHSBT) is responsible for blood services in England. NHSBT's Logistics Department plays a key role in planning for, collecting, and delivering life saving and life changing donated blood products to hospitals across England. It does not deliver to hospices directly.

Last year over 150,000 deliveries were made to hospitals around England, with over 2,000 of those being emergencies. Of the total blood units supplied, NHSBT's Logistics Transport delivered approximately 64%, and third parties delivered approximately 27%. Hospitals can collect their own blood unit order, making use of their own internal transport, couriers, or blood bike charity groups, and this equates to approximately 9% of total blood units supplied. Utilising couriers for ad hoc delivery is financially and environmentally advantageous, as NHSBT only pays for the delivery costs rather than the empty return journey of the vehicle, which may then be used for other purposes by the courier.

The current performance of courier delivery is audited through NHSBT's Governance and compliance, and a key factor for measuring the effective running of the contract is that the courier partner collects blood products for delivery on time. The performance level that NHSBT sets is 98.5% on time collection, and this performance is currently exceeded. There are currently no plans to extend the use of third-party couriers for the delivery of blood products or to publish further information in this area.

■ Brain: Injuries

Sir John Hayes: [\[42395\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help ensure brain injury survivors have access to community-based specialist neurorehabilitation services.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Government wants a society where every person, including those with a long-term condition such as an acquired brain injury (ABI), receives high-quality, compassionate continuity of care.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence is currently developing guidance 'Rehabilitation for chronic neurological disorders including acquired brain injury', which is expected to be published in September 2025. More information is available at the following link:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/indevelopment/gid-ng10181>

The former Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Public Health and Prevention along with officials met the original proponent of the ABI strategy, Sir Chris Bryant MP, at the end of 2024 to discuss ABI, and had a useful discussion about what might be achievable in both the short term and the longer term. Sir Chris remains a huge advocate for those that have suffered an ABI, and the Department fully agrees with him that the Government should, and importantly will, do more. The Department and NHS England are keen to showcase those areas that have effectively integrated post-hospital care and support, including rehabilitation, to other areas where patients are not getting the care and support they deserve.

A decision on next steps on ABI at the national level will be taken in due course.

More widely, our 10-Year Health Plan will deliver three big shifts from hospital to community, from analogue to digital, and from sickness to prevention. More tests and scans delivered in the community, better joint working between services, and greater use of apps and wearable technology will all help people manage their long-term conditions, including ABI, closer to home.

Sir John Hayes: [\[43817\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking following hospital discharge to ensure the adequate provision of rehabilitation for patients with head injuries.

Sir John Hayes: [\[43824\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to publish his Department's brain injury strategy.

Sir John Hayes: [\[43825\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that brain injury survivors have access to community-based specialist neurorehabilitation services.

Ashley Dalton:

The Government wants a society where every person, including those with a long-term condition such as an acquired brain injury (ABI), receives high-quality, compassionate continuity of care.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence is currently developing the guidance Rehabilitation for chronic neurological disorders including acquired brain injury, which is expected to be published in September 2025. Further information is available at the following link:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/indevelopment/gid-ng10181>

NHS England is in the process of updating its Specialised Neurology service specification, the revised version of which will cover ABI.

The former Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Public Health and Prevention met the original proponent of the ABI strategy, Sir Chris Bryant MP, at the end of 2024 to discuss ABIs, and had a very fruitful discussion about what might be achievable in the both the short and longer term. Sir Chris remains a huge advocate for those that have suffered an ABI, and the Department fully agrees with him that the Government should, and importantly will, do more.

The Department and NHS England are keen to showcase those areas that have effectively integrated post-hospital care and support, including rehabilitation, to other areas where patients are not getting the care and support they deserve.

A decision on next steps on ABI at the national level will be taken in due course. More broadly, our 10-Year Health Plan will deliver three big shifts, from hospital to community, from analogue to digital, and from sickness to prevention. More tests and scans delivered in the community, better joint working between services, and greater use of apps and wearable technology will all help people manage their long-term conditions, including ABI, closer to home.

■ **Cancer: Artificial Intelligence**

Mr James Cleverly:

[\[43072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of the withdrawal of funding for AI auto-contouring technology on (a) cancer treatment waiting times, (b) patient outcomes and (c) the workload of NHS cancer specialists; and whether he has considered alternative funding mechanisms for the rollout of that technology.

Ashley Dalton:

The Department supports the National Health Service in reviewing opportunities to utilise artificial intelligence (AI) to transform diagnostic performance, bring down waiting times, and support staff with their workload.

Furthermore, the Department is carrying out work to assess the barriers of effective adoption and improve the way AI tools are deployed across the NHS through a number of initiatives, including the NHS AI Lab's Ethics Initiative, which invests in research and practical interventions that could strengthen the ethical adoption of AI within health and care, and addresses risks and concerns over their use.

■ **Cancer: Bournemouth West**

Jessica Toale:

[\[42824\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many cases of cancer were diagnosed within Bournemouth West constituency in the most recent year for which data is available.

Jessica Toale:

[\[42831\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of patients received urgent cancer treatment within 62 days of a GP referral in Dorset integrated care board since October 2023.

Ashley Dalton:

There were 642 diagnoses of cancer within Bournemouth West constituency between January 2024 and December 2024. Between October 2023 and December 2024, within the Dorset Integrated Care Board (ICB), there have been 7,157 patients treated. Across this time, 69.2% of those treated were within the 62-day target. Performance as of December 2024 for Dorset ICB is 73.2% and exceeding the 70% recovery target.

■ Cancer: Children and Young People

Clive Jones:

[\[42162\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to Cancer52's report entitled, Improving diagnosis: Patient and clinician perspectives on increasing early diagnosis in rare and less common cancers, published in February 2025, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a target that 75% of children and young people with cancer are diagnosed within ten days of first symptom presentation to a clinician.

Ashley Dalton:

We are committed to getting the National Health Service diagnosing cancer earlier and treating it faster, so that more patients survive, including children, teenagers, and young adults.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence has set out detailed guidance for general practitioners on the symptoms of cancer in children and young people, recommending referral within 48 hours for those presenting with a range of potential cancer symptoms.

The Department is also taking steps to improve waiting times for cancer diagnosis and treatment across all cancer patient groups, including children and young people. This will be achieved by delivering an extra 40,000 scans, appointments, and operations each week to ensure that patients are seen and treated as quickly as possible.

To further support timely investigation after referral, we are working with the NHS to maximise the pace of the roll-out of additional diagnostic capacity, delivering the final year of the three-year investment plan for establishing community diagnostic centres, with capacity prioritised for cancer.

On 4 February 2025, the Department relaunched the Children and Young People Cancer Taskforce. The taskforce will explore a range of issues, including early detection and diagnosis, in order to identify improvements for this patient group.

■ Cancer: Screening**Jim Shannon:**[\[43057\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people are on the waiting list for cancer screening across the UK.

Ashley Dalton:

There are no waiting lists for the three cancer screening programmes, bowel, breast or cervical, in England. Lung cancer screening, which is being rolled out nationally, does not have waiting lists either.

Cancer screening is a devolved matter, and we do not hold information regarding waiting lists for Scotland, Ireland, and Wales.

■ Cancer: Young People**Jessica Toale:**[\[42797\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve diagnosis times for young people with cancer in (a) England and (b) Dorset.

Ashley Dalton:

The Department is committed to getting the National Health Service diagnosing cancer earlier and treating it faster, so that more patients survive this horrible set of diseases, including children and young people. To achieve this, the NHS has delivered an extra 40,000 operations, scans, and appointments each week as the first step to ensuring early diagnosis and faster treatment.

On 4 February 2025, the Department relaunched the Children and Young People Cancer Taskforce to identify tangible ways to improve outcomes and experiences for children and young people with cancer.

The forthcoming National Cancer Plan will include further details on how we will improve outcomes for cancer patients, including for children and young people with cancer, and will highlight how we aim to improve diagnosis rates for people in all parts of England, including Dorset.

Sir John Hayes:[\[43415\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to provide patient transport to specialist treatment centres for young cancer patients living in (a) South Holland and the Deepings constituency and (b) Lincolnshire.

Ashley Dalton:

National Health Service patient transport services in South Holland and the Deepings and Lincolnshire are provided by the East Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Trust.

The local NHS Lincolnshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) is responsible for the commissioning decisions in its local community, including patient transport services. ICBs are best placed to work and consult with their local stakeholders, health and

care organisations and local authorities to decide how to best meet and deliver for the needs of their local population.

■ Carers: Coronavirus

Noah Law: [\[43693\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing free covid vaccinations to unpaid carers.

Ashley Dalton:

The Government is committed to protecting those most vulnerable to COVID-19 through vaccination, as guided by the independent Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI). The primary aim of the national COVID-19 vaccination programme remains the prevention of severe illness, involving hospitalisation and/or death, arising from COVID-19.

The JCVI's advice for autumn 2024 noted that in the era of high population immunity to COVID-19, and with all cases due to highly transmissible omicron sub-variants, any protection offered by the vaccine against the transmission of infection from one person to another was expected to be extremely limited. On this basis, the JCVI did not advise offering vaccination to unpaid carers. The Government accepted the JCVI's advice for autumn 2024, with both the advice and the Government's response available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-accepts-advice-on-2024-autumn-covid-vaccine-programme>

On 13 November 2024, the JCVI published advice on the COVID-19 vaccination programme covering vaccination in 2025 and spring 2026. In line with its advice for the autumn 2024 campaign, the JCVI does not advise COVID-19 vaccination for unpaid carers. This advice is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-in-2025-and-spring-2026-jcvi-advice/jcvi-statement-on-covid-19-vaccination-in-2025-and-spring-2026#:~:text=the%20JCVI%20webpage.-,Advice%20on%20vaccination%20in%20spring%202025,care%20home%20for%20older%20adults>

The Government has accepted the JCVI's advice on eligibility for the spring 2025 COVID-19 vaccination programme. The Government is considering the advice for autumn 2025 and spring 2026 carefully, and will respond in due course.

■ Cervical Cancer: Northern Ireland

Jim Shannon: [\[43050\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he had with his Northern Ireland counterpart on lowering the smear age for women.

Ashley Dalton:

My Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has had no conversations with his Northern Irish counterpart on lowering the age of cervical screening. The UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC) advises the administrations of all four nations on aspects of screening, including age thresholds. However, the implementation of any UK NSC screening recommendation is a devolved matter.

■ Charcot Marie Tooth Disease: Cannabis**Laurence Turner:**[\[44130\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of prescribing medical cannabis to treat Charcot-Marie-Tooth Syndrome.

Karin Smyth:

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) does not recommend the use of any cannabis-based medicines to manage chronic or neuropathic pain in adults and that cannabidiol (CBD) only be offered as part of a clinical trial.

NICE recognises the lack of evidence to support the use of these medicines and recommends that further research is carried out on the clinical and cost effectiveness of CBD as an add-on treatment for adults with fibromyalgia or for persistent treatment resistant neuropathic pain.

The National Institute for Health Research welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health. As for all other medicines, it is the responsibility of the manufacturers to generate the evidence required for assessment by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency and NICE.

■ Childbirth**Ayoub Khan:**[\[43392\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure NHS Trusts implement interventions set out in (a) the guidance entitled Saving Babies' Lives Version Two: A care bundle for reducing perinatal mortality, published on 15 March 2019, and (b) other best practice guidance on preterm birth care.

Karin Smyth:

All trusts are now implementing Version 3 of the Saving Babies Lives Care Bundle, which was published in May 2023, and provides maternity units with detailed guidance to reduce stillbirths, neonatal brain injury, neonatal deaths, and preterm births.

The National Health Service has taken action to reduce variation in maternal and neonatal care through the Maternity Incentive Scheme, and through implementation of the latest version of the bundle, which is one of the safety actions that trusts must comply with. As of April 2024, during the fifth year of the scheme, 104 out of 120, or

87% of providers were considered to be on track to fully implement Version 3 of the bundle. We are delivering other key initiatives to reduce preterm birth, such as:

- the 14 Maternal Medicine Networks across England, to ensure that women with high-risk medical conditions, such as diabetes, heart disease, renal disease, and epilepsy, have access to a specialist physician with expertise in managing complex medical problems before, during, and after pregnancy;
- all local areas publishing Equity and Equality Action Plans, which set out tailored interventions to tackle inequalities for women and babies from ethnic minority backgrounds and those living in the most deprived areas; and
- the first ever National Institute for Health and Care Research Challenge funding call being launched in March 2024, backed by £50 million, which tasks researchers and policymakers with finding new ways to tackle maternity disparities and poor pregnancy outcomes, such as preterm birth.

Ayoub Khan:

[\[43399\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to expand access to (a) neonatal outreach services and (b) specialist perinatal mental health support for families of preterm babies following hospital discharge.

Karin Smyth:

From 1 April 2025, commissioning responsibilities for neonatal services in England have been delegated to the integrated care boards (ICBs). The neonatal service specification sets out the standards for neonatal provision. It states that a neonatal unit-based outreach service, or other designated neonatal unit staff, should coordinate pre-discharge planning for complex or long stay patients or patients with any safeguarding concerns.

ICBs are encouraged to develop locally tailored plans to expand access to neonatal outreach and specialist mental health services. The neonatal specification also outlines that clinical psychologists have a role in providing specialist psychological assessments and interventions to support the mental health of babies and families.

In addition to this, NHS England's guidance sets out that all women who have given birth should be offered a postnatal check-up with their general practitioner (GP) after six to eight weeks. This check-up provides an important opportunity for women to be listened to by their GP in a discreet, supportive environment, and for women to be assessed and supported not just in their physical recovery post-birth, but also their mental health.

■ Chronic Fatigue Syndrome: Health Services

Yuan Yang:

[\[42951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his planned timeframe is for the chronic fatigue syndrome delivery plan.

Ashley Dalton:

We have listened to key myalgic encephalomyelitis, also known as chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS), stakeholders to allow for more time to develop the plan, to help ensure we can be as ambitious as possible and make the most impact for those living with ME/CFS. As such, we aim to publish the plan by the end of June 2025.

John McDonnell:[\[43407\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his planned publication date is of the ME/CFS Delivery Plan; and for what reason it has been delayed.

Ashley Dalton:

We aim to publish the final delivery plan by the end of June. We have listened to key myalgic encephalomyelitis, also known as chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS), stakeholders to allow for more time to develop the plan and help ensure we can be as ambitious as possible to make the most impact for those living with ME/CFS.

It will also enable the final delivery plan to align more closely with wider related Government strategies such as the forthcoming 10-Year Health Plan. The extension to the publication timeline will allow vital further engagement with the ME/CFS Task and Finish Group and those, across Government and beyond, responsible for actions in the final delivery plan. Through this engagement, we will further scope and develop new and stronger actions seeking to deliver meaningful change for the ME/CFS community.

Siân Berry:[\[44182\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 28 March 2025 to Question 40020 on Chronic Fatigue Syndrome: Health Services, whether he has had discussions with the British Association of Clinicians in ME/CFS on the myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome delivery plan; and whether that plan will establish more NHS specialist ME/CFS services.

Ashley Dalton:

We are engaging with our myalgic encephalomyelitis, also known as chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS), Task and Finish Group, including the British Association of Clinicians in ME/CFS, seeking their feedback and suggestions as we develop our final delivery plan for ME/CFS. We will use that feedback, alongside the responses to the 2023 consultation on the interim delivery plan, to inform the final delivery plan, which we will publish by the end of June.

The contents of the delivery plan are still being finalised. However, the three key themes will be boosting research, improving attitudes and education, and bettering the lives of people with this debilitating disease.

■ Compulsorily Detained Psychiatric Patients: Learning Disability

Neil Coyle:

[\[43462\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people with learning difficulties have been sectioned under the Mental Health Act 1983 in each of the last five years.

Stephen Kinnock:

The following table shows the number of people with learning disabilities admitted to mental health inpatient care under the Mental Health Act 1983, within each year between 2020 and 2024, as of 28 February 2025:

YEAR	NUMBER OF PEOPLE WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES ADMITTED TO MENTAL HEALTH INPATIENT CARE UNDER THE MENTAL HEALTH ACT 1983
2020	490
2021	485
2022	415
2023	395
2024	400

Source: Assuring Transformation data collection, NHS England.

Notes:

1. this data includes people recorded as having a learning disability, and those with a learning disability who are also autistic, admitted to mental health inpatient care under the Mental Health Act 1983, within each year between 2020 and 2024;
2. this data excludes people recorded as detained under other Acts, for instance the Criminal Procedure (Insanity) Act 1964, or the Mental Capacity Act, and those who are recorded as informal patients; and
3. Assuring Transformation is a live data set and the information on a person's stay in hospital, including legal status, may be updated in the record if the person's status changes. These counts will reflect the legal status, as per the Mental Health Act legal status classification codes, as it is recorded in the latest data cut, which for some patients may not reflect their status on admission.

■ CPR and Defibrillators: Schools

Gregory Stafford:

[43370]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to take steps with the Secretary of State for Education to promote (a) CPR training and (b) defibrillator use in schools.

Ashley Dalton:

There are no plans to take steps with my Rt Hon. Friend, Secretary of State for Education to promote cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training and defibrillator use in schools. The Department for Education published guidance in January 2025 on the provision and use of automated external defibrillators in schools, as well as training in CPR. This guidance is available at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67936b102de28ea2d392f35b/Automated_External_Defibrillators_AEDs_guidance_for_schools.pdf

The Department for Education, working with NHS Supply Chain, has negotiated an arrangement for schools to purchase defibrillators at a reduced cost. As part of its work to help people survive an out-of-hospital cardiac arrest, the British Heart Foundation is offering CPR training packs free to all secondary schools in the United Kingdom.

■ Defibrillators and Heart Diseases: Isle of Wight East

Joe Robertson:

[43699]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase (a) survival rates from out-of-hospital cardiac arrests and (b) the availability of defibrillators in Isle of Wight East constituency.

Ashley Dalton:

To improve patients' survival rates following out-of-hospital cardiac arrests, the Government has committed to improving access to Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) in public spaces and reducing inequalities in access to these life saving devices. Following the depletion of the existing AED Fund, launched in September 2023, the Government approved a further £500,000 in August 2024 to fulfil existing applications to the fund.

As part of the application process, the Department has selected Smarter Society as its independent partner to manage grant applications against requirements specified by the Department, to ensure that resources are allocated to where there is the greatest need, for instance remote communities with extended ambulance response times, places with high footfall and high population densities, hotspots for cardiac arrest including sporting venues and venues with vulnerable people, and deprived areas.

When an AED is installed, these defibrillators are required to be registered on The Circuit, the national defibrillator and ambulance service database. Upon registration, contact details are provided for the nominated AED guardian/s who are local to the

defibrillator's location and conduct checks when required. One AED has been distributed through the fund to the Isle of Wight East postcode area.

■ Dementia: Diagnosis

Jim Shannon:

[\[43453\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve levels of (a) early and (b) accurate diagnosis for dementia; and if he will take steps to help increase the use of (i) blood tests and (ii) AI-driven assessments as diagnostic tools.

Stephen Kinnock:

We are committed to recovering the dementia diagnosis rate to the national ambition of 66.7%, which in England, at the end of February 2025, was 65.4%. To support the implementation of the Dementia Care Pathway, we have developed a memory service dashboard to support commissioners and providers with appropriate data on the diagnostic pathway and enable targeted support where needed.

The Department delivers dementia research through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). The NIHR funds a range of research into dementia, for example investing nearly £11 million to develop new digital approaches for the early detection and diagnosis of dementia.

To aid dementia diagnosis and provision of support in care homes, NHS England funded an evidence-based improvement project to fund two trusts in each region (14 sites), to pilot the Diagnosing Advanced Dementia Mandate protocol. Learning is currently being shared and promoted with regional and local partners following an impact assessment of the pilots.

The Government's Dame Barbara Windsor Dementia Goals programme has invested £13 million into three biomarker innovation competitions, which include an AI tool designed to improve the accuracy of blood tests for dementia. Alongside Alzheimer's Research UK, Alzheimer's Society, and the People's Postcode Lottery, the NIHR is funding the Blood Biomarker Challenge, which seeks to produce the clinical and economic data that could make the case for the use of a blood test in the National Health Service to support improved diagnosis of dementia in the future, if validated for clinical use.

Jim Shannon:

[\[43454\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help tackle regional differences in (a) timely and (b) accurate diagnostic rates for dementia.

Stephen Kinnock:

We are committed to recovering the dementia diagnosis rate (DDR) to the national ambition of 66.7%, which in England, at the end of February 2025, was 65.4%. To support the implementation of the Dementia Care Pathway, we have developed a

memory service dashboard to support commissioners and providers with appropriate data on the diagnostic pathway and enable targeted support where needed.

To reduce variation in diagnosis rates, OHID's Dementia Intelligence Network has developed a tool for local systems, which includes an assessment of population characteristics such as rurality and socio-economic deprivation. This enables systems to investigate local variation in diagnosis and take informed action to enhance their diagnosis rates. The tool has been released and is available via the NHS Futures Collaboration platform.

To aid dementia diagnosis and the provision of support in care homes, NHS England funded an evidence-based improvement project to fund two Trusts in each region, which is 14 sites, to pilot the Diagnosing Advanced Dementia Mandate (DiADeM) protocol. Learning is currently being shared and promoted with regional and local partners following an impact assessment of the pilots. The Department delivers dementia research through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). The NIHR funds a range of research into dementia, for example investing nearly £11 million to develop new digital approaches for the early detection and diagnosis of dementia. The NIHR is also partnering with the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and the Alzheimer's Society to support a £5.5 million investment in four Dementia Network Plus research grants. One of the Networks, EQUADEM, seeks to address inequalities in dementia diagnosis and care.

■ **Dental Services: Leigh and Atherton**

Jo Platt:

[42620]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help improve (a) patient access to and (b) staff retention in NHS dentistry in Leigh and Atherton constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Government plans to tackle the challenges for patients trying to access National Health Service dental care with a rescue plan to provide 700,000 more urgent dental appointments from April 2025 and recruit new dentists to areas that need them most. To rebuild dentistry in the long term, we will reform the dental contract with the sector, with a shift to focus on prevention and the retention of NHS dentists.

The responsibility for commissioning primary care services, including NHS dentistry, to meet the needs of local populations has been delegated to integrated care boards (ICBs) across England. For Leigh and Atherton constituency, the relevant body is NHS Greater Manchester ICB.

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

■ Dental Services: Maidenhead**Mr Joshua Reynolds:** [\[43277\]](#)

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

Stephen Kinnock:

The Government plans to tackle the challenges for patients trying to access National Health Service dental care with a rescue plan to provide 700,000 more urgent dental appointments from April 2025 and recruit new dentists to the areas that need them most. To rebuild dentistry in the long term, we will reform the dental contract with the sector, with a shift to focus on prevention and the retention of NHS dentists.

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

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Written Questions**Clive Jones:** [\[43298\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to Question 35076 tabled by the hon. Member for Wokingham on 3 March 2025.

Stephen Kinnock:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave on 7 April 2025 to Question [35076](#).

■ Domestic Waste: Fires**Joe Robertson:** [\[43351\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 4 March 2025 to Question 32576 on Fires: Air Pollution, whether the UK Health Security Agency and its predecessor has made an assessment of the impact of air pollution caused by backyard burning of domestic waste on public health.

Ashley Dalton:

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), formerly Public Health England, has published systematic reviews of the epidemiological studies on the health impacts associated with outdoor and indoor exposure to solid fuel burning. This included biomass and coal, and respiratory diseases in children and adults. The evidence suggests that burning solid fuels indoors could contribute to the risk of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and lung cancer in adults, while the evidence for other respiratory effects is less clear. The results regarding outdoor exposure and the health effects were too limited to draw firm conclusions.

The evidence of links between exposure to air pollution and a wider range of health effects, such as adverse birth outcomes, diabetes, and increased dementia risk, also continues to build, with varying strengths of evidence. This was noted in the Chief

Medical Officer's Annual Report on air pollution 2022, which the UKHSA contributed to. This report is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/chief-medical-officers-annual-report-2022-air-pollution>

■ Down's Syndrome

David Davis:

[43021]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 2 December 2024 to Question 15729 on Down's Syndrome, when the statutory guidance under the Down Syndrome Act 2022 will be published.

Stephen Kinnock:

Officials have been working to develop the Down Syndrome Act 2022's statutory guidance as a priority, engaging with sector partners and relevant Government departments.

We expect to issue the draft guidance for public consultation by the summer. The guidance will be published at the earliest opportunity, following the consultation.

■ Electronic Cigarettes: Lincolnshire

Sir John Hayes:

[42408]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to tackle the sale of illegal vapes in (a) South Holland and the Deepings constituency and (b) Lincolnshire.

Ashley Dalton:

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

In 2025/26 we will invest £10 million of new funding into Trading Standards, to enhance their work in tackling the illicit and underage sale of tobacco and vapes, and to support the implementation of the bill. This funding will be used to recruit approximately 80 new regionally coordinated apprentices in England. This will benefit all regions, including the East Midlands, which covers South Holland and the Deepings and Lincolnshire.

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

■ Endometriosis: Health Services

Ian Byrne:

[\[43534\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support women diagnosed with endometriosis in (a) Liverpool and (b) England.

Karin Smyth:

The Government is committed to prioritising women's health and improving care for gynaecological conditions, including endometriosis.

Women in Liverpool experiencing symptoms of endometriosis should see their general practitioner (GP) for an initial consultation. GPs across Liverpool can refer women to the endometriosis pathway. Liverpool women's health hubs also provide care for menstrual problems such as heavy bleeding, which can be a symptom of endometriosis.

NHS Liverpool is also contributing to the North East and West of England endometriosis transformation programme. This programme is addressing long waits for patients with severe endometriosis and improving patient pathways, from presentation in general practice through to management in secondary care.

In England, we have taken urgent action to tackle gynaecology waiting lists through the Elective Reform Plan. For gynaecology, the Plan supports innovative models offering patients care closer to home, and piloting gynaecology pathways in community diagnostic centres. Women's health hubs also have a key role in shifting care out of hospitals and reducing gynaecology waiting lists.

Clinical guidelines support healthcare professionals to diagnose and treat conditions. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence published an update to the guideline on endometriosis diagnosis and management in November 2024. This makes firmer recommendations for healthcare professionals on referral and investigations for women with suspected endometriosis, which will help women receive a diagnosis and treatment more quickly. The guideline is available at the following link:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng73>

■ General Practitioners

Edward Morello:

[\[42905\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to review the allocation of funding to Integrated Care Boards to address regional disparities in GP availability.

Stephen Kinnock:

NHS England is responsible for funding allocations to integrated care boards. This process is independent of the Government, and NHS England takes advice on the underlying formula from the independent Advisory Committee on Resource Allocation.

We are investing an additional £889 million through the GP Contract to reinforce the front door of the National Health Service, bringing total spend on the GP Contract to £13.2 billion in 2025/26. This is the biggest increase in over a decade, and we are pleased that the General Practitioners Committee England is supportive of the contract changes.

■ General Practitioners: Bournemouth West

Jessica Toale:

[\[42793\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase the availability of GP appointments in the Bournemouth West constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

We are committed to improving the capacity and access to general practice (GP) services across the country, including in the Bournemouth West constituency. Bournemouth West North sits within the NHS Dorset Integrated Care Board. Since June 2024, there has been an 8.5% increase in GP appointments delivered, higher than the national average increase of 7.1% in the same period

In October 2024, we put £82 million into the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme to enable the recruitment of 1,000 newly qualified GPs across England, which will increase the number of appointments delivered, and care for thousands of patients

The Government has delivered the biggest boost to GP funding in years, an £889 million uplift for 2025/26, with GPs now receiving a growing share of National Health Service resources. For the first time in four years, the General Practitioners Committee England backed the new contract, which includes key reforms to improve access, for instance by making sure patients can request appointments online throughout core hours.

■ General Practitioners: Cornwall

Perran Moon:

[\[44095\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of Car-Hill formula for funding to GPs in Camborne, Redruth and Hayle.

Stephen Kinnock:

There has been no assessment made of the adequacy of the Carr-Hill formula for funding to general practices (GPs) in Camborne, Redruth, and Hayle.

Plans to review this funding formula may be revisited in future. However, any changes would need careful planning to ensure they do not threaten stability or cause financial uncertainty for practices.

We are committed to ensuring that primary medical services receive appropriate support and resources. We are investing an additional £889 million in GPs to

reinforce the front door of the National Health Service, bringing total spend on the GP Contract to £13.2 billion in 2025/26. This is the biggest increase in over a decade.

■ **General Practitioners: Nurses**

Emily Thornberry: [\[43851\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of funding for the 2025-26 general practice contract in England will be allocated to the general practice nursing workforce.

Stephen Kinnock:

We hugely value the critical role that general practice (GP) nurses play and are determined to address the issues they face by shifting the focus of the National Health Service beyond hospitals and into the community.

GPs are independent businesses, providing GP services to their local populations under an NHS contract. Practices have autonomy in deciding how to provide services, including their workforce mix, in order to deliver their contracts.

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

The investment includes funding for an assumed increase in GP staff salaries of 2.8% in 2025/26. Once the Department has received the recommendations for GPs for 2025/26 from the independent Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration, it will be considered in the usual way.

As self-employed contractors to the NHS, it is for practices to determine uplifts in pay for their employees within the agreed GP Contract funding envelope.

The contract changes for 2025/26 also include increased flexibilities for the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme, to allow primary care networks to better respond to local workforce needs. Practice nurses have also been added to the scheme, with no restrictions on the numbers or type of staff able to be funded through the scheme.

Emily Thornberry: [\[43854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions his Department plans to have with general practice nursing staff on the development of the general practice contract for 2026-27.

Stephen Kinnock:

As in previous years, the Department will engage with a range of stakeholders and will consult with the profession on the GP Contract for 2026/27. More details will be communicated in due course.

■ General Practitioners: Pay**Emily Thornberry:** [\[43852\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the proportion of general practice staff that received the 2024 pay increase in full.

Emily Thornberry: [\[43853\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the proportion of female staff working in general practice not receiving the 2024 pay increase in full.

Stephen Kinnock:

For 2024/25, we accepted the recommendations of the Doctors' and Dentists' Pay Review Body in full, and the pay element of the GP Contract was uplifted by 6% on a consolidated basis, through an increase of 4% on top of the 2% interim uplift in April, to provide practices with the funding to uplift general practice (GP) partner, salaried GP, and other salaried staff pay by 6%. The uplift is backdated to April 2024, and it was our expectation that this funding should be passed on to all salaried GP staff.

As self-employed contractors to the National Health Service, it is for practices to determine uplifts in pay for their employees within the agreed GP Contract funding envelope. The Department does not centrally hold information on pay for salaried staff in GPs, nor could we provide a breakdown by gender. The data in the annual GP Earnings and Expenses Estimates is based on partner, contractor, and GP tax returns. Further information on the GP Earnings and Expenses Estimates is available at the following link:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/gp-earnings-and-expenses-estimates/2020-21?key=l2liJBo2P3DKdCqny5NcDpqlRExoUa4d6Q6VkCGWQzX7ewE8OL3O1Zil3lQBMduR>

For 2025/26, we are investing an additional £889 million through the GP Contract to reinforce the front door of the NHS, bringing total spend on the GP Contract to £13.2 billion. This is the biggest increase in over a decade. The 7.2% cash growth, estimated to be 4.8% of real growth on overall 2024/25 contract costs, on the contract funding envelope includes funding for an assumed increase in salaries of 2.8% in 2025/26. Once the Department has received the recommendations for GPs for 2025/26 from the Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration, it will be considered in the usual way.

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[44058\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 2 April 2025 to Question 42329 on General Practitioners: Finance, if he will list the (a) job roles and (b) areas of specialism used to compile salary data; and what those salaries were in (i) 2000-01 and (ii) 2024-25.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Market Forces Factor used in the Carr-Hill formula was estimated from a statistical model using all employees, anonymised, in the New Earnings Survey. The New Earnings Survey is undertaken by the Office for National Statistics, and is based on a 1% sample of employees in employment, information on whose earnings and hours is obtained in confidence from employers. It does not cover the self-employed.

The model included factors such as industry, occupation, and the age of each employee, to remove the modelled impact of these on earnings and thereby identify differences in earnings due to geographical location alone. The geographical earnings differentials form the Market Forces Factor in the Carr-Hill formula. There are no modelled earnings by geographical location for 2024/25.

■ General Practitioners: Recruitment and Training**Max Wilkinson:**[\[42777\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase (a) the recruitment and (b) levels of training of GPs.

Stephen Kinnock:

We have invested an additional £82 million into the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme (ARRS) in 2024/25 to enable the recruitment of over 1,000 recently qualified general practitioners (GPs). Under the 2025/26 GP contract changes, the ARRS will become more flexible to allow primary care networks to respond better to local workforce needs. The two ARRS pots will be combined to create a single pot for the reimbursement of direct patient staff costs. There will be no restrictions on the number or type of staff covered, including GPs and practice nurses.

The curriculum for postgraduate training is set by the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges for foundation training, and by individual Royal Colleges and faculties for specialty training. The General Medical Council approves curricula and assessment systems for each training programme. Curricula emphasise the skills and approaches that a doctor must develop to ensure accurate and timely diagnoses and treatment plans for their patients.

■ General Practitioners: Sussex**Alison Griffiths:**[\[42617\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to (a) retain existing and (b) recruit new GPs in Sussex.

Stephen Kinnock:

We are committed to training thousands more general practitioners (GPs) across the country, including in Sussex. We invested an additional £82 million into the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme (ARRS) over 2024/25, as part of an initiative to address GP unemployment and secure the future pipeline of GPs.

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

Our commitment to growing the GP workforce includes addressing the reasons why doctors leave the profession and encouraging them to return to practice. We know that high workloads can be a key driver for GPs reducing their contracted hours or leaving the profession and we are tackling morale issues through drivers such as growing the workforce and reducing bureaucracy through our Red Tape Challenge, to improve job satisfaction and reduce the risk of burnout.

The fully qualified GP workforce in Sussex has increased by 6.3% or 51.0 full-time equivalent (FTE) compared to January 2024 and compared with 2.7% nationally or 1,019 FTE.

I understand that the Sussex Primary Care Workforce Plan was developed and published last year, and aims to further develop a sustainable healthcare workforce, ensuring high-quality patient care despite rising demand. The plan prioritises expanding the workforce, improving staff retention, and introducing innovative training methods.

■ GP Practice Lists

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[43398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 31 March 2025 to Question 40751 on GP Practice Lists, how is the proportion of the population with a limiting long-term illness calculated for each constituency.

Ashley Dalton:

The proportion of the population living with a limiting long-term illness is the proportion of people who answered 'yes' to the question 'Do you have a limiting long-term illness?' in the 2001 Census. This is calculated at a ward level, with no constituency-level data calculated or used.

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[43400\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 31 March 2025 to Question 40751 on GP Practice Lists, how the standardised mortality ratio for people aged under 65 years old is calculated in each constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

The standardised mortality ratio for those aged under 65 years old is calculated by multiplying the number of people in each age group under 65 years old, within an area, by the national average death rate for each age group.

This is calculated at a ward level, with no constituency-level data calculated or used.

■ GP Surgeries**Neil O'Brien:** [\[43159\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) general practices and (b) GP premises there were in each integrated care board area in each month since June 2024.

Stephen Kinnock:

A table showing the number of general practices and premises in each current integrated care board (ICB) area in England, each month since June 2024, is attached.

Opening and closing dates for both practices and branches were identified using data from the NHS Organisation Data Service. Locations have been mapped to current ICB boundaries. The locations sheet in the attached document includes both main and branch practices.

Attachments:

1. PQ43159 Table [PQ43159 Table.xlsx]

Mr Connor Rand: [\[43770\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS GP surgeries have closed in each year since 2010; and how many new NHS GP surgeries have been built in each of those years.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Department does not hold this information centrally.

■ GP Surgeries: Burton**Sir Christopher Chope:** [\[43815\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to his oral contribution in response to the hon. Member for Christchurch of 25 March 2025, Official Report, column 773, whether he has received an update from the Dorset Integrated Care Board about the Burton Branch Surgery application.

Stephen Kinnock:

The NHS Dorset Integrated Care Board (ICB) has received applications to open a branch surgery in the Village of Burton, near Christchurch in Dorset. Applications are currently going through the ICB governance process, which is expected to conclude following the ICB Prevention, Equity and Outcomes Committee on 23 April.

Following a local practice closure in August 2024, the ICB is assessing capacity in the area, which remains good. Access to general practice (GP) services for local residents remains very good, with a choice of five practices in the Christchurch area that are all accepting new patients and growing their lists. The NHS Dorset ICB is engaging with local partners, other GP practices, and the Wessex Local Medical Committees to ensure views are collated while going through our governance processes.

■ Health Services: Sportsgrounds

Helen Maguire:

[\[42925\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what processes his Department undertook in its impact assessment into proposals for the Care Quality Commission to regulate sporting and cultural events; and if he will publish that work.

Ashley Dalton:

The Manchester Arena Inquiry Volume Two report recommended that the Government make changes to the law to enable the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to regulate event healthcare at sporting venues and gymnasiums and at temporary sporting and cultural events, to ensure public safety.

The Government has considered the impacts of this change, and a public consultation allowed stakeholders to provide information on the potential effects. A de minimis impact assessment was developed, which looked at a range of options and considered the impact on the event sector and event healthcare providers. The assessment includes costs, benefits, and risks.

An updated de minimis assessment will be published before the Statutory Instrument is laid before Parliament. This will outline the direct cost to business. The Government and the CQC continue to engage with stakeholders within the health, sports, and events sector regarding the changes in the regulations and their impact.

■ Health Visitors: Worcestershire

Bradley Thomas:

[\[43329\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of the health visitor to resident ratio in Worcestershire; and what steps his Department is taking to increase this provision.

Ashley Dalton:

Local authorities have responsibility for commissioning public health services for children and young people aged zero to 19 years old. This includes the commissioning of health visiting services.

We recognise the role health visitors play in our commitment to create the healthiest generation of children ever, as families must have the support they need to give their babies and children the best start and the building blocks for a healthy life.

We have therefore committed to strengthen health visiting services nationally. We will ensure we have the staff we need, so that children and their families are cared for by the right professional, when and where they need it. This will take time, but we are committed to building a health service fit for the future, with the workforce it needs.

Health: Disadvantaged**Andrew Ranger:** [\[43528\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is tacking to help tackle the socio-economic factors which contribute to ill health.

Ashley Dalton:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave to the Hon. Member for Poole on 5 March 2025, to Question [33818](#).

Healthy Start Scheme: Bournemouth West**Jessica Toale:** [\[42795\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many families are receiving Healthy Start in Bournemouth West constituency.

Ashley Dalton:

The NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA) operates the Healthy Start scheme on behalf of the Department. Monthly figures for the number of people on the digital Healthy Start scheme are published on the NHS Healthy Start website, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.healthystart.nhs.uk/healthcare-professionals/>

The NHSBSA does not hold data on the number of families receiving Healthy Start, or on local constituencies specifically. The number of people on the scheme in March 2025 for all ward areas within Birmingham, Christchurch, and Poole was 1,507.

Healthy Start Scheme: South Shields**Emma Lewell:** [\[43061\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many families receive Healthy Start in South Shields.

Ashley Dalton:

The NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA) operates the Healthy Start scheme on behalf of the Department. Monthly figures on the number of people on the digital Healthy Start scheme are published on the NHS Healthy Start website, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.healthystart.nhs.uk/healthcare-professionals/>

The NHSBSA does not hold data on the number of families receiving Healthy Start. The number of people on the digital Healthy Start scheme for South Tyneside in March 2025 was 1,162. The following table shows the number of people on the digital Healthy Start scheme, broken down by all ward areas in South Tyneside, of which South Shields is a part, as the NHSBSA does not hold data on local constituencies:

LOCAL AUTHORITY	WARD	PEOPLE ON THE DIGITAL SCHEME
South Tyneside	Beacon and Bents	44
South Tyneside	Bede	93
South Tyneside	Biddick and All Saints	160
South Tyneside	Boldon Colliery	65
South Tyneside	Cleadon and East Boldon	2
South Tyneside	Cleadon Park	50
South Tyneside	Fellgate and Hedworth	54
South Tyneside	Harton	59
South Tyneside	Hebburn North	79
South Tyneside	Hebburn South	65
South Tyneside	Horsley Hill	82
South Tyneside	Monkton	42
South Tyneside	Primrose	71
South Tyneside	Simonside and Rekendyke	121
South Tyneside	West Park	49
South Tyneside	Westoe	26
South Tyneside	Whitburn and Marsden	24
South Tyneside	Whiteleas	76

■ Hinchingsbrooke Hospital: Staff

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[\[43788\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the recent announcement on the level of employment at Hinchingsbrooke Hospital on (a) clinical procedures (b) appointments and (c) work related to the New Hospitals Programme.

Karin Smyth:

It is the responsibility of local National Health Service trusts to determine the right level of staffing.

The Government is committed to cutting NHS waiting lists and ensuring that people have the best possible experience during their care, including at Hinchingsbrooke Hospital and across the North West Anglia NHS Foundation Trust. We have already delivered on our pledge of two million extra elective appointments, and this is just a first step to delivering on the commitment that 92% of patients will wait no longer than 18 weeks from referral to consultant-led treatment, in line with the NHS constitutional standard, by March 2029.

Additionally, the New Hospital Programme is prioritising the rebuild of Hinchingsbrooke Hospital alongside six other hospitals built primarily from reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete, to protect patient and staff safety. It is expected that it will enter construction between 2027 and 2028.

■ HIV Infection: Vaccination

Florence Eshalomi:

[42746]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase the speed of the (a) development and (b) approval of effective HIV vaccines.

Ashley Dalton:

The Department is committed to maximising the United Kingdom's potential to lead the world in clinical research, with the aim of ensuring that all patients, including those with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), have access to cutting-edge clinical trials and innovative, lifesaving treatments.

The Department is working closely with the National Health Service, industry, academia, research regulators and charities to make clinical research in the UK more efficient, more competitive and more accessible. We expect these efforts to attract more commercial investment in clinical research and yield a broad and diverse portfolio of clinical trials in the UK, including clinical trials for HIV patients.

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) is ready to assess any market authorisation applications for HIV vaccines against high standards of quality, safety and efficacy. A standard assessment would take up to 210 days to complete.

The MHRA has several routes to support access to innovative medicines for patients with conditions with unmet need. One such route for doing so is the Early Access to Medicines Scheme (EAMS), and the entry for the scheme is a Promising Innovative Medicine (PIM) Designation. If a PIM Designation was awarded, the application would then continue under the EAMS, where it would be assessed for an EAMS Scientific Opinion, which if awarded would need to be renewed annually. Further information is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-the-early-access-to-medicines-scheme-eams>

Another route is the Innovative Licensing and Access Pathway (ILAP), which is focused on getting the most transformative new medicines to patients in the UK

health system more quickly. The ILAP is the only end-to-end access pathway in the world where the developer can work collaboratively with the national health system, the regulator, and Health Technology Assessment bodies. Further information is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/innovative-licensing-and-access-pathway-ilap>

■ Hospitals: Renewable Energy

Ben Obese-Jecty: [44056]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 2 April 2025 to Question 41611 on Hospitals: Renewable Energy, what sites comprise the NHS acute estate.

Ben Obese-Jecty: [44057]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 2 April 2025 to Question 41611 on Hospitals: Renewable Energy, what projects comprise the estimated increase in renewable power capacity in the NHS.

Karin Smyth:

Site data for the National Health Service is published in the annual Estates Return Information Collection (ERIC). The latest data set is from 2023/24, and 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>

The data set reports 9,725 sites in total. With regard to sites providing acute services, the most recent data shows 222 general acute hospital sites, 58 specialist, or acute only, hospitals, as well as 105 sites providing mixed services.

All NHS trusts were invited to submit projects for solar funding in our partnership with Great British Energy. NHS England received an overwhelmingly positive response, with over 300 bids that could potentially have been taken forward. The majority of bids were from acute trusts, where consumption profiles and space availability mean solar projects can offer particular value. Regrettably, funding limitations and the overwhelming response to the scheme meant many projects offering significant value missed out on this occasion. We will continue to work with NHS England and our partners across the Government to explore further funding opportunities.

The successful projects were announced on 21 March 2025, and include a range of NHS sites. The list is publicly available at the following link:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67dd2e0370323a45fe6a6f0e/gbe-nhs-solar-projects.csv>

It is estimated that these projects will deliver an additional 55 million kilo watt hours (kwh) in annual generation, which is approximately three times the 17.7 million kwh reported in ERIC in 2023/4.

■ Hospitals: Waiting Lists

Alison Bennett:

[\[44085\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to publish an implementation plan alongside the Elective Reform Plan.

Karin Smyth:

There are currently no plans to publish an implementation plan alongside the Elective Reform Plan.

Our Elective Reform Plan sets out the productivity and reform efforts needed to return to the 18-week constitutional standard by the end of this Parliament, and outlines how these will be implemented by National Health Service systems, including a series of milestones for delivery. We have already achieved our pledge to deliver two million extra elective appointments, as a first step to delivering on this commitment.

In addition, the Planning Guidance for 2025/26 has since been published and confirmed the interim targets for 2025/26, including a target that 65% of patients wait for 18 weeks or less by March 2026, up from 58.9% as of January 2025, with every trust expected to deliver a minimum 5% improvement on current performance over that period.

■ Infant Foods: Sugar

Jas Athwal:

[\[43671\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to Public Health England's report entitled Commercial infant and baby food and drink: evidence review, published in June 2019, what steps he is taking to help tackle commercial baby foods with high levels of added sugar.

Ashley Dalton:

Children's early years provide an important foundation for their future health and strongly influence many aspects of wellbeing in later life.

A 2019 evidence review showed that babies and young children are exceeding their energy intake requirement and are eating too much sugar and salt. Some commercial baby foods, particularly finger foods, had added sugar, or contained ingredients that are high in sugar.

More recently, a report by the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition highlighted that free sugar intakes are above recommendations, and that commercial baby food and drinks contributed to around 20% of free sugar intake in children aged 12 to 18 months. This does not align with recommendations that, in diets of children aged 1 to 5 years, foods including snacks high in free sugars should be limited, and that commercially manufactured foods and drinks are not needed to meet nutrition requirements.

It is vital that we maintain the highest standards for foods consumed by babies and infants, which is why we have regulations in place that set nutritional and compositional standards for commercial baby food. The regulations also set labelling

standards to ensure consumers have clear and accurate information about the products they buy. We continue to keep these regulations under review to ensure they reflect the latest scientific and dietary guidelines.

■ Influenza: Vaccination

Jim Shannon:

[\[42447\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of trends in the level of uptake of the flu vaccine in Winter 2024-25.

Ashley Dalton:

For England, the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) publishes monthly provisional data for general practice (GP) patients, school-aged children and frontline healthcare workers (HCWs), with weekly data for GP patients also available from October to January. The data is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-flu-and-covid-19-surveillance-reports-2024-to-2025-season>

Final end of season data is published in the annual reports in late spring. Monthly and annual data is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/vaccine-uptake#seasonal-flu-vaccine-uptake:-figures>

Flu vaccine uptake in 2024 to 2025 (based on the latest provisional monthly data) and the same timepoint in the previous season, is shown in the table below:

COHORT	65 YEARS AND OVER		CLINICAL RISK PREGNANT	2-YEAR-OLDS	3-YEAR-OLDS	PRIMARY SCHOOL-AGED	SECONDARY SCHOOL AGE	HCWS
	AND OVER	RISK				AGED	AGE	
2024/25	74.9%	40.0%	35.0%	41.7%	43.5%	54.6%	46.4%	37.9%
2023/24	77.8%	41.4%	32.1%	44.1%	44.6%	55.2%	43.0%	42.8%

Caution should be used in comparing uptake between seasons. The advice of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation is that it is preferable to vaccinate adults closer to when the flu virus is likely to circulate. Accordingly, vaccination for adults in clinical risk groups, those aged 65 years old and over, and frontline HCWs started from 3 October 2024, rather than 1 September as in previous seasons.

■ Joint Replacements

Alison Bennett:

[\[44083\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he is taking steps to provide mental health support for people waiting for joint replacement surgery.

Alison Bennett:

[\[44084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure people who need joint replacement surgery are able to access treatment where they live.

Karin Smyth:

The Government is committed to putting patients first, including those waiting for joint replacement surgery. Too many people have been left in limbo, with their personal and professional lives on hold waiting for National Health Service treatment. We understand the impact that long waits can have on patients' mental health, which is why we have committed, in the Government's Plan for Change, to return to the 18-week Referral to Treatment standard, which has not been met for almost a decade.

We will ensure that patients are not only seen on time but also have the best possible experience of care. Our Elective Reform Plan, published on 6 January 2025, has committed us to working with patients and their carers to co-develop minimum standards for their experience of care.

Dedicated and protected surgical hubs are helping to reduce elective surgery wait times by focusing on high volume low complexity surgeries, such as joint replacement surgery. As of March 2025, there are 114 elective surgical hubs that are operational across England.

The Elective Reform Plan has committed to providing quicker access for patients to common surgical hub procedures by opening 17 new and expanded surgical hubs by June 2025, and by ramping up the number of hubs over the next three years, so even more operations can be carried out near where patients live.

■ Junior Doctors: Training

Alex Brewer:

[\[43804\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that there are adequate numbers of specialty training places for junior doctors who have completed foundation years one and two; and what steps he is taking to ensure that the number of specialty medical training places available is adequate to provide for future increases in numbers of university medical school places.

Karin Smyth:

We are committed to training the staff we need to ensure patients are cared for by the right professional, when and where they need it.

We will ensure that the number of medical specialty training places meets the demands of the National Health Service in the future. NHS England will work with stakeholders to ensure that any growth is sustainable and focused in the service areas where need is greatest.

To reform the NHS and make it fit for the future, we have launched a 10-Year Health Plan as part of the Government's five long-term missions. Ensuring we have the right people, in the right places, with the right skills will be central to this vision. We will

publish a refreshed Long Term Workforce Plan to deliver the transformed health service we will build over the next decade, and treat patients on time again.

■ **Leukaemia: Lincolnshire**

Sir John Hayes:

[\[42406\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support people with leukaemia in Lincolnshire.

Ashley Dalton:

It is a priority for the Government to support the National Health Service to diagnose cancer, including leukaemia, as early and quickly as possible, and to treat it faster, to improve outcomes for all patients across England, including in Lincolnshire.

To improve early diagnosis, the NHS is implementing non-specific symptom pathways for patients who present with symptoms such as weight loss and fatigue, which do not clearly align to a tumour type. Blood cancers are one of the most common cancer types diagnosed through these pathways.

NHS England has committed to ensuring that every person diagnosed with cancer, including leukaemia, has access to personalised care. This includes needs assessments, a care plan, and health and wellbeing information and support. Through the provision of information, personalised care empowers people to manage their care and the impact of their cancer. This approach ensures that each person's care is planned holistically, covering mental and physical health, as well as any practical or financial concerns.

Following publication of the 10-Year Health Plan, we will publish a new National Cancer Plan. The plan will include details on how we will further improve cancer outcomes and support for all cancer patients, including those with leukaemia.

■ **Lung Cancer: Screening**

Paul Davies:

[\[43686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 10 March to Question 34747, whether it remains his Department's policy to reach full rollout of lung cancer screening to the eligible population by 2029.

Ashley Dalton:

The National Health Service is taking crucial steps to improve cancer outcomes across England, including for lung cancer. The NHS Lung Screening Cancer Programme is designed to catch more cancers earlier when they are more treatable, with the hope of saving more lives. The target is to be available to 100% of the population by the end of 2029/30.

■ Maternity Services: Racial Discrimination

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[\[41911\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether (a) his Department and (b) the National Institute for Health Research have commissioned (i) research and (ii) evaluation on systemic racism in maternity services.

Ashley Dalton:

The Department commissions research through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR).

The NIHR Research Inclusion Strategy 2022-2027 sets out how the NIHR will become a more inclusive funder of research and widen access to participation in clinical trials for under-represented groups such as pregnant women and ethnic minorities. In addition to these priorities, the NIHR will specifically consider intersectionality, recognising that multiple social identities overlap to exacerbate the experience of inequities.

The NIHR is actively supporting research to address disparities and improve equity in maternity services, including projects focussed on racism and its impact on maternal health. For example, the NIHR has supported research to understand how multiple inequalities, including racism, shape postnatal mental health among Black Caribbean and Black African women. The NIHR is also funding a study which is undertaking a wider exploration of the harms that health and social care services can cause the African-Caribbean communities in the United Kingdom. This study will explore how health researchers can work more positively with people of African-Caribbean heritage; to start having conversations about the harms that health and social care services can cause to these communities and determine how research and practice in this area can improve.

In addition, in March 2024, the NIHR launched a £50 million 'Challenge' funding call for research to tackle inequalities in maternity care bringing together experts across the country into a new consortium. The research carried out by the consortium will focus on inequalities before, during and after pregnancy and identify specific areas where measurable improvements can be made.

The NIHR continues to welcome funding applications for research into any aspect of maternal health, including research on systemic racism in maternity services.

■ Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Independent Review

Jeremy Hunt:

[\[R\]](#) [\[43029\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he will implement the recommended compensation schemes for victims of (a) pelvic mesh implants, (b) sodium valproate, and (c) Primodos made by the Hughes report.

Ashley Dalton:

The Government is carefully considering the valuable work done by the Patient Safety Commissioner and the resulting Hughes Report, which set out options for

redress for those harmed by valproate and pelvic mesh. This is a complex area of work, involving several Government departments, and it is important that we get this right. We will be providing an update to the Patient Safety Commissioner's report at the earliest opportunity.

The Patient Safety Commissioner was not asked to look at redress for hormone pregnancy tests as part of her recent report. The causal link between the use of hormone pregnancy tests during pregnancy and adverse outcomes in pregnancy has not been demonstrated. However, we are committed to reviewing any new scientific evidence that comes to light.

We remain hugely sympathetic to the families who believe that they or their children have suffered following the use of hormone pregnancy tests.

Esther McVey:

[\[43045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason Primodos was not within the terms of reference of the Hughes Report: options for redress for those harmed by valproate and pelvic mesh, published on 7 February 2024.

Ashley Dalton:

The Government is hugely sympathetic to the families who believe that they or their children have suffered following the use of hormone pregnancy tests.

The previous administration did not ask the Patient Safety Commissioner, Dr Henrietta Hughes, to look at redress for hormone pregnancy tests as part of the Hughes Report, because a causal link between hormone pregnancy tests and adverse outcomes in pregnancy has not been demonstrated. An Expert Working Group of the independent Commission on Human Medicines reviewed the available scientific evidence in 2017 and concluded that it does not support a causal association. This position was reaffirmed in its most recent review in November 2024. However, we are committed to reviewing any new scientific evidence that comes to light.

Dr Marie Tidball:

[\[44149\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to publish a response to the Hughes Report, published on 7 February 2024.

Dr Marie Tidball:

[\[44151\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to establish a redress scheme for people harmed by sodium valproate.

Ashley Dalton:

The Government is carefully considering the valuable work done by the Patient Safety Commissioner and the resulting Hughes Report, which set out options for redress for those harmed by valproate and pelvic mesh. This is a complex area of work, involving several Government departments, and it is important that we get this right. We will be providing an update to the Patient Safety Commissioner's report at the earliest opportunity.

■ Members: Correspondence

Sir Christopher Chope: [\[43411\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to reply to the correspondence of 5 February 2025 from the hon. Member for Christchurch relating to a constituent.

Ashley Dalton:

[Holding answer 8 April 2025]: We have received the Hon. Member's correspondence of 5 February 2025, and we will respond shortly.

■ Mental Health Services

Jessica Toale: [\[42803\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of trends in the level of regional inequalities of access to mental health services.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Severe Mental Illness Profile, developed by the Department, aims to help develop an understanding of severe mental illness at a regional and local level. It provides a set of metrics that allow planners, providers, and stakeholders to profile their area and benchmark against similar populations. Further information is available at the following link:

<https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile-group/mental-health/profile/severe-mental-illness>

The profile shows that new referrals to secondary mental health services increased from 5,960 per 100,000 population in 2017/18, to 6,897 per 100,000 in 2019/20, an increase of 15.7%. In 2019/20, rates varied from 5,618 per 100,000 in the South East, to 8,429 per 100,000 in the West Midlands. Across the three-year period, the greatest increase was seen in the West Midlands, at 22.3%.

Attended contacts with community and outpatient mental health services increased from 26,899 per 100,000 in 2017/18, to 30,674 per 100,000 in 2019/20, an increase 14.1%. In 2019/20, rates varied from 24,950 per 100,000 in the South East, to 45,016 per 100,000 in the North East. Across the three-year period, the greatest increase was again seen in the West Midlands, at 19.9%. The East Midlands region had the lowest increase, of 4.6%.

Inpatient stays in secondary mental health services increased from 239 per 100,000 in 2017/18, to 241 per 100,000 in 2019/20, an increase of 1.2%. In 2019/20, rates varied from 186 per 100,000 for the South West, to 276 per 100,000 in the London region. Across the three-year period, the greatest increase was seen in the East Midlands, at 10.5%. The London region had a decrease of 3.5%. Data for the following years is expected to be published this year.

■ Mental Health Services: Bournemouth West**Jessica Toale:**[\[42794\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase the availability of mental health services in Bournemouth West constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

It is the responsibility of the NHS Dorset Integrated Care Board to make available adequate and appropriate provision to meet the mental health needs of the people in Bournemouth.

Nationally, we know that too many people are not receiving the mental health care they need, and that waits for mental health services across England are too long.

As part of our mission to build a National Health Service that is fit for the future, we will provide access to a specialist mental health professional in every school in England, introduce open access Young Futures hubs in communities, and recruit an additional 8,500 mental health workers to cut wait times and provide faster treatment.

Despite the challenging fiscal environment, the Government has chosen to prioritise funding to deliver expansions of NHS Talking Therapies and Individual Placement and Support schemes, demonstrating our commitment to addressing the root cause of mental health issues and providing support for people with severe mental illness to contribute to the economy by remaining in or returning to work.

We have also committed £26 million in capital investment to open new mental health crisis centres, reducing pressure on the busy mental health and accident and emergency services, and ensuring people have the support they need when they need it.

■ Mental Health Services: Special Educational Needs**Jessica Toale:**[\[42854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the adequacy of access to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service services for special educational needs and disabilities children in Bournemouth.

Stephen Kinnock:

We know that too many children and young people, including those with special educational needs and disabilities, are not receiving the mental health care they need, and that waits for mental health services are too long across England, including in Bournemouth. We are determined to change that.

As part of our mission to build a National Health Service that is fit for the future, we will provide access to a specialist mental health professional in every school in England, introduce open access Young Futures hubs in communities, and recruit 8,500 mental health workers to cut wait times and provide faster treatment.

■ Mental Health Services: Waiting Lists

Bobby Dean: [\[43161\]](#)

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

Stephen Kinnock:

We know that too many people are not receiving the mental health care they need, and that waits for mental health services across England are too long.

As part of our mission to build a National Health Service that is fit for the future, we will recruit an additional 8,500 mental health workers to cut wait times and provide faster treatment.

Despite the challenging fiscal environment, the Government has chosen to prioritise funding to deliver expansions of NHS Talking Therapies and Individual Placement and Support schemes, demonstrating our commitment to addressing the root cause of mental health issues, and providing support for people with severe mental illness to contribute to the economy by remaining in or returning to work.

We have also committed £26 million in capital investment to open new mental health crisis centres, reducing pressure on busy emergency mental health and accident and emergency services, and ensuring that people have the support they need when they need it.

People of all ages in England who are experiencing a mental health crisis can now speak to a trained NHS professional at any time of the day through the mental health option on NHS 111. Trained NHS staff assess patients over the phone and guide them through next steps, such as organising face-to-face community support, or facilitating access to alternative services, such as crisis cafés or safe havens.

■ Musculoskeletal Disorders: Research

Martin Wrigley: [\[43664\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will work with Versus Arthritis to increase funding in musculoskeletal research.

Ashley Dalton:

The Department funds health and care research through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). The NIHR funds clinical, public health and social care research and works in partnership with the National Health Service, charities, universities, local government, other research funders, patients, and the public.

The NIHR supports and delivers research across a variety of musculoskeletal conditions such as arthritis, which includes osteo, rheumatoid, psoriatic and juvenile arthritis, osteoporosis and joint and back pain. In 2023/24, the NIHR funded £17.3 million in musculoskeletal research.

The NIHR works in collaboration with Versus Arthritis on a joint initiative, the UK Musculoskeletal (MSK) Translational Research Collaboration, aligning investment in

MSK translational research, and creating a United Kingdom-wide ambition and focus to drive cutting edge research and improve outcomes for patients.

The NIHR welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including arthritis and other musculoskeletal conditions through its research programmes.

■ Neuroendocrine Cancer: Radiotherapy

Mary Glendon: [\[43451\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the potential impact of selective internal radiation therapy on the (a) survival outcomes and (b) quality of life for neuroendocrine tumour patients.

Ashley Dalton:

No assessment has been made on the potential impact of selective internal radiation therapy (SIRT) on survival outcomes and quality of life for neuroendocrine tumour patients. However, the Department recognises the need to offer suitable treatment, including SIRT, to the patients who need it the most.

Radiotherapy treatment for cancer is highly individualised and decisions about cancer treatment are typically made by clinicians and multidisciplinary teams of healthcare professionals. They consider all aspects of a patient's health and circumstances when recommending treatment options. While certain treatments may not be advised for some patients, these decisions are based on medical assessments and what is best for the individual's overall health and well-being.

■ NHS England

Dr Caroline Johnson: [\[42649\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of restructuring administrative functions following NHS England's abolition.

Dr Caroline Johnson: [\[42650\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of (a) severance payments and (b) redundancy packages for NHS England staff following the abolition of NHS England.

Karin Smyth:

We recognise that there may be some short-term upfront costs as we undertake the integration of NHS England and the Department, but these costs and more will be recouped in future years because of a smaller and leaner centre. By the end of the process, we estimate that these changes will save hundreds of millions of pounds a year, which will be reinvested in frontline services.

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.

■ NHS: Artificial Intelligence**Tim Farron:** [\[43430\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of the withdrawal of AI auto contouring funding on NHS waiting times for radiotherapy treatment.

Tim Farron: [\[43433\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the NHS was instructed to proceed with engagement on AI auto contouring funding in 2024 following the previous Government's funding announcement.

Tim Farron: [\[43434\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason the NHS was preparing for AI auto contouring funding in September 2024; and what assessment he has made of the potential impact of not providing this funding on planning by radiotherapy departments.

Ashley Dalton:

We are committed to transforming diagnostic services, and will support the National Health Service to increase capacity to meet the demand for diagnostic services through investment in new capacity, including magnetic resonance imaging and computed tomography scanners. While no assessment has been made, we will continue to monitor developments and any potential impacts on waiting times.

All future spending commitments beyond 2025/26, including this one, will be determined through the next phase of the Spending Review process, which will conclude in June.

We will be spending £70 million on new radiotherapy machines, to ensure the most advanced treatment is available to patients who need it.

The Department will continue to look at opportunities to utilise artificial intelligence to diagnostic performance and ultimately bring down waiting times.

■ NHS: Buildings**Nick Timothy:** [\[43507\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS (a) hospitals, and (b) other buildings in England will be (i) sold, (ii) refurbished, and (iii) demolished between 2025 and 2030.

Karin Smyth:

The Department does not currently hold estimated figures for the number of sales, refurbishments and demolitions of hospitals and other National Health Service buildings in England for 2025 to 2030.

Decisions to sell, refurbish or demolish hospitals and other NHS buildings in England are matters for the local NHS organisations in line with their local infrastructure planning.

Decisions on sales, refurbishments and demolitions will also be shaped by capital availability. We are backing NHS systems to invest in local priorities in 2025/26, with over £4 billion in operational capital, and national funding, including the £750 million Estates Safety Fund. Systems are in planning stages for capital investments in 2025/26, informed by the NHS capital guidance for 2025/26, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/capital-guidance-2025-26/>

Capital funding levels for 2026/27 to 2030/31 will be determined through the current Spending Review, which concludes in June 2025.

■ NHS: Carbon Emissions

Peter Prinsley:

[43728]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress NHS England has made on becoming the first health service in the world to achieve carbon net zero; and whether this work will continue in the new health service structure.

Karin Smyth:

The National Health Service has made substantial progress in supporting the Government's Net Zero commitments. These include securing over £1.2 billion in funding through the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme, the NHS-wide [decommissioning of desflurane](#), ongoing reduction in waste from nitrous oxide, and the introduction of requirements for NHS suppliers to disclose their emissions and publish a carbon reduction plan, in line with the [NHS Net Zero Supplier Roadmap](#).

Going forward, the Department will continue to work with partners across the NHS and Government to deliver on these aims, including through our recently announced £100 million partnership with Great British Energy, that will increase NHS solar generation by 300%.

The Government remains committed to supporting NHS bodies to meet their obligations regarding the environment, and 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.

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[43807]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress his Department has made on reaching net zero for emissions controlled by the NHS by 2040.

Karin Smyth:

The Government continues to support the National Health Service to drive down its direct carbon emissions while increasing its energy efficiency and resilience.

Since 2019, the NHS has seen £1.2 billion in decarbonisation grant funding successfully delivered under the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (funded by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero), replacing fossil fuel systems with non-carbon alternatives.

The Department for Health and Social Care has also invested £95 million for energy efficiency and resilience measures across the NHS estate through the National Energy Efficiency Fund in current financial year 2025/26, driving down trust energy bills while delivering carbon savings.

In addition, all NHS trusts and integrated care boards have now introduced Green Plans setting out the key actions they will take to decarbonise, and the first ever NHS Net Zero Travel and Transport Strategy was published in 2023.

The Department will continue to work across Government to pursue our shared environmental aims, and we recently confirmed a new £100 million partnership with Great British Energy to increase solar generation across the NHS from 2025/26.

■ NHS: Drugs

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[43838\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce the cost of wholesale medications bought by the National Health Service.

Karin Smyth:

The Department has well established mechanisms to control the level of spend on medicines. For example, the voluntary scheme for branded medicines pricing, access, and growth, the statutory scheme for branded medicines to control their growth in sales, and the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's evaluations all ensure that spend on new medicines represents a clinically and cost effective use of National Health Service resources.

The Government's policy on generic medicines is to allow suppliers freedom of pricing for their products, relying on competition between suppliers and efficient purchasing by community pharmacies to deliver value for money for the NHS. However, this can mean that prices can fluctuate because of normal market forces, and can go up as well as down. Typically, this approach leads to some of the lowest prices of generic medicines in Europe.

■ NHS: Environment Protection

Peter Prinsley:

[\[43729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his Department's plans are for the Greener NHS Programme.

Karin Smyth:

The Government remains committed to supporting National Health Service bodies to meet their obligations regarding the environment, and we continue to work to ensure

that the NHS fulfils its significant potential to contribute to our clean power mission and Net Zero legal commitments.

NHS trusts have made significant progress on environmental goals in recent years, including securing £1.2 billion in funding through the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme since 2019. In addition, every trust and integrated care board now has a clear “Green Plan” in place, setting out the key actions that will deliver emissions reductions and support resilience to climate impacts.

The Department will continue to work with partners across the NHS and Government to deliver on these aims. For instance, we have recently completed a £95 million investment through the National Energy Efficiency Fund to drive down trust energy bills and emissions. Looking forward, together with the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, we recently announced a £100 million partnership with Great British Energy that will increase NHS solar generation by 300%.

■ NHS: Finance

Dr Caroline Johnson:

[\[42560\]](#)

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 long term public sector borrowing relating to health administration.

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. The transition team will work across NHS England and the Department, bringing together the expertise and experience of both organisations.

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 the financial implications of the changes. By the end of the process, we estimate that these changes will save hundreds of millions of pounds a year, which will be reinvested in frontline services.

■ NHS: Workplace Pensions

Suella Braverman:

[\[42458\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the level of modernisation of Primary Care Support England's NHS Pensions Scheme processes.

Karin Smyth:

Primary Care Support England (PCSE) follows the pension scheme requirements laid down by NHS Pensions. PCSE has provided an online portal, PCSE Online, which provides general practitioners (GPs), practices, and commissioners with a simple and efficient way to manage pension payments and provide visibility on the information held by PCSE in relation to their pension. PCSE Online enables GPs and non-GP partners to determine if their pension details held by PCSE are correct, identify any

gaps, and gives them the ability to self-serve a number of administrative tasks, including submitting end-of-year pension certificates. PCSE draws information from PCSE Online to update the pension scheme records of GPs held by NHS Pensions.

Suella Braverman: [\[42459\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of waiting times for NHS Pension Scheme queries.

Karin Smyth:

NHS Pension Scheme queries can be raised with the NHS Pension Scheme administrator, the NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA), and in the case of general practitioners (GPs), with Primary Care Support England (PCSE), who record GPs' pensionable service and collect pension contributions.

The NHSBSA reported that in March 2025, for general queries, the average speed for a call to be answered was 173 seconds, and the average response time for emails was 0.6 days. Further information about processing times for payments, estimates, transfers, and general queries received in writing is available at the following link:

<https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/current-processing-times-nhs-pensions>

The pension queries received by PCSE are often complex and could involve records of GP service over multiple years, and can require working with the GP and other parties to resolve. PCSE's services are contracted to Capita Business Services Ltd under a contract held by NHS England. NHS England has governance in place to oversee the performance of that contract, which includes monitoring the handling of queries and complaints. There are governance arrangements in place involving NHS England, PCSE, and NHS Pensions, to oversee the end-to-end service and identify areas for further improvement.

■ Nurses: Devon

Martin Wrigley: [\[43338\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 1 April 2025 to Question 41578 on Nurses: Training, if he will take steps to increase the number of nursing positions in Devon.

Karin Smyth:

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

We will publish a refreshed Long Term Workforce Plan to deliver the transformed health service we will build over the next decade and treat patients on time again.

■ Organs: Donors**Preet Kaur Gill:****[42719]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve NHS Organ Donor Register registration rates among ethnic minority groups.

Ashley Dalton:

The NHS Organ Donor Register is operated by NHS Blood and Transplant (NHSBT). Improving NHS Organ Donor Register registration rates overall and particularly for ethnic minority groups is a priority for the Government and NHSBT, to save and improve more lives. NHSBT runs marketing and communication activity throughout the year to increase organ donation, particularly for underrepresented groups, which includes but is not limited to:

- publication of the Annual Report of Ethnic Differences in Transplantation, with supporting media coverage, including on the BBC Asian Network;
- raising awareness during South Asian Heritage Month with charities and organisations; and
- Organ Donation Week 2024, which saw continued activity with partners, including Dalgety Tea, and an exclusive screening of the living donation film The Final Gift at Brixton's Ritzy cinema

NHSBT's Community Grants Programme is part of NHSBT's works to build support for organ donation amongst black, Asian, mixed heritage, and minority ethnic communities, working through faith groups to increase understanding and drive behavioural change on organ donation.

NHSBT works closely with the National Black, Asian, Mixed Race, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Transplant Alliance to deliver culturally and religiously sensitive messaging about low donation rates amongst their communities. In addition, a range of online and printed materials in relation to faith are available on the dedicated faith and beliefs section of the NHSBT website, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.organdonation.nhs.uk/helping-you-to-decide/your-faith-and-beliefs/>

Preet Kaur Gill:**[42720]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve NHS Organ Donor Register registration rates among (a) Sikh and (b) Jewish people.

Ashley Dalton:

NHS Blood and Transplant (NHSBT) manages transplant services across the United Kingdom. NHSBT works with an extensive network of organisations and individuals who have established and trusted relationships with their communities. Last year, in collaboration with the National Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Transplant Alliance (NBTA), NHSBT delivered a conference with the aim of developing culturally and religiously sensitive messaging to promote organ donation within these communities by engaging faith leaders and organisations. Representatives from 51 organisations

attended, including British Sikh Nurses. This promotes the sharing of messaging guidance with many faiths, including Sikhism. The report will be shared with all community grant groups and organisations working to increase engagement with faith groups. NHSBT and the NBTA, along with the Race Equality Commission, will continue to work together, and have established a Messaging Conference Implementation Group which will take forward the actions arising from the conference. NHSBT also creates and shares a host of faith-based assets on its website, including for Judaism, with further information available at the following link:

<https://www.organdonation.nhs.uk/helping-you-to-decide/your-faith-and-beliefs/judaism/>

The Jewish Organ Donor Association is a recipient of the Community Grant Programme, which is a two-year programme focused on building long-term relationships through trusted peers and leaders in the community, engaging with black African and Caribbean, South Asian, East and South East Asian, Hindu, Sikh, Jain, Muslim, and Christian communities. It aims to raise awareness, tackle misinformation, and change perceptions and behaviours around organ donation. A total of £600,000 was given to 51 recipients in 2024.

■ Orthopaedics: Surgical Hubs

Alison Bennett: [\[44082\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many of the new surgical hubs will be focused solely on orthopaedic procedures.

Karin Smyth:

The Elective Reform Plan has committed to providing quicker access for patients to common surgical hub procedures by opening 17 new and expanded surgical hubs by June 2025 and ramping up the number of hubs over the next three years, so more operations can be carried out.

In line with direction set by the Getting it Right First Time High Volume Low Complexity programme, surgical hubs focus on driving improvement in six high volume specialties: ophthalmology; general surgery; trauma and orthopaedics, which includes spinal surgery; gynaecology; ear, nose and throat; and urology. There are no plans for any of the new hubs to solely focus on orthopaedic procedures.

■ Osteoporosis: Menopause

Tom Morrison: [\[43314\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of carrying out bone density scans for early onset osteoporosis in women who have gone through the menopause.

Ashley Dalton:

One in three women and one in five men will experience an osteoporotic fracture in their lifetime. Never again will women's health be neglected, and we will prioritise women's health as we build a National Health Service fit for the future.

Fracture Liaison Services (FLS) are a globally recognised care model that can reduce the risk of refracture for people at risk of osteoporosis by up to 40%. They can play a vital role in improving quality of life and increasing the number of years that can be lived in good health. We remain committed to rolling out FLS across every part of the country by 2030.

DEXA scans are a vital component of the early diagnosis of osteoporosis. We are investing in high-tech DEXA scanners, which are expected to provide an extra 29,000 scans per year, to ensure that people with bone conditions get diagnosed earlier.

■ Patient Choice Schemes

Rachael Maskell: [\[41851\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of the abolition of NHS England on (a) (i) autism and (ii) ADHD assessments and (b) other functions of the Patient Choice department.

Stephen Kinnock:

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 all patients, driving productivity up, and getting waiting times down.

■ Pharmacy: Business Rates and Minimum Wage

Joe Robertson: [\[43675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the cost to community pharmacies of the rise in (a) business rates and (b) the National Minimum Wage from 1 April 2025.

Stephen Kinnock:

We have taken the necessary decisions to fix the foundations in the public finances at the Autumn Budget, and this enabled the Spending Review settlement of a £22.6 billion increase in resource spending for the Department from 2023/24 outturn to 2025/26.

The Department has considered the increases in the National Living Wage when consulting on the funding arrangements for community pharmacy. We have now agreed with Community Pharmacy England to increase the community pharmacy contractual framework to £3.073 billion from April 2025. This deal represents the largest uplift in funding of any part of the National Health Service, at over 19% across 2024/25 and 2025/26.

■ Pharmacy: Closures

Chris Coghlan: [\[44174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of independent pharmacy closures on (a) local GP capacity, (b) hospital capacity, (c) the healthcare needs of the local community and (d) local pharmacists in need of employment.

Stephen Kinnock:

The impact of any specific pharmacy closure will differ depending on the remaining access to health services in the area. We monitor access carefully and in general, access to pharmacies in England continues to be good, with 80% of people able to reach a pharmacy within a 20 minute-walk and twice as many pharmacies in the most deprived areas. We continue to support those in areas where there are fewer pharmacies through the Pharmacy Access Scheme. Additionally, in rural areas where there is no pharmacy, general practitioners are permitted to dispense medicines. Patients can also choose to access medicines and pharmacy services through any of the nearly 400 National Health Service online pharmacies that are contractually required to deliver prescription medicines free of charge to patients and deliver other services remotely.

Local authorities are required to undertake a pharmaceutical needs assessment (PNA) every three years to assess whether their population is adequately served, and must keep these assessments under review in the interim. Integrated care boards must give regard to the PNAs when reviewing applications to open new pharmacies in their areas.

■ Pharmacy: Finance

Joe Robertson: [\[43676\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the proportion of additional funding for community pharmacies that will be required from 1 April 2025 to cover the increase in (a) employer National Insurance contributions, (b) business rates and (c) the National Minimum Wage in (i) 2024-25 and (ii) 2025-26.

Stephen Kinnock:

We have taken the necessary decisions to fix the foundations in the public finances at the Autumn Budget, and this enabled the Spending Review settlement of a £22.6 billion increase in resource spending for the Department, from 2023/24 outturn to 2025/26.

The Department considered the increase in the National Living Wage when consulting on the funding arrangements for community pharmacy. We have now agreed with Community Pharmacy England to increase the community pharmacy contractual framework to £3.073 billion from April 2025. This deal represents the largest uplift in funding of any part of the National Health Service, at over 19% across 2024/25 and 2025/26.

■ Plastic Surgery

Bradley Thomas:

[\[43344\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS Accident & Emergency admissions were made for cosmetic and aesthetic treatments requiring urgent medical attention in 2024.

Karin Smyth:

Information on hospital admissions is not available in the format requested. However, an analysis of hospital episodes by diagnoses for 2023/24 is available at the following link:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/hospital-admitted-patient-care-activity/2023-24>

■ Prescriptions: Fees and Charges

Tom Morrison:

[\[43317\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS prescription penalty charges were overturned in each of the last five years; how many appeals were rejected; and how many successful appeals were categorised as you think you have an exceptional reason not to pay, and can show that you did not act wrongfully or with any lack of care.

Karin Smyth:

The following table shows the number of penalty charges overturned in the last five years, from 2019/20 to 2024/25:

FINANCIAL YEAR	EXEMPTION CONFIRMED AND PENALTY CHARGE CANCELLED
2019/20	361,970
2021/22	4,069
2022/23	150,351
2023/24	92,549
2024/25	68,128

Notes:

1. the data provided does not include easements applied where a valid exemption for maternity or medical certificates is awarded within 60 days of a Penalty Charge Notice being issued. This enables patients who are entitled to an exemption, for example through pregnancy, to make the appropriate claim for an exemption certificate if they have not already done so;

2. 2021/22 saw a reduced number of penalty charges due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic; and
3. the data is a snapshot as of 1 April 2025 and therefore figures may increase if the extract is repeated.

The NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA) does not categorise or collect data on unsuccessful appeals, or the reason given when a patient has attempted to challenge a penalty charge. Therefore, the NHSBSA does not hold data on how many appeals were rejected, or how many successful appeals were categorised as 'you think you have an exceptional reason not to pay, and can show that you did not act wrongfully or with any lack of care'.

■ Primary Care: Buildings

Mr Connor Rand: [\[43771\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many new NHS primary care facilities have been built using central Government funding in each year since 2010.

Mr Connor Rand: [\[43772\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much capital funding has been allocated by Government for the development of new NHS primary care facilities in each year since 2010.

Mr Connor Rand: [\[43773\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of new or redeveloped primary care facilities required following Lord Darzi's independent investigation into the NHS.

Karin Smyth:

The primary care estate is in mixed ownership between general practices (GPs), property companies, and integrated care boards (ICBs), and can be funded through a variety of routes. The Care Quality Commission regulates sites that provide National Health Services, including primary care facilities, with further information on their data available at the following link:

<https://www.cqc.org.uk/about-us/transparency/using-cqc-data>

Prior to 2016, new surgery premises were delivered either by GPs or by third parties. NHS England does not keep a register of the projects funded through these routes.

In the period 2016 to 2025, the upgrades programme delivered 90 new GP or primary care schemes, alongside several refurbishments and extensions of existing sites, at a cost of £996 million. For 2024 to 2025, the NHS Property Services and Community Health Partnership was given £15 million to adapt the existing estate, so that it could be used more intensively.

As a first step in response to the Darzi Report, in 2025/26 £102 million has been allocated for modernisation and improved utilisation in primary care. Capital budgets for 2026/27 onwards will be considered through Phase 2 of the Spending Review

process and the launch of the 10-Year Health Plan in Spring 2025. This will give the necessary strategic direction and funding certainty as we shift to a Neighbourhood Health Service and treating patients closer to home. The following table shows the schemes, capital investment, and new facilities delivered from 2016 to 2025:

SCHEME	PERIOD	NATIONAL CAPITAL INVESTMENT	NEW FACILITIES DELIVERED
GP or third-party developer	Before 2016	N/A	N/A
Primary care estates and IT	2016 to 2020	£800 million	50
Local authority joint schemes	2019 to 2025	N/A	30
Sustainability and transformation plan upgrades programme	2020 to 2025	£196 million	10

■ Prostate Cancer

Jim Shannon: [\[43051\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many men have been diagnosed with prostate cancer in the last 12 months.

Ashley Dalton:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave on 21 March 2025 to Question [37562](#).

■ Radiotherapy: Artificial Intelligence

Tim Farron: [\[43431\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what (a) webinars, (b) meetings and (c) other engagements NHS England undertook with radiotherapy networks on access to the AI auto contouring funding announced on 21 May 2024; and whether alternative funding will be made available to support AI use in radiotherapy.

Tim Farron: [\[43432\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the webinars held by NHS England with hospital staff on AI auto contouring funding in September 2024 on staff expectations for that technology.

Ashley Dalton:

The information requested is not held by the Department, but we are seeking advice from NHS England on the impact of these webinars and subsequent engagement that they have undertaken.

All future spending commitments beyond 2025/26, including this one, will be determined through the next phase of the Spending Review process, which will conclude in June.

The Department supports the National Health Service in reviewing opportunities to utilise artificial intelligence to transform performance, bring down waiting times, and support staff with their workload. We expect that radiotherapy treatment centres will use all appropriate technology for treating patients, to ensure that they receive the best possible care. This includes the use of artificial intelligence where available.

■ Respiratory Diseases: Health Services

Dr Simon Opher:

[\[42733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to support people with lung conditions.

Ashley Dalton:

In collaboration with a number of partners, the National Health Service has developed a package for local systems containing the information and support required to help increase the number of people receiving an early and accurate diagnosis for respiratory disease.

Following a significant drop in the volume of respiratory specific diagnostic tests, such as spirometry, during the pandemic, NHS England has managed to bring these numbers to above pre-pandemic levels.

The Government is committed to a preventative approach to the public's health and is determined to improve air quality for everyone and address inequalities by working across Government to tackle these issues, including by supporting the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to deliver their comprehensive and ambitious Clean Air Strategy, which will include a series of interventions to reduce emissions so that everyone's exposure to air pollution is reduced.

In alignment with the Neighbourhood Health Service model, NHS England is leading on the development of an approach for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) management, to support proactive identification and management of rising risk patients in winter, thereby reducing demand on primary and secondary care by identifying at risk patients, optimizing care, and strengthened support. Core20PLUS5 identifies COPD as one of the five clinical areas of focus requiring accelerated improvement to help tackle healthcare inequalities, and plans to improve this area by increasing vaccination uptake, namely for COVID-19, flu, and pneumovax, in people with COPD, and by avoiding exacerbations that could lead to emergency treatment in hospital and inpatient care.

Danny Beales:

[\[43229\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the NHS 10-year plan will include steps to improve (a) prevention of, (b) early diagnosis for and (c) treatment for lung conditions.

Ashley Dalton:

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

More tests and scans delivered in the community to allow for earlier diagnosis, better joint working between services, and greater use of apps and wearable technology will all help people manage their long-term conditions, including respiratory conditions, closer to home. Earlier diagnosis of conditions will help people manage their conditions, prevent deterioration, and improve survival rates. Taking action to reduce the causes of the biggest killers, such as enabling a smoke free generation, can further help prevent lung conditions.

■ Sickle Cell Diseases: Medical Treatments**Chi Onwurah:**[\[42260\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the progress on developing new treatments for sickle cell disorder; and whether he has had recent discussions with Cabinet colleagues on taking steps to accelerate the development of new treatments.

Ashley Dalton:

Working under the UK Rare Diseases Framework, the Government is committed to improving the lives of those living with rare diseases, such as sickle cell disease. Priority four of the framework aims to improve access to specialist care, treatment, and drugs for all rare conditions.

In February 2025, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence approved exagamglogene autotemcel (Casgevy) for use on the National Health Service in England through the Innovative Medicines Fund, and it is now available for eligible patients. People in England with severe sickle cell disease will be among the first to receive treatment using revolutionary CRISPR gene editing technology, providing a potential cure for some people with severe sickle cell disease.

My Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has not discussed steps to accelerate the development of new treatments for sickle cell disease with Cabinet colleagues.

■ Social Services: Labour Turnover and Recruitment**Victoria Collins:**[\[44274\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to develop a (a) comprehensive and (b) fully-funded plan to effectively (i) recruit, (ii) train, and (iii) retain a sustainable social care workforce.

Stephen Kinnock:

We are launching an independent commission into adult social care as part of our critical first steps towards delivering a National Care Service. We expect that the

commission will look at workforce issues, building on work already underway to provide a career structure, give care professionals greater skills and legislate for the first ever Fair Pay Agreements.

■ Strokes: Bedfordshire and Thames Valley

Callum Anderson:

[\[42097\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of stroke care provision 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 Integrated Stroke Delivery Network (ISDN) in Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, and Berkshire West aims to improve stroke care through collaborative service improvement across the stroke pathway, addressing the approximately 2,200 annual stroke admissions in Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, and Berkshire West, which cost £38.6 million in 2023/24. The ISDN's 2025/26 plan prioritises reducing stroke incidence and disability through acute care, rehabilitation, and prevention workstreams. Key achievements include artificial intelligence implementation, to reduce treatment times, and increased mechanical thrombectomy rates, particularly due to the 24/7 service at Oxford University Hospital and an agreed referral protocol, with Wycombe Hospital achieving the highest national referral rate for an acute stroke centre. Rehabilitation efforts focus on improving consistency, with projects in Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire demonstrating positive outcomes, such as increased access to support and improved patient wellbeing. Building on these positive outcomes will require sustained funding in Oxfordshire's community rehabilitation services, alongside ongoing efforts to enhance the integration of services and patient engagement across the region.

NHS England leads the quarterly joint North and South East of England ISDN meeting, which reviews stroke provision across the region. The Bedfordshire Luton and Milton Keynes (BLMK) Integrated Care Board (ICB) and representatives from provider trusts attend these meetings to provide assurance. The ICB still has contract monitoring in place with trusts, and trusts have their own internal quality assurance processes. The Sentinel Stroke National Audit Programme is the main data source for monitoring, which all the above forums use. The last Getting It Right First Time review of stroke services, which included BLMK, was in 2022.

■ Sunbeds

Jim Shannon:

[\[43052\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to discourage the use of sunbeds.

Ashley Dalton:

The Sunbeds (Regulation) Act 2010 prohibits the use of sunbeds for those under 18 years old. For those over 18 years old, advice has been issued by both the National Health Service and the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) to increase awareness of the public health risks of excessive exposure to ultraviolet radiation. The UKHSA's advice is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sunbeds-safety-advice/sunbeds-safety-advice>

The NHS' advice is available at the following link:

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/seasonal-health/sunscreen-and-sun-safety/>

■ Tuberculosis: Medical Treatments**Uma Kumaran:****[43252]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve the (a) monitoring and (b) treatment of tuberculosis.

Ashley Dalton:

Tuberculosis (TB) is a statutorily notifiable disease in the United Kingdom. Surveillance data on all individuals diagnosed with TB is collected via the UK Health Security Agency's (UKHSA) National TB Surveillance System (NTBS), which was launched in 2021 to replace older systems.

Scotland joined the NTBS in March 2025, bringing all four UK nations into a single system to improve TB control. Regular data and analysis to support TB control activities is published by the UKHSA, with both annual and quarterly analyses and updates available, respectively, at the following two links:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tuberculosis-in-england-2024-report>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/tuberculosis-in-england-national-quarterly-reports/national-quarterly-report-of-tuberculosis-in-england-quarter-3-2024-provisional-data>

Annual data sorted by National Health Service and local authority geographies is also available publicly on the Fingertips website, which is available at the following link:

<https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/tb-monitoring>

The UKHSA and NHS England's joint Tuberculosis (TB): action plan for England, 2021 to 2026 details actions to support prevention, detection, and control of TB. This includes actions targeted at improving treatment completion and ensuring effective management of drug-resistant TB.

The UKHSA routinely undertakes whole genome sequencing of all TB strains through the National Mycobacterial Reference Service to support treatment decisions based on resistance profiles and public health action with high resolution typing.

NHS England and the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital's Getting it Right First Time review of TB services reported in March 2025, with a series of recommendations to reduce unwarranted variation and improve care, including to underserved populations. Work is underway, including a call for evidence launched on 2 April 2025, to review and update the national action plan, with further information available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/calls-for-evidence/tuberculosis-national-action-plan-2026-to-2031#:~:text=The%20government%20is%20developing%20the,for%20England%2C%20published%20in%202021>

■ Urinary Tract Infections: Mid Bedfordshire

Blake Stephenson:

[43759]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to support people who suffer with chronic urinary tract infections in Mid Bedfordshire constituency.

Karin Smyth:

There are nine pharmacists in the Mid Bedfordshire constituency area, and all offer the Pharmacy First service. This service builds on the NHS Community Pharmacist Consultation Service which has run since October 2019. The consultation service enables patients to be referred into community pharmacy for a minor illness or an urgent repeat medicine supply.

The Pharmacy First service, launched 31 January 2024, adds to the existing consultation service and enables community pharmacies to complete episodes of care for seven common conditions following defined clinical pathways, including urinary tract infections.

It is common for recurrent urinary tract infections to be treated with a longer-term course of antibiotics, following antimicrobial guidelines for primary care. Should symptoms continue then a referral may be made to a specialist urologist.

■ Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme

Sir Christopher Chope:

[41389]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason applicants seeking mandatory reversal of decisions made by the NHSBSA on vaccine damage claims are required as a precondition to adduce fresh evidence without which no mandatory reversal is possible; and whether there is statutory provision for such a restriction.

Ashley Dalton:

[Holding answer 1 April 2025]: If a claimant to the Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme (VDPS) wants to challenge a decision about their claim, they can ask for the decision to be reviewed. This is known as a 'mandatory reversal'.

In accordance with the legislation which governs the VDPS, when applying for a mandatory reversal, claimants must provide an explanation of why they think that the original decision is wrong, and they may provide further evidence to support their request. They can also ask the NHS Business Services Authority, the administrators of the VDPS, to request additional medical records from healthcare providers.

However, providing further evidence to support their request for a mandatory reversal is not a legal or operational requirement. The answer given by the Department to [PQ39388](#) incorrectly stated that claimants must provide additional evidence to their claim before a mandatory reversal is undertaken. This response has been corrected.

Sir Christopher Chope: [\[43410\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 1 April 2025 to Question 41384, what the (a) maximum and (b) minimum time was between a Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme application being made to the NHS Business Services Authority and being submitted to Crawford & Co for review.

Ashley Dalton:

[Holding answer 8 April 2025]: The submission of applications to Crawford & Co is dependent on the NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA) receiving the relevant medical records from healthcare providers.

As of 3 April 2025, the maximum time between an application being made to the Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme and that application being submitted to Crawford & Co for review was 1,339 days. The minimum time was 14 days, and the average time was 199 days.

The NHSBSA is working with healthcare providers to speed up the rate at which these medical records are shared.

Sir Christopher Chope: [\[43412\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what was the (a) maximum and (b) minimum time between Crawford & Co completing a medical review of applications for vaccine damage payments and the applicant being informed of the decision in the period January 2024 – December 2024.

Ashley Dalton:

[Holding answer 8 April 2025]: Between January and December 2024, the maximum time between Crawford & Co completing a medical assessment of an application to the Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme and the applicant being informed by the NHS Business Services Authority of my Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care's decision as to whether they are entitled to a payment under the scheme was 518 days. The minimum time was zero days, with the claimants informed of the outcome on the same day that the medical assessment was completed.

Over the same period, the average time between Crawford & Co completing a medical assessment of an application and the applicant being informed of my Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care's decision was 14 days.

■ Work Experience: Nurses

Jim Shannon: [\[43054\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with the Northern Ireland Executive on regional inequalities for nursing placements in universities.

Karin Smyth:

No discussions have taken place with the Northern Ireland Executive on the regional variation of nursing placements. Both health and education are devolved matters, with each home nation setting its own education and training policies for students residing in their respective countries.

Although devolution can lead to a degree of variation in clinical placements across the four nations, it allows each to focus on their own unique set of challenges and put in place policies that best assure the financial viability and sustainability of their independent National Health Service system.

HOME OFFICE

■ Ali Kololo

Ian Byrne: [\[43520\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has had recent discussions with the Metropolitan Police on an apology to Ali Kololo following his overturned conviction.

Dan Jarvis:

The operationally independent Metropolitan Police continue to progress matters relating to this case. It would not be appropriate for Home Office Ministers to comment on any discussions concerning the individual.

■ Animal Experiments

Dan Norris: [\[43409\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 4 March 2025 to Question 33380 on Animal Experiments, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the concordance range; whether she has made an assessment of the potential limitations of the paper; and whether she has considered evidence on the predictive value of non-animal methods.

Dan Jarvis:

The paper in question is published in a reputable scientific journal and will have undergone rigorous peer review before publication.

The Government invests £10m annually in The National Centre for the Replacement, Refinement and Reduction of Animals in Research (NC3Rs). The NC3Rs places

significant investment into programmes and projects specifically for developing non-animal methods.

In March 2023 the NC3Rs made its biggest award to date in a single investment (£1.6M) to develop a 'Virtual Dog'. The project aims to exploit advances in computational approaches and machine learning to ultimately replace their use as a second species in drug development.

This government has made a commitment to “partner with scientists, industry, and civil society as we work towards the phasing out of animal testing”. The government will publish a strategy to support the development, validation and uptake of alternative methods later this year.

■ **Animal Experiments: Animal Welfare**

Mr Richard Holden:

[42706]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 18 March 2025 to Question 37318 on Animal Experiments: Animal Welfare, how many animals were bred for use in procedures licensed under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 but deemed surplus and disposed of without being used for scientific purposes in the last full calendar year for which data is available.

Dan Jarvis:

The most recent statistics in this category were published in 2017, when 1.81 million non-genetically altered (non-GA) animals were bred for scientific procedures but were killed or died without being used in regulated procedures. These statistics can be found here:

[Additional statistics on breeding and genotyping of animals for scientific procedures, Great Britain, 2017](#)

■ **Animal Experiments: Inspections**

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[44147]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he could publish the full list of sites that could be inspected by the Animals in Science Regulations Unit; on what dates did (a) announced and (b) unannounced audits by the Unit take place at those locations; and what was the outcome of each of the inspections.

Dan Jarvis:

The Animals in Science Regulation Unit publishes an Annual Report containing information on the number of licensed establishments, the number and type of audits that have been conducted and a summary of audit outcomes. The Annual Report also publishes information on all cases of non-compliance, including the number of animals involved and the actions taken by the Regulator.

The Home Office has published Guidance on how it administers and enforces ASPA and a Code of Practice which provides appropriate standards for the care and accommodation of animals used for scientific purposes. Assessment of compliance

includes ensuring adherence to this Code of Practice. Each establishment that holds specially protected species will be audited at least once every year. All other establishments will receive an audit at least every three years.

■ **British National (Overseas): Hong Kong**

Adam Thompson:

[\[42827\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to help ensure the safety of Hong Kongers in the UK experiencing (a) bounties, (b) sanctions and (c) other forms of transnational repression.

Dan Jarvis:

The safety and security of Hong Kongers in the UK is of the utmost importance. The UK will always stand up for the rights of the people of Hong Kong. Where we identify individuals at heightened risk, we are front footed in deploying protective security guidance and other measures as appropriate

We have a broad suite of powers available to counter transnational repression. This includes measures in the National Security Act 2023 which make the UK a harder target for those states which seek to conduct hostile acts.

On 4 March, I announced a new package of training for frontline police officers and staff to increase their understanding of foreign state threats. This training will improve law enforcement's ability to detect and investigate incidents which may be state directed.

The Defending Democracy Taskforce is also reviewing the UK's existing response to transnational repression to ensure it is robust and joined across government and law enforcement.

■ **British Nationality**

Euan Stainbank:

[\[42888\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what criteria she plans to use in applying her discretionary powers to give an exception to the current ban on citizenship being granted to an asylum seeker who has arrived irregularly.

Seema Malhotra:

We have strengthened measures to make it clear that anyone who enters the UK illegally or who arrives without a required valid entry clearance or electronic valid authorisation having made a dangerous journey, including small boat arrivals, faces having a British citizenship application refused. The change applies to citizenship applications made from 10 February 2025, regardless of the time that has passed since the illegal entry took place.

However, citizenship applications have always been, and will continue to be, considered on a case-by-case basis considering all positive and negative factors. The Secretary of State may choose to apply discretion to grant citizenship on an

exceptional basis where there are particularly exceptional, compelling, or mitigating circumstances and where necessary to comply with our international obligations.

■ Data, Statistics and Research on Sex and Gender Independent Review

Tonia Antoniazzi: [\[43182\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 27 March 2025 to Question 40390 on Data, Statistics and Research on Sex and Gender Independent Review, what steps her Department is taking to implement the recommendations of the Sullivan Review.

Jess Phillips:

The Government has now published the independent review of data, statistics and research on sex and gender commissioned by the previous Government.

We are considering the findings in light of ongoing policy work in this area.

The Home Office recognises the contribution of this review to the important issues of accurate and consistent recording of data on sex and gender in statistics and research. We are considering the recommendations and the implications for policing and across the Criminal Justice System.

■ Domestic Abuse: Men

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[43776\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of domestic abuse victims were (a) men and (b) boys in the latest period for which data is available.

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[43777\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of refuge spaces for victims of domestic abuse are committed to supporting male survivors.

Jess Phillips:

The Crime Survey for England and Wales year ending September 2024 showed that 3% of men aged 16 and over were victims of domestic abuse between September 2023 and September 2024 (compared to 6.6% of women).

The Government funds services that provide essential support to male victims, including support in accessing safe accommodation. These include Respect, Galop, SignHealth and Hourglass.

According to Women's Aid 2025 Annual Audit report, there were 50 refuges in England with bedspaces for men in May 2024, an increase of 11 from the previous year.

Since 2021, Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act has required local authorities in England to ensure support is available to all victims of domestic abuse in safe accommodation such as refuges.

Local authority data shows that in 2023/24 there were 63,950 individuals supported in safe accommodation, of which 3% (1,830) were men.

■ Emergency Services: Medals

Tom Rutland: [\[42974\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a medal to recognise people who have suffered severe injuries in the line of duty.

Dame Diana Johnson:

It is only right that we recognise the sacrifices made many members of the emergency services and we are always willing to consider proposes for new medals towards that end.

However, any official award is a gift from the Government, on behalf of His Majesty The King, and the creation of a new award requires cross Government consensus and approval from the Committee on The Grant of Honours, Decorations and Medals (“HD Committee”), before advice is put to HM The King to make any subsequent decision.

■ Events Industry: First Aid

Anna Dixon: [\[44192\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what guidance her Department plans to provide to (a) fairs, (b) parades and (c) other local community events on the (i) supply and (ii) administration of first aid under Martyn’s Law.

Anna Dixon: [\[44193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what specific first aid equipment will be required under Martyn’s Law for (a) venues and (b) events; and whether there will be different requirements based on (i) venue size and (ii) risk level.

Dan Jarvis:

The Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act requires those responsible for certain premises and events to consider how they would respond to a terrorist attack. In addition, appropriate steps to reduce vulnerability to terrorist attacks must also be considered at certain larger premises and events. The Act does not have specific requirements relating to the provision of medical treatment and associated equipment.

Wider work is ongoing to strengthen Healthcare Standards. The Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) is working with partners to put in place updated guidance for health care at events. Once published the Event Healthcare Standard will be assessed in partnership with NHS England to determine whether this standard should become a statutory obligation. DHSC has also undertaken work with the National Counter Terrorism Security Office and health sector partners to standardise the contents of Public Access Trauma kits.

The Home Office will be issuing statutory guidance, which will assist those responsible for qualifying premises and events in understanding the requirements set out in the legislation. The Home Office will also continue to engage with sectors affected by the legislation, to support them in understanding their obligations.

■ Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority: Complaints

Chris Law:

[\[42554\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 19 March 2025 to Question 37194 on Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority: Inspections, how many complaints were received by the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority in (a) England, (b) Scotland, (c) Wales and (d) Northern Ireland in each of the last five years.

Jess Phillips:

'Complaints' is taken to mean referrals received by the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA) about labour abuses, mistreatment of workers, labour providers operating without a licence or a business using an unlicensed gangmaster.

The GLAA reports the number of referrals received in each of the GLAA's regions, over the last 5 years, as:

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	TOTAL
North East	326	414	269	213	182	1,404
North West	214	198	117	77	127	733
South East	515	499	375	228	337	1,954
South West	270	263	224	132	186	1,075
Multi-Region	29	22	27	10	12	100
Region not listed	152	129	75	22	13	391
TOTAL	1,506	1,525	1,087	682	857	5,657

'Regions' denote the regions of England. However, 'North West' includes reporting related to Scotland and Northern Ireland; 'North West' includes reporting related to North Wales; and 'South West' includes reporting related to South Wales and Dyfed.

■ Home Office: Public Expenditure

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[43784\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what proportion of her Department's budget was spent on international operations during the 2024-25 financial year to date.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Details of all the Departments expenditure, including on activities and operations overseas, are set out on a regular basis in the Home Office's Annual Reports, published on Gov.uk.

■ Immigration

Wendy Morton: [\[42590\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to publish the Immigration White Paper.

Seema Malhotra:

Our upcoming Immigration White Paper will set out a comprehensive plan to restore order to our broken immigration system, end reliance on overseas labour and boost economic growth. The paper will be published in due course, and announced in Parliament in the normal way.

Euan Stainbank: [\[42864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what proportion of refugees received indefinite leave to remain in the latest period for which data is available.

Seema Malhotra:

The Home Office publishes statistics relating to indefinite leave to remain and asylum in the [Immigration system statistics](#) publication.

Data on the number grants of Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) to refugees, is published in table Se_D01 of the [Settlement detailed datasets](#). The latest data relates to 2023. In addition, information on the number of ILR grants to refugees, including persons given ELR (Exceptional Leave to Remain), HP (Human Protection) or DL (Discretionary leave) is published in table Se_D02 of the [Settlement detailed datasets](#) for which latest data relates to 2024.

■ Immigration Controls: Republic of Ireland

Apsana Begum: [\[42838\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will take steps to help ensure that UK Border Force eGates are configured to permit entry to holders of Irish passport cards travelling from outside the Common Travel Area.

Seema Malhotra:

Irish nationals can travel to the UK on either an Irish passport or associated passport card. In line with other identity cards, Irish passport cards cannot be used at eGates and there are no plans to change this.

If an Irish national wishes to use their passport card to enter the UK from outside the Common Travel Area, they are required to present it to a Border Force officer.

■ Immigration: Inspections**Chris Law:**[\[42557\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many UK Visas and Immigration Compliance Unit inspections were carried out in 2024 in (a) Scotland, (b) England, (c) Wales and (d) Northern Ireland.

Seema Malhotra:

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

■ Intimate Image Abuse: Internet**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[42622\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent steps she has taken to help prevent online intimate image abuse.

Jess Phillips:

Tackling violence against women and girls (VAWG) in all of its forms, including when it takes place online, is a top priority for this Government. This is why we have set out an unprecedented ambition to halve it in a decade.

As of 17 March 2025, online platforms have new legal duties to assess the risk of illegal harms on their services and to take additional steps to tackle priority offences. These priority offences include sharing and threatening to share intimate images including 'deepfake' pornography without consent.

We have also announced our intention to legislate to make the creation of intimate images, including sexually explicit deepfake images, a criminal offence. In addition, Ofcom are required to produce guidance setting out how providers can take action on harmful content and activity that disproportionately affects women and girls. The consultation on their draft guidance is currently open and closes on 23 May 2025.

The Government is also funding the Revenge Porn Helpline. The helpline provides high-quality support and advice to victims of intimate image abuse, engages with law enforcement and other stakeholders to improve processes to respond to intimate image abuse, and raises awareness of the nature of intimate image abuse and the harm that it can cause.

■ Jews: Safety**Kevin Hollinrake:** [\[43092\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Answer of 28 November 2023 to Question 2562 on Jewish Safety, when the Jewish Community Crime, Policing and Security Taskforce last met.

Dan Jarvis:

The taskforce last met on October 23rd, 2023. To discuss the surge in antisemitism seen in UK following the Hamas attacks in Israel on October 7th, 2023.

We continue to work closely with the Community Security Trust (CST) and other stakeholders in the Jewish community to discuss the scourge of antisemitism and the protection of Jewish synagogues, schools and other communal centres. The Home Secretary addressed these and other issues in her speech to the CST annual dinner on 26 March 2025, which can be read here: [Home Secretary speech at the Community Security Trust - GOV.UK](#).

Antisemitism has absolutely no place in British society, and we are funding measures to protect Jewish communities and places of worship. We have assigned £72M from 2024/25 to 2027/28 as part of the Jewish Protective Security Grant, which is administered by the Community Security Trust.

■ Offences against Children: Guinea-Bissau and Portugal**Ben Obese-Jecty:** [\[44064\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many children from (a) Guinea-Bissau and (b) Portugal have been referred to the national referral mechanism in each year since its start.

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[44067\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many children were referred to the national referral mechanism in Huntingdon constituency in each year since its start.

Jess Phillips:

The Home Office does not hold or publish data on the number of National Referral Mechanism (NRM) referrals received for individuals on a constituency level.

The Home Office publishes quarterly and annual statistics regarding the NRM including the nationality of children referred. NRM statistics can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-referral-mechanism-statistics>

Further disaggregated data is published via the UK Data Service and can be accessed here:

<https://beta.ukdataservice.ac.uk/datacatalogue/studies/study?id=8910>

■ Offences against Children: Inquiries

Rupert Lowe: [\[44180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish all (a) correspondence and (b) internal assessments on the decision not to proceed with a full public inquiry into grooming gangs.

Rupert Lowe: [\[44181\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will consider the findings of privately funded independent inquiries into (a) grooming gang activity and (b) associated institutional failures.

Rupert Lowe: [\[44183\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will offer (a) safeguarding and (b) witness protection support to (i) victims and (ii) whistleblowers that give evidence to the hon. Member for Great Yarmouth's private inquiry into grooming gangs.

Rupert Lowe: [\[44187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what (a) mental health and (b) trauma support services are available to survivors of grooming gangs who participate in non-statutory inquiries.

Rupert Lowe: [\[44188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will meet with the hon. Member for Great Yarmouth to discuss his private inquiry into grooming gangs.

Rupert Lowe: [\[44189\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if her Department will provide a liaison contact to assist with the hon. Member for Great Yarmouth's inquiry into grooming gangs.

Rupert Lowe: [\[44191\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing anonymised (a) data and (b) reports to support the hon. Member for Great Yarmouth's inquiry into grooming gangs.

Rupert Lowe: [\[44194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will instruct relevant Departmental officials to engage with the hon. Member for Great Yarmouth's inquiry into grooming gangs.

Rupert Lowe: [\[44338\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will instruct relevant Departmental officials to engage with the hon. Member for Great Yarmouth's inquiry into grooming gangs.

Jess Phillips:

I refer the Hon Member to the various statements to the House made on these issues by Home Office ministers in recent months. Most recently on 8 April.

■ **Passports: Applications**

Jim Shannon: [\[42448\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many first time applications there were for British passports in 2024.

Seema Malhotra:

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

■ **Police: Biometrics**

Mr Gregory Campbell: [\[43831\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has made an assessment of the potential implications for her policies of police use of live facial recognition technology.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Government supports the police use of live facial recognition technology and will continue to ensure the right balance is struck between ensuring public safety and safeguarding individuals' rights.

■ **Police: Employers' Contributions**

Wendy Morton: [\[42588\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what funding she has allocated to frontline policing to mitigate changes to employer National Insurance contributions.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The 2025-26 final police funding settlement provides funding of up to £19.6 billion for the policing system in England and Wales. This is an overall increase of up to £1.2 billion when compared to the 2024-25 and represents a 6.4% cash increase and 3.9% real terms increase in funding.

This includes an additional £230.3 million of funding for territorial police forces to cover the costs of the increases to National Insurance Contributions.

■ **Police: Freedom of Information**

Charlie Dewhirst: [\[42612\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has had discussions with the National Police Chiefs' Council on the handling of FOI requests by the Central Referral Unit.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Responding to Freedom of Information requests and ensuring compliance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 is a matter for the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC), or any public authority which receives such a request.

■ **Refugees**

Euan Stainbank: [42862]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what guidance her Department has issued to refugees on the process of applying for indefinite leave to remain.

Seema Malhotra:

Guidance setting out the rules on settlement protection for refugees is available on GOV.UK at: [Settlement protection](#).

■ **Resettlement: Chagossians**

David Simmonds: [42869]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to support people of Chagossian descent who arrive in the UK.

David Simmonds: [42871]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 18 March 2025 to Question 37161 on Resettlement: Chagossians, what information her Department holds on the costs incurred by local authorities for the provision of statutory support for recent migrants of Chagossian descent.

David Simmonds: [42872]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 18 March 2025 to Question 37161 on Resettlement: Chagossians, if she will publish the costs for the provision of statutory support claimed by each local authority as of 31 March 2025.

David Simmonds: [42873]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 18 March 2025 to Question 37161 on Resettlement: Chagossians, whether Hillingdon Council has claimed costs for the statutory provision of support for Chagossians who have recently migrated to the UK.

David Simmonds: [42874]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to help ensure that people of Chagossian descent who are planning to move to the UK are offered help with finding permanent accommodation.

David Simmonds: [\[42875\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what information her Department holds on the number of people of Chagossian descent who have arrived at Heathrow Airport since 1 July 2024.

Seema Malhotra:

I refer the Hon Member to the answer I gave on 18 March to Question 37161.

David Simmonds: [\[42870\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has had discussions with local authorities on the potential impact of migrants from the Chagos Islands on levels of service provision.

Seema Malhotra:

The Home Office has made funding available to support local authorities in meeting their statutory duties in relation to Chagossian British citizens arriving in the UK. Alongside other responsible departments, the Home Office continues to engage in discussions and work with the local authorities most impacted by the arrival of Chagossian British citizens in the UK.

■ Security Guards: Licensing

Susan Murray: [\[42685\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the private security licencing regime.

Dan Jarvis:

The Security Industry Authority (SIA) has been brought under the Security Minister's portfolio in a move that will ensure that the SIA is provided clear, strategic direction from the Home Office on both regulation of the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill and also the Private Security Industry Act moving forward. The Home Office and the SIA are overseeing a substantial programme of work to ensure that the SIA can deliver for the public. This will include:

- tightening existing safeguards, to ensure that those who present a risk to the public cannot access an SIA licence.
- work to ensure criminality is driven out of the industry, including a review of the SIA's investigation and enforcement remit, powers and tools for its current role.

Susan Murray: [\[42694\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department has taken in response to Recommendation MR8 of the Manchester Arena Inquiry on business licensing in the private security sector.

Dan Jarvis:

The Government is committed to reviewing the recommendations of the Manchester Arena Inquiry with a view to delivering better uniformity of standards in the private security industry, enhanced provision of security services, and effective counter-

terrorism measures. Home Office officials are working with the SIA to ensure criminality continues to be driven out of the industry, and this includes a review of the SIA's investigation and enforcement remit, powers and tools.

■ Shops: Money Laundering

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[42210\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to tackle money laundering in (a) shops and (b) other services using high street premises.

Dan Jarvis:

The Government recognises that cash intensive businesses such as barber shops and nails bars can be exploited by criminals who seek to legitimise their criminal cash, enabling them to profit from their illegal activities. Addressing cash-based money laundering is one of the strategic priorities of the National Economic Crime Centre, which sits within the National Crime Agency, who are currently working with partners to drive an increased operational response to this threat, including money laundering through cash intensive businesses.

In parallel, the National Police Chiefs Council economic crime co-ordinators are engaged in the development of Clear Hold Build strategies to help police forces tackle serious and organised crime. Clear Hold Build aims to reclaim and rebuild neighbourhoods affected by organised crime and increase public confidence in the police and partner agencies. This includes tackling financial crime on the high street.

While businesses such as barber shops are not regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority they interact with regulated businesses, such as banks, who under the Money Laundering Regulations are required to undertake customer due diligence and under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 submit reports to the National Crime Agency if they suspect money laundering.

■ South Wales Police: CCTV

David Chadwick:

[\[42993\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has issued guidance to South Wales Police on the roll-out of facial recognition surveillance in a city-wide CCTV network.

Dame Diana Johnson:

All police forces are expected comply with existing legislation and published guidance when they use facial recognition technology. In particular, when forces use live facial recognition, they must comply with the College of Policing's Authorised Professional Practice. Its use must always be justified and pass the tests of necessity, proportionality and use for a policing purpose.

■ Vetting

Luke Akehurst: [\[42791\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what demographic information is held about the subjects of DBS checks in England and Wales.

Jess Phillips:

The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) is operationally independent from the Home Office and as such the Home Office does not hold any demographic information about the subjects of DBS checks in England and Wales. The DBS itself only holds demographic information that is mandatory for the processing of disclosure checks and barring referrals.

■ Visas: Seasonal Workers

Chris Law: [\[42556\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 18 March 2025 to Question 37197 on Visas: Seasonal Workers, what steps she is taking to facilitate Scheme Operators in enforcing welfare on farms.

Seema Malhotra:

UKVI Seasonal Agricultural Worker Officers visit farms, interviewing both workers and farm managers to ensure that worker welfare, accommodation standards, as well as pay and conditions meet the requirements of the route.

Regular bi-monthly meetings are held with the licensed sponsors to ensure any complaints raised or issues identified are addressed as soon as possible.

Should systemic issues relating to worker welfare be identified that are not acted upon, UKVI will consider taking punitive action against the associated provider, up to and including the revocation of their licence.

■ Voyeurism

Uma Kumaran: [\[42919\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to tackle upskirting.

Uma Kumaran: [\[42920\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to help reduce the number of incidences of upskirting.

Jess Phillips:

Tackling violence against women and girls (VAWG) is a top priority for this Government and we are committed to addressing all forms of VAWG, including non-contact sexual offences, such as exposure and voyeurism (such as so-called 'upskirting').

Through the Crime and Policing Bill, three new offences will be introduced, for the taking of intimate images without consent, alongside two offences for the installation

of equipment with intent to enable these offences. This will cover a broader range of behaviour than the two existing voyeurism offences that they will replace.

We will continue to work with law enforcement agencies to ensure that the right powers are available for the authorities to tackle sexual crimes, bring perpetrators to justice and manage sex offenders. More broadly, we will be publishing a new VAWG Strategy later this year, taking forward our unprecedented mission to halve VAWG over the next decade.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Anti-Muslim Hatred/Islamophobia Definition Working Group

Kevin Hollinrake:

[41858]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 14 March 2025 to Question 36103 on Islamophobia, what the public appointment process will be.

Alex Norris:

The Anti-Muslim Hatred/Islamophobia working group has been established to provide government with a working definition of Anti-Muslim Hatred which is reflective of a wide range of perspectives and priorities of British Muslims. The Working Group is made up of representatives from Muslim communities, independent experts, and academics.

Full membership details of the Anti-Muslim Hatred/Islamophobia Definition Working Group have been [published](#) on GOV.UK. The Government expects all holders of public office to work to the highest personal and professional standards. Further details of the Government's [public appointments](#) process and the [Governance Code of Public Appointments](#) can be found on GOV.UK.

Kevin Hollinrake:

[42249]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether the members of the working group on the definition of Islamophobia will be remunerated; and what is the process by which they have been selected.

Alex Norris:

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

■ Care Homes: Fire Prevention**James Wild:** [\[43204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department has received any representations on fire safety guidance and the time within which care homes should aim to evacuate residents from protected areas.

Alex Norris:

The Fire Risk Assessment: Residential Care guide is being updated as part of a major work programme to update all fire safety guidance under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, and will address evacuation times in premises such as care homes. This work is currently expected to run over the next couple of years given the number of guides in development, the detailed policy work required and the differing expert views regarding care home evacuation times.

■ Civil Society: Islam**Kevin Hollinrake:** [\[39872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 3 March 2025 to Question 31935 on Civil Society: Islam, how such decisions are (a) recorded and (b) communicated to teams within her Department.

Alex Norris:

The responsibility for decisions around who departments engage with sits with respective departments and the appropriate policy areas. All policy decisions are taken and recorded in the usual way, as per standard practice.

■ Community Development: Disadvantaged**Luke Akehurst:** [\[43389\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of establishing mission critical neighbourhoods, as defined by the Independent Commission on Neighbourhoods, on the effectiveness of the Government's policies on tackling (a) deprivation and (b) other issues.

Luke Akehurst: [\[43390\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when she expects to receive the final report of the Independent Commission on Neighbourhoods.

Alex Norris:

This Government has recently announced the Plan for Neighbourhoods, a £1.5 billion programme to invest in 75 areas over the next decade, offering a long-term strategy to fix the foundations of places that have been left behind. This plan will help to tackle deprivation at the root cause, creating neighbourhoods where people can thrive, communities are stronger, and people have control over the things that matter to them. In each of these areas, we will help set up a Neighbourhood Board, bringing

together residents, local businesses, and grassroots campaigners to draw up a new vision for their neighbourhood. I welcome the launch of the Independent Commission on Neighbourhood's interim report and look forward to seeing, their insights on how we can build on this agenda to support the most in need neighbourhoods.

■ Democracy and Elections

Kevin Hollinrake: [\[43094\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 20 March 2025 to Question 38627 on Democracy and Elections, if she will name each of the stakeholders who have been consulted to date.

Rushanara Ali:

The Government engages with a broad range of stakeholders including local authorities, Civil Society Organisations and electoral bodies including the Electoral Commission, the Association of Electoral Administrators, The Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and the Scottish Assessors' Association. The Government is committed to working proactively and collaboratively with those groups where the Government's ambitious agenda for electoral reform will have the most impact and we will continue to build on these trusted relationships.

■ Holiday Accommodation

Carla Denyer: [\[43634\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what her planned timetable is for (a) introducing a registration scheme for short-term lets, (b) removing the furnished holiday let rules to ensure all income from property will be treated the same for tax purposes and (c) concluding her consideration of what additional powers she might give local authorities to enable them to respond to the pressures created by short-term lets.

Matthew Pennycook:

The government remains committed to introducing a national mandatory registration scheme for short-term lets. The initial phase of digital development is now complete, and public testing is planned to start in the next 12 months. Further details about the implementation of the scheme will be announced in due course.

The furnished holiday lettings rules cease to apply in tax years commencing on or after 6 April 2025 for Income Tax and for Capital Gains Tax, and 1 April 2025 for Corporation Tax and for Corporation Tax on chargeable gains. This was enacted by the Finance Act 2025.

We are considering what further powers we might give to local authorities to enable them to respond to the pressures created by second homes and short-term lets. We will announce further details on this in due course.

■ Homelessness: Finance

Neil Duncan-Jordan: [\[43386\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans she has to review cross-Government spending on tackling homelessness, in the context of the Spending Review.

Rushanara Ali:

As part of the current Spending Review, the government will be reviewing all spending across government, including spend on tackling homelessness. The Deputy Prime Minister is leading cross-government work to deliver the long-term solutions we need to get us back on track to ending homelessness. This includes chairing a dedicated Inter-Ministerial Group, bringing together ministers from across government to develop a long-term strategy.

■ Homes England: Equality

Kevin Hollinrake: [\[43085\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 3 March 2025 to Question 32222 on Homes England: Equality, whether this expenditure was signed off by the Principle Accounting Officer for Homes England.

Alex Norris:

The Whitehall Diversity & Industry Group (WIG) Diversity & Inclusion event is a conference with key note speakers, panel discussions and interactive sessions and therefore does not fall under the EDI restrictions and/or require sign off from the Principal Accounting Officer for Homes England.

■ Housing: Construction

Lewis Cocking: [\[903642\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to ensure that adequate infrastructure is in place before new housing is built.

Matthew Pennycook:

The government recognises the importance of ensuring that new housing development is supported by appropriate infrastructure.

The revised National Planning Policy Framework published 12 December included changes designed to improve the provision and modernisation of various types of public infrastructure.

The government is also committed to strengthening the existing system of developer contributions to ensure new developments provide the necessary infrastructure communities expect.

■ Housing: Energy Performance Certificates

Samantha Niblett:

[\[43322\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that purchasers are not financially disadvantaged by incorrect EPC certificates.

Alex Norris:

The Energy Performance of Buildings Regulations 2012 place a duty on accreditation schemes to ensure that Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) are produced in a consistent and accurate manner and the energy assessors are suitably qualified and experienced to carry out their duties. Government regularly audits accreditation scheme to assess whether they are fulfilling their duties and takes action to address any issues found.

We have recently consulted on EPC Reforms including proposals to improve the accuracy and reliability of Energy Performance Certificates. This includes reviewing the training standards of energy assessors and strengthening auditing processes to more effectively capture and correct errors. We have also proposed that additional metrics be added to EPCs to provide a broader perspective on building performance, alongside measures to make the underlying data used to calculate these metrics more transparent. This increased transparency will allow any errors to be identified sooner and corrected.

■ Levelling Up Fund: Lancashire

Mr Andrew Snowden:

[\[43158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what her plans are for projects that received funding through the Levelling Up Fund in (a) Fylde and (b) Lancashire.

Alex Norris:

The Levelling Up Fund is fully committed, with £4.8 billion going to 271 projects across the UK. In Lancashire this includes 10 projects worth £260 million.

We are supporting Local Authorities to help deliver the benefits of this investment to communities across the UK.

■ Local Government: Elections

Martin Wrigley:

[\[43235\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she has plans to repeal part 1, Schedule 13 of the Elections Act 2022.

Rushanara Ali:

I refer the hon Member to the answer given to Question UIN [23541](#) on 22 January 2025.

■ Members: Correspondence**Steve Darling:** [\[44062\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when she plans to reply to correspondence of 17 January 2025 from the hon. Member for Torbay on local government reorganisation; and if she will meet with the hon. Member for Torbay to discuss this issue.

Jim McMahon:

I will respond to the letter imminently.

■ Private Rented Housing: Bournemouth East**Tom Hayes:** [\[903638\]](#)

What steps her Department is taking to improve standards in the private rented sector in Bournemouth East constituency.

Matthew Pennycook:

Our Renters' Rights Bill will deliver the government's manifesto commitment to transform the experience of private renting, including by applying a Decent Homes Standard to the private rented sector to drive up standards within it.

■ Tell MAMA: Finance**Kevin Hollinrake:** [\[41854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Answer by Lord Khan of Burnley of 13 March 2025, Official Report, House of Lords, Column 822, whether the grant funding agreement with Tell MAMA has been signed.

Alex Norris:

As with all government funding, funding to Tell MAMA is subject to grant funding agreements which are rightly kept under constant review and are subject to continued monitoring and evaluation. Following Tell MAMA's signing of the required Grant Funding Agreement, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has made payment for the 2024/25.

■ Temporary Accommodation: Domestic Abuse**Irene Campbell:** [\[903621\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department is taking to provide safe accommodation for victims of domestic abuse.

Rushanara Ali:

Local authorities in England must ensure that support is available in safe accommodation for domestic abuse victims who need it. My Department has allocated £160 million for 2025-26, a £30 million uplift from the previous year. That

funding is for local authorities to commission lifesaving support for victims in safe accommodation.

JUSTICE

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Alicia Kearns:

[44110]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what plans her Department has to review the use of automatism as a legal defence.

Alex Davies-Jones:

There are no current plans for the Government to review the defence of automatism.

■ Child Trust Fund

John Milne:

[44038]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if the Minister of State for Courts and Justice will meet with the hon. Member for Horsham to discuss the Child Trust Fund campaign.

Sarah Sackman:

As he acknowledged in his letter to me dated 02 March 2025, the Hon. Member for Horsham is aware that I am happy to meet with him regarding locked Child Trust Funds.

My office will be in touch to agree a mutually convenient date.

■ Coroners

Joe Robertson:

[44031]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the time taken for coroner inquests on the issuing of Prevention of Future Death reports.

Alex Davies-Jones:

Regulation 28(3) of the Coroners (Investigations) Regulations 2013 provides that a Prevention of Future Death report may not be made until a coroner has considered all the documents, evidence and information that, in the opinion of the coroner, are relevant to an investigation. The Chief Coroner has issued Guidance for coroners on reports to prevent future deaths, including on the timing of any report in the context of an individual investigation. The Guidance is available at: [Reports to prevent future deaths \(PFDs\) - Courts and Tribunals Judiciary](#).

The Government is committed to supporting an inquest process which is as swift as possible and which puts the bereaved families at the heart of the process. We recognise the impact of delays on bereaved families and wider systems and will continue to work closely with the Chief Coroner, Local Authorities and other key partners to reform and deliver a framework for the future development of coroner services.

■ Coroners: Standards

Joe Robertson: [\[42946\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the average waiting times are for coroner inquests in each region.

Joe Robertson: [\[42949\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, which coroner jurisdictions have the longest inquest wait times; and what steps she is taking to bring them in line with national averages.

Alex Davies-Jones:

The requested information is available in, or can be extrapolated from, the Coroner Statistics 2023 which are published at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/coroners-statistics-2023>. Statistics for 2024 will be published on 08 May 2025.

The Government is committed to supporting an inquest process which is as swift as possible and which puts the bereaved families at the heart of the process. We recognise the impact of delays on bereaved families and wider systems and will continue to work closely with the Chief Coroner, Local Authorities and other key partners to reform and deliver a framework for the future development of coroner services.

■ Courts: Greater Manchester

Mrs Elsie Blundell: [\[42702\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps she is taking to target additional judicial resources toward court settings which are at capacity in Greater Manchester.

Sarah Sackman:

We are continuing to invest in judicial recruitment nationally, across all jurisdictions, with plans to recruit around 1000 judges and tribunal members in 2025-26; and around 2,000 magistrates in 2025-26, and annually thereafter. Following recruitment, regional and court level deployment decisions are a matter for the judiciary, and we support actions to flexibly deploy judges to maximise capacity where it is needed.

Our assessment is that overall there is currently sufficient judicial capacity in the courts in the North West, including Greater Manchester. Any vacancies which may arise as a result of departures are expected to be filled through planned recruitment.

■ Criminal Records

Luke Akehurst: [\[42790\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what proportion of the population of England and Wales has a criminal record.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

To answer the question exactly would be disproportionate costs. The Ministry of Justice holds an extract of data from the Police National Computer (PNC). To obtain data on all those with a criminal record would require collaborating with the Home Office as they hold the complete source data.

In October 2024, the Ministry of Justice [published an ad-hoc statistical publication](#) which estimated that 9.4 million working age people in the UK have a nominal record with a criminal element against their name held on the MoJ extract of the PNC. This is a high-level estimate based on the UK population and is equivalent to 22% of the working aged population (those aged 16-64). This is an estimate with limitations. A comprehensive programme of work would need to be undertaken to determine a precise figure and this would incur disproportionate cost.

■ Data, Statistics and Research on Sex and Gender Independent Review**Tonia Antoniazzi:**[\[43194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 27 March 2025 to Question 40390 on Data, Statistics and Research on Sex and Gender Independent Review, what steps her Department is taking to implement the recommendations of the Sullivan Review.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The Government has now published the independent review of data, statistics and research on sex and gender commissioned by the previous Government.

We will consider the findings of the review alongside our existing data collections and publications, many of which already contain detailed demographic dimensions.

■ Family Proceedings**Dr Marie Tidball:**[\[44154\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether she plans to publish a response to her Department's report entitled, Assessing risk of harm to children and parents in private law children, published in June 2020.

Alex Davies-Jones:

The Ministry of Justice has published a full implementation plan and various updates to the report entitled "Assessing risk of harm to children and parents in private law children cases", which is known as the Harm Panel report. The latest delivery update can be found at: [Assessing Risk of Harm to Children and Parents in Private Law Children Cases - Implementation Plan: delivery update](#).

A core part of the response to the Harm Panel report is the Pathfinder pilot courts. The Pathfinder pilot aims to improve the court experience and outcomes for children and parents involved in private family law proceedings. We recently published a specific update on the Pathfinder model which can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/private-law-pathfinder-delivery-update>.

The report recommended a review of the presumption of parental involvement. The Ministry of Justice has undertaken this review, focusing on the courts' application of the statutory presumption and the exceptions to it, such as in cases where there is evidence that parental involvement will put the child at risk of harm. This review will be published shortly.

■ HMP Latchmere House: Rehabilitation

Josh Babarinde: [\[42652\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether she has made an assessment of the implications for her Department's policies of rehabilitation practices in HMP Latchmere House.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

HMP Latchmere House is no longer operational.

■ Offenders: Rented Housing

Sarah Owen: [\[43939\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps she is taking to reduce the number of young people recalled to prison due to landlord refusal to install home monitoring equipment.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Recall is a vital tool to protect the public.

Recalling a child to custody is a last resort. Local Youth Offending Teams will explore other options before deciding to recall a child. This could include a curfew that is not electronically monitored but managed by Youth Offending Teams instead.

Adult offenders released on home detention curfew are still serving the custodial element of their sentence and it is a statutory requirement that the curfew is electronically monitored for at least 9 hours a day. In cases where it is no longer possible to electronically monitor offenders in the community, through no fault of their own, they will be recalled until it is possible for them to be monitored in the community.

■ Prisoners: Accident and Emergency Departments

Ben Goldsborough: [\[43674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps her Department is taking to reduce delays in prisoners accessing emergency hospital care.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Prison governors are responsible for ensuring that their establishments respond promptly and appropriately to medical emergencies, and that prison staff are aware of their own responsibilities and of the local procedures in place to support a streamlined response.

Responses to medical emergencies in prisons are undertaken and monitored locally by both prison staff and healthcare staff. Prison staff will secure the attendance of

medical staff. During the day, or where a prison has 24-hour healthcare, commissioned healthcare staff will assess what intervention is needed and determine whether hospital treatment is required. Prison staff will arrange for an ambulance to attend, if needed, and escort it to the nearest, safest point of access to the patient, ensuring arrival and departure times of ambulances are recorded locally.

Any incidents, including the time taken to respond, are discussed between prison and healthcare staff, either as part of a full debrief (in the case of the most serious incidents) or as part of the regular daily reflection on the events of the previous day.

■ Sentencing

Sir John Hayes:

[\[42407\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will take steps to override the Sentencing Council's guidance entitled Imposition of community and custodial sentences - Effective from 1 April 2025.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

This Government's position is clear: we are seeking to remove the unequal treatment before the law in these guidelines.

In the first instance, the Lord Chancellor used her power under the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 and asked the Sentencing Council to reconsider their guidance. On 01 April, we introduced legislation to address the specific issue with these guidelines.

The Sentencing Council have now put the guidelines on pause – we are grateful for their constructive engagement on this issue.

We will also consider a broader review of the Sentencing Council's role and powers over the coming months. It is right that we take the time to consider more fundamental reforms.

■ Youth Custody: Self-harm

Ben Goldsborough:

[\[43672\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps her Department is taking to help reduce incidence of self harm on the secure estate.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

We recognise that rates of self-harm across the estate are high, and we are taking action to address this.

We provide individualised support through our case management process for people assessed as at risk of self-harm. This approach places a strong emphasis on identifying individual risks, triggers and protective factors and having effective care plans in place to record, address and mitigate risks.

All new staff receive suicide and self-harm prevention and mental health awareness training, to increase skills in supporting at-risk prisoners.

We fund Samaritans to train prisoners to provide emotional support to other prisoners in crisis (the Listener Scheme).

LEADER OF THE HOUSE

■ Government Departments: Written Questions

Kevin Hollinrake: [\[43090\]](#)

To ask the Leader of the House, pursuant to the Answer of 19 March 2025 to Question 37209 on Government Departments: Written Questions, whether it is her policy that if information would be released under the Environmental Information Regulations it should also be released in response to a written Parliamentary Question.

Lucy Powell:

I refer the Hon. Member to the response provided to Question [37209](#), which answers his question.

I encourage the Hon. Member to raise any specific issues they may have regarding PQ responses with myself and my office.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Coroners: Clonoe

Alex Easton: [\[43299\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of the findings of the Clonoe Inquest.

Hilary Benn:

Following careful consideration, on 22 March 2025 the Ministry of Defence wrote to the Coroner to outline its intention to apply for a judicial review. In the Government's view, the findings of the Coroner do not properly reflect the context of the incident, nor the challenging circumstances in which members of the armed forces served in Northern Ireland. The MoD has also confirmed that it is funding the veterans in question to seek a judicial review and it is continuing to provide them with welfare support.

As I explained in the debate on this issue in the House on 2 April 2025, the almost universally opposed Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act 2023 Act has been found by the domestic courts to be unlawful in a number of respects. I am consulting widely, including with veterans, and plan to bring forward replacement legislation which is fair, balanced, proportionate and compatible with our international and domestic human rights obligations.

■ Data, Statistics and Research on Sex and Gender Independent Review**Tonia Antoniazzi:**[\[43201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to the Answer of 27 March 2025 to Question 40390 on Data, Statistics and Research on Sex and Gender Independent Review, if he will have discussions with his counterparts in Northern Ireland on the potential implications for their policies of the recommendations of the Sullivan Review.

Hilary Benn:

The government has now published the independent review of data, statistics and research on sex and gender commissioned by the previous government.

We are considering the findings in light of ongoing policy work in this area.

■ Import Controls: Northern Ireland**Alex Easton:**[\[42935\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what discussions he has had with the Northern Ireland Government on the potential impact of border checks in the Irish Sea on the (a) availability and (b) shelf life of perishable goods in supermarkets in Northern Ireland.

Hilary Benn:

The Windsor Framework protects the UK internal market by ensuring the smooth flow of trade across the whole of the UK. Certain checks are required on goods moving through the UK Internal Market System as part of a risk-based and intelligence-led approach to tackling criminality, abuse of the scheme, smuggling and disease risks.

■ UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland**Alex Easton:**[\[42938\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what steps he is taking to improve Northern Ireland's (a) constitutional and (b) economic links with the rest of the United Kingdom.

Hilary Benn:

In line with the Good Friday Agreement and the principle of consent upon which it rests, Northern Ireland will remain a part of the United Kingdom for as long as a majority of its people wish for it to be.

The Government is committed to continuing to take forward Safeguarding the Union, and to protecting Northern Ireland's place in the UK internal market. In February we launched Intertrade UK, which will advise on opportunities to promote and boost trade across the UK, including strengthening East West trade.

We are also committed to seeking a SPS/veterinary agreement with the EU, which could deliver tangible benefits for businesses across the UK and further smooth the flow of trade between Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY**■ 5G: Infrastructure****Blake Stephenson:**[\[42671\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the time taken for decisions on planning applications to be made on the rollout of new (a) 5G and (b) 5GSA infrastructure.

Chris Bryant:

The Government's ambition is to deliver nationwide coverage of standalone 5G to all populated areas by 2030.

Most wireless infrastructure, including ground-based masts and rooftop antennas, benefit from permitted development rights. This means that mobile operators can upgrade to 5G more quickly.

In addition, the Chancellor announced £46 million investment into the planning system for 2025-2026 to support the deployment of infrastructure. The Government has also committed to appointing 300 new planning officers into local planning authorities. As part of our determination to strip away unnecessary and disproportionate regulatory burden, the government is considering whether further changes to planning regulations are required to reduce barriers to digital infrastructure deployment.

Blake Stephenson:[\[42672\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of Net Neutrality Regulations in England on the rate at which new (a) 5G and (b) 5GSA infrastructure is rolled out.

Chris Bryant:

The Government's ambition is for the UK to have nationwide coverage of high-quality standalone 5G in all populated areas by 2030. From 2023 onwards, operators began deploying standalone 5G in locations across all four nations and are continuing to upgrade their networks.

The Government is committed to ensuring we have the right policy and regulatory framework to support operators to achieve this ambition. This includes working with operators to understand how net neutrality rules could support operators' ability to provide innovative forms of connectivity and not act as a barrier to investment in their networks.

■ Animal Experiments**Ben Obese-Jecty:**[\[44068\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how much was allocated to Three Rs funding in the 2024-25 financial year; and how much he plans to allocate in the 2025-26 financial year.

Feryal Clark:

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) has a diverse portfolio of direct investments in the 3Rs and supports research that underpins advancements in this area. From April 2020 - 2025 UKRI invested ~£10m /year in the NC3Rs. The combined investment in this area in 2024/25 is expected to be ~£26m, including additional £5m funding to the NC3Rs from DSIT. We cannot confirm the 2025/26 allocation, as UKRI is currently conducting a strategic review of the NC3Rs to determine the optimal level of future investment. This approach ensures decisions are informed by rigorous analysis and are aligned with UKRI's long-term goals.

Artificial Intelligence**Mr Gregory Campbell:**[\[43832\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of the Data (Use and Access) Bill on the development of artificial intelligence models.

Chris Bryant:

Compliance, productivity and familiarisation costs savings of Artificial Intelligence and machine learning reforms in the Data (Use and Access) Bill have been considered and can be found in the indirect benefits and costs sections of the impact assessment (IA). The ethical assessment can also be found in the impact on individuals section. The assessment of the effect on different organisations by size and sector can be found in the small and micro business assessment section of the IA [here](#) (particularly, Table 14, 24, 25, 26 & 34).

Arts: Artificial Intelligence**Anneliese Midgley:**[\[42881\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to ensure that generative AI developers are obliged to disclose the use of creative works in AI training.

Feryal Clark:

The Government's consultation on copyright and AI closed on 25 February. This sought views on a proposal to require AI model developers to be more transparent about how they obtain and use copyright works in their training.

Our priority now is to review the evidence from the consultation which will inform the Government response, including any legislative proposals.

Broadband: Power Failures**Ben Lake:**[\[43570\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he has had recent discussions with Ofcom on increasing the four-hour minimum time requirement for power backup during power outages in the broadband phone network.

Chris Bryant:

Communication providers have statutory responsibilities to take appropriate and proportionate steps to provide resilient networks and services. Ofcom published guidance in September 2024 on the measures that providers can take to meet those responsibilities, which sets out that power backup of at least four hours is good practice for active fixed access equipment in cabinets at the point of installation.

Ofcom also requires providers to ensure customers making calls over broadband are able to make emergency calls in the event of a power cut at their premises for a minimum of one hour. On 14 March, Vodafone, BT, KCOM and Zen Internet announced that they will introduce a Broadband Battery Backup capable of powering routers for four-to-seven hours. This follows the agreement of the Checklist for Non-Voluntary Migrations agreed by providers in November 2024.

Ofcom are reviewing the power resilience of mobile networks, and on 10 February announced work they may complete to review power outages affect broadband networks in the UK.

■ Broadband: Rural Areas**Henry Tufnell:**[\[43717\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps his Department plans to take to ensure that Physical Infrastructure Access fees structures enable the wider roll out of full fibre broadband to rural areas.

Henry Tufnell:[\[43718\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether his Department has made an assessment of the (a) potential impact of Physical Infrastructure Access fees on the rollout of full fibre broadband to rural areas by Alternative Network Providers and (b) the adequacy of the Physical Infrastructure Access fee pricing structure.

Chris Bryant:

The government is committed to delivering 2030 nationwide gigabit connectivity, including in rural areas. The government's strategy supports market entry and expansion by alternative network operators via access to Openreach's ducts, poles, and other utility infrastructure, through the Physical Infrastructure Access (PIA) framework.

Ofcom governs the PIA framework, with powers to impose access conditions on electronic communications networks, enabling third party infrastructure access on fair and reasonable terms, conditions and charges, and without undue discrimination.

The government supports this framework but will not intervene in independent Ofcom decisions regarding the PIA fee pricing structure.

■ Chemical Engineering

Mary Kelly Foy: [\[43495\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps his Department plans to take to engage with chemical engineers on ensuring the future of chemical engineering is sustainable.

Feryal Clark:

The government is committed to transitioning to a circular economy and has convened a Circular Economy Taskforce of experts to develop a Circular Economy Strategy for England. 'Chemicals and plastics' is one of the five priority sectors, and the Taskforce are extensively engaging with industry leaders and other key stakeholders within the sector. Through UK Research and Innovation, the government is also supporting chemical engineers through schemes such as the £22 million Sustainable Chemicals and Materials Manufacturing hub and a £4.6 million Centre for Doctoral Training in Sustainable Chemical Technologies, training new leaders in sustainable chemical technologies.

■ Data, Statistics and Research on Sex and Gender Independent Review

Tonia Antoniazzi: [\[43177\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, pursuant to the Answer of 27 March 2025 to Question 40390 on Data, Statistics and Research on Sex and Gender Independent Review, what steps her Department is taking to implement the recommendations of the Sullivan Review.

Feryal Clark:

The government has now published the independent review of data, statistics and research on sex and gender commissioned by the previous government.

We are considering the findings in light of ongoing policy work in this area.

Dr Ben Spencer: [\[43556\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, when his Department received the Sullivan Review of Data, Statistics and Research on Sex and Gender, published on 19 March 2025.

Feryal Clark:

The Review was received by the department on 23rd September 2024.

■ Intimate Image Abuse: Internet

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[42603\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what recent discussions he has had with Ofcom on its enforcement powers relating to the non-consensual posting of intimate images.

Feryal Clark:

The DSIT Secretary of State and officials regularly meet with Ofcom to discuss the Online Safety Act and enforcement.

The Online Safety Act gives platforms new duties to proactively tackle the most harmful content on their services. This includes intimate image abuse, which is a priority harm under the regulations. Ofcom has robust enforcement powers to sanction companies who do not comply with these new duties. It can require companies to take measures to return to compliance, impose substantial fines, or apply to the courts for business disruption measures.

Mobile Phones: Rural Areas**Stuart Anderson:**[\[37275\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps his Department is taking to help increase mobile phone coverage.

Chris Bryant:

The government wants all areas of the UK to benefit from reliable and good quality mobile coverage.

4G geographic coverage from at least one mobile operator has now reached over 95% of the UK landmass through the Shared Rural Network. The programme is continuing to deliver 4G mobile connectivity to places where there is either limited or no coverage.

Our ambition is for all populated areas having higher-quality standalone 5G by 2030, and we are committed to ensuring we have the right policy and regulatory framework to support investment and competition. As part of this work, the government intends to reform the planning system to make it easier to build digital infrastructure. We have also increased funding for our 5G Innovation Region programme to £43 million to drive adoption of standalone 5G across key sectors.

We will continue working with Ofcom to ensure that their coverage reporting is more accurate.

New Businesses: Investment**Chi Onwurah:**[\[43861\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how Innovate UK supports (a) start-ups and (b) scale-ups in meeting the requirements of potential investors.

Feryal Clark:

Innovate UK has several targeted approaches to support innovative SMEs that increase their investment readiness. From 2020-2024, SMEs supported by Innovate UK Business Growth have raised over £9bn in private sector investment. In its current spending review planning, Innovate UK is further prioritising how their overall support is strengthened to provide a smooth innovation journey from start-up to

scale-up alongside working in closer partnership with other ecosystem partners such as the Scale-up Institute and British Business Bank.

SCOTLAND

■ Data, Statistics and Research on Sex and Gender Independent Review

Tonia Antoniazzi:

[\[43200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to the Answer of 27 March 2025 to Question 40390 on Data, Statistics and Research on Sex and Gender Independent Review, if he will have discussions with the Scottish Government on the potential implications for their policies of the recommendations of the Sullivan Review.

Ian Murray:

The government has now published the independent review of data, statistics and research on sex and gender commissioned by the previous government.

We are considering the findings in light of ongoing policy work in this area.

Officials and Ministers engage frequently with Scottish Government counterparts on a range of issues that matter to the people of Scotland.

TRANSPORT

■ A19: Roundabouts

Emma Foody:

[\[42601\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her Department holds information on levels of congestion on Moor Farm Roundabout between the A19, A1 and A189.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Department holds and publishes data on the average speed and delay for both the strategic road network, of which the A19 and A1 form part, and locally managed 'A' roads, of which the A189 forms part. Datasets are available on the Department for Transport's website for the strategic road network

(<https://dft.maps.arcgis.com/apps/instant/portfolio/index.html?appid=0e99fa1f832d4f5cb240ab7e0fca0d46>) and the local road network

(<https://dft.maps.arcgis.com/apps/instant/portfolio/index.html?appid=d16db07065864eb0a29df1ea9152590d>).

It is important to note that although figures are produced for average speed and average delay on both the Local 'A' and SRN networks, methodological differences between the Local 'A' road and SRN data prevents direct comparison between the two road types.

■ A27: Chichester**Jess Brown-Fuller:** [\[43294\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps National Highways are taking to reduce congestion on the A27 through Chichester.

Lilian Greenwood:

National Highways has developed a number of options to improve the performance of the A27 through Chichester as part of the pipeline of projects being considered for possible delivery in a future Road Investment Strategy, beyond 2031.

Jess Brown-Fuller: [\[43295\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps National Highways are taking to improve road safety at roundabouts on the A27 in Chichester.

Lilian Greenwood:

The safety of road users is National Highways' top priority, and the company regularly reviews the safety performance of the strategic road network. Options identified by National Highways as part of the development of proposals within the RIS pipeline would seek to improve the safety performance of the A27, particularly at the junctions to the south of Chichester.

■ Air Routes: Ghana**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** [\[43607\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions she has had with British Airways on (a) the management of its UK-Ghana route, (b) service standards and (c) passenger experience.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[43611\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has had discussions with British Airways on (a) the scheduling, (b) route changes and (c) operational decisions impacting UK-Ghana flights.

Mike Kane:

DfT officials hold regular discussions with airlines, airports and international partners, including Ghana, to facilitate global connectivity. Routes operated, and the management of those routes, are commercial decisions made freely by airlines as an independent business. As these are commercial decisions, the DfT has not had any discussions with British Airways on the management of its UK-Ghana route. The UK Civil Aviation Authority would undertake any discussions with British Airways if the airline was not meeting any of its regulatory requirement standards.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[43609\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of the affordability of flights between the UK and Ghana.

Mike Kane:

The UK aviation industry operates in the private sector, and each airline is responsible for setting its own fare structures, within a competitive market. However, they must be transparent about what the ticket price includes, helping passengers to make informed decisions about booking flights that meet their needs.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[43610\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of encouraging increased airline competition on the UK-Ghana route.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[43612\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions she has had with her Ghanaian counterparts on bilateral aviation agreements to improve connectivity and competition on the UK-Ghana route.

Mike Kane:

DfT officials met with their Ghanaian counterparts in August 2024 and agreed an updated UK-Ghana Air Service Agreement. The new Air Service Agreement enables further connectivity between the two countries as a result of the extension of traffic rights. The updated ownership and control provisions within the agreement also widens the potential for airline investment and the opportunity for airlines to enter the market resulting in increased competition on the UK-Ghana route.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[43613\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of British Airways' operational decisions on UK-Ghana business and tourism links.

Mike Kane:

DfT officials hold regular discussions with airlines, airports and international partners, including Ghana, to facilitate global connectivity. Routes operated, and the flights on those routes, are a commercial decision made by airlines. As this is a commercial decision, the DfT has not undertaken any assessment on British Airways' operational decisions on its UK-Ghana service. The UK-Ghana Air Services Agreement provides opportunity for growth in UK-Ghana market.

■ Aviation: Ghana**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** [\[43614\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has had recent discussions with British Airways on (a) passenger rights and (b) compensation for (i) delays and (ii) cancellations on UK-Ghana flights.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[43615\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what mechanisms (a) her Department and (b) the Civil Aviation Authority have to hold airlines to account on (i) passenger rights and

(ii) compensation for (1) delays and (2) cancellations on (A) intercontinental flights (B) flights between the UK and Ghana.

Mike Kane:

Regulation (EC) 261/2004 ('Regulation 261') is the UK legislation that sets out passenger rights around assistance, refunds and compensation in the event of long delays and cancellations.

Regulation 261 applies to flights departing from a UK airport, regardless of the airline. It also applies to flights arriving in the UK on an EU or UK airline.

The Civil Aviation Authority is responsible for enforcing Regulation 261.

Government is committed to working with industry and stakeholders to ensure consumers continue to have a high level of protection whilst travelling by air.

■ **Bus Services: Disability**

Martin Wrigley:

[\[42707\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will take steps to enable disabled bus pass users to use their passes at peak times.

Simon Lightwood:

The English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) provides free off-peak bus travel to those with eligible disabilities and those of state pension age. The ENCTS costs around £700 million annually and any changes to the statutory obligations, such as extending the travel time criteria, would therefore need to be carefully considered for its impact on the scheme's financial sustainability. The government recently conducted a review of the ENCTS, which included considering travel times for disabled passholders and is currently considering next steps.

Currently, local authorities in England have the power to go beyond their statutory obligations under the ENCTS and offer additional discretionary concessions, such as extending the travel time criteria for the ENCTS.

The government has confirmed £955 million for the 2025 to 2026 financial year to support and improve bus services in England outside London. This includes £243 million for bus operators and £712 million allocated to local authorities across the country. Devon County Council has been allocated £11.6 million of this funding. Funding allocated to local authorities to improve services for passengers can be used in whichever way they wish. This could include extending the discretionary concessions available in the local area.

■ **Civil Aviation Authority**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[44009\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions she has had with the Civil Aviation Authority on their role in delivering economic growth.

Mike Kane:

I meet with the Chair and the Chief Executive of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) regularly to discuss a range of topics, including the role of the CAA in delivering economic growth. The government's new Action Plan for regulators contains six regulatory pledges from the CAA, alongside the commitments the CAA made in their letter to the Prime Minister in January 2025. The CAA will also play an important role in the planned expansion of Heathrow Airport.

■ Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency: Standards

Blair McDougall: [\[42712\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress her Department has made on reducing the DVLA backlog.

Blair McDougall: [\[42713\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to reduce the DVLA licensing backlog.

Lilian Greenwood:

The quickest and easiest way to transact with the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) is by using its extensive suite of online services. There are no delays or backlogs for vehicle applications or straightforward driving licence applications and customers should receive their documents within a few days following a successful application.

Driving licence applications where a medical condition must be investigated before a licence can be issued can take longer depending on the condition(s) involved and whether further information is required from third parties, for example doctors or other healthcare professionals, before a decision on whether to issue a licence can be made.

■ Driving Tests: Personation

Sir John Hayes: [\[43823\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to tackle people fraudulently impersonating someone else at the practical part of the driving test.

Lilian Greenwood:

To ensure Great Britain's roads remain among the safest in the world, the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) has robust measures in place to stop people using false identities when taking a driving test.

At the start of the driving test, all driving examiners (DE) carry out thorough identification and documentation checks to satisfy themselves of the person's identity, and the validity of the driving licence and theory test pass certificate.

To make it harder for fraudsters to impersonate a candidate, the DVSA has worked in partnership with the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency to give DEs access to an enlarged photograph of the candidate, as shown on the driving licence, to help the

examiner decide if the person presenting for test is the correct candidate. If a candidate fails to satisfy the examiner that they have complied with the requirements, the examiner will, under legislation, refuse to take the test.

All fraudulent activity identified is referred to the DVSA's Investigations and Counter Fraud team for further investigation. DVSA uses intelligence to identify vehicles and individuals involved in previous fraudulent test attempts and consider this when verifying the identity of people taking a theory or practical driving test. DVSA will revoke fraudulently obtained licences where it detects people impersonating someone else at the theory or practical driving test.

■ Driving Tests: Waiting Lists

Sir John Hayes: [\[43822\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has had recent discussions with the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency on delays in booking practical driving tests.

Lilian Greenwood:

I regularly meet with officials from the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) to discuss various topics. I last met with DVSA's Chief Executive Officer, Loveday Ryder, on 18 March 2025 to discuss car practical driving test waiting times and other topics.

■ Driving Tests: Wiltshire

Sarah Gibson: [\[43747\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of trends in the level of driving test waits in Wiltshire; and what steps she is taking to help reduce the backlog.

Sarah Gibson: [\[43755\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to help tackle bots in the DVSA's online booking system for driving tests.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency's (DVSA) main priority is upholding road safety standards while it works hard to reduce car practical driving test waiting times.

The table below shows the number of car practical driving tests booked and available in the 24-week booking window, as of 31 March 2025, for the driving test centres (DTCs) serving customers in Wiltshire:

DTC	CAR PRACTICAL DRIVING TESTS BOOKED	CAR PRACTICAL DRIVING TEST AVAILABLE
Chippenham	2,721	138
Salisbury	1,795	84
Swindon	3,233	144

On the 18 December 2024, DVSA set out further plans to reduce driving test waiting times across the country. These steps include recruiting 450 driving examiners (DEs). [Full details](#) of these steps can be found on GOV.UK.

DVSA continues to recruit DEs DTCs serving customers in Wiltshire and is currently working through the recruitment process from recent campaigns. As part of this, DVSA has four potential new DEs booked on training programmes.

On 31 March 2025, DVSA launched its latest DE recruitment campaign and has two vacancies for the area as part of this.

To ensure fairness for everyone wanting to book a practical driving test, DVSA continues to work hard to combat the unscrupulous practice of reselling tests and has announced further measures to review the driving test booking system.

On the 18 December 2024, a [call for evidence](#) was launched, seeking views on the current rules to book tests. This will lead to consultation on improving processes, with potential future legislative changes.

On 6 January 2025, DVSA introduced new terms and conditions for use of the service driving instructors and trainers use to book and manage practical driving tests for their pupils. Since this change DVSA has issued 25 warnings, 4 suspensions, and closed 90 business accounts.

DVSA has deployed bot protection to help stop automated systems from buying up tests unfairly. These applications, however, are constantly evolving and changing, and DVSA's work on this is ongoing.

■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points

Sir John Hayes:

[43820]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many fast charging points for electric vehicles are operational in South Holland and The Deepings constituency.

Lilian Greenwood:

The below table shows public EV charging devices in South Holland and the Deepings constituency, as of 1 January 2025. Charging devices are categorised into the below speed bandings in the data held by the Department. Devices in higher power speed bandings can deliver charging at quicker speeds.

	3KW UP TO 8KW CHARGING DEVICES	8KW TO 49KW CHARGING DEVICES	50KW TO 149KW CHARGING DEVICES	150KW AND ABOVE CHARGING DEVICES
South Holland and The Deepings constituency	30	7	13	0

The table includes only public charging devices as power rating data for private charging devices is not available.

Data on public electric vehicle charging devices in the UK, held by the Department for Transport, are sourced from the electric vehicle charging platform Zapmap. Charging devices not recorded on Zapmap are not included and the true number of charging devices may be slightly higher than recorded in these figures.

■ Excise Duties: Motor Vehicles

Tom Morrison:

[\[43304\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the end of the use of tax discs on (a) enforcement and (b) revenue from non-payment of vehicle tax.

Lilian Greenwood:

In 2023/24, the DVLA collected £7.8 billion in Vehicle Excise Duty (VED) on behalf of HM Treasury, the highest amount ever collected in one year.

The Department for Transport carries out a roadside survey every two years to estimate the rate of vehicle excise duty evasion among vehicles seen on UK roads. The most recent survey carried out in 2023, estimated the rate of VED compliance to be 98.7 per cent. This demonstrates that the vast majority of motorists comply with their legal obligations to tax their vehicles.

■ Great British Railways: Public Appointments

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[42812\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether appointments to Great British Railways will be included in the Public Bodies Order in Council; and whether the Chair will be classified as a Significant Appointment.

Simon Lightwood:

After the Railways Bill is scrutinised by Parliament, and as part of the design of Great British Railways, we will consider whether to propose an amendment to the Public Bodies Order in Council. We expect that the GBR Chair will be classed as a significant appointment.

Parliament will have an opportunity to scrutinise GBR's duties when the bill is taken through Parliament later this session.

■ High Speed 2 Line: Lichfield**Gareth Bacon:** [\[43479\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make it her policy to retain passive provision for the HS2 junction at Fradley/Streethay.

Gareth Bacon: [\[43480\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make it her policy to retain passive provision for the HS2 junction north of Birmingham Interchange.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Department's priority is on delivering Phase 1 at the lowest reasonable cost. We continue to review the wider position we inherited on rail infrastructure and will announce more details in due course.

■ Large Goods Vehicles: Concrete**Edward Argar:** [\[43459\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what environmental impact assessment she has carried out ahead of a decision on whether to ban volumetric concrete mobile plants in 2028.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Department ran a call for evidence from October to December 2023 seeking views on three potential options on weight limits for Volumetric Concrete Mixers (VCMs). The outcome of my department's review into volumetric concrete mixers was published on 18 March. This can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/calls-for-evidence/volumetric-concrete-mixers-review>

Whilst some VCM operators have argued that heavier VCMs could reduce overall trips and emissions, the increased road and bridge damage would result in more frequent repairs, offsetting these potential benefits.

VCMs will continue to be permitted on our roads, but as planned, a temporary weight limit exemption for this type of vehicle will end on 31 March 2028. This is not a ban or change in policy.

Graham Leadbitter: [\[43639\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate her Department has made of the potential impact of changes to weights for volumetric concrete mobile plants on lorry miles on concrete deliveries.

Graham Leadbitter: [\[43640\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate her Department has made of the potential impact of changes to weights for volumetric concrete mobile plants on annual lorry journeys for concrete deliveries.

Lilian Greenwood:

A call for evidence ran from October to December 2023 seeking views on three potential options on weight limits for Volumetric Concrete Mixers (VCMs). The following factors were considered: reduction in payload per journey, increased waste, and increased vehicle mileage. Information received did not provide any compelling evidence for permitting a weight limit exemption specifically for VCMs on the grounds of increased lorry journeys.

The outcome of the Department's review into volumetric concrete mixers was published on 18 March. This can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/calls-for-evidence/volumetric-concrete-mixers-review>.

Current exemptions to weight limits for VCMs will expire in 2028.

Graham Leadbitter: [\[43641\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate her Department has made of the potential impact of changes to weights for volumetric concrete mobile plants on CO2 emissions from lorry making concrete deliveries.

Graham Leadbitter: [\[43642\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate her Department has made of the potential impact of changes to weights for volumetric concrete mobile plants on carbon costs for concrete deliveries.

Graham Leadbitter: [\[43643\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate her Department has made of the potential impact of changes to weights for volumetric concrete mobile plants on levels of (a) CO2, (b) nitrogen oxide and (c) particulates.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Department ran a call for evidence from October to December 2023 seeking views on three potential options on weight limits for Volumetric Concrete Mixers (VCMs). The outcome of my Department's review into volumetric concrete mixers was published on 18 March. This can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/calls-for-evidence/volumetric-concrete-mixers-review>

Whilst some VCM operators have argued that heavier VCMs could reduce overall trips and emissions, the increased road and bridge damage would result in more frequent repairs, offsetting these potential benefits.

VCMs will continue to be permitted on our roads, but as planned, a temporary weight limit exemption for this type of vehicle will end on 31 March 2028. This is not a ban or change in policy.

Graham Leadbitter: [\[43644\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate her Department has made of the potential impact of changes to weights for volumetric concrete mobile plants on the number of lorry drivers that will be required.

Lilian Greenwood:

The call for evidence conducted from October to December 2023 was an opportunity for respondents to present evidence, but it did not reveal significant new evidence supporting a change in policy.

The outcome of my department's review into VCMs was published on 18 March. This can be found at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/calls-for-evidence/volumetric-concrete-mixers-review>

Current exemptions to weight limits for VCMs will expire in 2028.

■ Low Traffic Neighbourhoods

Wera Hobhouse: [\[43552\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to enforce statutory guidelines on implementing low traffic neighbourhoods.

Lilian Greenwood:

The draft guidance on low traffic neighbourhoods published in March 2024 was never brought into force and remains in draft. As it says in the introduction, the intention was that when published in final form, it would apply to all traffic authorities in England. However, due to the general election, further work on it was put on hold and the Government is now considering appropriate next steps.

As has always been the case, local authorities are responsible for managing their roads and are accountable to their communities.

■ Lower Thames Crossing: Environment Protection

Alison Bennett: [\[43347\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to help protect (a) woodland and (b) natural habitats in the context of the construction of the lower Thames crossing.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Minister for Local Transport's considerations on the Lower Thames Crossing scheme are explained in the Decision Letter, published on the Planning Inspectorate website, and this sets out the proposed mitigations regarding habitats, including woodlands. The Honourable Member will understand that during the 6-week legal challenge period the Department is unable to comment in detail, but National Highways will be able to answer further questions about the scheme.

■ M25: Repairs and Maintenance

Mr Will Forster: [\[43669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her Department plans to provide additional funding to highway authorities affected by the M25/A3 roadworks to cover the increased wear and tear and maintenance costs on diversion routes.

Lilian Greenwood:

The strategic and local road networks are frequently used to support diversions for one another, typically without the need for compensation from either party. From the early stages of the project, extensive engagement was undertaken with Surrey County Council which is the main local authority impacted by the works. This included detailed discussions on diversion routes that would utilise Surrey County Council's road network to support the scheme's delivery. The development of these diversion routes carefully considered local communities, road widths, weight and height restrictions, junction configurations, and other relevant constraints.

Public Transport: Infrastructure**Mark Swards:**[\[42638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her Department is taking steps to reduce private car ownership and improve the connectivity of public transport.

Simon Lightwood:

This Government recognises the importance of improving public transport to ensure that people have greater choice around how they travel and has recently confirmed its commitment to phasing out new cars that rely solely on internal combustion engines from 2030.

The Government have set out an ambitious programme of reform to help improve bus services and grow usage across the country. The Bus Services (No.2) Bill, introduced on 17 December, puts power over local bus services back in the hands of local leaders and is intended to ensure bus services reflect the needs of the communities that rely on them. In the Autumn Budget, the Government also confirmed investment of over £1 billion to support and improve bus services and keep bus fares affordable.

The Government have also set out plans to create a unified and simplified railway that places train operations under public ownership and control, putting passengers first and rebuilding trust. The Railways Bill, which will be introduced later this session, will enable the biggest overhaul of the rail sector in a generation. Alongside this, the Prime Minister has announced more funding to deliver the largest rail investment in the North in decades.

As part of our commitment to local transport, we have uplifted City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement funding in 2025-26 by £200m, helping to improve the local transport in our largest city regions and drive growth and productivity across the country. This brings local transport spending for Metro Mayors in 2025-26 to £1.3bn. Also at the Autumn Budget, we allocated over £650m funding for local transport outside of our city regions to improve connectivity and support local growth in our smaller cities, towns, villages and rural areas in England outside London.

The Integrated National Transport Strategy will be published later this year and will focus on how transport should be designed, built, and operated to better serve the people who use it, connecting people to housing, jobs and public services.

■ Railway Stations: Access**Mr Paul Kohler:**[\[44059\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she will publish a response to her Department's consultation entitled, Design standards for accessible railway stations: a code of practice, published on 23 August 2023.

Simon Lightwood:

This consultation was conducted under the previous government. The Department for Transport is currently considering publication of a response.

■ Railway Stations: Surrey**Jeremy Hunt:**[\[42424\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent progress she has made on completing feasibility studies to provide step-free access to Ash Vale Station.

Simon Lightwood:

The feasibility work for Ash Vale station is underway and we expect all 50 of the feasibility studies announced last year to be complete in the spring. We expect to be able to confirm which stations will move forward over the summer. The Access for All programme continues to be heavily oversubscribed.

We remain committed to improving the accessibility of the railway and recognise the valuable social and economic benefits this brings to communities.

■ Railways: North of England**Mrs Elsie Blundell:**[\[42700\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the deliverability of the Northern Powerhouse Rail project.

Lilian Greenwood:

As announced in the Autumn 2024 Budget, we are maintaining momentum on Northern Powerhouse Rail by progressing planning and design works to support future delivery. This improved rail connectivity in the north is a vital step towards better linking people and jobs, creating opportunities for everyone and we will set out further details in due course.

Mrs Elsie Blundell:[\[42701\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to mitigate rail congestion across East-West rail lines in the north of England.

Simon Lightwood:

The Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline portfolio contains some of the most transformative and important programmes in the country such as the TransPennine Route Upgrade, which will increase capacity and improve reliability of East to West rail lines in the north of England.

■ Railways: Stockport**Navendu Mishra:** [\[42868\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing adequate passenger services to Reddish South railway station.

Simon Lightwood:

The Department expects operators to match capacity and frequency of their services to demand, though these must also be operationally sustainable and deliver value for taxpayers. Rail North Partnership, through which the Department and Transport for the North jointly manage the contract with Northern Trains, which serves Reddish South, will assess any business case put forward, but this analysis must balance the economic and social benefits of any enhancement with the performance of existing services and the financial impact on taxpayer subsidy.

■ Road Works: Utilities**Adam Dance:** [\[43239\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she plans to take to increase the level of overrun charges for utility companies responsible for delayed road repairs.

Adam Dance: [\[43244\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans she has to ensure that at least 50 per cent of the revenue from the lane rental scheme is reinvested in (a) road resurfacing and (b) pothole repairs.

Lilian Greenwood:

Charges for works that overrun are already set at up to £10,000 per day. The Government announced in December that we will apply overrun charges to weekends and bank holidays. We also announced that local authorities operating lane rental schemes will be required to spend 50% of surplus lane rental charges on highway maintenance, The regulations implementing these changes will be laid later in 2025. They will also double the level of fixed penalty notices available for some street works offences.

Adam Dance: [\[43240\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she plans to take to introduce overrun charges for utility companies undertaking road repairs on weekends and bank holidays.

Lilian Greenwood:

Charges for works that overrun are already set at up to £10,000 per day. The Government announced in December that we will apply overrun charges to weekends and bank holidays. We also announced that local authorities operating lane rental schemes will be required to spend 50% of surplus lane rental charges on highway maintenance, The regulations implementing these changes will be laid later

in 2025. They will also double the level of fixed penalty notices available for some street works offences.

■ Roads: Repairs and Maintenance

Kevin Hollinrake:

[42473]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much local highway authorities in England received from the (a) pothole fund, (b) highways maintenance block needs, (b) highways maintenance block incentive, (d) integrated transport block, (e) Maintenance funding uplift from HS2 Euston savings, (f) Network North highways maintenance funding and (g) other repurposed HS2 funding for potholes and road maintenance in the 2024-25 financial year.

Lilian Greenwood:

In 2024/25, the Department provided a total of £1,067 million to local highway authorities in England under the pothole fund and highways maintenance block (needs and incentive elements). Nominally, this broke down into approximately £407 million from the potholes fund, £407 million from the highway maintenance block “needs” element, £102 million from the highway maintenance block “incentive” element and £150 million from the Network North plan. In practice, these funding streams now serve the same purpose and are used interchangeably by local highway authorities: the Department will formally consolidate them into a single payment from 2025/26 onwards.

The £150 million funding uplift from the previous Government’s Network North plan was divided up among all CRSTS recipients and local highway authorities in England. Individual authority by authority allocations are available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/highways-maintenance-funding-allocations>.

The Department also paid a total of £170 million of Integrated Transport Block (ITB) funding to local highway authorities in 2024/25, with the details available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/highways-maintenance-funding-allocations/highways-maintenance-and-itb-funding-formula-allocations-2022-to-2025>.

None of the above figures include the £208 million or so of highway maintenance funding per annum, or the £90 million or so of ITB funding per annum, that has been consolidated into the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements (CRSTS) that are paid to some Mayoral Combined Authority areas.

Kevin Hollinrake:

[43089]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much local highway authorities in England will receive in 2025-26 from the (a) pothole fund, (b) highways maintenance block needs, (c) highways maintenance block incentive, (d) integrated transport block, (e) Maintenance funding uplift from HS2 Euston savings, (f) Network North highways maintenance funding and (g) other repurposed HS2 funding for potholes and road maintenance.

Lilian Greenwood:

During 2025/26, the Department will provide a total of £1,567 million to local highway authorities in England under a new single, consolidated highway maintenance capital grant. This consolidates into one single funding stream the previous pothole fund, highway maintenance block (needs and incentive elements) and earlier Network North funding uplift, as well as the £500 million funding uplift announced in the Chancellor's October 2024 Budget. The funding allocations to individual authorities are all on gov.uk at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/highways-maintenance-funding-allocations/highways-maintenance-block-formula-allocations-2025-to-2026>.

The Department will also provide £170 million of Integrated Transport Block (ITB) funding to local highway authorities in 2025/26. Allocations to individual authorities are published on gov.uk at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/integrated-transport-block-allocations>.

None of the above figures include the £208 million or so of highway maintenance funding per annum, or the £90 million or so of ITB funding per annum, that has been consolidated into the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements (CRSTS) that are paid to some Mayoral Combined Authority areas.

Edward Morello: [\[44327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what criteria are used to determine the allocation of funding for road resurfacing to local councils; and how these criteria have been applied to Dorset Council.

Edward Morello: [\[44329\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much funding has been allocated to Dorset Council for road resurfacing projects in West Dorset for the fiscal years (a) 2023-24 and (b) 2024-25; and how this compares to the last five years for which information is available.

Lilian Greenwood:

The main criteria used to determine the allocation of highway maintenance funding to local highway authorities are road length and road classification, along with the number of bridges and street lighting columns that each local authority is responsible for maintaining. The Department uses a bespoke formula to allocate funding to eligible authorities, including Dorset Council; details of the formula can be found on gov.uk.

It is for Dorset Council to decide how much to spend in the West Dorset constituency and how much to spend elsewhere across its network.

Funding allocations for Dorset Council for the last six years are set out in the table below.

Funding for Dorset Council 2020/21 – 2025/26

YEAR £M	HIGHWAYS	HIGHWAYS	POTHoles	BUDGET	NETWORK	TOTAL
	MAINTENANCE	MAINTENANCE			NORTH	
	BLOCK	BLOCK	FUND*	2023	(ROADS	
	NEEDS	INCENTIVE		TOP UP	RESURFACING	
	BLOCK			FUND)		
20/21	10.564	2.201	9.112			21.877
21/22	7.285	1.821	7.285			16.391
22/23	7.285	1.821	7.285			16.391
23/24	7.285	1.821	7.285	2.914	2.068	21.373
24/25	7.285	1.821	7.285		2.068	18.459
25/26	18.273	6.738**				25.011

* For 2020/21, this included the £500 million Pothole Fund, allocated funding from the £100 million Challenge Fund, and the final £50 million of the previous Pothole Action Fund, totalling £650 million.

**25% of this funding is subject to authorities adhering to incentive measures as announced on March 24, 2025.

■ Taxis: Licensing

Mary Kelly Foy:

[\[43941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of reforming the regulation of cross-border taxi hiring.

Simon Lightwood:

Legislation allows taxis and private hire vehicles to operate outside of the area in which they are licensed. Taxis can only ply for hire (pick up passengers at taxi ranks or be hailed in the street) in the area in which they are licensed. Pre-booked work by private hire vehicles and taxis can be undertaken anywhere. This allows the sector to work flexibly to meet the needs of their passengers.

The Government however recognises concerns around out-of-area working and is considering options to strengthen the regulation of the sector.

TREASURY■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]**

Wera Hobhouse: [\[903674\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps she is taking with the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero to increase investment in renewable infrastructure projects.

James Murray:

The Prime Minister's Plan for Change sets out our ambitious but achievable target of Clean Power by 2030.

The Clean Power Action Plan demonstrates the significant investment requirements to reach this target, including in renewable infrastructure, and actions we will take to facilitate this.

We have already taken action to remove the de-facto ban on onshore wind in England, approved major solar projects, and delivered a record-breaking renewables auction.

Margaret Mullane: [\[903676\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will postpone changes to the taxation of double-cab pick-up trucks for 12 months.

James Murray:

Following a judgement by the Court of Appeal, Double Cab Pick Ups must be treated as cars, rather than goods vehicles, for certain tax purposes, based on their primary suitability.

The government has no plans to legislate to postpone the change and treat DCPUs as goods vehicles, as this would depart from the broader principles underpinning the Court of Appeal's judgement, and be a significant tax break worth hundreds of millions per year.

Josh Fenton-Glynn: [\[903679\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the Spring Statement 2025 on the number of children in poverty.

Darren Jones:

Living standards, measured by Real Household Disposable Income (RHDI) per capita, are growing at their fastest quarterly rate in two years and are forecast to rise at more than twice the pace this Parliament compared to the last.

The Government's ambition is to tackle child poverty over this Parliament.

The Ministerial Taskforce is developing a comprehensive strategy aimed at reducing child poverty and exploring the levers available to tackle the root causes of child poverty.

■ Agriculture: Seasonal Workers**Chris Law:** [\[42552\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 19 March 2025 to Question 37200 on Agriculture: Seasonal Workers, whether HMRC has made an assessment of the potential impact of productivity related pay on (a) hourly wage calculations and (b) payslips for seasonal agricultural workers.

James Murray:

When HMRC undertake compliance activity, evidence is gathered to determine the hourly rates of pay. We do not hold specific data on seasonal workers from our compliance activity.

HMRC continues to crack down on employers who ignore the law, ensuring workers receive the wages to which they are entitled.

■ Air Passenger Duty**Saqib Bhatti:** [\[42832\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she has made a recent assessment of the international competitiveness of air passenger duty.

Saqib Bhatti: [\[42833\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make a comparative assessment of the Standard Rate of Air Passenger Duty between the UK and (a) Germany, (b) France, (c) Italy and (d) Spain.

James Murray:

Air Passenger Duty (APD) applies to airlines and is the principal tax on the aviation sector. It is expected to raise £4.2 billion in 2024-25.

At Autumn Budget 2024, the Government announced Air Passenger Duty (APD) rates for 2026-27, including a partial adjustment to help compensate for two recent years of inflation that was higher than expected. APD rates are set in advance using forecasts of inflation, and so with actual inflation being significantly greater than forecast in 2022 and 2023, APD rates fell in real terms.

The Government is clear that APD is an appropriate tax that ensures airlines make a fair contribution to the public finances, particularly given that tickets are VAT free and aviation fuel incurs no duty. Other countries also have different forms of aviation taxes.

The Government keeps all taxes under review.

Saqib Bhatti: [\[42834\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she plans to reform Air Passenger Duty to prevent passengers travelling in a Premium Economy cabin from paying the same rate as passengers travelling in a First Class and Business Class cabin.

James Murray:

Air Passenger Duty (APD) applies to airlines, not individual passengers, and is the principal tax on the aviation sector. It is expected to raise £4.2 billion in 2024-25 and it aims to ensure that airlines make a fair contribution to the public finances, particularly given that tickets are VAT free and aviation fuel incurs no duty. The distance-based band structure ensures that those who travel furthest, and in the greatest comfort, incur a greater tax liability.

There are three rates of duty for each destination band depending on the class of travel. The reduced rate applies to all travel in the lowest class of travel available on the plane for seat pitches less than 1.016 metres. The standard rate applies to travel in any non-economy class of travel or where the seat pitch is more than 1.016 metres (40 inches). This includes premium economy, as well as first class and business class.

When making changes to taxes the Government has to consider a wide range of factors, including administrative burdens and complexity. The Government keeps all taxes under review.

Saqib Bhatti: [\[42835\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she plans to reform Air Passenger Duty to extend the exemption for children under 16 years old to travel in Premium Economy or any other cabin classes.

Saqib Bhatti: [\[42836\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate she has made of total revenue generated by Air Passenger Duty from children aged under 16 years old who travelled in Premium Economy in each of the last three years?.

Saqib Bhatti: [\[42837\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate she has made of the cost to the exchequer of extending the Air Passenger Duty exemption for children under 16 years old to (a) Premium Economy and (b) any other cabin class travel.

James Murray:

Air Passenger Duty (APD) applies to airlines, not individual passengers, and is the principal tax on the aviation sector. It is expected to raise £4.2 billion in 2024-25 and it aims to ensure that airlines make a fair contribution to the public finances, particularly given that tickets are VAT free and aviation fuel incurs no duty. The distance-based band structure ensures that those who travel furthest, and in the greatest comfort, incur a greater tax liability.

Children under 16 years old on the date of the flight, and in the lowest class of travel, are exempt from APD. This means that no APD will be paid on that passenger by the airline to the UK government. If children under 16 years old are travelling in any other class (such as premium economy) or in business jets, they are not exempt. Children under 2 years old without a seat are exempt from Air Passenger Duty for all classes of travel.

Airline operators declare the number of chargeable passengers by destination band and by rate. They do not break down chargeable passengers by age, and therefore this is not information that HMRC collects.

The government has published annual statistics and analysis on airline passenger numbers and Air Passenger Duty (APD) receipts in the UK which are administered by HM Revenue and Customs. It is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/air-passenger-duty-bulletin>.

As with all taxes, APD is kept under review and any changes are announced by the Chancellor at fiscal events.

■ Betting: Regulation

Mr Richard Holden:

[43113]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what powers the Financial Conduct Authority has to regulate sports spread bets; and whether those powers have changed since the implementation of the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000.

Emma Reynolds:

Under the Financial Services and Markets Act (FSMA) 2000, HM Treasury is responsible for determining the perimeter of financial services regulation, with the approval of Parliament. This is chiefly achieved by specifying the financial services activities that can only be carried out by firms authorised by either the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) or the Prudential Regulation Authority.

It specifies these activities primarily through the Regulated Activities Order (RAO), a piece of subordinate legislation made under powers in FSMA 2000. HM Treasury can bring an activity into the regulatory perimeter by amending the RAO, subject to Parliamentary approval.

The FCA does not itself have the power to bring any activity into the regulatory perimeter or decide what activities are regulated. This has not changed since the implementation of FSMA 2000.

The FCA CEO raised non-financial spread betting in the annual perimeter meeting in July 2023, and noted that the FCA has clarified that non-financial betting products are not financial instruments and not within the FCA's regulatory perimeter. The minutes are published online at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hm-treasury-and-financial-conduct-authority-regulatory-perimeter-meeting-july-2023/hm-treasury-and-financial-conduct-authority-regulatory-perimeter-meeting-july-2023>

■ Civil Servants: Redundancy

Richard Fuller:

[42428]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 2.43 of the Spring Statement of 26 March 2025, what the £150 million provided for government employee

exit schemes will be spent on; and how much and what proportion of this is for redundancy payments.

Darren Jones:

As announced at Spring Statement the government has allocated £150 million for government employee exit schemes. Information can be found in the Spring Statement supporting documentation here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67e3ec2df356a2dc0e39b488/E03274109_HMT_Spring_Statement_Mar_25_Web_Accessible_.pdf. This will be match-funded by a further £150 million from Departments.

Exit schemes will enable delivery of leaner, smarter, more efficient government, whilst delivering savings over the medium term.

Departments will bid for funding from this central pot in order to run exit schemes, and therefore the exact details of how this will be spent is not yet known.

■ **Employers' Contributions: Pre-school Education**

Michelle Welsh:

[42941]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the proposed increase in employer National Insurance contributions on early years providers.

James Murray:

A Tax Information and Impact Note (TIIN) was published alongside the introduction of the Bill containing the changes to employer NICs. The TIIN sets out the impact of the policy on the exchequer, the economic impacts of the policy, and the impacts on individuals, businesses, and civil society organisations, as well as an overview of the equality impacts.

Early years providers play a crucial role in driving economic growth. The Government has committed to delivering the expansion of government-funded childcare and opening 3,000 new school-based nurseries in this parliament. At the Budget, the Chancellor announced that total funding will rise to over £8 billion in 2025-26 to support providers. On top of this, the Department for Education confirmed an additional £75 million of funding in 2025-26 to support the sector deliver the final phase of expanded childcare entitlements from September 2025. Alongside this, rates for the early years pupil premium have also been increased by over 45%, equivalent to up to £570 per eligible child per year.

■ **Empty Property: Business Rates**

Preet Kaur Gill:

[42725]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment she has made of the potential impact of practices of landlords repeatedly occupying properties for short periods of time in order to claim further Empty Property Relief on local government finances.

Preet Kaur Gill:[\[42726\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps she is taking to help tackle the practice of landlords repeatedly occupying properties for short periods of time in order to claim further Empty Property Relief.

James Murray:

This government will not tolerate tax avoidance. We are committed to ensuring that every person and every business pays their fair share.

Most businesses pay the rates that are due, but a minority abuse the system, through either avoidance or evasion, to reduce their bills or avoid paying rates altogether. This imposes an unfair burden on the majority and prevents funding from reaching local services.

In its response to the 2023 Business Rates Avoidance and Evasion consultation, the government noted that abuse of Empty Property Relief (EPR) through repeated artificial occupation was a significant avoidance challenge. To tackle this the government extended the reset period (the period of occupation required to be eligible for further EPR) from six weeks to thirteen weeks from 1 April 2024 in England. The government will keep this change and the treatment of empty properties under review.

■ **Film: Business Rates****Blake Stephenson:**[\[42691\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 13 March 2025 to Question 36218 on Film: Business Rates, if she will make an estimate of how many film studios have a rateable value of less than £500,000.

James Murray:

This data is published on gov.uk as at 31 March 2024. In the [2024 stock of properties publication](#), the following zip file contains counts (rounded to the nearest 10) for each special category code, including film and tv studios, broken down by rateable value band in England and Wales:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67a2038f7da1f1ac64e5fe4e/ndr_stock_scat_la_2024.zip

■ **Foreign Relations: China****Sir Iain Duncan Smith:**[\[42391\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 24 March to Question 38340 on Foreign Relations: China, how many meetings with Chinese government officials have taken place at her Department since September 2024, broken down by (a) month and (b) subject of meeting.

Emma Reynolds:

As stated in my Answers of 14 and 24 March, UK Officials regularly engage with Chinese counterparts in order to further UK interests, cooperating on areas of mutual interest and challenging on areas where we disagree.

This government is taking a consistent, long-term and pragmatic approach to managing the UK's relations with China. It is only right that we engage with China where there are clear UK and global interests, including on international stability, climate, health and bolstering our trade relationship.

Motor Vehicles: Excise Duties**Mary Kelly Foy:**[\[43515\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of reviewing (a) car and (b) other vehicle taxes to ensure non-emission producing vehicles are not charged higher rates than emission producing vehicles.

James Murray:

The Government uses the tax system to support a variety of objectives including our legally binding climate targets and the transition to electric vehicles (EVs).

From 1 April 2017, a reformed Vehicle Excise Duty (VED) system was introduced for new cars. The changes in April 2017 were applied to new cars only, meaning that the tax treatment of existing cars was not affected. Under the reformed VED system, new cars pay a variable first year rate according to the emissions of the vehicle, with the most polluting currently paying over £5,400, and zero emission models currently pay £10.

Since the introduction of the current VED system in 2017, standard rates have risen in line with inflation only, meaning drivers have not experienced a real terms increase.

At Autumn Budget 2024, the Government announced changes to the VED first year rates from 1 April 2025, to introduce higher rates for hybrid and petrol/diesel vehicles for 2025-26, and a freeze to the rate for zero emission vehicles until 2029-30.

The Budget also announced new company car tax rates for 2028-29 and 2029-30, which gradually increase the rates for both petrol/diesel and electric vehicles whilst restricting incentives for hybrid vehicles.

Cars are also treated according to their emissions under the capital allowances system; and company cars made available for private use are taxed according to their CO2 emissions under the benefit in kind regime.

Emissions-producing vehicles are generally subject to fuel duty, which is levied on petrol and diesel they use.

■ National Wealth Fund: Bedfordshire

Blake Stephenson:

[\[42692\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an estimate of the expected contribution of the National Wealth Fund to economic growth in Bedfordshire between 4 July 2024 and 4 July 2029.

James Murray:

Growth is the government's number one mission, and the National Wealth Fund is a key lever for helping to deliver the investment underpinning this.

The National Wealth Fund is committed to supporting the Government's growth and clean energy missions. Importantly, the impact and long-term benefits of many of its investments will be felt UK-wide, not just in the location where the individual deal is situated.

Since July 2024, the NWF has committed £1.8 billion, supporting almost 10,000 jobs across the UK.

The National Wealth Fund has not estimated its expected impact in Bedfordshire specifically, but further detail on the National Wealth Fund's impact can be found in its Annual Report & Accounts.

■ Public Expenditure

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[\[43316\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what Government spending as a proportion of GDP was on 31 March 2022.

Darren Jones:

The Office for Budget Responsibility publishes historical outturn data going back to 1948 for Total Managed Expenditure as a percentage of GDP as part of its [Public finances databank](#).

■ Railways: Expenditure

Laurence Turner:

[\[44140\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 3 April 2025 to Question 42342 on Railways: Public Expenditure, if her Department will make the calculations for each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Darren Jones:

It is possible to reproduce English regional railway expenditure excluding HS2 for the last five years using the Country and Regional Analysis (CRA) dataset. The table below shows the impact for the most recent CRA publication from November 2024:

RAILWAY SPENDING FOR ENGLISH REGIONS IN £S PER CAPITA, EXCLUDING HS2

ITL Region	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
North East	118	224	188	239	255
North West	171	222	206	203	202
Yorkshire and the Humber	124	239	197	196	214
East Midlands	102	197	160	156	159
West Midlands	160	238	226	216	221
East of England	215	423	342	308	325
London	528	687	633	683	665
South East	235	433	333	301	299
South West	142	222	165	149	168
England	226	353	301	298	302

■ **Valuation Office Agency**

Navendu Mishra:

[\[42865\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps her Department is taking to (a) reduce the backlog at the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) and (b) improve the efficiency of VOA services.

James Murray:

The Valuation Office Agency (VOA) is currently on target to deliver the next business rates revaluation in 2026 across England and Wales.

The VOA is committed to continually learning and further improving its services. It is replacing IT systems with modern cloud-based platforms that will deliver significant efficiencies. At the same time, it is enhancing digital services to make it easier for customers to self-serve.

In addition, it is managing demand by recruiting new people, moving existing staff to where there is the greatest customer need, ensuring hardship cases are prioritised and upskilling its workforce so they can handle multiple types of cases and work more flexibly.

■ Veterans: Employers' Contributions**James Cartlidge:**[\[43555\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she plans to extend the National Insurance contributions holiday for businesses that employ veterans after April 2026.

James Murray:

The government keeps all taxes under review.

WORK AND PENSIONS**■ Access to Work Programme: Cost Benefit Analysis****Marsha De Cordova:**[\[43111\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions she has had with the RNIB on its report entitled Access to Work - Cost benefit analysis, published on 5 September 2015, in the context of her Department's consultation on its Green Paper on Pathways to Work: Reforming Benefits and Support to Get Britain Working Green Paper, published on 26 March 2025.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Since 2015, the style, scope and cost of support that disabled people require has changed significantly, as has the labour market, yet Access to Work has stayed broadly the same. We believe there is a strong case for looking at the future role and purpose of Access to Work, given the significant operational challenges it faces, its limited reach (it only supports around 1% of the working disabled population) and rising costs. We want to improve accessibility and support more disabled people into work and think Access to Work has a significant role in this.

In March 2025, the *Pathways to Work* Green paper launched a consultation on the future of Access to Work, and we are keen to hear the views and voices of disabled people and representative organisations, such as RNIB. We will consider all evidence during the review of Access to Work.

■ Access to Work Programme: Small Businesses**John Milne:**[\[43368\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of making access to work schemes the responsibility of employers on small and medium-sized businesses.

Sir Stephen Timms:

As outlined in the *Pathways to Work* Green Paper published on 18 March, we need to get the balance right between supporting employers to understand and provide reasonable adjustments as part of their legal duties, and interventions that go beyond this to enable employment. There are no plans to require employers to provide measures beyond a reasonable adjustment.

We will assess any new intervention through evaluation, ensuring its impact and value for money.

■ AEA Group: Workplace Pensions

Sir Julian Lewis: [\[43809\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Fifty-seventh Report of the Committee of Public Accounts of Session 2022-23 on AEA Technology Pension Case, HC 1005, published on 14 June 2023, and to Questions 329 and 330 of the oral evidence given by the Minister for Pensions to the Work and Pensions select committee on 10 January 2024, HC 144, what steps she is taking to implement a redress scheme.

Torsten Bell:

In its response to the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) report on the AEA Technology case, the department agreed to consider the PAC recommendation to 'ensure that people have an adequate route of appeal when considering complaints about their occupational and personal pensions, through a review of the Ombudsman'. Progress on the PAC and subsequent WPC recommendations were paused due to the General Election. The department remains committed to providing the PAC with an update once the Cabinet Office has considered how it would like departments to scope and schedule a new series of reviews for public bodies.

■ Carer's Allowance

Wendy Chamberlain: [\[R\] \[43176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to effectively communicate to eligible people over State Pension age that they may be entitled to Carer's Allowance.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is constantly working to improve the way it communicates information and is committed to encouraging older people to claim Carer's Allowance where they are entitled to it.

Information and advice about entitlement to Carer's Allowance may be available from a range of outlets including DWP and other helplines, gov.uk and other internet sites, local authorities, Citizens Advice and welfare benefit offices, Social Services, voluntary organisations, such as, Age UK, Carers UK and Carers Trust and MacMillan, public libraries, health clinics, doctors' surgeries and health visitors.

■ Employment and Support Allowance

Mel Stride: [\[43442\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what proportion of new style Employment and Support Allowance claims have been in payment for at least (a) three, (b) six, (c) 12, and (d) 18 months for (i) the Work Related Activity Group and (ii) the Support Group.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The following table shows the volume of new style Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) Work Related Activity Group (WRAG) and Support Group (SG) claims that have been in payment for at least three, six, 12 and 18 months.

Volumes of ESA claims that have been in payment for at least three, six, 12 and 18 months

IN PAYMENT FOR AT LEAST:	WORK-RELATED ACTIVITY	
	GROUP	SUPPORT GROUP
3 months	6,000	708,000
6 months	5,000	701,000
12 months	1,000	677,000
18 months	-	653,000

Source: DWP administrative data for Employment and Support Allowance
Volumes have been rounded to the nearest 1,000.

■ **Employment: Chronic Illnesses and Disability**

Dr Luke Evans:[\[42822\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on best practice in joined up systems supporting people with long term health issues to (a) find work and (b) achieve long term employment.

Alison McGovern:

Regular cross government collaboration takes place at both Ministerial and official level. Examples of this can be seen through the publication of the Get Britain Working White Paper and the Pathways to Work: Reforming Benefits, Support to Get Britain Working Green Paper, the Industrial strategy, the Joint Health and Work Directorate and the Make work pay legislation.

■ **Employment: Disability**

Graeme Downie:[\[43007\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 31 March 2025 to Question 40712, what the cost to the public purse was of the Disability Confidence Scheme in each of the last four years.

Alison McGovern:

The Disability Confident scheme expenditure is not separately recorded within departmental budgets.

■ Health: Disadvantaged

Neil Duncan-Jordan:

[43683]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Green Paper: Pathways to Work, published on 18 March 2025, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the proposed changes to (a) health and (b) disability benefits on health inequalities.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The Government is committed to building a fairer Britain, to ensure people can live well for longer, and spend less time in ill health, regardless of where they are born or their financial circumstances. We are working with the Department for Health and Social Care to ensure that health is built into our policies, including those outlined in the Pathways to Work Green Paper.

Information on the impacts of the Pathways to Work Green Paper will be published in due course, with some information published alongside the Spring Statement. These publications can be found here '[Pathways to Work: Reforming Benefits and Support to Get Britain Working Green Paper](#)'.

A further programme of analysis to support development of the proposals in the Green Paper will be developed and undertaken in the coming months.

■ Household Support Fund

Freddie van Mierlo:

[44070]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of extending the Household Support Fund after March 2026.

Alison McGovern:

This Government is committed to a sustainable, long-term approach to drive up opportunity and drive down poverty across the UK.

That is why we are providing £742 million in England to extend the Household Support Fund by a further year, from 1 April 2025 until 31 March 2026. This will enable Local Authorities to continue to provide vulnerable households with immediate crisis support towards the cost of essentials, and develop their schemes to help prevent poverty locally and build local resilience.

However, no decision has been made at this stage on funding beyond the end of March 2026. As with all other government programmes, any such funding will be considered in the round at Phase 2 of the Spending Review.

■ Housing Benefit and Pension Credit

Dr Simon Opher:

[43591]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what progress she has made on merging pension credit and housing benefit.

Dr Simon Opher:

[\[43605\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, which body will administer the proposed merged housing and pension credit.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The Department is committed to delivering the Government's goal of bringing together the administration of pensioner Housing Benefit and Pension Credit for new claimants from 2026, so that pensioners receive the support they are entitled to.

We are working closely with local authorities, to ensure reforms meet the needs of current and future pensioners.

In addition, we have already improved how we use existing data to target new pensioner Housing Benefit customers to ensure they are prompted to claim and receive any Pension Credit to which they are entitled.

■ **Jobcentres: Staff**

Jim Shannon:

[\[42453\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to improve employment capacity in local job centres.

Alison McGovern:

We have interpreted your question to refer to the functionality of Jobcentre Plus and the role they play in increasing employment.

The Government has set a long-term ambition to achieve an 80% employment rate, building on our plan for growth. The Get Britain Working White Plan sets out the fundamental reforms needed to realise our ambitions, including the vision to reform Jobcentres - to a new Jobs and Careers Service to meet the needs of local labour markets, people and employers.

Across Great Britain, the new service will enable everyone to access support to find good, meaningful work, and support to help them to progress in work, including through an enhanced focus on skills and careers. Central to the new service will be our use of technology, enabling us to reinvest time in supporting people more effectively.

We are starting a test and learn approach to develop the new service. We are currently running two large-scale tests testing reducing the frequency of engagement with customers and the mode of mandatory engagement for Universal Credit claimants that are looking for work or are in lower paid jobs. These will help us to better understand what will work best for the individual.

■ Motability: Payments

Nick Timothy: [\[43508\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an estimate of the total (a) value and (b) number of payments made by her Department to Motability in each year since 2010.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The Department for Work and Pensions retains financial information for 7 years in compliance with the fifth principle of the Data Protection Act, therefore we are unable to provide historic data back to 2010. We can provide the requested estimated total Motability values data for the previous three calendar years, DWP has paid:

2022 - c£607 million

2023 - c£600 million

2024 - c£600 million

We are unable to provide volumes data, and value data for earlier years within the timescales required for this request, due to the time required to interrogate our systems to obtain this level of information.

■ Pathways to Work: Employment

Marsha De Cordova: [\[43112\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Pathways to Work: Reforming Benefits and Support to Get Britain Working Green Paper, published on 18 March 2025, what estimate she has made of the number of people who will enter the workforce in the (a) 2026-27, (b) 2027-28 and (c) 2028-29 financial years as a result of the reforms set out in that paper.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Information on the impacts of the "[Pathways to Work: Reforming Benefits and Support to Get Britain Working Green Paper](#)" will be published in due course, with some information already published alongside the Spring Statement.

A further programme of analysis to support development of the proposals in the Green Paper will be developed and undertaken in the coming months.

We will continue to work with the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) to estimate the potential labour market impacts of these proposals.

■ Pathways to Work: Homelessness

Neil Duncan-Jordan: [\[43384\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the welfare reforms proposed in her Pathways to Work: Reforming Benefits and Support to Get Britain Working Green Paper, last updated 28 March 2025, on (a) reducing levels of and (b) preventing homelessness among disabled people.

Sir Stephen Timms:

No assessment has yet been made.

Information on the impacts of the Pathways to Work Green Paper will be published in due course, and some information was published alongside the Spring Statement.

These publications can be found in '[Pathways to Work: Reforming Benefits and Support to Get Britain Working Green Paper](#)'.

A further programme of analysis to support development of the proposals in the Green Paper will be developed and undertaken in the coming months.

■ Pathways to Work: Impact Assessments**Neil Duncan-Jordan:****[43682]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if her Department will undertake a health impact assessment of proposed changes to health and disability benefits in her Department's Green Paper entitled Pathways to Work: Reforming Benefits and Support to Get Britain Working, published on 18 March 2025.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Information on the impacts of the Pathways to Work Green Paper will be published in due course, with some information published alongside the Spring Statement. These publications can be found here '[Pathways to Work: Reforming Benefits and Support to Get Britain Working Green Paper](#)'.

A further programme of analysis to support development of the proposals in the Green Paper will be developed and undertaken in the coming months.

■ Pension Credit: Information Sharing**Wendy Chamberlain:****[43174]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to share data between her Department and HMRC to identify households eligible for Pension Credit.

Torsten Bell:

HMRC and DWP already have well established data-sharing processes and procedures, which are governed by the rules on how data can be accessed, shared and used whilst safeguarding individuals' data and privacy.

DWP officials are currently working with HMRC to explore how to use data more effectively to help identify pensioner households most likely to be eligible for Pension Credit and to target them directly.

■ Pensioners: Housing Benefit**Dr Simon Opher:****[43599]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many pensioners in receipt of Housing Benefit are not claiming Pension Credit.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Using the latest published benefit combinations statistics from [Stat-Xplore](#), out of the 1.24m benefit claimants of state pension age in Great Britain receiving Housing Benefit in August 2024, 448,500 were not in receipt of Pension Credit.

A DWP benefit claimant is defined as the individual who is claiming benefit on their own behalf, or in the case of Universal Credit, Pension Credit and Housing Benefit, an individual who is part of a single or couple claim for benefit.

■ Personal Independence Payment**John Milne:**[\[43367\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department plans to introduce a substantial risk element into the PIP assessment process.

Sir Stephen Timms:

In our Green Paper, Pathways to Work: Reforming Benefits and Support to Get Britain Working, we announced our plans to scrap the Work Capability Assessment and use the single Personal Independence Payment assessment to assess entitlement for the Universal Credit health element. We are considering how change of this kind could affect individuals who currently meet limited capability for work and work-related activity criteria due to non-functional special circumstances; including those currently classed as having substantial risk.

We also announced plans to launch a process to review the PIP assessment. We will bring together a range of experts, stakeholders and people with lived experience to consider how best to do this and to start the process as part of preparing for a review. Any changes to the PIP assessment will need to work alongside the reforms set out in the Green Paper.

Richard Burgon:[\[43973\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many Personal Independence Payment claimants there are in each (a) constituency and (b) local authority area.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Data on Personal Independence Payment (PIP) can be found on [Stat Xplore](#). The requested data can be found in the 'PIP Cases with Entitlement from 2019' dataset. You can log in or access Stat-Xplore as a guest user and, if needed, you can access [guidance](#) on how to extract the information required.

For data on claimants in receipt of PIP by local authority area there is a pre-populated table with the latest data. For data by constituency, you can filter by using the 'Geography' filter to select 'Westminster Parliamentary Constituency 2024'.

PIP has been devolved to Scotland since April 2020 and existing claims are currently being moved to the Scottish replacement benefit Adult Disability Payment.

■ Personal Independence Payment: Chronic Illnesses

Ian Roome:

[\[43769\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what changes her Department plans to make to Personal Independence Payment (PIP) reassessments for claimants suffering from longer-term degenerative conditions.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Award reviews are an important feature of Personal Independence Payment to ensure people receive the correct level of benefit, both for those whose needs will increase and those whose needs may decrease. People who receive the highest level of PIP and whose needs will not improve, receive a PIP award for a continuous period with a light touch review at the 10-year point.

In the Green Paper *Pathways to Work: Reforming Benefits and Support to Get Britain Working* published on 18 March we outline plans to consider changes to improve the experience for people who receive these ongoing awards in PIP. These include improving the information we provide when we write to people about ongoing PIP award decisions, what support is offered between 'light touch' reviews and reviewing the length of time between 'light touch' reviews.

■ Personal Independence Payment: Local Housing Allowance

John Milne:

[\[43364\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of planned reforms to Personal Independence Payment on people that receive (a) housing allowances and (b) higher rate housing allowances.

Sir Stephen Timms:

No such assessment has yet been made.

Information on the impacts of the Pathways to Work Green Paper will be published in due course, and some information was published alongside the Spring Statement. These publications can be found in '[Pathways to Work: Reforming Benefits and Support to Get Britain Working Green Paper](#)'.

A further programme of analysis to support development of the proposals in the Green Paper will be developed and undertaken in the coming months.

■ Personal Independence Payment: Medical Examinations

Richard Burgon:

[\[43921\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what proportion of current Personal Independence Payments recipients do not meet four points on a single descriptor on the daily living activities assessment criteria.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Information on the impacts of the Pathways to Work Green Paper will be published in due course, and some information was published alongside the Spring Statement.

These publications can be found in '[Pathways to Work: Reforming Benefits and Support to Get Britain Working Green Paper](#)'.

A further programme of analysis to support development of the proposals in the Green Paper will be developed and undertaken in the coming months.

■ **Personal Independence Payment: Reform**

Mel Stride: [\[43445\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of her Department's proposed reforms to eligibility for Personal Independence Payment on employment.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Information on the impacts of the Pathways to Work Green Paper will be published in due course, and some information was published alongside the Spring Statement.

These publications can be found in '[Pathways to Work: Reforming Benefits and Support to Get Britain Working Green Paper](#)'.

A further programme of analysis to support development of the proposals in the Green Paper will be developed and undertaken in the coming months.

■ **Personal Independence Payment: Tipton and Wednesbury**

Antonia Bance: [\[43207\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people who receive (a) enhanced daily living Personal Independence Payment awards and (b) standard daily living Personal Independence Payment awards did not score four or more points on any individual activity descriptor in 2024-25 in Tipton and Wednesbury constituency.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The requested information is not readily available.

Information on the impacts of the Pathways to Work Green Paper will be published in due course, and some information was published alongside the Spring Statement.

These publications can be found in '[Pathways to Work: Reforming Benefits and Support to Get Britain Working Green Paper](#)'.

A further programme of analysis to support development of the proposals in the Green Paper will be developed and undertaken in the coming months.

■ **Public Authorities (Fraud, Error and Recovery) Bill**

Apsana Begum: [\[42647\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the Code of Practice in the Public Authorities (Fraud, Error and Recovery) Bill in protecting the (a) rights and (b) privacy of (i) vulnerable people and (ii) people living in poverty.

Andrew Western:

As outlined in the Public Authorities (Fraud, Error and Recovery) Bill, DWP will publish three Codes of Practice to sit alongside its Information Gathering, Debt Recovery and Eligibility Verification measures. These are in development and we are already engaging with key stakeholders on the principles of the Codes. There will be public consultations to provide an opportunity for all interested parties to review and respond.

It is important to note these Codes of Practice are not legislation and so will not contain statutory provision themselves. They offer guidance and guidelines on how the Bill's measures will be operationalised and detail the Bill's practical application including the application of safeguards included in the Bill itself.

The Department is confident the Bill's powers are compliant with the government's duties under the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR), including the right to private life under Article 8. The measures are justified, lawful and proportionate and the Departments' detailed analysis on ECHR is set out in the published ECHR Memorandum, available [here](#).

The Impact Assessment which accompanies this Bill can be found [here](#).

The Bill includes safeguards to provide assurance the new powers are used proportionately and effectively, and in a way that protects vulnerable people and people living in poverty. More information can be found here: [Fraud, Error and Recovery\) Bill 2025: factsheets - GOV.UK](#)

■ Sick Leave and Statutory Sick Pay**Michael Wheeler:****[43260]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to paragraphs 7.2 to 7.4 of her Department's publication entitled Final stage impact assessment: Improve access to Statutory Sick Pay by removing the Lower Earnings Limit and removing the waiting period, published on 21 October 2024, what estimate she has made of the proportion of sickness absences that last at least four weeks; and what average length of sickness absence was estimated to calculate the annual cost of Statutory Sick Pay for businesses.

Alison McGovern:

There is no administrative data collected or recorded when an employee takes a sickness absence. The best evidence available uses findings from the Employee Survey (Employee research Phase 2: Sickness absence and return to work.

Quantitative and qualitative research:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64108286d3bf7f02f6e38078/employee-research-phase-2-sickness-absence-and-return-to-work-quantitative-qualitative.pdf>.)

The survey showed that 64% of respondents had no sickness absence. Of those that do have a sickness absence, 13% of those who have a sickness absence reported an absence of more than 3 weeks. The majority of sickness absences were for up to a week (57%) followed by between 1 to 2 weeks (20%), and between 2 to 3 weeks

(10%). These figures demonstrate that when workers took sickness absence, it was usually for a short period of time.

Of those who have had a sickness absence, many would receive Occupational Sick Pay. The Employee Survey findings suggest 57% of employees said they would receive OSP, while a further 9% said they would receive some combination of both SSP and OSP. 26% would receive SSP, while the remaining 8% do not know.

The estimated cost to business of SSP reforms is derived from a simulation model that incorporates raw sickness absence data from the DWP Employee Survey 2023 alongside characteristic information from the Family Resources Survey. ([Family Resources Survey: financial year 2022 to 2023 - GOV.UK](#))

■ Social Security Benefits: Applications

Wendy Chamberlain: [\[43175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of simplifying application forms for social security entitlements.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The Department continues to review the experience of users of its services, and seeks to balance application simplicity with obtaining the information needed for an accurate award. A key objective of DWP's Service Modernisation Programme, drawing on end user research, is to assess how applications should be made in the future, and consider the opportunities for more user friendly and easily accessible services.

DWP Agents and third-party organisations are available to support customers with applications. For those without third party support, DWP provides various support to assist with benefit applications. The Department's Visiting Service offers the most vulnerable applicants help with form completion.

■ Social Security Benefits: Costs

Richard Foord: [\[44167\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has considered changes to the benefits system to reflect increases in costs for (a) building and contents insurance, (b) home maintenance, (c) boiler servicing and (d) other homeowner-related costs, in the context of those costs not usually applying to renters.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The Department has not recently considered changes to the benefit system to reflect increases in costs for (a) building and contents insurance, (b) home maintenance, (c) boiler servicing and (d) other homeowner-related costs.

■ Universal Credit: Disability

Graeme Downie:

[\[43006\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 31 March 2025 to Question 40715 on Universal Credit: Disability, what steps she is taking to ensure that savings reinvested into (a) work support and (b) training opportunities impact recipients of Universal Credit health top up in (i) Dunfermline and Dollar constituency, (ii) Scotland and (iii) other devolved administrations.

Sir Stephen Timms:

We announced in the Pathways to Work Green Paper that we would establish a new guarantee of support for all disabled people and people with health conditions claiming out of work benefits who want help to get into or return to work. This is backed up by £1 billion of new funding across the United Kingdom, with the share of funding for devolved governments calculated in the usual way.

In Northern Ireland employment support is fully transferred. In Scotland and Wales, the Department for Work and Pensions and the Scottish and Welsh Governments have concurrent powers to deliver employment support, with some provision delivered and funded directly by DWP and some funding devolved through the block grant.

As outlined in the Get Britain Working White Paper, we are committed to working in partnership with the Scottish and Welsh Governments on shared employment ambitions across devolved and reserved provision, which includes employment support measures in the Health and Disability Green Paper.

■ Universal Credit: Young People

John Milne:

[\[43365\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate her Department has made of the number of under 22 year olds who will no longer receive limited capability to work payments.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Information on the impacts of the "[Pathways to Work: Reforming Benefits and Support to Get Britain Working Green Paper](#)" will be published in due course, with some information already published alongside the Spring Statement.

A further programme of analysis to support development of the proposals in the Green Paper will be developed and undertaken in the coming months.

■ Winter Fuel Allowance

Tom Morrison:

[\[43323\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what data she plans to collect on the impact of changes to the winter fuel allowance.

Torsten Bell:

Following the decision to target Winter Fuel Payments at pensioners on the lowest incomes, the Government took immediate action to maximise the take-up of Pension Credit.

The latest Pension Credit applications and awards statistics were published on 27 February. Details can be found at: [Pension Credit applications and awards: February 2025 - GOV.UK](#). The statistics show that the Department received 235,000 Pension Credit applications in the 30 weeks since the Winter Fuel Payment announcement – an 81% increase on the comparable period in 2023/24 and made 117,800 new Pension Credit awards – a 64% increase or 45,800 extra awards on the comparable period 2023/24.

Winter Fuel Payment statistics are published annually. The next release of Winter Fuel Payment statistics covering winter 2024 to 2025 will be published on 16 September 2025 and will report on recipients and beneficiaries of Winter Fuel Payment. The statistics will also include a measure of the proportion of the pensioner population who are beneficiaries of the Winter Fuel Payment.

■ Winter Fuel Payment: Death**Iqbal Mohamed:****[43680]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she plans to publish an assessment of the potential impact of the decision to means test the winter fuel payment on the number of excess deaths in winter 2024-25.

Torsten Bell:

Targeting Winter Fuel Payments was a difficult decision, but the right decision given the challenging public finances. The Government is, however, protecting pensioners on the lowest incomes. Winter Fuel Payments will continue to be paid to pensioner households with someone receiving Pension Credit or other qualifying means-tested benefits or tax credits. They will continue to be worth £200 for eligible households, or £300 for eligible households with someone aged 80 or over.

A very wide range of factors impact changes in mortality. Details of excess winter deaths in England and Wales can be found at: [Winter mortality in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

CABINET OFFICE

■ Civil Service: Standards

Joe Robertson:

[\[40727\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what data his Department collects on the outcomes of performance management procedures.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 1 April 2025. The correct answer should have been:

Georgia Gould:

~~Cabinet Office staff, except those on career breaks or new joiners, are allocated a performance marking at mid-year and end of the year. These performance markings are Exceeding, High Performing, Achieving, or Partially Met. All line managers are instructed to upload these performance markings onto our HR system, which is called SOP.~~

~~For SCS grade staff, at both the mid and end of year point, performance markings are centrally collated and moderated.~~

~~For delegated grade staff, markings are not centrally collated, but business units are expected to collate and moderate these.~~

~~In March, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster announced that the Government will be strengthening performance processes for the SCS.~~

Cabinet Office staff, except those on career breaks or new joiners, are allocated a performance marking at mid-year and end of the year. All line managers are instructed to upload these performance markings onto our HR system, which is called SOP. In March, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster also announced that the Government will be strengthening performance processes for the SCS.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme: Coronavirus

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[39388\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an estimate of the number of Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme claims on Covid-19 vaccinations which have been accepted following mandatory reversal based upon (a) additional evidence provided and (b) existing evidence.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 24 March 2025. The correct answer should have been:

Ashley Dalton:

Claimants to the Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme (VDPS) can ask for a reassessment, known as a mandatory reversal, if they disagree with the **medical assessor's** decision on the eligibility of their claim. Additional evidence **must** be added before it is reassessed, and this can include medical records.

Between 1 November 2021, when the NHS Business Services Authority took over administration of the VDPS, and 20 March 2025, 25 claims have been awarded a Vaccine Damage Payment following a mandatory reversal. Additional evidence was provided for all of these claims.

C ~~No e~~ claims ~~have been reassessed~~ without additional evidence **are received and reassessed through the mandatory reversal process. However, no claims without additional evidence have been awarded a Vaccine Damage Payment.**

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

BUSINESS AND TRADE

■ Horizon Redress

Minister for Services, Small Business and Exports (Gareth Thomas):

[\[HCWS585\]](#)

The planned statement will be delivered orally today by the Minister for Services, Small Business and Exports.

■ Upgraded Free Trade Agreement with the Republic of Korea: Round Four of Negotiations

Minister of State for Trade Policy and Economic Security (Mr Douglas Alexander):

[\[HCWS582\]](#)

The fourth round of negotiations on an upgraded Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the Republic of Korea (RoK) took place in London between 10 and 21 March 2025.

Total trade between the UK and RoK was worth £15.3 billion in the 12 months ending September 2024. An upgraded FTA is intended to support growth in this trade and strengthen our broader relationship with the RoK.

Specifically, an upgraded UK-RoK FTA will help secure and future proof current goods market access. Negotiators are also seeking to update the agreement in key areas where trade policy has progressed in recent years, including digital and services trade.

Discussion is also progressing on a range of areas where increased cooperation will futureproof our UK-RoK strategic relationship, such as commitments on supply chains.

Negotiators made good progress on a number of areas, including but not limited to:

Rules of Origin

Sides continue to make good progress on a new chapter, building on constructive discussions held virtually in February. Discussions covered both the chapter's main text and product specific rules (PSRs) for a range of sectors, including automotives, textiles and apparel, and food and drink. Sides are seeking to ensure the chapter accounts for current and future supply chains.

Digital trade

Further positive discussions were held on an ambitious digital chapter, including on commitments such as data, trade digitalisation and business safeguards. Additionally, the UK is seeking digital commitments that will help foster UK-RoK cooperation on a range of areas, such as emerging technologies.

Services and Business Mobility

The UK is seeking upgraded commitments to boost UK services exports to the RoK. This round included discussions on commitments to provide improved certainty and access for

the mobility of business persons. Further discussions were also held on professional and business services and domestic regulation.

Trade and Gender Equality (TGE)

Negotiators made significant progress before the round towards agreeing ambitious TGE commitments. Commitments being sought here will help foster UK-RoK cooperation on specific areas, including improving women's access to global markets, financial resources and business networks, so that they can further benefit from trade.

Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs)

Notable progress was made towards agreeing a new SMEs chapter. The outcomes being sought here will help SMEs access important information on the UK-RoK trading arrangement online and encourage cooperation between Parties to reduce trade barriers for SMEs.

Supply Chains and Customs and Trade Facilitation (CTF)

Good progress was made prior to the round to upgrade the existing CTF chapter. Good progress was made during the round towards agreeing new supply chains commitments. These will help cement ongoing UK-RoK cooperation on critical supply chains through mechanisms that facilitate government to government dialogue during supply chain disruptions.

Other Areas

Positive discussions were held across a range of further areas of the FTA including Anti-Corruption and the environment.

The Government will only ever sign a trade agreement which aligns with the UK's national interests, upholding our high standards across a range of sectors, including protections for the National Health Service.

The fifth round of negotiations is currently expected to take place in Seoul in the Summer of 2025. The Government will continue to work towards delivering outcomes in the FTA that secure economic growth for the UK and will update Parliament on the progress of discussions with the RoK as they continue to develop.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

■ Statement by the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Minister for Energy Consumers) (Miatta Fahnbulleh): [\[HCWS581\]](#)

On 1 April, Rebel Energy announced that it planned to cease trading. Following this announcement, Ofgem confirmed that it would seek to appoint a Supplier of Last Resort (SoLR) to protect Rebel Energy's customers, ensuring no disruption and continuity of service for all customers.

Following a competitive process to get the best deal possible for consumers, Ofgem has appointed British Gas as the SoLR for Rebel Energy customers. British Gas will take on supplying Rebel Energy's 84,000 domestic customers and 6,000 non-domestic customers.

Customers of Rebel Energy do not need to take any action for now. There will be no disruption in energy supply, which will continue as normal following the switch over to British Gas on Sunday 6 April 2025. Funds that current and former domestic customers of the supplier have paid into their accounts will be protected and transferred, where they are in credit. Domestic customers will also be protected by the energy price cap with their new supplier.

Customers of Rebel Energy will be contacted over the coming days about the changes. Once the SoLR process is complete, customers will be able to switch providers or sign up for a new fixed tariff in the usual way, although Ofgem advises them to wait until the SoLR process has been completed. Customers will not be charged exit fees if they decide to switch to another supplier.

Since its introduction, Ofgem's SoLR process has ensured supplier exits are orderly, costs are minimised and customers experience no disruption to their energy supply as they are transferred to a new supplier. Most recently, it was successfully used to protect approximately 1.8 million customers of the 28 domestic suppliers which exited the market between August 2021 and July 2022.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Clinical Trials and the Health Data Research Service

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Wes Streeting): [\[HCWS587\]](#)

Today I am updating the House on plans to create a new Health Data Research Service and fast-track the setup of clinical trials to accelerate the development of the medicines and therapies of the future. These changes will improve patient care and help to make Britain the best place in the world for medical research.

We will invest up to £500 million to establish a new Health Data Research Service. This will improve access to data for medical research by providing a secure single access point, meaning a researcher doesn't have to navigate different systems or make multiple applications for information for the same project. This will unlock the power of NHS data to transform research and lead to breakthroughs that improve care for patients.

The Wellcome Trust will be the first charitable funder supporting this groundbreaking initiative, committing an additional £100 million towards its development. The service will be hosted for at least the first five years at the Wellcome Genome Campus near Cambridge, leveraging the campus's world-class facilities and expertise.

We will involve the public as we design the service, building trust and understanding through transparent communication and discussion about how patient data is used to deliver health benefits to patients across the UK.

We will work closely with Wellcome and other stakeholders to ensure the successful implementation of a service that will drive faster research that benefits patients sooner.

This government's work to make the UK a world-leading destination for commercial interventional clinical trials also supports our clear focus on driving economic growth, alongside improving health outcomes for patients and the public.

We will also accelerate clinical trials and deliver radical improvement in regulatory, set up and recruitment processes over the next year. This will help to bring down the time it takes to move from the trial being submitted for regulatory approval from over 250 to 150 days.

We will do this by streamlining approval processes for clinical trials by moving to standardised contracts, with contracting undertaken by a single lead research site. We will reduce the unnecessary duplication of checks that can be best conducted centrally. We will publish NHS Trust level set-up performance data for the first time, and continue to work with industry and the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI) to improve data on our metrics to compare our performance with international competitors.

We will also implement the new clinical trials regulatory framework announced in December 2024 by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), to speed up trial approvals and encourage innovation in trial design without compromising patient safety.

I will continue to keep parliament updated on the progress of this work.

■ Recruitment of General Practitioners

Minister of State for Care (Stephen Kinnock):

[\[HCWS586\]](#)

General practice sits at the heart of our NHS and is its front door, but it has been neglected for far too long.

We are committed to getting primary care back on its feet and have already taken decisive action to get more GPs onto the frontline. This government inherited a ludicrous situation where patients couldn't get a GP appointment, while GPs leaving training couldn't get a job.

Within weeks of coming into office, we committed to recruiting over 1,000 recently qualified GPs through an £82 million boost to the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme (ARRS) over 2024/25, as part of an initiative to address GP unemployment and secure the future pipeline of GPs. I am delighted to announce the government has exceeded this target.

By cutting red tape and investing more in our NHS, we have put an extra 1,503 GPs into general practice to deliver more appointments. See: [GPs recruited through the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme \(ARRS\) - NHS England Digital](#)

The recruitment boost, part of the government's Plan for Change, will help to end the scandal of patients struggling to see a doctor – easing pressure on GPs and cutting waiting times. Alongside changes to the GP contract for 2025-26, these additional GPs

will help end the 8am scramble for appointments which so many patients currently endure every day.

Previously, primary care networks were limited in how they could use their funding. We've changed that. Now they can hire recently qualified doctors through the Additional Roles Reimbursement scheme - a practical solution that's boosting GP numbers across the country. For 2025/26 we have gone further, delivering more flexibilities to the scheme to allow local systems to respond better to local workforce needs.

GPs will be central to our 10 Year Health Plan and shifting healthcare from hospitals to the community.

In February we reached agreement with the British Medical Association (BMA) on a new GP contract for the first time in four years. We are investing an additional £889m in general practice to fix the front door of the NHS, alongside reforms to improve access, incentivise greater continuity of care and streamline targets to focus on preventing the biggest killers. And at the Autumn Budget, the Chancellor announced £100 million of capital for GP estate upgrades over the next financial year, the biggest central GP capital investment since 2019-20.

Thanks to these decisions, the government has already delivered over two million additional elective appointments since July, meeting its target seven months early, and brought the Referral to Treatment waiting list down by 193,000.

But we're not complacent and we know the job isn't done. We're determined to go further and faster to deliver more appointments, faster treatment, and an NHS that the British public deserve as part of our Plan for Change.

HOME OFFICE

■ Consultation on Third Party Material Request Code of Practice and associated definition of counselling services

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Safeguarding and Violence Against Women and Girls (Jess Phillips): [\[HCWS583\]](#)

The Victims and Prisoners Act 2024 introduces duties mandating that police and other authorised persons may only request victim information such as medical records when it is necessary and proportionate, and in pursuit of a reasonable line of enquiry. These duties also create special protections for victims' counselling records, reflecting the highly sensitive nature of these records.

I am confident these new duties, once in force, will help protect the privacy and dignity of victims within the criminal justice system and help the government deliver on our ambitious aim to halve violence against women and girls over the next decade.

However, before we can bring in these essential reforms it is first necessary to define counselling services and issue a Code of Practice to which authorised persons such as police must adhere.

That is why I am pleased to announce the Government is today publishing a public consultation on both a draft Code of Practice for Third Party Material Requests and a definition of counselling services.

The consultation will run for a 12-week period and provides a valuable opportunity for the public to have their say.

A copy of the consultation and draft Code of Practice will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses and published on Gov.uk.

TREASURY

■ Oil and Gas Decommissioning Relief Deeds

The Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury (James Murray): [\[HCWS584\]](#)

The government's fiscal approach for oil and gas aims to balance encouraging investment with ensuring a fair return for the nation in exchange for the use of its resources. Currently, inclusive of the temporary Energy (Oil and Gas) Profits Levy, companies engaged in the production of oil and gas in the UK and on the UK Continental Shelf (UKCS) are subject to a 78% headline tax rate on their profits.

At Budget 2013, the government announced it would begin signing decommissioning relief deeds. These deeds represented a new contractual approach to provide oil and gas companies with certainty on the level of tax relief they will receive on future decommissioning costs.

Since October 2013, the government has entered into 109 decommissioning relief deeds. Offshore Energies UK estimate that these deeds have so far unlocked approximately £14.7bn of capital, which can now be invested elsewhere.

The government committed to report to Parliament annually on progress with the decommissioning relief deeds. The report for financial year 2023-24 is provided below.

- Number of decommissioning relief agreements entered into: the government entered into 3 decommissioning relief agreements in 2023-24.
- Total number of decommissioning relief agreements in force at the end of that year: 108 decommissioning relief agreements were in force at the end of the year.
- Number of payments made under any decommissioning relief agreements during that year, and the amount of each payment: 3 payments were made under a decommissioning relief agreement in 2023-24, for £87m in total. These were made in relation to the provisions recognised by HM Treasury from 2015 onwards as a result of companies defaulting on their decommissioning obligations.
- Total number of payments that have been made under any decommissioning relief agreements as at the end of that year, and the total amount of those payments: 19 payments have been made under any decommissioning relief agreement as at the end of the 2023-24 financial year, totalling around £347m.

- Estimate of the maximum amount liable to be paid under any decommissioning relief agreements: the government has not made any changes to the tax regime that would generate a liability to be paid under any decommissioning relief agreements. HM Treasury's 2024-25 accounts will recognise a provision currently estimated to be £123m in respect of decommissioning expenditure incurred as a result of companies defaulting on their decommissioning obligations[1]. The majority of this is currently expected to be realised over the next several years.

[1] This figure which is an estimate at the last interim reporting period is unaudited and takes into account payments made subsequent to the financial year covered by this Written Ministerial Statement. The estimate is under review ahead of the year end reporting period and may be updated to reflect newer information.